

# THE STANDARD

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## MEDITATION

### Escape from Hell

.... Up, get you out of this place! Gen. 19:14b

The time, then, will come when "the wicked shall be silent in darkness"; and: "that every mouth may be stopped."

Still, it seems that the wicked shall have many words to utter against the Almighty. It seems, when listening to the wicked now, that they will upbraid Him for not warning them sufficiently of the doom that is prepared for them; and also for the severity of their punishment: according to them the punishment does not fit the crime.

Neither are the wicked alone in this.

There hangs a picture in the dogmatic salons of the church of Christ which does not fit its pendant, its counterpart of burning pitch and blistering sulphur. Hell does not fit the walk and conversation of the wicked, that is, as this walk is valued by the common grace enthusiasts. The god of common grace which is painted as bowing down in love and favor towards humanity in general is not at all like the terrible God of judgment to come from Whose face the earth and the heavens shall flee so that no place will be found for them. The benign countenance of this god of common grace is not at all like the face of the terrible God of Whom the wicked will say: Mountains and hills hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!

Pray, if the greater part of the life of Sodom is so lovely and good, what will we, what can we do with its hell-fire? Then punishment ill befits the crime.

Nay, it seems that the Lord will have to issue an apology on the "lake of fire." Unless hell and its inhabitants are allowed to everlastingly reproach our Father for a rigor, too harsh, too bitter; a rigor, perhaps unjust!

But attend! "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them."

\* \* \* \*

Oh, that we would cease from reading the life of Sodom by the "ignis fatuus" of Grecian fools. These "Will-o'-the-

wisps" lead us in the quagmire of folly and deceit. Their so-called light is very darkness. And if we have dulled our spiritual perception through such folly we become aliens to the testimony of our God that comes by Word and Spirit. Then we are not as the inspired poets who sang: "The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes," Instead of that scriptural testimony we will say by the light of Plato: "The good that sinners do puts me to shame."

Indeed, the Lord hath not let Himself without witness! There is the awful history of Sodom and Gomorrah, of Admah and Zeboim.

And this history of wickedness and doom is reiterated through the ages: we find it referred to in 17 books of the Bible. Sodom is God's witness of hell, and Lot is God's witness of the escape from hell.

Sodom's overthrow in brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven is the partial fulfillment of Noah's curse, for the inhabitants of the cities of the plain are the descendants of Canaan, the son of Ham. (Comp. Gen. 9:25 and 10:19)

Although the cities of the plain comprised Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboim and Zoar, the firstnamed seems to have been the cradle of their unnatural lust. It is often mentioned alone as the unholy representative of the heinous sin of *pederasty*, although Gomorrah seems to have been a close second in the unholy race for unnatural lust.

Not to mention any more than is absolutely necessary about this sin which ought to be divorced from the mind even, may we say that it is characterized by this, that every relation of the sexes is turned into its very opposite. This much ought to be said, however, for only then can we understand how the church of God is often called by the name of Sodom and Gomorrah. (Cf. Deut. 32:32, Isa. 1:10, 3:9; Lam. 4:6; Ezek. 16:46) The sin of Sodom spiritually is the breach of the bond of the covenant that binds the church to God. Very unnatural it was that Jerusalem would crucify Jesus: He came unto His own and His own received Him not, but threw Him without the city and crucified Him. Reason why we read in Rev. 11:8: "And their bodies shall lie in the street of the great city which is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified."

In that city Lot resided.

Now, he had no business being there at all. He was the son of Haran, the grandson of Terah, the nephew of Abraham, the chosen of the Lord.

But Lot as resident of Sodom is representative of the people of God who seek the world. Lot had lifted up his eyes and beheld all the plain of Jordan that it was well watered there before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar. And the result was that Lot pitched his tent towards Sodom. And here again we see that if we once set our foot on forbidden soil, walking in dangerous paths, we go from bad to worse. Did he first only pitch his tent, the Divine Committee of destruction finds him in a house. Was he first only pitched toward Sodom, this same committee finds him within the walls of this den of ferocious beasts.

And it went from bad to worse. Lot dwelling in the shadow of him who is called the friend of God is happy indeed. But Lot, away from the wholesome censure of the eye of Abraham takes unto himself a wife of Sodom who will reveal her wicked heart in the glance backward, a glance that must have been indicative of her longing heart for the city and its pleasure. And a wife that brings forth Sodomites, which are already betrothed to Sodomites to raise still more of the brood of the adder and the basilisks. How otherwise can you explain their callous sin of incest with their father? Or how can you explain the daughters' association with young men that mock with a testimony from heaven?

Also on Lot, that righteous man, is the stamp of Sodom. He lingered and lingered even in the face of such dire warning as is sounded by the angels. These messengers of God must need grasp his hand and the hand of his wife and the hand of his daughters.

What is the end for Lot of all this fertile valley and of all his possessions? He loses all he had. He brings forth through unnatural associations enemies of God's people Israel and dies in obscurity: his name is mentioned no more and the day of his death is not mentioned.

And yet, how great is the love of God!

For Lot escaped the conflagration of Sodom and the blistering heat when the cities of the plain were overthrown.

For Lot had a righteous soul. And he had enough of God's Spirit in him to be vexed continually with all the rotten deeds of the worldlings. So that Lot is even a beautiful figure in all the places where he is mentioned afterwards. And he is even mentioned as the type of God's people who shall remain unto the end. We may even say that Lot did not remain silent in Sodom. It is clear from the rude conversation of the Sodomites before his door that he must have judged them and condemned them. They say of Lot: he will needs be a judge!

Great is the love of God Who saves His people from the doom to come. Attend to this speech of the angels: Haste

thee, escape thither; for I cannot do anything till thou be come thither! The Lord even does more than He promised to Abraham. The Lord would not destroy the just with the wicked even if He would find but ten righteous dwelling in Sodom. And God found but one. And this one must first be taken out of Sodom before the angel can destroy.

\* \* \* \*

And now?

What means Sodom to us?

God tells us that His church which has become apostate earns that name spiritually. Isa. 1:9, 10; Ezek. 16:46-49 and Rev. 11:8.

That church is married historically to God in Christ. They are married to heaven in their generations. But they turn to the earth and are taking the earth and worldly things to their bosom. And this unnatural alliance always goes hand in hand with hatred for the former relations, hence, they repeatedly crucify the Lord Jesus.

That is the reason why Sodom shall condemn the Pharisees in the day of judgment. Sodom sinned this sin of unnatural alliances in a physical sense. But the Pharisees and with them unbelieving Israel committed this unnatural sin in a spiritual sense: they crucified the bridegroom of Israel which is abomination to God.

And spiritually, Lot is left in this Sodom.

For such is the situation. Isa. 1:8. The true kernel is called the cottage in the vineyard, the lodge in the garden of cucumbers, the besieged city.

The Bride of Christ hates the Word of her groom and pollutes it. She makes after worldly lovers and becomes thru the ages the great whore.

And all this vexes the souls of the Lots of all the ages.

In the midst of all this the unnatural alliances threaten Lot.

God comes to the Lots of His choice and tells them: Come out of her my people that ye be not partakers of her sins and that ye receive not of her plagues. Be in the world but not of the world. Travel continually out of Sodom and escape the conflagration that is coming. Neither is this separation only spiritual. Many times Lot is called upon to very concretely separate himself from the Sodomites. He may not marry a Sodomite, neither may he allow it that his daughters marry Sodomites. He may not raise Sodomites for the hell that is coming. He must raise seed of the Covenant.

Also in his very concrete business and economic life he must remain aloof from the Sodomite influences. The less he entangles himself with the wives and son-in-laws of Sodom, with sodomite partners and business alliances, the less he will be inclined to linger when Divine Committees will come to bid him go to heaven. For the cry from heaven will resound in our ears presently: Escape from hell, My beloved! I cannot do anything until thou art safe in the midst of the angels and the perfect righteous ones in the house of the Father.

And Jesus, finally, has painted the final picture of Lot and Sodom.

This world shall be spiritually as Sodom in the last day. And perhaps also physically, for we notice that the intelligentsia are more and more condoning the hellish sin of homosexual relations. The end of this world shall be rotten to the core. And the Lots shall be still there. Oh, how they shall vex their souls!

But the Lots shall be the corks on which the Godforsaken world shall float. Until the last second. And then the angels shall once more come and by miraculous power God shall transform the Lots as in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. And they shall soar to heaven.

And then Sodom shall burn once more. Not, however, in the choking fumes of sulphur and brimstone and bituminous matter, but with a fire that shall never be quenched. With the fire that burns in the lake of fire. The second death.

Oh, beloved, hunger not, lust not for the world! And do not make an apology for Sodom. Do not call the spiritual Sodom good in the sight of God. God is even now counting the righteous Lots. He is reckoning the time of His impending visitation!

And let us not ally ourselves with Sodomites. Fathers and mothers! Are your son-in-laws mocking when you interpret the angels' testimony? If they are, you are in dangerous company. Depart!

And let us long for the coming of the messengers of Abraham's great Friend.

Methinks, I hear the rustling of their wings!

Woe to Sodom of all the ages!

But, blessed Zion!

Blessed Lot!

G.V.

#### IN MEMORIAM

The Delegate Board of the Eastern Ladies League hereby wishes to extend to its sister member, Mrs. Peter Decker and family, its expression of sympathy in the death of her mother

MRS. PAULINE JANSEN

"Let not your heart be troubled: Ye believe in God, believe also in Me." John 14:1.

The Delegate Board

Mrs. G. Pipe, Vice-Secretary

#### IN MEMORIAM

On September 20 it pleased God to take unto His eternal home our beloved husband and father,

HERBERT VAN HARN

at the age of 77 years.

We are comforted in the knowledge that our loss was his gain, and that God doeth all things well.

"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints."

Psalms 116:15

Mr. and Mrs. Stephen Van Harn

Mrs. Herbert Van Harn

Mrs. Frances Nouse

Mrs. Peter Schippers

Miss Johanna Van Harn

Grand Rapids, Michigan

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## EDITORIALS

### A Protest and its Reply

By omitting the meeting of June 1st, and turning immediately to the meeting of the Consistory of the First Church, held on June 23rd, the former Consistory of Kalamazoo simply corrupts and distorts the truth in its answer to the protest of brother Meninga.

We must remember that Classis East, in May, 1953, had rendered its decisions in the case of the Rev. De Wolf and the elders that supported him, and had condemned them. The final decision was that they had to apologize or be deposed from office. At the same time Classis had appointed a committee of five to report about the case to, and make it pending with the Consistory of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan.

On the meeting of June 1 that Consistory took a principal and decisive action.

At that meeting, first of all, the Rev. Vos informed the Consistory that the Classis had appointed a committee to make the case pending with the Consistory, and that said committee appointed him to address the Consistory, which he did in an appeal to the Rev. De Wolf and the elders that supported him to preserve the unity of the churches and to apologize for their heretical doctrine as the Classis had decided.

Immediately after that speech the elders that supported the Rev. De Wolf revealed that it had no effect on them, and that they rather tried to play politics than to preserve the truth and the unity of the churches. For right after the speech one of those elders made a motion to adjourn. The purpose of this motion was, of course, to stall for time. We must remember that after all the elders that followed the Rev. De Wolf were in the minority. One of the good elders, Mr. O. Van Ellen, had died while the case was before the Consistory; and already the congregation had voted a new elder, Mr. A. Vermeer, a brother-in-law of De Wolf, who had not yet been installed into office but who was to be installed within two or three weeks. To this installation of Mr. Adolph Vermeer the opposing elders evidently looked forward, thinking that then they could possibly have a majority in the Consistory. Hence, they made the motion to adjourn, which was, however defeated by the Consistory.

Thereupon the all-important and decisive motion was made and supported namely, to adopt the decision of Classis and to act accordingly. This motion implied of course, that the Rev. De Wolf and his elders were guilty of heresy; that, if the motion was passed, the Consistory demanded of them to apologize; and that, if they refused to apologize, they would be suspended and deposed from office. In other words, if this motion was carried, the whole case would simply be decided.

The opposing elders realized the importance of this motion very well. One of them, therefore, made a motion to table the matter. This, of course, was another political maneuver: they meant to stall for time. But there was no earthly reason to table this motion and to wait with the adoption of it, that is, to accept the decision of Classis and to act accordingly. For there was nothing to be considered and discussed any more about the whole matter. It had been discussed for many months, both in the Consistory and in the Classis; and there was no need for any more deliberation about it. Also this motion to table was defeated by the Consistory. And after this the motion to adopt the decision of Classis and to act accordingly was adopted by the majority vote of the Consistory. This decision meant, of course, that the accused pastor and the elders that supported him had but two alternatives. They surely were now in a state of guilt, and had lost all their rights to function as office-bearers in the church. But they confronted the alternatives, either that the Rev. De Wolf and the elders supporting him had to apologize, or that they were suspended and deposed by this very decision of the Consistory from their office in the church. By this decision of June 1, the Consistory by majority vote already decided on their suspension and deposition unless they apologized. If they refused to apologize, the Consistory could do only one thing: carry out the decision of Classis, and suspend and depose them from office.

This proves to anyone that can read that the statement by the former Consistory of Kalamazoo in its answer to the protest of brother Meninga, that the Rev. De Wolf and the heretical elders were suspended and deposed by a minority of the Consistory, is false. What could have been done, of course, is that this decision be altered and rescinded by a two-thirds vote of the Consistory. But this was never done. Hence, it certainly can be said that when De Wolf and the elders supporting him refused to apologize, they had already been deposed and suspended by the decision of the Consistory of June 1st.

After this decision was made, (not before as the rumor goes) De Wolf and his guilty elders asked for time to consider the matter and even for the privilege of meeting together separately, to consider whether or not they would apologize. This the Consistory undoubtedly should never have granted, especially in the light of the later political maneuvers of the guilty office-bearers. It would have been far better seeing that they were in a state of guilt that the Consistory would have decided right there to unseat them as officebearers and not to allow them to function as such before they had apologized. Besides in the light of later events, it would have been better if the Consistory had never given them any more time, but simply had proceeded to ask them to apologize, and if they had refused, to decide formally to ask the advice of the Fourth Consistory and to proceed to their suspension and deposition. But the Consistory was lenient: they gave them the time they asked for, supposing that they acted in good faith and would really consider the

matter of an apology, especially after they had heard the heart-appealing speech of the Rev. G. Vos at that same meeting. But it soon became evident that they still stalled for time until Mr. Vermeer would be installed as elder, thinking that then they could have the majority in the Consistory.

Another and very brief meeting was held on June 15, 1953, at the request of the committee that was appointed by Classis to advise the Consistory. At that meeting the committee appointed for the case referred to our error as Consistory of not removing the guilty and elders from office until they had apologized. But still the Consistory took no action. However, at the same meeting it became very evident that the guilty parties had not even considered the matter of an apology. After two weeks they had done nothing about it, and were still stalling for time.

The next meeting of the Consistory was on June 22, 1953.

At that meeting all the elders were present, as well as all the ministers. Mr. Adolph Vermeer, who had just been installed as the new elder in the place of Mr. O. Van Ellen, was present for the first time. And again, at the request of the Consistory, also the advisory committee of the Classis was present.

At this meeting the president was asked now to place the Rev. De Wolf and his accused elders before the question decided upon in the meeting of June 1, namely: whether they were ready to apologize.

One of the guilty elders remarked that this would require a motion and a decision by the Consistory. Such a motion, of course, would be entirely out of order. What could have been done was, as was said before, that a motion was made and tested to rescind the action of June 1. But certainly, a motion to ask the Rev. De Wolf and his elders to apologize was entirely out of order because that had already been decided at the June 1st meeting. However, the motion was made and supported and carried. It was carried without a doubt because the guilty elders could not possibly vote any more. They had lost all rights to vote. And although they did vote, and although their vote was counted when their hands were raised, and although then it appeared that the vote stood eleven to eleven (one of the good elders not voting), nevertheless the motion was carried, and carried unanimously. The Rev. De Wolf was placed legally before the question whether he would apologize or not.

The same action was taken in regard to the accused elders. Again a motion was made to ask them to apologize. And again that motion was carried unanimously, not counting the illegal vote of the guilty elders. And it certainly ought to be very evident not only that the guilty elders could not vote at all, but also that certainly they could not vote in their own case.

At the same meeting the Rev. De Wolf offered what was purported to be an apology, but was not. What he did was to offer a statement which he illegally had already read from

the pulpit on the evening of June 21. The Consistory knew nothing about it previously. Hence, the whole thing was illegal. Besides, it was not an apology at all. The Consistory had demanded of him at the June 1st meeting that he should publicly confess that the condemned statements were literally heretical, according to the decision of Classis adopted by the Consistory. But what he did was to offer an apology really for the stupidity of the Consistory in not understanding him. This so-called apology was so often presented already that I will not quote it again.

The elders that supported the Rev. De Wolf made no attempt at an apology whatsoever. The result was, of course, that by the majority vote of the Consistory meeting of June 1 they certainly were already declared worthy of suspension and deposition. At that meeting the Consistory had decided that they would be removed from office if they did not apologize.

It is therefore a downright untruth and distortion of the facts when the former Consistory of Kalamazoo answers brother Meninga by saying that they had been suspended and deposed by a minority of the Consistory.

Then came the meeting of the Consistory of June 23, 1953.

The former Consistory of Kalamazoo claims not only that the Rev. De Wolf and the guilty elders were suspended and deposed by a minority of the Consistory, the untruth of which we have already exposed. But they also claim that this meeting of June 23 was not a legal meeting because all the elders were not only not present, but many of them were not even notified. Hence, according to them, the meeting of June 23 was not even a legal meeting.

Now this certainly is also a distortion of the facts. In other words, it is a downright untruth. For, in the first place, there is nothing in the Church Order that demands that guilty officebearers, that have already been condemned by Classis and Consistory, must be present at their own formal deposition. The case was completely finished. Secondly, it was really impossible to meet with them and do business properly. Ever since the June 1st meeting they had tried to obstruct the procedure of the Consistory by their illegal actions and motions. The meeting of June 22 had ended in such chaos that the Rev. Hoeksema simply left the meeting. And thirdly, there are plenty of precedents in the past that officebearers were deposed without being summoned to the meeting of the body that deposed them. This is true not only of the famous Synod of Dordrecht in 1618-'19, but also of several depositions in the Netherlands in recent years.

At this meeting of June 23 the Consistory of the Fourth Prot. Ref. Church of Grand Rapids was called in for advice. Strictly speaking, this was not necessary whatsoever, because the Classis had already decided the whole matter. Nevertheless, to fulfill all righteousness that Consistory was called in.

And here the former Consistory of Kalamazoo in its answer to brother Meninga again evades the truth. Instead of quoting literally the advice of the Fourth Consistory of Grand Rapids they appeal to what are called stenographic notes which someone took at the October 1953, session of Classis East. These stenographic notes contain remarks made by the Rev. R. Veldman at the time of the session of Classis.

But does not the former Consistory of Kalamazoo understand that these stenographic notes have nothing to do with the legality of the case? All they had to do was to quote to brother Meninga the advice of the Fourth Consistory literally. And this they failed to do.

This advice, although it was presented to our readers more than once, I will quote here once more. Literally they advised as follows: "It is clear to our consistory:

"1. That neither the Rev. De Wolf nor the elders involved have made the apology demanded by the Consistory, as advised by Classis.

"2. That Clasis advised the Consistory to proceed with suspension in case the Rev. De Wolf and the elders involved should refuse to apologize.

"3. That in so far the Consistory had the right to proceed with suspension on the basis of the Classical decisions.

"However, we are not prepared to say:

"a. That a Consistory meeting can be called legal when half of its members were not notified that it should be held.

"b. That a suspension can be called in order when the involved were not notified that the double consistory meeting would be held and the suspension decided on."

From the above it is evident that the Fourth Consistory positively advised to proceed with suspension and deposition. The last part of this advice is purely negative, and our Consistory could do nothing with it. It does not state that the Consistory meeting of June 23 was not legal. This it certainly was: because the guilty parties were not legal members of the Consistory any more, and had lost all right of membership in the Consistory. Nor does the advice state that the suspension was not in order because the guilty parties were not present at the meeting of the double consistory. It simply states: "We are not prepared to say . . ." And such a statement has no value as far as positive advice is concerned. And therefore, the only advice of the Consistory of Fourth Church was to proceed with suspension and deposition.

And this was done. At the same meeting the Rev. De Wolf was suspended and the guilty elders were deposed. And of this suspension and deposition they were duly notified.

This, then, is the answer to the above part of the reply of the former Consistory of Kalamazoo to brother Meninga.

H.H.

#### ANNIVERSARY

The congregation and consistory of the Fourth Protestant Reformed Church extend their sincere congratulations to their pastor,

REV. R. VELDMAN

on his 25th anniversary as a minister of the Word of God.

We pray that God may continue to bless him as pastor of his flock through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Consistory of Fourth  
Protestant Reformed Church  
John Veltman, Clerk

#### IN MEMORIAM

The Ladies Society, Ruth, of the Hope Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Mich., herewith extends its sympathy to one of its former members, Mrs. G. Korhorn, Jr., in the death of her Mother,

MRS. MARGARET HULL

May our Heavenly Father comfort the bereaved and may we at all times put our trust in Him.

Rev. J. A. Heys, President  
Mrs. J. Kalsbeek, Secretary

#### WITH JOY AND GLADNESS IN MY SOUL

With joy and gladness in my soul  
I hear the call to prayer;  
Let us go up to God's own house  
And bow before Him there,

We stand within thy sacred walls,  
O Zion, blest for aye,  
Wherein the people of the Lord  
United homage pay.

They come to learn Jehovah's will,  
His mighty deeds to own,  
For there is judgment's royal seat,  
Messiah's kingly throne.

O pray that Zion may be blest  
And have abundant peace,  
For all that love thee in their hearts  
Shall prosper and increase.

I pray the Lord that peace may still  
Within thy walls abound,  
And ever in thy palaces  
Prosperity be found.

Yea, for the sake of friends and kin,  
My heart desires thy peace,  
And for the house of God the Lord  
My care shall never cease.

Psalm 122



# OUR DOCTRINE

## THE TRIPLE KNOWLEDGE

AN EXPOSITION OF THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

PART III — OF THANKFULNESS

LORD'S DAY 42

Chapter 2

The Grace of Contentment (cont.)

The Christian, the believer in Jesus Christ, considering himself as a steward of God, certainly is no waster. Nor can he be a miser. There is principally really no difference between a waster, or a spendthrift, and a miser. Although they may appear rather radically different, from a spiritual, ethical point of view they are principally the same, the waster and the miser. They certainly agree in this respect, that they do not want to manage their earthly possessions before the face of God in His name, and according to His will. An principally they also agree in this that they are motivated by the principle of covetousness. The miser probably may appear worse than the spendthrift and waster. The latter may sometime be mistaken for a loyal, liberal fellow. But do not make a mistake. The waster and spendthrift is simply a man who, rather than manage things in the name of God and in His employ, according to His precepts, uses his earthly possessions for his own carnal enjoyment, and does not spend them properly in the service of God and for the well-being of the neighbor, but rather destroys them. The miser is the man who gloats over the mere possessions of earthly goods. Every day he rejoices to count the increase of his possessions. He loves to have his gold pass through hands, and hear the sound, and see the glitter of it. Day by day he likes to open his bank book, and see how his actual possessions have increased. He rejoices in the mere possession of earthly goods. He cannot, he will not, and he dare not manage these possessions with the question on his lips: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me do with them?" The poor may starve, the kingdom of God may suffer, the neighbor may have nothing; but the miser does not care to spend his possessions. He only wants to pile them up. God does not even give the poor fellow the gift to eat and drink of the possessions he has acquired. But remember: whatever form the sin of stealing many assume, the thief in principle is always the one who refuses to manage his earthly possessions as a steward before the face of God.

And even as the Christian steward acquires everything and manages everything with regard to his earthly possessions in the name, and before the face of God and according to His precepts, so he also excepts his reward from God alone.

And this reward is three-fold.

In the first place there is the reward of your daily bread. Out of our possessions over which God has placed us as stewards we may take whatever is necessary for soul and body for us and our children. Such is the reward of faithful stewards for this present time. And this daily bread does not mean that the Lord is stingy and that you may not freely eat and live of the goods which He bestows upon you. But on the contrary if possible you may eat your daily bread liberally. Only always you must be content with whatever God gives unto you. If you do not possess sufficient to have abundant food, liberal clothing, and decent homes, you must practice contentment with mere daily bread in God's employ, and be thankful. On the other hand, if you do not acquire your daily bread, which God gives you in His faithful service, because man snatches it away from you, and refuses to pay you a decent wage, God, your Employer, will require it from his hand. And to Him you will complain of the injustice of the wicked. You refrain from taking the law in your own hand and organizing for power to enforce your rights. That is neither your calling, nor the proper solution of the problem. You rather say to the wicked, that refuses to pay you a decent wage: "I am going to accuse you to my Employer. And my Employer, as well as yours, is God. And when He comes, He shall require my wages from your hand." Or, in the words of the apostle James, chapter 5, vss. 1-8: "Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth. Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter. Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you. Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts; for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh."

In the second place, the steward that acquires and manages his earthly possessions in the name of, and before the face of God has the rich reward that he may have peace, true spiritual peace, the peace that passeth all understanding. That reward no man can possibly take from him. That rich spiritual blessing the thief can never have, even when he is principally a Christian. In the measure that one refuses to be a steward over his earthly possessions, and to seek the things that are above, in the measure that one must accuse himself of having things in his possession which God really did not bestow upon him, in that measure he is a thief, and in the same measure he can never have the peace that passeth all understanding. And, there is after all nothing so

rich and precious as the peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Finally, the Christian steward has the reward that he does and may expect all things from God. For even in this life he has the reward of the hope eternal. In that hope he rejoices. Also this the thief cannot possibly possess. As long as he is a thief, he can never rejoice in the hope eternal. But the Christian steward lives in that hope. For he does not set his heart on the things that are below, but on the things above, on the eternal inheritance. God has given him a promise. And that promise has already principally been realized. The promise is that he shall possess all things, and that every thief and robber shall be cast out. All the wicked shall be destroyed. And all that do not desire to be stewards which God has bestowed on them in their earthly possessions shall eternally be excluded from that rich inheritance. That promise God has already realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, Who is the chief steward over the whole house of God and is sitting at the right hand of God, in glory forever. It is the promise of the new heavens and the new earth, where the tabernacle of God shall be with men, and which the believers in Christ Jesus shall possess forevermore, as stewards under Christ Jesus their Lord. In that inheritance we shall forever confess that all things are ours, and that we are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

#### LORD'S DAY 43

Q. 112. What is required in the ninth commandment?

A. 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; likewise, that in judgment and all other dealings I love the truth, speak it uprightly and confess it; also that I defend and promote, as much as I am able, the honor and good character of my neighbor.

#### Chapter 1

##### The Principle of the Ninth Commandment

The law of perfect liberty requires of us, even as it is principally written in our hearts, that we love the neighbor in his name, and therefore speak the truth to him and about him in love for God's sake.

All sin we must remember uses for its commitment and realization a good power bestowed upon us by God. Sin is the abuse of such power. It is the corruption of it. It is the perversion of what God has made good and bestowed upon us of His good gifts. This is true of all sin. It is true of the first table of the law. It is true, for instance, of idolatry and image worship: we imagine and invent and fashion an idol, serve and worship an idol with the very same power which God has bestowed upon us to know and to love and to worship Him; only that power is merely perverted and directed into sinful channels and to sinful objects. We blaspheme

God and take His name in vain with the same heart and mind and mouth which God has given us to glorify Him. And thus it is also with every sin against the second table of the law. With the same power which God has given us, whereby we submit ourselves to all authority, we rebel against it and become disobedient. With the same power which God has bestowed upon man, whereby he may love him in his earthly existence and temporal life, to preserve it and seek his well-being, we kill him and destroy him from the face of the earth. Again, with the same power which God has bestowed upon us to establish the marriage relation as an indissoluble union between man and wife for the propagation of the human race, we commit adultery and fornication. And so, with the same power and means which God bestows upon us to have dominion over all earthly things and to be stewards of the Most High, we steal and defraud and covet the things that are below, rather than the things that are above.

This is particularly true of the sin against the ninth commandment.

This is peculiarly so because the sin against the ninth commandment is that of lying. And principally, all sin is the lie.

Negatively, the ninth commandment forbids the sin of lying particularly that of lying against and about the neighbor. And therefore positively, it demands that we speak the truth in love,—the truth about God, but more especially the truth to and about the neighbor.

It is therefore, especially in the sin of speaking and loving the lie that a perfectly good power which God bestowed upon man is perverted and corrupted. He made man a rational, moral being, that is, a being with intellect and will. And in doing so, He gave man a power which, if he subverted it, would make him a liar. He did not create us liars. He did not create us so that we loved the lie. But He nevertheless created us with a power which, if it was subverted by an act of our own will, we would become liars. He gave us the power of the mind, the intellect; and by means of that intellect we have the power to make unto ourselves a representation of reality concerning God, concerning the world, concerning ourselves, and concerning the neighbor. In other words by the power of the mind we can know the truth in the intellectual sense of the word. We can form a certain conception of God as He has revealed Himself in all the works of His hands, and particularly in the Scriptures. We can form an intellectual conception of Christ and the truth concerning Him. And we can form a conception of ourselves, as well as of the neighbor. Now, if I act and live and speak according to that knowledge of the mind, if I cling to it with my will with my heart and with my desires, so that I love it and speak it, I follow the truth. But with that same mind which God gave me I have the power to do something radically different. I have the power of imagination.

H.H.



## THE DAY OF SHADOWS

### The Prophecy of Isaiah

The prophet gives no definite answer to the question just when Hezekiah's sickness took place, before or after Sennacherib's overthrow. In the prophet's piece Sennacherib's overthrow precedes Hezekiah's sickness. One may say that this proves that such was also the order of these events in point of time. But would the prophet then not also have brought this clearly into view by some such statement as "and it came to pass *after* those days (of the invasion of Judah by Sennacherib, the inclosure of Jerusalem by Rabshakeh's mighty army, and the overthrow of the Assyrian's host) that Hezekiah was sick unto death," instead of writing, "*In* those days (of the transportation of these events) Hezekiah was sick unto death?" It is at least probable, certainly.

In support of the position that Hezekiah's sickness *followed* Sennacherib's overthrow one could come also with this reasoning: the coming of the embassy from the king of Babylon took place after Sennacherib's overthrow. (This is, of course, highly probable. For it could not well be that their journey to Jerusalem was made when Judah was still being overrun by Assyrians). According to the text at 39:1 the embassy came "at that time," that is, at the time of Hezekiah's sickness and recovery shortly thereafter. From these considerations it follows that also Hezekiah's sickness followed in point of time Sennacherib's overthrow.

So also we could reason. But the reasoning would be valid only if the overthrow of Sennacherib and Hezekiah's sickness followed each other in rather close succession. But we should realize that it must have taken considerable time for the report of Hezekiah's sickness to penetrate to Babylon. Also to be taken into consideration is the time it took for the embassy to make the journey to Jerusalem. They had to come way from Babylon beyond the Euphrates. The significance of this is that though the coming of the embassy must have taken place after Sennacherib's overthrow, Hezekiah's sickness may nevertheless have preceded the overthrow of the Assyrian even for a considerable length of time. At any rate, the phrase "at that time" cannot mean, "*during* the time of Hezekiah's sickness and recovery." Nor can it hardly mean "*shortly after* Hezekiah's recovery." What is more, the phrase may refer to a time that includes besides Hezekiah's sickness also the inclosure of Jerusalem by the Assyrians and the overthrow of Sennacherib's army.

And so it is highly probable that the order of the events of this period of Hezekiah's reign (the close of the 13th, the 14th and the beginning of the 15th year of his reign) was this: the invasion of Judah by Sennacherib. Hezekiah's sickness and the wonder that was wrought in confirmation of the promise of his recovery and of the deliverance of the city (Jerusalem). The city enclosed by Rabshakeh's mighty

army, Rabshakeh's blasphemies, and the prophecy that Sennacherib shall hear a report and return to his own place amounting to a renewal of the promise of the deliverance of the city. Rabshakeh's return to his master and the second renewal of the promise of the deliverance of the city in connection with Sennacherib's blasphemies. The destruction of Sennacherib's host. The embassy from the king of Babylon.

There is sufficient scriptural ground for the position that Isaiah himself was the writer of the account of the events of which our chapter treats, that is, that the narrative owes its origin to him. That he completed the history of Sennacherib before narrating Hezekiah's sickness was doubtless because the latter event was radically related to the event of the embassy from Babylon. But this in no wise impairs the integrity of the account, seeing that it plainly enough suggests that the arrangement of the events that it treats, is not strictly chronological.

According to the dates of Sennacherib's campaign as fixed by an Assyrian "Inscription," his attack upon the kingdom of Judah took place in the 28th and not, as Isaiah has it, in the 14th year of Hezekiah's reign. Were this true then the temporal phrases "in those days," 37:1, and "at that time," 39:1, are also spurious. They who here side up with the "Inscription" must not imagine that they clear themselves of the charge of ascribing greater credibility to heathen annals than to God's own Word by saying that these errors (?) in the account of Isaiah owe their origin not to the prophet but to the editor or redactor of his piece. The Scriptures may not thus be silenced. "Textual criticism" is necessary. But the apparatus for the cultivation of this biblical science does not include, certainly, pagan inscriptions, annals and monuments.

*Let us now turn to Isaiah's account of the embassy from the king of Babylon. XXXIX:1-8.*

At that time Merodach-Baladan, the son of Baladan, king of Babylon sent letters and a present to Hezekiah: for he had heard that he was sick and had recovered (39:9).

According to the "inscriptions," this person as king of Babylon was living in open rebellion against the kings of Assyria, whose vassal he was. He was defeated and driven from the throne. The struggle was continued by his successors and the result was the independence of Babylon and its eventual rise to world-power.

This person sent letters in which he congratulated Hezekiah on his recovery, (he had heard that he had been sick and was again strong) and inquired after the wonder that had been done in the land (the wonder of the sun-dial), II Chron. 32:31 — "in the land," that is, in the whole earth. This is the meaning, because the sun itself had been brought back ten degrees and not merely the shadow on the sun-dial, Isa. 38:8. Their inquiry afforded Hezekiah a priceless opportunity to explain this wonder to these heathen men, to set it forth, bring it into view as wrought by Israel's wonder-working God in confirmation of His gracious promises to His people.

"And rejoiced over them," Hezekiah, vs. 2a.

But his rejoicing is carnal. At bottom it was a glorying in self, as is evident from the description of his reaction to the overtures of Babylon's king. Instead of explaining to these envoys the wonder of the sun-dial, he showed them the house of his spices, the silver and the gold and the spices and his precious ointment and assortments of war implements, and all that was found in his treasures; there was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah shewed them not (vs. 2).

Surely his purpose was to make impression. He wanted these envoys to return to their master with a glowing account of his greatness and magnificence. That this great one who reigned there in far away Babylon should send messengers all that great distance to court his friendship!

According to the text at II Kings 22:13, Hezekiah "hearkened unto them," namely to the envoys. It is therefore highly probable that the letter contained outright overtures of a political nature. Highly probable it is that what the king of Babylon aimed at was to gain Hezekiah and his wonderworking God as his allies in his war with Assyria. And he hearkened unto them. It may mean that their propositions fascinated him.

The Chronicler brings out that this whole matter was of the Lord.

Howbeit, regarding the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon who sent unto him to enquire of the wonder that was done in the land, God gave him up, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart (II Chron. 32:31).

Here the sacred writer speaks of God as though He were limited in His knowing like a man. As the Lord's knowledge is determinative the idea is not that the Lord had to put Hezekiah to a test, as if otherwise He would have remained in the dark as to all that was in the king's heart. The truth concealed in this manner of God's speaking of Himself is this: What was in Hezekiah's heart, the sinful pride, vanity and ambition that lurked in his bosom, had to be made manifest that God might be fully justified in afflicting his soul with the revelation of His judgment's determined against king and people. And therefore God tried him through the overtures of the envoys and subjectively through the lusts of his own sinful flesh to which the Lord gave him over.

And so we cannot go along with the view that Hezekiah did not sin in dangling his riches and magnificence before the eyes of the envoys.

Now back to the account of Isaiah.

Then came Isaiah the prophet unto king Hezekiah and said unto him, What said these men? And from whence come they unto thee? (vs. 3a)

*Come*, not *came*. The tense of the verb may indicate that the envoys were still in Jerusalem. It is not improbable that they were present when the prophet interrogated the king and communicated to him his message.

When viewed in their context it will be seen that the

questions were meant as a rebuke. They were not put for the purpose of obtaining information. For the prophet had the answers from the Lord. The interrogation aimed at bringing the king under the sense of the wrongness of his doing and to prepare him for the reception of the Word of God.

And Hezekiah said, They are come from a far country unto me, even from Babylon (vs. 3b).

Indeed, but what said the men? With what overtures or propositions had they come to the king? It is probable that he had failed to give answer purposely. The prophet did not press him. But he had one more question.

Then he said, What have they seen in thy house (vs. 4a). That was a question that he did not mind answering. And he held back nothing. Perhaps he felt relieved that the prophet did not return to the matter of what the men had said.

And Hezekiah answered, All that is in mine house have they seen: there is nothing among my treasures that I have not shewed them (4b).

Might this be taken as a full and whole-hearted confession of guilt? Or was the king defiant? Did he mean to be saying that he had behaved as it behoved him? The men were spokesmen of a king. And they had come from far. Whatever the posture of the king, the prophet now spake his message.

Then said Isaiah unto Hezekiah, Hear the word of the Lord of hosts; behold, the days come, that will be carried away all that is in thine house, and all that which thy fathers have treasured up until this day, to Babylon *shall it be carried away*; not shall be left a thing, saith the Lord. And of thy sons that shall go forth from thee which thou shalt beget shall they take away and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon (vss. 5-7).

Who should not be able to see that, being what it was — a reply to the king's answers disclosing that what the future, according to the counsel and will of God, held in store for his posterity was exile and hard bondage in a strange land — the prophet's message was condemnatory of Hezekiah's whole doing regarding the embassy.

Being a Godfearing man, he received the grace to say, "good is the word of the Lord that thou hast spoken." Yet it must not be supposed that the impact of the tidings left his spirit unshaken.

But we must attend more closely to Hezekiah's reasoning.

And he said . . . good is the word of the Lord . . . Moreover he said, *For* there shall be peace and truth in my days (vs. 8).

This response may not be taken to indicate that the sole concern of Hezekiah was his own well-being so that the judgments that were to overtake Israel's posterity including the king's own children left him cold and that this explains the acceptance of and submission to the Word of the Lord. Such could not have been his attitude, seeing that he was a saint. He loved God and his people. There is more in Hezekiah's response than meets the eye at first glance. I believe its

meaning to be this: good is the Word of the Lord. For it is a true and faithful word and powerful, effecting the salvation of His people through pain, sorrow exile, banishment and death and the destruction of the adversary. I know, for I have tasted the goodness of His Word, I and my people. The enemy oppressed. Our plight was hopeless. But the Lord saved us. There is peace and truth in all my days by His Word and according to it. Surely the Word of the Lord is good, all His Word, now and always. For don't we see, there is peace in the land in all my days presaging a peace and rest that will never end.

If this is not the thrust of Hezekiah's words on that occasion he spake as a profligate. These Old Testament saints had far deeper insight into the purpose of God than they are usually given credit for.

It should now be plain that Hezekiah's hospitality was sinful. This view has the strong support also of a passage contained in II Chron. 32:24-26.

Here we read, "In those days Hezekiah was sick to the death, and prayed unto the Lord: and he spake unto him and gave him a sign. But Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him for his heart was lifted up: therefore there was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem."

Notwithstanding Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, both he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of the Lord came not upon them in the days of Hezekiah."

*According to the benefit done unto him.* — The reference is to the wonder that was wrought in the land, to the healing of Hezekiah and to the overthrow of Sennacherib.

But Hezekiah did not render again according to this benefit. He was not thankful. And the reason? His heart was lifted up. Then wrath fell upon Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. The Lord afflicted Hezekiah's soul with the revelation of the judgments determined against king and people, the prophecy of the exile. But Hezekiah humbled himself, and likewise the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And therefore the wrath of the Lord came not upon them in the days of Hezekiah, that is, the prophecy of the exile was not realized in Hezekiah's days.

What could be plainer than that the chronicler is here occupied with the same series of events in the life of Hezekiah that we find treated in the last two chapters of the historical section of Isaiah's prophecy.

It is true that in the above-cited passage the chronicler makes no mention of Hezekiah's hospitality to the envoys. But that in penning these verses he nevertheless had this hospitality before his mind and was denouncing it as sinful as to its motive is clear from the sequel. Here we come upon a passage that reads:

And there was to Hezekiah riches and honor much exceedingly. And treasures he made for himself for silver and for gold and for stones precious and for spices, and for shields and for all *kinds* of desirable implements and store-

houses for the increase of corn and wine and oil and stables for all *kinds* of undomesticated animals and stables for cattle and flocks. And cities he made for himself and possessions of flocks and herds in abundance; for gave him God substance abundantly. This same Hezekiah also stopped the upper water courses of Gihon and brought it straight down to the arid open country of the city of David.

And now follows the verse already quoted and explained: And so (not as the versions have it, *howbeit*) regarding the envoys from the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to enquire of the wonder that was done in the land, God gave him up, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart (II Chron. 32:27-31).

The thrust of this whole passage is clear. Hezekiah had grown immensely rich. It had to be made manifest (for Hezekiah's sake and for our sake and also in the sense explained for the Lord's sake) whether he was thankful or whether under all that prosperity he had grown proud and vain. So the Lord tested him. He sent to him the envoys from Babylon to enquire after the wonder of the sun-dial. The expression "and the Lord gave him up" shows that he did not endure the temptation which in turn revealed that in his prosperous days he had indeed forgotten the Lord, though, of course, not essentially as he was a saint.

He did not endure the temptation to which he was exposed by the overtures of the envoys, but his faith faltered, which *must* have consisted in his hospitality to these men.

It is probable that Hezekiah accumulated his great riches during the first thirteen years of his reign, thus before the invasion of Judah by Sennacherib. This prosperity together with Hezekiah's sickness and Sennacherib's overthrow are the benefit according to which the king did not render unto the Lord.

G.M.O.

#### HOW GOOD IT IS TO THANK THE LORD

Thou, Lord, hast high exalted me  
With royal strength and dignity;  
With Thy anointing I am blest,  
Thy grace and favor on me rest;  
I thus exult o'er all my foes,  
O'er all that would my cause oppose.

The righteous man shall flourish well,  
And in the house of God shall dwell;  
He shall be like a goodly tree,  
And all his life shall fruitful be;  
For righteous is the Lord and just,  
He is my rock, in Him I trust.

How good it is to thank the Lord,  
And praise to Thee, Most High, accord,  
To show Thy love with morning light,  
And tell Thy faithfulness each night;  
Yea, good it is Thy praise to sing,  
And all our sweetest music bring.

Psalm 92:4, 5, 6

## FROM HOLY WRIT

### Exposition of Philippians 1:3-11

(Continued)

Since Paul tells the church in Philippi of His great confidence that the Beginner of the good work in them will surely perfect it even unto the day of Jesus Christ, and since this is the reason for his thanking God upon every remembrance of this church, and also the reason for admonishing them unto the perfection set before them in the life to come, it is incumbent upon us to show the great implication of the *certainty of God's work* as stated here by Paul in verse 6.

In the first place it must be pointed out that Paul stands upon the solid Rock in the rock-bottom assurance that God is the Alpha and the Omega of our salvation. It is true, the text does not employ the terms Alpha and Omega. But that is the sense and meaning nonetheless. For when Paul speaks here of the certain of final and ultimate salvation he is not speaking simply of his confidence and faith in *God's work*, but he is speaking of his confidence and faith in *God Himself*. It is true that God's faithfulness is revealed in this work of our complete and final salvation. But this does not preclude the glorious reality that Paul rejoices in prison, that he has all things and abounds. For Paul *believes in God!* God is the Rock of his confidence and boasting. The form of the greek sentence indicates that Paul is here rejoicing in *God*, as the *One* who has begun this good work in the Philippian saints, and not simply in His *work*. Just as in the Twelve Articles of Faith, we do not say, "I believe in the *work* of creation," but rather "I believe in God the Father, *Creator* of heaven and earth, so here too Paul trusts in God, the Beginner of Salvation. He believes in the Alpha, and, *therefore*, in the Omega of our salvation!

What a Solid Rock to stand on!

All other considerations are simply so much quick-sand. And certainly the winds of the enemies of the Gospel would blow down all Paul's confidence were it not for this confidence in *The Beginner* of our salvation! But now Paul rejoices. God's fountain of strength is the well-spring of Paul's confidence with respect to the final glory of the Philippian church. And we may well add: all other ground of confidence is simply sinking-sand also for us.

When Paul here speaks of the Divine work of our salvation he does not view it *primarily* from the viewpoint of election. Notice, that we said "primarily!" This implies that the glorious truth of sovereign election is indeed presupposed in this "viewpoint" of Paul. For Paul's view-point is that of *applied salvation in time*; he is viewing the church here as she must run the race, keep the faith, and look forward to the crown of life for all the faithful. But, even so, the glorious doctrine of election is still the heart-beat of salvation. That heart-beat of election is clearly stated in the Gospel tidings in I John 3:10, "Herein is love, not that we

love God, but that He loved us and sent His Son a propitiation for our sins." In such a passage we have the election of God in the Cross of Calvary. And when John adds: "Beloved, if God thus (outoos) loved us (we also *ought* to love each other" then let no one ever say: do not tell us *what we ought* to do! Rather let it be sounded from the pulpits that *since* God so loved us and gave His Son for us we *ought* to lay down our lives for the brethren! And when this exhortation of the *Gospel* is proclaimed let then no one complain that this is no *preaching* of election, nor should anyone "go over the horse" in the other direction and say: this passage has nothing to do with election; this *simply* tells us what *we ought* to do. Let us not separate in either direction what God has joined together, lest we tempt God either with a walk of antinomism or with a walk of legalistic phariseism! It is incumbent upon the preacher that he *accurately* set forth the truth of Scripture!

That duty is also incumbent upon the undersigned in this rubric!

And therefore we say: the viewpoint here is not *primarily* that of election, but it is that of the applied salvation in Christ, namely that of regeneration, calling, faith, justification, sanctification and glorification. Such is the viewpoint here in this passage.

How wonderful for the struggling believer to know that, He, who worketh in him both to will and to do, is God, the Alpha and Omega of our salvation! How wonderful it is to turn unto God in thanksgiving and in the midst of the saints to utter in glad strains, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord, Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as He hath chosen us in him before the foundations of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love, having predestinated us unto the adoption of sons by Jesus Christ unto Himself, according to the good-pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." Ephesians 1:3-6.

And that wonderful song can only be sung by us because God "hath begun" the good work in us "according to His counsel."

This means briefly that as the things are in God's counsel thus they will also be in history! Notice the "even as" in the above quotation from Ephesians 1:3-6! However, we should not fall into the error of teaching that *history* and the counsel of God are identical!! "Before the foundation of the world" certainly is more than temporal in its meaning, but nevertheless is also indicates that the counsel is "prior" to history. It is, only after the seals of the book of Him on the Throne are broken, that the events of history in judgment and in salvation transpire historically.

For this reason we can distinguish between the "viewpoint" of "election" and that of "applied salvation" in the word of God. And for this same reason we also distinguish between the "fruit of righteousness in our life" and the chastisement and means through which it is wrought. And in

this sense we distinguish also a good and sound "before" and "afterwards!"

According to God's unchangeable purpose in Christ Jesus, our Lord, he began the good work in the Philippian church in Macedonia. It was God's elective purpose in Christ Jesus that shows us the reason why the Holy Spirit did not allow Paul, Silas and Timothy to preach the Word in Asia and, when they tried to go into Bithynia, they were not permitted to do so, and thus were directed to Troas in Mysia! And according to this unchangeable purpose of election Paul receives a vision of the Macedonian who says: Come over and help us! And, again, when Paul and Silas come to Philippi and find the worshipping women at a river-side, among whom is Lydia, a merchant-woman in purple, then it is elective love that opens their hearts for the Gospel. And thus God began the good work in these Philippians here at the river-side, in the prison by giving the jailor and his house contrition of faith and repentance! What a fond and cherished memory for the prisoner of the Lord in Rome! God had *begun* a good work in them. Small wonder that Paul thanks *God* as often as he thinks of this church! Indeed, he has all things and abounds!

For, when God thus began the good work in them through the Holy Spirit of Christ, and working efficaciously through the preaching of Paul, He will bring them all the way to glory. For this God is not only the Alpha but He is also the Omega. And he is this emphatically in the work of salvation of the church and the renewal of all things. For God will surely conform each believer unto the image of the Son of God, the First-born amongst the brethren, according to his purpose. He will cause all things to work together for their good. And in this causing all things to work together He is finishing our salvation even unto the day of our Lord, Jesus Christ. He will not simply finish it then. But each step of the way He is so energizing us that He brings us to that end! He deals with us as with sons. He chastises us to correct us. Thus faith must be perfected in us. And this process of justification and sanctification is energized into us each step of the way!

What a confidence!

This is what Paul believes concerning the elective, saving work of God.

And, therefore, he prays for the concrete sanctification of these believing Philippians. They were *not yet* in heaven. The day of Christ Jesus had not yet come. They still are in the flesh, and in this flesh there dwells no good at all. And so Paul prays in Rome for their perfecting of sanctification in the fear of God. It must be worked out in their whole life. However, in this church at Philippi, it is especially in the sphere of the brethren that it must be worked out. Love was not perfected in them yet, and their joy could, therefore, not be full! And since love was not perfected in this church Paul's cup of joy was not overflowing either. And how passionately Paul desires this! O, how he admonishes this church to so walk that his joy may be full!

He prays that their love may abound more and more! And it *must* abound in the practical walk in gratitude for God's redemption. For if we shut up our bowels of mercy for the brethren, then the love of God does not abide in us, controlling our thinking, willing and all our aspirations. Love is then not perfected in us, casting out all fears! For perfect love hath no torment. In perfect love there is exhibited a thorough knowledge and understanding of all life's problems in the light of the law of God as the spiritual guide to our feet. And such knowledge certainly manifests itself in all spiritual sensitiveness, in that moral discernment of ethical matters as its plain from verse 10, where we read in order that ye may approve the things that differ, in order that ye may be sincere and blameless into the day of Christ."

When such love thus abounds more and more in all knowledge and spiritual discernment we shall very readily perceive the difference between a walk of good works out of faith, according to God's law and unto His glory, and one that is not. The latter we shall abhor. What a difference we will then notice between the discerning with holy joy the work of the Spirit and of grace in us and that of the flesh, and how shall we then not crucify the latter. Hatred and love, forgiveness and lack of forgiveness will be then clearly distinguished by those who fight against sin and unbelief in a good conscience. Lack of zeal for God and true and pious zeal will clearly be immediately recognized. The distinction between stubbornness of the flesh, which is as the sin of witch-craft, and the steadfastness of godliness will be discerned with great clarity. In a word we will then work out our salvation in holy fear and trembling, standing in holy awe before God!

Then we shall be sincere and without offence into the day of Christ.

To be sincere means that when our life, our works are judged by God in the clearest and penetrating light of the sun they are able to stand the light of day. And that thus our walk is such that we do not cause the brother to stumble! Nor that our walk will cause the Name of God to be blasphemed among the unbelievers of this world. On the contrary our life must have in it the fruit of righteousness, the righteousness in Christ Jesus.

Why does Paul tell the Philippians of this prayer of his?

He tells them this because in so doing he admonishes them unto the very walk for which he prays to God. It is *Ora et Labora*! Paul planted many years ago in Philippi. Now he waters and nurtures. But God gives the increase through His *own means*: the exhortations of the Gospel!

Paul does this because He believes not only that the One who has begun the good work in the believers shall surely perform this, but because he is equally certain that he shall perform this *also* (not: only) through admonitions of the Gospel!

G.L.

## IN HIS FEAR

### That Straw of "Initiating Discipline"

"A drowning man will grasp at a straw."

So the saying goes.

And many of the things put forth as arguments to try to justify the awful schismatic action of those who left us is certainly nothing more than the grasping of straws by men who know that they are sinking under the deluge of facts and truth.

We were reminded of this as we had the privilege to conduct church visitation in the churches of Classis East with Rev. G. Vos.

Let us explain.

One of the questions drawn up by one of our Synods in the past for the church visitors to ask the full consistory is the following: "Is the Consistory aware whether there are members of a secret organization in the congregation, and if so, is church discipline applied?"

Now let us assume that a consistory replies that it does have in its very consistory an elder who is a member of a lodge or of a worldly union and that the consistory, after rebuking him for such membership, decided to do nothing more since this elder attends the services on the Sabbath regularly, does his work faithfully as an elder, contributes liberally to the financial support of the church, lives an exemplary life and is of such great help in Men's Society with his clear understanding of the truth of Scripture that the consistory felt that all these "good works" far offset his one violation of the stand of our churches in regard to such secret organizations.

You say that this is an improbable case? Not at all. And our Synod adopted this question just exactly because such things can very easily happen and may happen in the near future. That is not our point now. We want to pursue the case.

The church visitors report it to the Classis as is their duty. The whole Classis becomes aware of it. What then? With those that left us, *unless they change their stand again*, this is what will happen: NOTHING.

It is not difficult to visualize the treatment of such a matter at one of their classical sessions. The president may wring his hands and say that it is too bad that a Consistory has taken such a stand against the decision of our churches, but it is an autonomous body and when for "conscience sake" it is moved to take this stand, it must be allowed to do so and cannot be put out of the denomination. He will suggest that they go on to the next business.

One of the delegates, most likely one of the church visitors, may object and say that such action makes a farce of all church visitation. He will suggest or make a motion that this Consistory be advised to abide by the decision of the churches and to begin to discipline that Elder.

However, the ministers who have engineered and led this mass exodus out of the Protestant Reformed churches last year will call the attention of the body to the fact that Classis may not "*initiate discipline*." Since this is an elder who is walking in sin and since "According to the Church Order suspension proceedings belong solely to the Consistory" — and we are quoting here the Reformed Guardian, Vol. I, No. 3, page 14 — Classis may not touch the case. According to this stand in the Reformed Guardian a Consistory can walk in the error of failing to discipline such, an elder without ever being demanded to cease that sinful practice. You may be sure that this Consistory will never bring the case to Classis, and since it does not, Classis cannot touch it. Suspension proceeding belong *solely*, so the quotation reads, to the Consistory. And the sin can stay in the congregation and in the Consistory and eat like a cancer in the denomination.

That whole argument of "Classis initiated discipline" is nothing but a straw. And we will make that very plain. For Rev. Blankespoor quotes a passage from the pen of the Rev. Hoeksema out of the Standard Bearer, Vol. 5, page 548, wherein he condemns the action of the Christian Reformed Classis East, Grand Rapids for initiating discipline upon his Consistory. And he tries to make his reader believe that we did the same thing with Rev. De Wolf and the elders that supported him. All this he does in that pamphlet that claims to guard truth and justice. But we will remind Rev. Blankespoor of a few things which he knew as clerk of that Classis that took this action last May. And then to defend truth and justice he should write another article in the Reformed Guardian to show that he was mistaken about Classis East initiating discipline upon Rev. De Wolf and his elders.

1. We would remind Rev. Blankespoor that Rev. Hoeksema gave four points in that article in that Vol. 5, Standard Bearer, to show that the Christian Reformed Churches had acted in an heirarchical way with him and his Consistory. Point two, which Rev. Blankespoor quoted, looks quite different when it follows point one which he withheld from his readers. For he, the Rev. Hoeksema, shows in point one that the Classis had demanded things of him which THE SYNOD HAD DECLARED SHOULD NOT BE DEMANDED. SYNOD SAID THAT HE DID NOT NEED TO SUBSCRIBE TO THE THREE POINTS AND SHOULD NOT BE DEPOSED. And the Rev. Hoeksema had that in mind when he wrote in the paragraph Rev. Blankespoor quoted that "Classis DEPOSED the consistory without in the least acknowledging the congregation." Rev. Blankespoor, did we *as a Classis* suspend or depose Rev. De Wolf and his Elders? Did we *begin* to suspend or simply *advise* suspension, if he did not apologize?

2. Rev. Blankespoor have you forgotten that long before the case ever came to Classis — more than a year before it got to Classis — the Consistory had prescribed an apology for Rev. De Wolf's first statement and that it also pres-



cribed discipline upon his second sermon and that the minutes show nowhere that by a two thirds majority — nor even by bare majority — these decisions were rescinded? Did you also forget that when the Consistory had to draw up an answer to the protests of the Rev. Hoeksema and the Rev. Ophoff that the Consistory could not do so because it was deadlocked with a tie vote? Did you forget that half of that Consistory — get that half of the CONSISTORY — still prescribed discipline upon Rev. De Wolf and that the other half wanted to absolve him? And this was all before it ever came to Classis? And that information came to Classis when you were clerk. And did Classis not simply advise — get that word too, ADVISE — the Consistory to do as it had itself prescribed to do to Rev. De Wolf? Rev. Blankespoor, did we “prescribe to the consistory what it had to request of the pastor and what it had to demand of him?”

The minutes of the Consistory still prescribe that discipline!

The case is quite different from 1924, is it not? You know that in 1924 the Consistory had never begun any discipline proceedings whatsoever upon the Rev. Hoeksema and had unanimously absolved him of *all* the accusations hurled at him by the protestants. Why then do you make the cases parallel? That straw will not hold you up. And if you felt that we “initiated discipline,” why did you not register your negative vote last MAY and tell us you would appeal to Synod?

3. You undoubtedly read the protest of the Rev. H. Hoeksema against his Consistory for you were clerk of the Classis. Do you not recall that he protested to the Classis not against Rev. De Wolf but against the Consistory that was not heeding the discipline it had prescribed and never withdrawn? Just read his protest over. And therefore you ought to go back to the readers if the Reformed Guardian to defend truth and justice and tell them that Classis *advised* the Consistory of Fuller Ave. to abide by *their, the Consistory's, prescribed discipline*.

Classis did not *initiate discipline*. And yet we maintain that Classis may *advise* discipline even when the Consistory has not asked for it. We made that plain a moment ago in regard to cases which come there by way of the church visitors. We will give another example, one taken out of the files of Classis East itself, a concrete case.

A Consistory in Classis East placed certain individuals under the first step of censure. A neighbouring consistory received these people — who had left the church that was disciplining them — and although the certificates of dismissal clearly indicated that they were under the first step of censure for a particular sin, allowed them to the table of the Lord without demanding a confession of them and without as much as contacting the church they had placed them under this first step of discipline.

The matter came to Classis, and Classis decided that this Consistory must place those people back under the first step of censure and apologize to the other Consistory for lording

it over that Consistory.

Did Classis initiate discipline? Did it begin to exercise the keys of the Kingdom? It did not, and we did not upon Rev. De Wolf. But surely that Classis had a right to demand what it did in order that this grievous error in the churches might be corrected.

But some may say, O, yes, but now it came to Classis by the request of an autonomous Consistory. True, but it did not come there as sent by the erring Consistory, and so all Classis could do, if we take Rev. Blankespoor's stand, is to give advice to the aggrieved Consistory and keep entirely silent about the Consistory that had not sent the matter to the Classis. Since the one Consistory cannot discipline the other Consistory, the only hope of rectification of such evils is that the Classis has the right to demand *apologies* and *advise* that this erring Consistory discipline those who were being disciplined when they asked for their papers. After all, a brother may demand an apology of a brother without fear of being accused of exercising “key power” upon him.

If that is not so you will never get the case of an erring Consistory to the attention of the Classis. And denominational chaos is the result.

And we are at a loss to understand the boldness of Rev. Kok's unchristian, unbrotherly and malicious remarks about the Rev. Hoeksema's “guilty conscience” and “dishonesty.” This is especially so not only because he deliberately distorts his writings but also because of his own testimony in court, also in regard to these very things of which we just wrote.

For, Mr. Tubbs asked him whether he attended many of the sessions of Classis East during his ministry. He replied that he had. Mr. Tubbs asked him if it ever happened while he was present that a consistory was demanded to apologize by the Classis. He said that he did not recall any such case. Plainly he did not, for then he added — which he was not at all required to do, but which came back to plague him later — that if it had happened, he surely would have opposed it.

Then Mr. Tubbs reminded him of the case of which we wrote above. And to Rev. Kok's confusion and shame it was exposed to the court that *he* was the president of that Consistory that had lorded it over Byron Center's Consistory by accepting into Hudsonville's church people under censure in Byron Center. Let it be stated to Rev. Kok's credit that he was visibly shaken by this exposition. It *had* happened while he attended Classis East. And what is more, he and his Consistory, although they did oppose it even to bringing it at Synod and refusing to abide by the decision of Synod until they were told that they would not be seated at the next Classical session if they did not do as Synod had decided, the Consistory did apologize with an apology which Rev. Kok admitted *he* drew up for the Consistory.

We would like to believe that when Rev. Kok showed visibly that he was shaken by this revelation that his conscience spoke to him. Would to God he had listened to it

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## Contending For The Faith

### The Church and the Sacraments

#### EARLY VIEWS ON THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

(Continued)

*The idea of sacrifice* (continued).

Of interest, in connection with this idea of sacrifice in connection with the celebration of the Lord's Supper as prevalent in the early period of the Christian Church, is what we read in the History of the Christian Church by Philip Schaff whom, writing on the Eucharist as a Sacrifice, we quote as follows (Vol. II, 245 f.f.)

#### THE EUCHARIST AS A SACRIFICE

This point is very important in relation to the doctrine, and still more important in relation to the cultus and life, of the ancient church. The Lord's Supper was universally regarded not only as sacrament, but also as a sacrifice, the true and eternal sacrifice of the new covenant, superseding all the provisional and typical sacrifices of the old; taking the place particularly of the passover, or the feast of the typical redemption from Egypt. This eucharistic sacrifice, however, the ante-Nicene fathers conceived not as an unbloody repetition of the atoning sacrifice of Christ on the cross, but simply as a commemoration and renewed appropriation of that atonement, and, above all, a thank-offering of the whole church for all the favors of God in creation and redemption. Hence, the current name itself — *eucharist*; which denoted in the first place the prayer of thanksgiving, but afterwards the whole rite.

The consecrated elements were regarded in a twofold light, as representing at once the natural and the spiritual gifts of God, which culminated in the self-sacrifice of Christ on the cross. Hence the eucharistic prayer like that connected with the typical passover, related at the same time to creation and redemption, which were the more closely joined in the mind of the church for their dualistic separation by the Gnostics. The earthly gifts of bread and wine were taken as types and pledges of the heavenly gifts of the same God, who has both created and redeemed the world.

Upon this followed the idea of the self-sacrifice of the worshipper himself, the sacrifice of renewed self-consecration to Christ in return for his sacrifice on the cross, and also the sacrifice of charity to the poor. Down to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the eucharistic elements were presented as a thank-offering by the members of the congregation themselves, and the remnants went to the clergy and the poor. In these gifts the people yielded themselves as a priestly race and a living thank-offering to God, to whom they owed all the blessings alike of providence and of grace. In later times the priest alone offered the sacrifice. But even the

Roman Missal retains a recollection of the ancient custom in the plural form, "We offer," and in the sentence: "All you, both brethren and sisters, pray that my sacrifice and your sacrifice, which is equally yours as well as mine, may be meat for the Lord."

This subjective offering of the whole congregation on the ground of the objective atoning sacrifice of Christ is the real centre of the ancient Christian worship, and particularly of the communion. It thus differed both from the later Catholic mass, which has changed the thank-offering into a sin-offering, the congregational offering into a priest offering; and from the common Protestant cultus, which, in opposition to the Roman mass, has almost entirely banished the idea of sacrifice from the celebration of the Lord's Supper, except in the customary offerings for the poor.

The writers of the second century keep strictly within the limits of the notion of a congregational thank-offering. Thus Justin says expressly, prayers and thanksgivings alone are the true and acceptable sacrifices, which the Christians offer. Irenaeus has been brought as a witness for the Roman doctrine, only on the ground of a false reading. The African fathers, in the third century, who elsewhere incline to the symbolical interpretation of the words of institution, are the first to approach on this point the later Roman Catholic idea of a sin-offering especially Cyprian, the steadfast advocate of priesthood and of episcopal authority. The ideas of priesthood, sacrifice, and altar, are intimately connected, and a Judaizing or paganizing conception of one must extend to all.—end of quote from Philip Schaff.

*The idea of the Sacrament.*

In general we may remark that the word, "sacrament," is not found in the Holy Scriptures. This word, "sacrament," however, is not the only term which we use dogmatically and does not appear in Holy Writ. Terms such as: providence, trinity, are also foreign to the Scriptures. The word, "sacrament," is derived from the Latin, "sacramentum," which originally denoted a sum of money deposited by parties in litigation, inasmuch as the winner's money was returned while the loser's sum was forfeited. This seems to have been called a "sacramentum" because it was intended to be a sort of sacrifice to the gods and therefore sacred. The transition of this term to its Christian use may be sought in two things. First, the word appears to have been used as a military term, in which it denoted the oath by which a soldier solemnly pledged obedience to his commander. A reference to this idea of an oath and obedience to our Commander may be discerned in Article 34 of our Confession of Faith where we read that "by which we are received into the Church of God and separated from all other people and strange religions, that we may wholly belong to him, whose *ensign* and *banner* we bear (*italic ours*—H.V.). Secondly, we would refer to the specifically religious sense which the term acquired when the Vulgate employed it as a rendering of the Greek "mysterion." It is possible that this Greek term was applied to the sacraments because they have a faint resemblance to some of

the mysteries of the Greek religion. In the early Church the word "sacrament" was first used to denote all kinds of doctrines and ordinances.

We have already observed that two words were employed: the Latin "sacramentum" and the Greek "mysterion." Justin the great apologist, employs the term "mystery" in a short paragraph which he devotes to the Eucharist, a part of which we quote: "that Jesus took bread, and when He had given thanks, said, 'This do you in remembrance of Me, this is My body;'" and that, after the same manner, having taken the cup and given thanks, He said, "This is My blood;" and gave it to them alone. Which the wicked devils have imitated in the mysteries of Mithras, commanding the same thing to be done. For, that bread and a cup of water are placed with certain incantations in the mystic rites of one who is being initiated, you either know or can learn." — end of quote. It is true that Justine here speaks of the mysteries of Mithras. However, he declares that these wicked devils have imitated the practices of the Christians, and he plainly implies that the practices of the Christians are mysteries. Today, we know, the term, sacrament, is used with respect to the Lord's Supper and Holy Baptism. However, the word, "sacrament," as we have already remarked, was derived from the Latin, "sacramentum" and employed by the Vulgate (the Latin translation of the Bible) as the Latin translation of the Greek "mysterion," which word was used by Justin, not to denote the Lord's Supper and Holy Baptism as today, but to denote the practices of the Christians.

Tertullian is said to be the first of the Church Fathers to use the word "sacrament" in connection with Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Refuting Marcion, who denied that Jesus possessed a real human nature, and writing of the institution of the Lord's Supper but referring to Moses, he writes, and we quote: "In like manner does He also know the very time it behoved Him to suffer, since the law prefigures His passion. According to all the festal days of the Jews He chose the passover. In this Moses had declared that there was a sacred mystery." — end of quote. The word which is translated "mystery" here is literally: sacramentum.

It must be remembered, however, that these words: mystery and sacrament, were not exclusively used for our sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, but that they also had a wider use: the sacrament or mystery of religion, of the Trinity, of the Lord's Prayer, etc. Tertullian, for example, writes the following: "In the scheme of Marcion, on the contrary, the mystery (sacramentum) of the Christian religion begins from the discipleship of Luke." And this, too, was written by Tertullian: "I say, therefore, that in them (and not simply such of them as were founded by apostles, but in all those which are united with them in the fellowship of the mystery (sacramentum) of the gospel of Christ, that the Gospel of Luke which we are defending with all our might has stood its ground from its very first publication." Cyprian does not recognize an exclusive ter-

minology on this point. He speaks, we know, of a sacrament of the Lord's Supper, as in the following quotation: "For when Christ says, 'I am the true vine,' the blood of Christ is assuredly not water, but wine; neither can His blood by which we are redeemed and quickened appear to be in the cup, when in the cup there is no wine whereby the blood of Christ is shown forth, which is declared by the sacrament and testimony of all the Scriptures." That Cyprian speaks of prayer and the Trinity as a sacrament is evident from the following which we quote from his explanation of the Lord's Prayer. However, inasmuch as our space is almost filled as far as this article is concerned, we will conclude this article at this point and write this quotation from Cyprian in our following article.

H.V.



### IN HIS FEAR

(Continued from page 39)

and confessed that he was in error in his stand today. We say "confessed" it because later on he was forced to admit it. Mr. Tubbs pressed him somewhat later in a different session of the hearings as to why he and his Consistory complied with that advice and demand of the Classis and Synod if the local consistory can reject the decisions of Classis and Synod if their conscience so dictates without being put out of the denomination. Then Rev. Kok admitted that they complied with that demand because they considered the advice of Classis and Synod to be good advice. That, mind you, after fighting it for almost a year!

But, if you please, did Rev. Kok not thereby admit that even when a local Consistory does not bring the case to the attention of Classis, Classis may give that Consistory advice in regard to discipline? If Classis has no right to advise disciplinary proceedings, then this advice could never be called good advice. What is illegal is never good.

To be sure, the above example does not refer to suspension proceedings upon an office bearer, but let us assume now that during all that period of time one of these members had been voted in as a deacon in Hudsonville's Consistory — which would not have been impossible, since the Consistory had given them all clean papers and was defending that stand. Do Rev. Blankespoor and Rev. Kok maintain that just because of that fact the Classis would have to say to Byron Center? "Sorry, we cannot treat your case about this one man. As far as the rest are concerned we can advise Hudsonville to put them back under the first step of censure, but this deacon, we must inform you, may not be touched. We may not even advise the Consistory to suspend him from his office."

That is the confusion you get when you try to make out that what we did to Rev. De Wolf and his elders is parallel to what happened in 1924. And one of these days those that left us are going to learn this the hard way. God cannot

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## The Voice of Our Fathers

### The Canons of Dordrecht

#### PART TWO

#### EXPOSITION OF THE CANONS

#### FIRST HEAD OF DOCTRINE

#### OF DIVINE PREDESTINATION

Article 13. The sense and certainty of this election afford to the children of God additional matter for daily humiliation before him, for adoring the depth of his mercies, for cleansing themselves, and rendering grateful returns of ardent love to him, who first manifested so great love towards them. The consideration of this doctrine of election is so far from encouraging remissness in the observance of the divine commands, or from sinking men in carnal security, that these, in the just judgment of God, are the usual effects of rash presumption, or of idle and wanton trifling with the grace of election, in those who refuse to walk in the ways of the elect.

The above translation can hardly be called a faithful rendering of the original Latin version, even if we overlook the fact that in many instances it is far from literal. The most serious error in the translation changes completely the comparison in the article implied in the words, "The consideration of this doctrine of election is so far from . . . ." Rather than giving an involved explanation of this difference, we will give the correct translation, and the reader can note the differences for himself. Correctly translated, the article reads as follows:

"Out of the sense and certainty of this election, the children of God daily draw more matter for humbling themselves before the face of God, for adoring the depth of his mercies, for purifying themselves, and for ardently loving him in turn, who has so greatly first loved them: so far distant is it, that by this doctrine of election and its meditation they should be rendered sluggish in the observance of the divine commands, or carnally secure. Which by the just judgment of God usually happens to those who, with respect to the grace of election either rashly presuming, or idly and wantonly chattering, are not willing to walk in the ways of the elect."

Especially from the polemical point of view, this is one of the outstanding articles of this First Head of Doctrine. For it meets the Arminian opposition, as it were, head-on, and on its own territory. And it comes to grips with one of their most precious practical objections against the Reformed truth of election, deprives them of it, and tells them,

as it were: "What you claim is just exactly not the case with this doctrine of election when it is practically applied; it has the very opposite effect on a child of God than what you always claim it has. Instead, these dread results of which you speak, namely, a carnal security, and a careless walk, are the usual effects,—and that too, according to a just judgment of God,—in those who rashly presume and idly and vainly and wantonly chatter of election while they do not want to walk in the ways of the elect. No, the elect need not fear these claimed bad results of this doctrine, for they walk surely in the ways of the elect. But the ungodly reprobate, and especially the "religious" ungodly, will justly experience these results."

This is a warm and appealing article, and at the same time it reveals a deep discernment of the truth, and is therefore very instructive also in a practical sort of way. It is designed to make the child of God pause for a moment and stand in awe, reverently and humbly, of that wonderful grace of election and blessed gift of assurance.

We are all acquainted with the objection which is met in this article. It is the same objection which is treated by the *Heidelberg Catechism* in Question and Answer 64: "But doth not this doctrine make men careless and profane? By no means: for it is impossible that those, who are implanted into Christ by a true faith, should not bring forth fruits of thankfulness." Only, here in the *Canons* the setting is a little different. In the *Catechism* the objection is brought against the doctrine of free justification. There the Heidelberg expounds the truth of justification by faith as meaning that "though my conscience accuse me, that I have grossly transgressed all the commandments of God, and kept none of them, and am still inclined to all evil; notwithstanding, God, without any merit of mine, but only of mere grace, grants and imputes to me, the perfect satisfaction, righteousness and holiness of Christ; even so, as if I never had had, nor committed any sin: yea, as if I had fully accomplished for me; inasmuch as I embrace such benefit with a believing heart." The *Catechism* further insists that we are not acceptable to God on account of the worthiness of our faith, that our good works cannot even be part of our righteousness before God, and that even the reward of our good works is not of merit, but of grace. Against this doctrine,—and it can ever only be against such doctrine,—the enemy levels the charge, denied and refuted in the 64th Question and Answer, that it makes men careless and profane. Since,—so the argument goes,—neither our faith nor our good works form any part of our righteousness before God, nor have any merit before God, it is of no use to walk in a new and holy life. Besides, there is no incentive either to walk holily. In fact, there is much reason and incentive to abound in sin, in order that the grace of God may also abound. Here the same objection is faced, but the connection is slightly different. The truth of absolutely sovereign election

has been established in the preceding articles, and was maintained by our Reformed fathers over against the Arminians. Furthermore, they maintained that the elect attained the assurance of their eternal and unchangeable election. And it is especially the last, the "sense and certainty of this election," that was assailed with the same old weapon: this doctrine makes men careless and profane. Or, using the language of this article, they objected: this doctrine renders them carnally secure and lax in observing the commandments of God. And here, instead of proposing the "impossible" which the *Catechism* lays down, the *Canons* set forth some real facts from Christian life: "Out of the sense and certainty of this election, the children of God daily draw more matter for humbling themselves before the face of God," etc.

It is to be noted, however, that the two situations mentioned in the preceding paragraph are nevertheless essentially the same. This might also be expected in view of the fact that the same objection is used. In the first place, of course, when this objection is raised against the truth of free justification, we must remember that it is nevertheless essentially against the doctrine of sovereign election, in last instance, that it is brought. For that truth of free justification is rooted in the truth of free election. The doctrine of justification by faith only can never be maintained successfully if the doctrine of sovereign election is not maintained. Sacrifice the latter, and the former must also go. But, in the second place, the two truths have this in common that they magnify the sovereign grace of God and reject any thought of human merit. And it is especially the latter thought that occasions the objection that these doctrines make men careless and profane. As soon as you inject any notion of human worthiness and human merit and human ability to do anything towards attaining salvation into your doctrine, one thing is certain: you will never face the objection that your doctrine makes men careless and profane.

Now what must be said of this objection?

It might very well be answered here also as it is by the *Heidelberg Catechism*. The fathers might have said: "It is impossible that those who have attained the sense and certainty of their election should not humble themselves before God, adore the depth of his mercies, cleanse themselves, and ardently love him in turn, who first so greatly loved them." Certainly, it is this impossibility that underlies the proposition of this article also. They might also have argued that this objection is purely rationalistic. For it is certainly not an objection that is derived from and based on Scripture, but one which arises out of human reason, and sinful human reason at that. And this alone surely invalidates the entire argument. But instead of this, they go into the question from a practical point of view, from the point of view of real life. And then they insist that the Arminian is entirely off the track. They really imply that one who adopts the position

of the objector has really never understood and never spiritually apprehended this marvellous doctrine of election, is so far from understanding it that he presents as its fruit that which is farthest from reality, namely that the elect become carnally secure.

For what is implied in this carnal security? Notice that the question is not whether the elect are rendered *secure* by this "sense and certainty" of their election. They surely are, secure, everlastingly secure! But the question is whether they are rendered *carnally* secure. And this carnal security is the attitude of heart according to which one says within himself: "I am elect. And my election is eternal and unchangeable. I can do nothing to it, and I can take nothing away from it. It therefore makes no difference any more what I do and how I live. I can sin all I please to. I need not fight against sin, and I shall not." Note that this carnal security is a subjective attitude of the heart and mind. Objectively, of course, it is absolutely true that nothing which the elect ever does, good or evil, can possibly affect his election. And how good it is that this is true! All our sins, our deepest falls, our most horrible transgressions cannot change God's purpose of election with respect to us! Otherwise, to be sure, we would be long lost. But *subjectively*, this assurance of our election, so the *Canons* maintain, does not lead to the carnal attitude: "Well, then, let us sin; it makes no difference anyway." There is a vast difference, therefore, between *carnal* security and *spiritual* security.

Such carnal security, just because it is carnal, leads to a laxity in observing the commandments of God. You ask in what respects? It leads, first of all, to pride: pride over against our fellows because we imagine ourselves to be privileged above them not only, but essentially pride over against the living God, whereby a man fails to acknowledge His most high and most holy majesty, and contrariwise boasts in his sin. It involves, in the second place, this, that a man scorns and despises the depth of God's mercy, or, to use the language of Romans 2, he despises the riches of God's goodness and forbearance and longsuffering, the reason being that he has never known nor tasted the goodness of God that leads to repentance. Quite in harmony with the foregoing, this carnal security, in the third place, will never lead to a striving for sanctification of life and a continual struggle to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit, but, on the contrary, to a life of licentiousness and carelessness with respect to God's precepts. And finally, the root of the whole matter is this, that there is no love of God in such a carnally secure man. Never having tasted the love of God, that love finds no response in his heart. Instead, he is really filled with enmity against the living God, the enmity in which he was conceived and born.

(to be continued)

H.C.H.

## ALL AROUND US

### *An Anniversary Unobserved.*

In the September 15th issue of the *Presbyterian Guardian* the editor, Leslie W. Sloat, calls attention in one of his editorials to a "Happy Anniversary." In this editorial he reflects on the 25th anniversary of Westminster Seminary, the school of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church located in Philadelphia, Pa. He reminds his readers of the very humble beginning and the remarkable progress that institution has made through the years of its existence. He pays tribute to the staff of instructors who have come and gone, as well as to the present staff whom he calls "experts" in their field.

Another article appears in the same issue, written by Robert S. Marsden, entitled: "What's Next For Westminster," in which the writer reflects on this same anniversary, more particularly from the view point of the future expectations of this institution.

Westminster Seminary, the reader undoubtedly knows, had its inception in a split in the Presbyterian Church, a movement fathered by the late Dr. J. Gresham Machen.

When we read these articles we could not help asking the question: What is the reason that the 25th anniversary of our own seminary has passed by unobserved? We did not remember that such an anniversary was even mentioned in the *Standard Bearer*. So we checked back to see if our memory failed us. We regret to say that we found no notation anywhere of this event. How come?

Was the reason perhaps that at the time when this 25th anniversary of our Protestant Reformed Seminary should have been observed that we were so deeply involved in doctrinal debate re the Declaration of Principles? When we paged through the *Standard Bearers* of the year 1951, we noticed that the giant share of the material was devoted to this subject. Was the reason perhaps that many were at the point where they had the evil hope that our Seminary was about to go out of existence, and that the two original professors would soon be out of the denomination and hence out of our School? I am wondering what happened that this most important department of our history has been so sorely neglected and forgotten.

Last week, I had the privilege to witness the celebration one of our churches gave her pastor who had passed the quarter century mark in the ministry. And one of the speakers of the program reminisced on the years this particular minister spent in our seminary, as well as the early years of that institution. The thought could not be suppressed, how is it possible that the very heart of our denominational existence has been so sorely forgotten?

Those who have graduated from our Protestant Reformed Seminary, and have remained Protestant Reformed, must certainly feel as I do their sincere gratitude to God for that institution, and for the instruction they received in

it. Also they must feel the urge to express profound esteem for those professors that have given their all for more than 25 years that we might receive the very best training for the gospel ministry one can find in any school if its kind. Yet, no word of comment, of gratitude has been publicly expressed.

An anniversary has passed by unnoticed and unobserved. I am sorry for this. And I realize that no apology can rectify this neglect. An anniversary that is passed and neglected cannot be observed. But the thirtieth anniversary of our Protestant Reformed Seminary will be here soon enough. Maybe our Theological School Committee will take this cue and bring that celebration to our attention.

### *The Church's Task.*

In the same issue of the *Presbyterian Guardian* mentioned above, we came upon a meditation entitled: "The Task of the Church." It was written by Henry P. Tavares. The so-called meditation was based on Acts 1:8, "Ye shall be my witnesses." We enjoyed this little article most of all because it set forth what we also conceive to be the only proper task of the Church, and it expressed this in sharp contrast to what is generally conceived to be the Church's task today, but wrongly so.

In the introductory part of this article, the writer points out that church generally speaking today is of the same mind as the apostles when they were led out by the risen Lord to the Mount of Olives and they sensed that something wonderful was about to take place. So strong was their impression that they dared to ask if now at last their most cherished hopes were to be realized. They were sure Jesus was the Messiah. Would he now restore the kingdom to Israel? The writer remarks: "the question was understandable. But it was not to their credit." A little later he remarks: "With thought congealed in faulty molds, they dishonored God with beggarly hopes. He promised the inheritance of new heavens and new earth to come. They looked for a national triumph, and the return to the joys of the past. God promised a transformation. They had their hearts on a mere restoration, the joys of a social reform." Then follows that part of the article which we especially enjoyed and trust our readers will also.

"They were foolish and slow of heart to learn. But who can reproach them? The Church today is still much in a daze. An earthly kingdom. A new social order. These are too often the love of her soul. And many do not even ask of the Lord, 'Wilt thou restore,' for they seem rather sure they can do it themselves.

The hope of the Church is the glory of the Kingdom to come, for which she prays. God will be everywhere adored, and righteousness, holiness, and truth will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. The unrest and chaos of this age will vanish in that perfect peace that passeth all understanding, and God will wipe away all tears. There will be



no more pain and no more death. And the joy unspeakable and full of glory will flood every heart.

The Kingdom is not 'of this world.' It is not like the nations we know. It is the Kingdom of heaven, the Kingdom of God. It is God's order. And it will be divinely established.

Yet the Kingdom is not entirely future. The glow of the heavenly city already shows on our horizon. The Kingdom is not of 'this world.' But it makes an appearance in it. The power of the world to come is already at work among us.

By His Word and Spirit, the Lord of all the earth makes captives to 'the obedience of Christ.' And Christ, the Lord of Glory, rules wherever men obey Him and enjoy His care. Hearts subdued, spirits transformed, souls renewed mark the boundaries of his Dominion in this present world. And all the powers of hell cannot overthrow or harm it.

The preaching of the Word, and not the power of the sword, is the means appointed to set the bounds of this empire — The Word that became flesh and dwelt among us. As he was seen, and heard, and handled, he must be preached by men who saw and heard and handled him. In the power of a divine dynamic they must testify to a historical reality they witnessed.

So the Church's task is clear. Let her tell the world of Jesus. Let her tell his story — as it happened. A story that can have no other meaning than that which was put upon it by those who saw it unfold and heard it explained by the author himself.

To the churchmen of our day, sold out to politics and propaganda, and anxious to display their gifts for drama, this calling is naïve and unworthy of their master minds and massive brains. The big show and the big vote is their concern. How wonderful the words 'impressive' and 'majority,' and how sweet the adjective 'worldwide!' The Jesus of Nazareth is an interesting question. But his importance may be debated.

Unimpressed with the Christ that lived, and preoccupied with an earthly empire, they easily miss their calling. And it is to be expected that just when the feeling of successful Kingdom building is flushing their souls, just then they are pushing the cause of apostasy. And just when they count themselves heirs of the greatest of hopes, they are moving to unspeakable ruin! They have bartered the facts of redemptive history for a barrel of fancies. What can be before them but the reward of fools?

My soul, have thou none of their ways. Count it thy joy to tell the Good News!"

When we read the reports of the church councils lately held, one in Evanston and the other in Elkins Park, Pa., we could not help agreeing with this writer that the church has certainly lost her perspective and ignored her specific calling. I use the word 'church' rather loosely, of course. For it is a question in my mind whether that which calls herself church really has a right to that name when she has departed so far from her task. I know, they still prate about

being the churches of Christ. But strictly speaking they should be called churches of Man.

But how about the Reformed Churches and our own? When one sees what is going on in the majority of these churches, one wonders whether the church today has not lost sight of her only task. Is she not so deeply steeped in the throes of her own program and her own troubles that in many instances her specific task is neglected? Many churches are more interested in out-classing one another with beautiful structures. Others are almost wholly devoted to social reform, to community improvements. As one minister told me awhile ago, he prided himself in having the biggest Sunday-school, and the best facilities for boys-clubs to take care of the delinquency problem in his area. While in this same church the preaching of the Word has been reduced to a minimum. A twenty-minute talk is the most his audience can stand. And this was a so-called Reformed Church.

We, too, should be reminded of our only calling. "Ye are My witnesses" is a word of Christ that has also been spoken over us. It appears that we were in the past so over-whelmed with our internal difficulties that we even forgot about the School where these witnesses are trained to go out with their testimony. Our Synod has decided that a missionary shall be called. But also this important aspect of witnessing has been sorely neglected, due no doubt to our present difficulties. We have hopes that this mandate of Synod will soon be realized. In this task all our people should be deeply interested. And all should be busy to realize it.

M.S.

## CONTRIBUTIONS

### An Open Letter to Kok

Rev. B. Kok:

I am amazed that in spite of the constant charge that you quote articles out of context, you persist in doing that. The only conclusion to which I can come is that you deliberately trying to deceive people most of whom, to their shame, are not ambitious enough to check the entire article or series of articles. The last Concordia is one more example of this (Vol. 11, No. 14).

If I followed your article correctly first you quote from the S. B. in which Rev. H. Hoeksema condemns in no uncertain terms the "hierarchical stand and actions of the Synod of Utrecht . . ." and in another S. B. (to put it briefly and without comments) that we can not possibly agree with the Synodicals in regard to the church-political side of the controversy. Then you state "Today the Rev. Hoeksema is defending this very same hierarchical system . . ."

Secondly, you state that Rev. H. Hoeksema quoted Dr. Ridderbos' interpretation of Art. 31 as being authoritative, and that, on the witness chair. Then you quote Rev. Ophoff as labeling that *same* interpretation which Rev. Hoeksema quoted as "most horrible and dreadful popery." Also you

quoted 8 reasons why this interpretation is "most horrible and dreadful popery."

To my mind you have to prove the following: first that the quotations from the decisions of the Synod of Utrecht which were placed on court record by the Rev. Hoeksema were *the same* decisions which he condemned in the Standard Bearer, Vol. 22, p. 414. In the same volume and page from which you quoted we read this, "Other actions of a similar nature could be mentioned. But the above is quite sufficient to prove that the Synod of 1943-1945 took and maintained the hierachial stand that it could directly exercise keypower over the churches, its officebearers and members. In fact, in the course of a discussion on the floor of the Synod, this was literally maintained by Dr. K. Dijk, professor at Kampen: 'Also the Synod has keypower, and not only the local church.' This is bad enough. The action of Synod, however, was worse, for it wholly ignored and denied the keypower of the local church, and completely monopolized the keys!" Then Rev. Hoeksema states that which you also quoted, "3. That we abhor the hierarchical stand and actions of the Synod of Utrecht, and would never bend our neck under their popish yoke." Now it is up to you to prove (and that you purposely never did) with direct quotations from the court records that Rev. Hoeksema quoted and maintained in court *this* decision namely: that the keypower is ignored and denied to the local church and is completely invested in the classis and synod. Unless you can prove that, your whole charge falls away and you become guilty of the very sin of which you condemn him.

Secondly, you have to prove that the interpretation of Dr. Ridderbos on Article 31, which Rev. Hoeksema quoted in court, is the *same part* of the interpretation which Rev. Ophoff condemned in the quotations which you gave. What part of the interpretation did Rev. Ophoff condemn? See Vol. 23, p. 418 (which you conveniently overlooked), "As we saw, the issue or question is this: May an office-bearer (entire consistory or common member) without being deposed refuse to be bound by a classical (synodical) decision which he deems unscriptural, while he is engaged in protesting the decision on the major assemblies?" Now Dr. Ridderbos maintains that an office-bearer who refuses to be bound by classical (synodical) decisions which he deems unscriptural can be deposed by the classis (synod). *That* Rev. Ophoff violently denounces in the quotations you gave from his article. You must prove now (which you didn't in Concordia) from quotations of the court record, that Rev. Hoeksema, by quoting Dr. Ridderbos, maintained in court that the classis has the right to *depose* office-bearers who refuse to abide by classical decisions when they think them to be unscriptural. In other words, did Rev. Hoeksema truly maintain in court *the same thing* which Rev. Ophoff condemned in Vol. 23 of the Standard Bearer? Prove that with honest quotations.

Finally, may I please offer af few quotations of my own

from the same series of articles concerning article 31 which Rev. Ophoff wrote and from which you also quote?

First quotation is from Vol. 23 page 158: "Thus all that the Classis can do in case its decisions are being rejected by consistories is to refuse to receive their delegates on its classical meetings and thereby sever the denominational tie between it and the aggrieved consistories. This the Classis may do. This is its right,—a right implicit in the very purpose of a number of churches federating on the basis of our Church Order. Certainly the consistory is autonomous. It is free to repect classical decisions, also decisions fixing classical assesments, without finding itself under the necessity of being penalized on the account by deposition by the Classis. *However, the autonomy of the local congregation does not imply that the consistory can persitently reject the decisions of the major assemblies with retention of its right to a place in the church formation.*"

The second quotation comes from the same Vol. 23, page 228: "The issue is not whether the Classis may advise the consistory to depose that minister. It may. For it has this right.

*"The issue is not whether, in the event the Consistory refuses to adopt and execute the Classical advice, the Classis may sever the denominational tie between it and that Consistory and its flock. It may. That is its right.*

"The issue is not whether a Consistory may depose its minister without the advice of Classis. It may not. The Church Order forbids this. The issue is not whether the Consistory is obliged to adopt and execute the advice of Classis that it depose its minister if the advice cannot be proved to conflict with the Word of God and with the articles of the Church Order of Dort. If this cannot be proved, the advice must be adopted and executed.

"What then is the issue? It is this: In the event the Consistory refuses to take action, may the Classis then pass sentence of deposition on that minister and thereby divest him of his office?"

The next quotation, and I want you especially to note this, Rev. Kok, is Rev. Ophoff's idea of the meaning of article 31 in July 1947 and is found in Vol. 23, page 442: "If, let us say, a consistory complains that it has been wronged by the decision of a minor assembly — classis — it shall have the right to appeal to a major assembly — synod — without being *deposed by classis for refusing to submit to the classical decision that for conscience sake it must protest*; and whatever may be agreed upon by a majority vote of synod shall be considered settled and binding unless the synodical decision be proved to conflict with the word of God; that is to say, unless there be an aggrieved one — the same consistory or some other consistory — persuaded that the synodical decision conflicts with the word of God; that consistory shall have the right to break with the denomination for conscience sake *without being deposed by classis.*"

And here is a final quotation which is a sad testimonial against all what you and others stated in court and against

all which you have written in the recent Concordias. Look, Rev. Kok, (if you haven't seen it already) in Vol. 23, page 443: "3. It is said that the interpretation under III (The one I quoted just above — GvB) is hopeless subjectivism. So Rev. G. Hoeksema and also the doctor and all the others. But the charge is false. What the interpretation in question does is to free the churches from the overlordship of the classis (synod) but only to subject them solely to the authority of the Scriptures as administered by the local pastors and teachers. *Hence, it is not true that, on the ground of the interpretation under III, the decisions of major assemblies do not bind those who do not agree with them; that, in other words, they are never binding* (G. Hoeksema). *Also according to our interpretation of the article 31, these decisions are binding on every member of the church, except on those who are persuaded that they contradict the scriptures, yet also on such, if they want to remain in the church.*"

All the italics in the above quotations are mine. I'd like to add just a few comments. Rev. Kok, aren't these quotations, and especially the last one exactly what Rev. Hoeksema maintained on the witness chair, referring to authorities outside of our own churches to prove his point? And isn't that the same church order which Rev. Ophoff today maintains? Isn't that exactly what you claimed under oath you had never been taught? Didn't you claim that a church in the denomination could throw aside a decision of classis (synod) *and still remain in that denomination?* And didn't you claim that that was also the view of Rev. Ophoff and Hoeksema until the court trial? Didn't you write that this view (the same of which Rev. Ophoff wrote in 1947) was a concoction of the Rev. Hoeksema shortly before or during the court trial in order to get the bricks? Who should stand aghast, Rev. Kok? You or we?

Gise Van Baren

### Ridderbos - Ophoff - Kok

Our readers are aware of the fact that the Rev. B. Kok, in the Reformed Guardian and again in recent numbers of Concordia, has made much of the fact that our leaders now endorse, church-politically, the stand of Prof. Ridderbos and the Synodical Churches in re Art. 31 of our Church Order whereas they, in former years, vehemently repudiated their views. And that which has particularly borne the brunt of Kok's attack is a series of three articles written by the Rev. Ophoff in which the latter condemns Ridderbos' interpretation of Art. 31. These articles appear in the Standard Bearer, Vol. 23, pages 394, 418, and 441.

The undersigned does not purpose in this article to rise to the defence of Rev. Ophoff. He is well able to take care of himself. My purpose in this article is to call the attention of our readers to a glaring example of the manner in which the Rev. Kok quotes.

In connection with the dispute between Ridderbos and the Liberated in re the interpretation of Art. 31, as revolving

about the expression: "unless it be proved to conflict with the Word of God or with the articles of the Church Order," the Rev. Ophoff writes as follows, page 395, second column: "Just what is the issue in the dispute? To be clear on the issue, we must know what is not the issue. The issue is not whether a classical or synodical decision may be rejected on the alleged ground of it being in conflict with the Word of God without the aggrieved one being compelled to *make an attempt* to prove the decision unscriptural also to the satisfaction of the churches on their major assemblies. This is a solemn duty certainly. For refusing to be bound by a decision of a major assembly is not a small matter, as it implies that the aggrieved is persuaded that the decision militates against the Scriptures. Hence, if the aggrieved one will take no action, if he does not protest and at the same time persists in refusing to be bound by the decision, his consistory, if he be a common member or officebearer, may have to take action against him. If a consistory should so behave, the classis might have to refuse for the time being to receive its delegates on the classical assembly. (Classis would have no right to depose that consistory). The issue, once more, is not whether the churches must allow, let us say, a consistory to persist indefinitely in pronouncing a classical or synodical decision unscriptural and on this ground to refuse to be bound by it, after they, the churches, even once and again have treated that consistory's protest of the error of their decision. The churches may expect of such a consistory that it now be still or comply, and they may expel it from their fellowship (but not depose it) if it refuse to comply." — end of this quote.

This is surely an important quotation of Rev. Ophoff's articles against Prof. Ridderbos. It appears at the very beginning of these three articles. In this quotation Rev. Ophoff clearly states what is not the issue in the controversy involving Art. 31.

Rev. Kok quotes also this part of Rev. Ophoff's article as follows — see Reformed Guardian, Vol. II, Number 1, page 10, as follows: "Just what is the issue in the dispute? To be clear on the issue, we must know what is not the issue. The issue is not whether a classical or synodical decision may be rejected on the alleged ground of its being in conflict with the Word of God without the aggrieved one being compelled to *make an attempt* to prove the decision unscriptural also to the satisfaction of the churches on their major assemblies. This is solemn duty certainly . . . The issue, once more, is not whether the churches must allow, let us say, a consistory to persist indefinitely in pronouncing a classical or synodical decision unscriptural and on this ground to refuse to be bound by it, after they, the churches, even once and again have treated that consistory's protest on their major assemblies without being convinced of the error of their decision . . ." — end of quote of this particular part of Rev. Ophoff's article.

Do our readers see the difference between these two

quotations? O, yes; the Rev. Kok did indicate in his article that he did not quote all of this part of Rev. Ophoff's article. But, this does not excuse him in the least. Did he expect his readers to check up on him and look up Vol. 23 of the Standard Bearer, if, indeed, they were able to do this? Besides, he quotes the rest of Rev. Ophoff in its entirety, with the exception of a few lines at the bottom of page 396 of the Standard Bearer, and a reading of this part of Rev. Ophoff's article also leaves the impression that Rev. Kok has left this part out very deliberately. Why did Rev. Kok fail to quote the Rev. Ophoff in full? In this particular quotation, not quoted by the Rev. Kok, Rev. Ophoff declares that a consistory must comply with the decision of a major assembly or be expelled from its fellowship. And the Rev. Ophoff also declares that if an aggrieved one refuses to be bound by the decision of a major assembly and also refuses to walk in the way of protest, the consistory will be compelled to take action against him. Is it clear why the Rev. Kok fails to call attention to this part of Rev. Ophoff's quotation? He cannot use it because the Rev. De Wolf and his elders have committed the wicked and unbelievable folly of refusing to submit to their discipline, as *advised* by the classis and *executed* by their consistory, under protest.

I do not rise to the defence of Rev. Ophoff. But the following must surely be borne in mind. The point at issue in the controversial discussion of Art. 31 is simply this: what is the status (ecclesiastical) of one who regards a decision of an ecclesiastical assembly as contrary to the Word while he is appealing his case and protesting to the following major assembly? Both, Rev. Ophoff and Prof. Ridderbos, declare that such an one must appeal to the following major assembly. The Rev. De Wolf and his elders, however, simply refused to walk in the way of protest. They simply made it impossible for themselves to protest at the classical meeting of Oct. 6, 1953. They ignored the disciplinary action of their consistory, continued to function as officebearers, and could therefore never be seated at the Oct. 6, 1953 classical meeting. The entire discussion, involving Rev. Ophoff's articles against Prof. Ridderbos, have no bearing whatever on the case of the Rev. De Wolf who must shoulder before God and our churches the claim of having caused the split in our churches. And that the Rev. Kok has quoted the Rev. Ophoff as he did does no longer surprise us. We have grown accustomed to the evil and slanderous way in which he quotes from the past.

Let us not confuse the matter or be confused. In his articles against Prof. Ridderbos Rev. Ophoff defends the proposition that an appellant must be granted the full right of protest (this, by the way, we never denied anyone) and that no classis or synod has the right to depose him as long as his protest is pending or is being treated; (in fact, they may never depose him.) This is the heart of Ophoff's dispute with Ridderbos. When did our leaders ever change their stand in re the hierarchical treatment of hundreds of "Liberated" officebearers by the Synodicals? When did they ever

justify the Synodical treatment of the various points of dispute, the so-called doctrinal differences? And, whatever may be the correct interpretation of Art. 31, particularly as it concerns the question to whom the protestant must prove a decision to be in conflict with the Word of God, to the ecclesiastical body or to himself? When was it ever reformed that anyone could ignore a classical or synodical decision, fail to protest against it, and continue as a member of those churches? It is a simple axiom in Reformed Church Polity that an aggrieved one must walk in the way of protest. This the Rev. De Wolf and his elders failed to do. This was not merely an act of wickedness but also of unbelievable folly. For it they stand condemned, also by any Reformed conception of Church Polity. H.V.

### IN HIS FEAR

(Continued from page 41)

be mocked. And when soon they get such a case, they are either going to leave the doors open to all kinds of corruption in their group or else confess that they must do exactly as we did and that such procedure of *advising* Consistories that need help is not heirachy but truly brotherly love.

Another point Mr. Tubbs drove home and brought out to Rev. Kok's embarrassment and shame was that he had a debate in the Standard Bearer (Vol. 20) with the Rev. Ophoff about these same things and that the Rev. Ophoff maintained in that debate quite a different viewpoint from what Rev. Kok had been attributing to him in the court hearings. Those court records will reveal an awful lot of things!

Here, for example, is a quotation from that debate. And that is still the Rev. Ophoff's stand today, not as a change of church political viewpoint but of unchanged conviction from 1924 to this present time.

We quote from that debate:

"VI. The right of a local consistory to act contrary to the Church Order would result in Chaos and the final dissolution of our entire Church Formation, for a) The Church Order would be supplanted by as many private Church Orders as there are churches in our organized denomination of churches. Each Consistory would transact according to its own private Church Order. *Classis and Synod would be only two names. Their resolutions could have no binding power and their meetings would partake of the character of conferences such as those held by the independents or congregational churches.* Now if this is what we want, let us say so, but let us then cease prating about our being Reformed in our church government." The italics are ours.

Any doubt as to whether Rev. Ophoff changed his church political views? This was written in 1943.

And so we urge you again, walk IN HIS FEAR.

Then all our problems will be dissolved. And in that way a reunion can even be realized at this late date. But that is the only way it can be realized. J.A.H.