

THE STANDARD

Bearer

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MEDITATION

Singlemindedness

.... How long halt ye between two opinions?
I Kings 18:21b

Elijah's time is dark.

Historical Israel was under the dominion of the Prince of darkness.

Its king was spiritually an adulterer: the wicked Ahab.

Its queen: the heathen princess Jezebel.

The people: "walked in vanities."

Its spiritual leaders: 450 Baal priests, while Elijah fled to the deserts and the God-fearing Obadiah hid God's prophets in companies of fifty. From the wrath of wicked doers.

Certainly a sorry plight.

And the worst shadow of this picture is that the people bowed themselves before the golden calves at Bethel and Dan and cried: Thou art Jehovah Who led us out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. The very worst was that they still called themselves with the name of the God of the heavens and the earth.

This last sin is greater than open and exclusive idolatry. It made the people halt before God and man.

And to halt is ridiculous, it even partakes of the ludicrous.

So that Elijah would call the elders and the officers of the people together and ask them: How long halt ye between two opinions?

Literally speaking, halting is the result of walking on two different planes. When the right foot is walking on a plane that is a few inches above the plane of the left foot, we halt. And the result is seen in the waddling and limping and swaying of the entire body.

Notice in the first place that this halting in a spiritual way is only found, can only be found, in the sphere of the Covenant. For there the two planes are revealed. The one plane is the way of God and the other the way of the devil.

The way of God is in His sanctuary where we learn to know His will, statutes, ordinances and judgments. It is the high way. It is the walk in the light.

The way of the devil is the way of the lie and the false prophecy. It is the dark way of sin.

Now, from the cradle to the grave, we solely, wholly and exclusively walk on the way of the devil—if *nothing happens to change us*.

With both our spiritual feet we walk on the way of darkness and the lie: as a child, young man and greybeard. There is no halting there. All the thoughts of the imaginations of our heart is only evil continually. We simply hate God and hate our fellowmen. I say simply, and I mean with that word: singlemindedly we persist and endeavour to please self and the devil. We are in covenant with the prince of darkness, his willing slaves. And we walk. We are at peace with our state and condition. There is no doubt about it. Our entire manifestation of life is a loud cry: We belong to the devil, the lie, the false prophecy. And what of it! "Merely we go to hell!!"

There is no halting there. There is only one plane. Principally it is the plane of hell. It is the plane that will cause no surprise to its sojourners thereon when it will find them in outer darkness.

But no halting on that plane.

* * * *

Entirely different it is, however, when we are born in the line of continued generations of God's covenant people. Then we see before our eyes an entirely different plane. Principally the plane of that Covenant is heaven. Our walk is in heaven. And even as little children we notice in the eyes, the face, the words, the songs, the dress, the behaviour in a thousand ways of God's regenerated and converted people.

Then we see the light of the world and that is Jesus.

Moreover, from morning to night, from the early chanting of our children's songs to the pastor's visit at our deathbed we are taught to say and to walk and to behave on that plane of the heavens of heavens. Before we are aware of it, we are assuming the outward manifestation of a walk that is in the clouds.

And when the heart is not renewed through God's everlasting mercy, we become halters. We become of all people the most miserable. It were better never to have been born,

than to be born and live unregenerated among God's chosen ones on earth.

Then we become a double mockery to the world. It's awful.

You see, we love the devil and sin: our hearts never changed but, you see, eternity is so long, so awfully long. And the lurid flames of hell with the tortuous writhings of the damned are so terrible. From our youth on we listened to the complaints and wailings of the Rich man in the flame. "That he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue!" No, we better stay with the church!

Yet, the heart and flesh lust and hunger and yearn for Baal and Ashtaroth. Church and the Word of God is so insipid and dry. I would almost vomit of the ever recurring theme of that Jesus on the Cross: the heart of the Gospel. And my opinion is that the world and all its lures and promises of the thrill are not so bad after all.

And slowly on, we are in the pew on Sunday and in the dancehall on Saturday night. Or, to speak in the language of Elijah's time: I am bowing before the calves in Bethel and have Jehovah's blessed name on my lips. "Thou, Who broughtest us up out of Egypt, the house of bondage . . .!"

Ludicrous and ridiculous halting? Attend to this: Here is my dollar for the budget, Oh, Jehovah! 'Tis Sunday. And: Here is my \$5.00 for the glee of devils! With one foot I try to walk in heavenly spheres and with the other foot I walk on hell's dancefloor. Or: On Sunday I sit in the pew and shiver when I hear from above the language of the light; but during the week I sit in the theater and laugh and scream with riotous glee: it's so funny!

* * * *

No, it is necessary that I make a choice.

This cannot go on. Jesus said: I would thou wert cold or hot. It is all the same thing: to be halting on two opinions or to be lukewarm. Both will be spewn from His blessed mouth. This cannot go on.

Hence, Elijah says: If Jehovah be indeed God, follow Him; but if Baal be, follow him.

Notice, first of all, there is no third alternative. It's either Jehovah or Baal. You either walk with both feet on the plane of heaven or you walk with Baal on the plane of the devil. When someone therefore halts, it is not because he really walks with God and also with the devil. That is impossible. No, this halting is really also a walk of darkness. But is the worst manifestation of it. As the walk of the Pharisees and Scribes: they walked in complete darkness and really hated God. But they said: We are children of God and have Abraham for a father. No, halting is only a matter of *opinions*. Their testimony was: We love God. But they killed His Son. They were the worst manifestation of the walk of hell.

Also, notice, that to be hot, or to walk on the plane of heaven does not mean that we are without sin. That the world does not have snares for us or that the devil has no access to our hearts at all.

No, but here is the difference. The halter loves sin from the heart and is merely afraid of God. But he who is walking on the plane of heaven, even in spite of all his sinning, loves God from the heart and loves all God's virtues. He has really and essentially only one desire and that is: to dwell in the House of the Lord and to search in His tabernacle.

No, the choice must be made. Why halt ye on two opinions? Make the choice. And usually when the choice is made, that choice is hell. It seemed different in Elijah's time. But the crying of the multitude when fire devoured the water soaked sacrifice was more of terror than of love. As subsequent history shows. No matter how much and how purely we hear and see the Gospel. We finally and in the last analysis choose sin and the devil.

If we do not, it is because eternal mercy gave us a better choice.

If we embrace Christ, it is because He embraced us first.

* * * *

But choose we must. And ministers and teachers and parents do well to talk much about this choice, when history reveals a halting church-life or offspring.

It is necessary. First of all for God's sake. When the membership are so devilish as to partake of the bread and wine, but also of the harlot and the devil, it is time that the knife of Christian censure bring the choice about. When children pray by the table but curse expressly the Name within the camp, it is well that Elijah's prophecy is quoted and the choice be born.

For God's sake. Because His name is slandered as the day is long. It does not escape the eye of the out and out world when those who bear the Triune Name on their forehead are seen in the dance and the riotous living. And the foolish world reasons from the children to the Father. Are these God's children? What a farce is the church of God! And hell keeps holiday when God's Name is slandered. Make the choice for God's sake.

But also for your own sake.

It seems to me that the mixture of the theater and the church make for a miserable life. I do not envy the three years of Judas' walk with Jesus. It must have been awful. Imagine yon pharisee. He enters the home of the widow. With pious words and "pious" countenance he says: Let us pray. And while he prays a very long prayer he is studying ways and means to eat her home. It is not nice to have the ever recurring reminder of Jehovah's name about you and to love sin and the world's pleasures within. It is abominable to the world even. They hate us, but they despise the hypocrite. Oh, be cold or hot.

This does not mean that to be cold is pleasing to God. But it does mean to be lukewarm will call for greater condemnation and stripes. No, to be cold is also sin. But to say: Lord, Lord! While loving sin and the devil is abominable.

Neither does it mean that we would not say and preach: be hot! That is the demand, the command of God. Even

the devil has no business to be devil. All things ought to praise God and love Him. For that is good and praise is comely.

Finally: follow Him. If Jehovah is God, follow Him.

Be ye followers of God as beloved children and walk in love.

That is good. Oh, to love the Lord and to love your neighbour: how sweet a walk. To be imitators of the Most High: how unspeakably blessed.

Oh, no, I do not mean first of all the reward of such a walk in the sweet bye and bye. I mean here and now. To be cold or lukewarm is to be miserable as the day of life is long. And to be hot, to walk in love, to walk on heaven's plane is sweet and pleasurable even now. In the keeping of His law there is a great reward. A reward of peace in the heart. And with all our miseries because of the sin in our members that we hate, we sing. And our song improves with the singing. Angels accompany us.

When we begin to be merry.

In the Father's House.

G.V.

* * * *

IN MEMORIAM

The Board of the Eastern League of Men's Society hereby expresses its loss of a faithful brother and fellow member in the sudden death of

MR. N. KUNZ

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

The Board
Rev. Hanko, President
Mr. J. Oomkes, Secretary

* * * *

IN MEMORIAM

The Consistory of the Protestant Reformed Church of Hull, Iowa, hereby expresses its sincere sympathy with Elder Peter Jansma, in the death of his brother

ANDREW JANSMA

Our prayer is that our Heavenly Father may comfort him in his bereavement.

Nick Kooiker, Vice President
John Hoekstra, Vice Secretary.

* * * *

IN MEMORIAM

The Ladies' Society of the Protestant Reformed Church of South Holland, Illinois, wishes hereby to express its sympathy to its fellow members, Mrs. Frank Van Baren and Mrs. Michael Van Baren in the sudden death of

JAMES KUIPER

May the God of all grace comfort the relatives with His all-sufficient grace.

John Van Baren, President
Mrs. J. Van Baren, Secretary

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EDITORIALS

The Heart of the Matter

The later it becomes in the day of the recent history of our Protestant Reformed Churches, the more it becomes and will become apparent that the heart of the whole matter is the doctrine of election and the truth of sovereign grace.

This we should never forget.

This truth the Protestant Reformed Churches always wanted and still want to maintain.

But this truth those that apostatized from us and from those churches deny.

They may claim, as they still do, that they are Protestant Reformed and that they are the continuation of the Protestant Reformed Churches, no one with a sound and unprejudiced mind will believe them and history will surely justify us in claiming that not they but we are the Protestant Reformed Churches.

They may seek refuge in all kinds of lies, slander and false quotations, and even become guilty of perjury, as they do, this merely corroborates the fact above mentioned and even shows that their own conscience condemns them.

And when all the dust of lying and camouflage is raised and the ecclesiastical sky is cleared up, history will justify, not them, but us.

The history of doctrine clearly shows that what calls itself church in the world never maintained and stood foursquarely, for any prolonged period of time, on the truth of election and reprobation and of the sovereign grace of God in the salvation of the sinner.

We but have to mention the names of Augustine, Calvin, the Synod of Dordrecht, Kok, Kuyper, to verify this statement.

Augustine, we know defended the truth of sovereign grace over against Pelagius. And over against all opposition he became more strongly confirmed in this truth as the years of his life sped by.

The question that was in dispute between Augustine and Pelagius was, strictly speaking, not directly concerned with the truth of predestination.

It rather was concentrated about the total depravity of man.

Pelagius taught, as is evident especially from the teachings of his chief disciple, Coelestinus, that Adam would have died even if he had not sinned; that all children are born in the same state and condition in which Adam stood before the fall; that the sin of Adam, therefore, concerned him alone and not the whole human race; that, whereas the whole human race was not corrupted in Adam and dies because of his sin, all do not participate in the resurrection through

the resurrection of Christ; that the law as well as the gospel can cause us to enter into the kingdom of heaven; that, before the coming of Christ, some have lived without sin; that grace is not necessary to live a holy life; that grace is given to man according to his merit.

It stands to reason that, when Augustine opposed this Pelagian doctrine, he must needs come to the doctrine of predestination. The truth of total depravity and that of absolutely sovereign grace are inseparably connected.

Only one that teaches that God, on His part, is willing to save all on condition of faith, can teach that it is our act of conversion that causes us to enter into the kingdom of God.

On the contrary, one that maintains the truth of Scripture that God does not promise salvation to every man on condition of faith, but that He saves only His elect, will also insist that, not our act of conversion, but only the power of God's predestinating grace can cause us to enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Hence, through the controversy with Pelagius, Augustine was led to a deeper contemplation of predestination and God's sovereign grace.

He emphasized that man is utterly dependant upon sovereign grace and, therefore, on sovereign election, to know or to will or to do any good at all. Nor can anyone make himself ready or worthy to receive this grace. Grace is strictly first and absolutely sovereign. And this grace is bestowed only on the elect, through the Holy Spirit that is given unto them. Man can do nothing about it. The Holy Spirit is the great gift of God, the beginner and perfecter of all the work of salvation, and this Spirit is given only to the elect.

The point I wish to make, however, in this connection, is that the church as a whole and officially did not maintain this truth very long in all its purity.

Even in his lifetime it was already denied or, at least, camouflaged.

That those who always were enemies of the truth of predestination attacked him does not surprise us, of course.

They were especially men like Coelestius and Julianus.

It is interesting to note that they came with the same arguments which the opponents of this truth advance today. They appeal to such passages of Scripture as I Tim. 2:4, Matt. 23:37, and Rom. 2:4. But they also adduced other arguments such as that the doctrine of predestination implies the acceptance of the person, that it makes God the author of sin, that it denies the responsibility of man, that it is determinism and fatalistic.

But also Augustine's disciples began to have questions.

In his lifetime there arose those that are known as Semi-pelagians. They taught that God, on His part, is ready to save all men, that God's calling comes to all men, but that, while God seriously offers salvation to all, all do not accept it. Only those are saved that believe and these God has from eternity chosen in his foreknowledge.

When these Semi-pelagians spread their doctrine, which soon was embraced by many, Prosper, one of the disciples of Augustine addressed several questions to him, and from the very nature of these questions it is evident that even he is in doubt and is in need of more light. He would like Augustine to show very clearly what danger there is in the semi-pelagian conception, he points out that even the fathers before Augustine had taught a predestination which is based on foreknowledge, and especially would he like Augustine to show that the doctrine of predestination does not eliminate the ethical choice of the will of man.

From these very questions it is evident that even Prosper, one of the most faithful disciples of Augustine, began to question Augustine's presentation of the truth of predestination.

Augustine, however, answered all these questions in two tracts. In these he maintains very strongly the truth of election and reprobation, enters rather broadly into the various questions asked him, and emphasizes that his doctrine is not based on any philosophical arguments, but only on the testimony of Holy Writ.

However, the opponents were not convinced by these tracts.

This could be expected.

The acceptance of the doctrine of Predestination, with election and reprobation, is not according to man. It is not a matter of logical argument. It is above all a matter of the regenerated heart that, unconditionally, accepts the clear testimony of Scripture. It implies, above all, the full acknowledgement that God is GOD and that, therefore, He is absolutely sovereign, also in the matter of the salvation of man. And this acknowledgement is always in conflict with our carnal nature.

Instead, therefore, of allowing themselves to be persuaded by the arguments of Augustine, the semi-pelagians strengthened themselves in their opposition. With all sorts of human arguments they blasphemed the truth of predestination and placed it in a very unfavorable light. Once more they argued that Augustine's doctrine was fatalistic, that by it men are driven into sin and death. A pious life, so they argued, was of no avail since God does not want to save the reprobate anyway. God, according to the doctrine of Augustine, so they said, wills sin and is its creator. The choice of man's will, whether it be to good or evil, means nothing since God's predestination determines and works all things, both good and evil.

Thus they blasphemed.

On the other hand, however, these men cast the accusation of downright Pelagianism far from them. And so they assumed a position between Augustine and Pelagius, which is, of course, impossible.

They believed in original sin, but denied that through this man is dead in sin and misery. He is not entirely in-

capable of choosing the good. He is only weakened. The seeds of virtue are still implanted in his soul, but they can sprout only through God's grace. Man, therefore, has a certain receptivity for the grace of God. He has a free will and this cooperates with the grace of God in the internal calling. God certainly wills that all men shall be saved. The call of the gospel comes to all. And that many are not saved is due only to man's rejection of God's calling. God's election is based on His foreknowledge. Of reprobation they must have nothing. All men can be saved if they only will.

It is true that the teachings of Augustine still found defenders. Among these was Prosper, whom we mentioned before. But their defense was very half hearted. They conceded too much to the opposition. Prosper, for instance, certainly, maintained the doctrine of election and reprobation, and especially the former he wants to explain only from the good pleasure of God. But next to this, he also teaches a general will of God for the salvation of all men. It stands to reason that, in the light of this general will of God unto salvation the doctrine of reprobation could not be maintained. That many are lost cannot be attributed to God's will of reprobation but only to their own will. That many are saved is because of God's gracious election, but that some are lost is caused only by their own rejection of the grace of God.

Thus came the synod of Orange in 529.

This synod has often been characterized as standing on the basis of Augustine's doctrine of election and reprobation and fully maintaining the Augustinian doctrine of predestination.

Nothing could be farther from the truth.

It was rather clearly evident that the synod was very much afraid of the strict doctrine of predestination as Augustine had maintained it.

It is true that the synod confessed the total incapability of the natural man to do any good. But, on the other hand, the infallibility and irresistibility of the grace of God was denied. As to the doctrine of predestination, the synod really said nothing at all about a reprobation, but thought it sufficient to reject a predestination to evil. They assumed really a thoroughly apologetic attitude over against the semi-pelagians.

May this bit of early history warn us not to assume a half hearted attitude over against the stand of those that have recently departed from us and apostatized from the Protestant Reformed truth.

Remember that their official stand is that the promise of God is for every one, on condition that they believe; and that our act of conversion is a prerequisite which we must fulfill before we can enter into the kingdom of God.

Reformed? Protestant Reformed?

God forbid that we should ever be deceived to even imagine that it is!

H.H.

AS TO BOOKS

Inleiding in de Zendingswetenschap (Introduction in the Science of Missions), by Dr. J. H. Bavinck. Published by J. H. Kok, Kampen, the Netherlands.

This is one of the best books on the subject of missions, from a Reformed viewpoint, that I have yet read. It consists of three parts, The Theory of Missions, Elenhs, and the History of Missions. In the first part the author discusses the basis of missions, the approach of missions, and the purpose of missions. In the second part he discusses the idea, place, and task as well as the main lines of elenctical science (the science of refutation). In the third he presents the idea and task of the history of missions to close with a chapter on the future of missions.

Once more I wish to state that this book made a very good impression on me. If it were not for the fact that is written in the Holland language I would probably have used it in our theological school in my course on the Principles of Missions. It, evidently, was designed as a textbook, and for this it is very well adapted. What impresses me especially is the theological approach. Throughout Dr. Bavinck emphasized that, not man, not even the Church, but God in Christ is the Author of missions and that He alone gathers His Church.

From this viewpoint, I consider the part that treats of the mission-approach the weakest.

I would consider it worth while that someone would translate this book by Dr. Bavinck.

Heartily recommended.

H.H.

De Gereformeerde Zede (The Reformed Moral(s) or Morality) by Dr. R. Schippers. Publisher J. H. Kok, N.V. the Netherlands. Price f 7.90.

The term "zede" in the title of this book is somewhat difficult to translate. "Ethics" will not do because it refers to the science of the system of moral rules, and Dr. Schipper did not mean to write a book on that science. Literally the translation would be "The Reformed Moral" which is somewhat clumsy and, besides, in English the term "moral" is generally used in the plural. When I read the book of Dr. Schippers I considered other translations such as "moral customs" or "moral norms" because the author again and again refers to what was considered normative in the past from an ethical viewpoint and is being repudiated or criticized in the present. But I finally decided upon the translation I offer above. Perhaps, the reader or Dr. Schipper himself can suggest a better rendering.

In the above I also already briefly characterized the contents of the book. The law of God is, of course, the standard

and criterion of all morality and ethics, but the concrete interpretation and application of that law are not always the same. Besides, the world and life in the world changes. And so, the question arises: what must be considered normative in our day and age from a Scriptural and Reformed point of view?

In his book, Dr. Schippers also discusses some modern practical problems such as that of our "spare time" and of "amusements," particularly the movie and the theatre as well as the dance. Still other problems are those of the sabbath, forced marriages, sexual intercourse before marriage, and birth control.

In regard to some of his solutions of these problems, I would remark: „Het kan wel, maar pas op!" It is possible, but beware! In fact, this expresses the author's own attitude. As to my own view, I would rather express my condemnatory opinion more strongly.

But read the book, if you are acquainted with the Dutch. It is worth while.

H.H.

Ellicott's Commentary on the Whole Bible. Published by Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich. Eight volumes. Price per vol. \$5.95.

Sometime ago I reviewed one volume of this commentary, which, at that time, was not complete. Now I have all the volumes. What I said then about the one volume I may now repeat about the whole set.

It is, of course, impossible to review and criticize in detail a work of this nature. I would hesitate to recommend it at all, if, during the course of my almost forty years of ministry, I had not become acquainted with the commentaries of Ellicott. And on this basis I certainly recommend this commentary very highly. It proceeds throughout from the principle that the Bible is the inspired Word of God and is characterized by honest dealing with the text.

It is a commentary that can very well be used, not only by the scholar but also by the layman.

I congratulate Zondervan on this reprint of a very valuable commentary.

H.H.

The Court Records

We have received sufficient signatures for the court records to make it possible for us to obtain them. But we are not going to publish any more copies than to give to each signator a copy. We are not going "in business" on this matter, nor attempting to make a profit. We will divide the expense by the number of those signing up for them. If you desire a set, write the undersigned in the very near future.

J.A.H.

OUR DOCTRINE

THE TRIPLE KNOWLEDGE

AN EXPOSITION OF THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

PART III — OF THANKFULNESS

LORD'S DAY 43

Chapter 2

The Practical Implications of the Ninth Commandment

The Heidelberg Catechism in Lord's Day 43 enumerates various instances of violations against the ninth commandment. These are, in the first place, that which concerns the principal meaning of the ninth commandment in the narrower sense: "That I bear false witness against no man;" secondly, that I do not falsify any man's words; thirdly, that I be no backbiter or slanderer; fourthly, that I do not judge, nor join in condemning any man rashly or unheard; fifthly, 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. And positively, the Heidelberg Catechism explains that the ninth commandment means "that in judgment and in 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."

Let us briefly attend to this explanation of the Heidelberg Catechism.

The direct and proper meaning of this ninth commandment in its narrower sense is that I bear no false witness against any man. For the commandment reads: "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor." This means, of course, that in judgment, before the proper authorities, I do not bear false testimony *against* the neighbor. It is possible, of course, that I may be called upon to testify against him when he is accused of a misdemeanor and is guilty according to my knowledge and conviction. In that case, when I am called as a witness, I must and can speak the truth in love before God. But when as a witness I know and am convinced that he is not guilty of the crime of which he is accused, and in that case bear testimony against him, I am guilty of false testimony and the lie. This is done from various motives. Principally, of course, it is always the motive of hatred against the neighbor, rooted in enmity against God. For by such false testimony I seek to destroy him. The most glaring and heinous illustration of this great evil is, of course, the witness against Christ, both before the Sanhedrin and before Pilate. Christ was perfectly holy and sinless, and all His enemies were convinced of it. He could stand before them all and challenge them, "Who of you can convict me of sin?" Yet, at His trial they attempted to find false witnesses against Him. We read in the gospel according to Matthew that they searched for witnesses, but could

not find them. But, "at the last came two false witnesses, and said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days." This, of course, was a downright distortion of the words which Christ had spoken, and therefore was false testimony. And when finally the high priest demanded under oath of Him to testify whether He was the Christ, the Son of God, Jesus spoke the truth when He said: "Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." And when the high priest in mock indignation rent his clothes, and said that He had spoken blasphemy, he too bore false witness against the Christ. The same is true of the trial before Pilate. He was accused before the Roman governor of many things, no doubt, by the chief priests and elders. And the Lord did not deign to answer one thing, for the simple reason that He was convinced that they were bearing false witness against Him. This, of course, is the most terrible illustration in all history of the sin against the ninth commandment.

Another illustration of false testimony in judgment is found in the Old Testament. I refer to the testimony against Naboth by wicked Jezebel. This also is rooted, of course, in hatred against the neighbor and hatred against God. But it was accompanied by the motive of selfish gain. Ahab coveted Naboth's vineyard. And when Naboth refused because the vineyard represented the inheritance of his fathers, Ahab was very ill-pleased, and acted like a balky child, lying down upon his bed with his face to the wall and refusing to eat. But when Jezebel found him, and the king revealed unto her why he was so ill-pleased, that wicked woman immediately took steps to acquire the vineyard of Naboth. She wrote letters in Ahab's name, sealing them with his seal, and sent them to the elders and nobles that were in the city. And in the letter she wrote as follows: "Proclaim a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people: And set two men, sons of Belial, before him, to bear witness against him, saying, Thou didst blaspheme God and the king. And then carry him out, and stone him, that he may die." This was done by the elders and inhabitants of the city. A fast was proclaimed, and two false witnesses came to testify against him as follows: "Naboth did blaspheme God and the king." Thus, not only the two witnesses, the men of Belial, but also the elders of the inhabitants of the city became false witnesses against Naboth. It was a false testimony, motivated, no doubt, by hatred against Naboth, but with the additional motive of selfish gain.

Over against this, according to the Heidelberg Catechism, the ninth commandment demands "that in judgment and all other dealings I love the truth, speak it uprightly and confess it." In judgment God requires that we always speak the truth in love, whether that truth is in favor of the neighbor or against him, and whether that truth benefits or injures us.

In immediate connection with this we can also mention what the Heidelberg Catechism describes as judging, or join-

ing in judging, "any man rashly or unheard." This, of course, may also be done officially by those that are in authority, either in the world or in the church. Or it may, and most frequently is, done unofficially among the brethren or in the world. If we are motivated by the love of the brother, we shall not condemn him rashly when he is accused of any misdemeanor on hear-say, or rumors, thinketh no evil. Love surely is not hasty to think or to believe evil of the neighbor, and to condemn him. Love always seeks the well-being and the salvation and the good reputation of his name, and therefore cannot hastily condemn him. If I love the brother, I will not condemn him on hear-say. And if one approaches me, and tells something evil about the brother, the love of the brother will not incline me immediately to throw up my hands in holy horror, and say, "Is not that terrible? I never thought such a thing of him!" On the contrary, love will move me to say to the one that thus approaches me about the neighbor: "Let us go and see that brother together," before I will form and express any judgment against the brother. The ninth commandment in its positive sense demands that I do not condemn the brother rashly, or unheard, but that I approach him personally, and thus treat him in love. To do contrariwise is the act of the hypocrite. Hence, the Lord Jesus admonishes us in Matthew 7:1-5: "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye." And according to John 7:24, the Lord says to the multitude surrounding Him: "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment." And in James 4:12 we read: "There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?"

This is closely connected, too, with the sin of backbiting and slandering. The Heidelberg Catechism explains the ninth commandment as demanding too "that I be no backbiter, nor slanderer." In the positive sense of the word this means "that I defend and promote, as much as I am able, the honor and good character of my neighbor." The latter is the direct opposite of the former. The backbiter and slanderer promotes as much as in him is the evil report of his neighbor, and certainly means to dishonor him by spreading about him an evil reputation, and thus to besmear his good character. Even though the report about the brother or the neighbor is possibly true, even though his reputation is not good, and he already has a bad name, I shall never in private conversation, behind his back, spread his evil report. This we must plainly understand.

Whether the evil report is true or false, I shall not be a party to spreading it abroad. In fact, the first concern in this

connection is not whether the report is true or false. The evil report may very well be true, or at least partly true. There is, of course, a difference between slander and backbiting. Backbiting may spread an evil report of the neighbor or of the brother that is true, or at least partly true, and perhaps exaggerated, and therefore partly false. But slander is always the lie. It is always a false report about the neighbor or brother. But backbiting and slander have this in common, that they do spread an evil report about the neighbor, and, of course, behind his back. The backbiter and slanderer have, for some reason or other, a delight in besmearing the good name of the neighbor. And this delight may have various motives. It may be motivated by sheer maliciousness: I may simply hate my neighbor, and hating him, may have a delight in attacking his good name and spreading some evil report about it, whether true or false. The backbiter and slanderer may also conceive of his evil work as having some advantage to himself. Perhaps he wants a certain position which the neighbor is otherwise in danger of securing instead of him; and it is to his advantage that he does not spread his good report, and therefore, he would rather slander and backbite him, and speak in a derogatory way of his name. Sometime it is motivated by pure pride or vain-glory. In fact perhaps there is an element of pride in all backbiting and slander. The slanderer is like the pharisee in the parable who says to God and before men: "I thank thee Lord that I am not as he." If the slanderer, or backbiter, really felt in his own heart that he is just as bad as the brother whose name he besmears and slanders, then the evil report would die on his lips. But back of this evil of slander and backbiting there is at least often the pretence of pride, to exalt one's self above the neighbor. Not infrequently too backbiting and slandering occurs when people are in company together, simply as a sort of pastime. In their conversation they have nothing serious and worthwhile to talk about. They are so vain and puffed up and superficial that in their conversation they cannot talk about the things of the Word of God and His kingdom. And so, in order to make the evening interesting nevertheless, they talk about the name of the brother and sister, and begin to backbite and slander. And when they leave, they say to one another that they had a very enjoyable time. Again, the evilspeaker is often a flatterer. While he speaks evil of the neighbor or of the brother behind his back, he flatters him to his face.

This, no doubt, is one of the most wicked and most despicable forms of lying. Scripture often speaks of slander and backbiting, and employs different terms to denote this form of evil-speaking. The term *slanderer* is used in I Timothy 3:11, where the apostle admonishes the congregation that even the wives of the deacons must "be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things." In Psalm 50:20 the wicked is addressed as follows: "Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother; thou slanderest thine own mother's son."

H.H.

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

The Prophecy of Isaiah

The word of the Lord imperishable, XL:6-8.

The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry?
(Cry), All flesh is grass,
And all the beauty thereof as the flower of the field:
Withereth the grass, fadeth the flower:
Because the breath of the Lord bloweth upon him:
Truly the people is grass.
Withereth the grass, fadeth the flower:
But the word of the Lord shall stand forever.

This voice, too, must be identified with the Lord. For it does a thing that He alone can do. It mandates the prophet. It bids him to cry and specifies what is to be cried. The content of the cry points to Him alone as its author. For it tells what is characteristic of His Word. No one but He can say anything about Himself and His word.

The one mandated is the prophet as representative of all the prophets of God.

"All flesh" is humanity, every individual man without exception. That the animals are here excluded is indicated by the occurrence in the text of the term "The people" alongside of the expression "all flesh."

Our passage first voices a complaint, "All flesh is as grass . . ." It receives full expression in Ps. 90.

Thou carriest them—the children of men—away as with a flood they are as a sleep: in the morning they are like grass that groweth up.

In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down, and withereth. For we are consumed by thine anger, and by thy wrath are we troubled. Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance.

So the Lord's captives in Babylon lamented as they would contemplate the terrifying fact. But let them consider. The word of the Lord is not a thing that like "all flesh," like the grass of the field, withers and vanishes away, but it is a word that stands forever, definitely His word to the exiles that their warfare is finished, that their sins are blotted out and they are forgiven of him implying that with regard to them, His chosen people His wrath has been appeased, His justice satisfied, and that He will now turn their captivity and crown them with immortality and life according to His word. And it shall come to pass seeing that His mouth has spoken it and that His word stands forever. And therefore also His redeemed ones shall abide forever, sustained and perpetuated by His word by which they also were raised from the dust of death and crowned with glory.

This is not seeing in the glad announcement of the prophet truth that is not there and that was not there to the minds of His captives in exile. Seeing that they, too, as well

as "all flesh" were withering away and returning to the dust there is Babylon, what real and abiding comfort could they have derived from Isaiah's Gospel, if, to their mind, all it promised was a deliverance from the clutch of earthy rulers and a return to an earthy Canaan, Jerusalem and temple. What was the purpose or God in voicing by the mouth of the prophet the lamentation that "all flesh is as grass," and in concluding it with the glad tidings that, in contrast thereto, the word of the Lord abideth forever, if it was not to give the lamenters to understand that what He was promising them in the final instance is a resurrection from the dead unto life everlasting and that the promise would surely come to pass. If this is not true, then all the prophecy of the Old Testament Scriptures is nothing but senseless prattle, and the living by the promise, as the captives in Babylon were doing, an utterly vain thing. If the essence of all prophecy was not that Christ would come to suffer and die for the sins of His people and that He would be raised again, there was no prophecy worthy of the name and then the faith of the saints was vain and they of all creatures the most miserable. If on the other hand there was prophecy worthy of the name, but of the saints were not empowered to grasp essentially the import and thrust of its promises, they were still wholly without comfort in their afflictions. But they did have comfort, their only comfort in life and in death and that consisted in their knowing that they belonged not to themselves but to their faithful Saviour, the Jehovah God of Israel, who through the Lamb that He Himself would provide Him, would atone their sins. Accordingly they knew that though after their skin worms should destroy their bodies, they should yet in their flesh see God (Job 19:26).

The summons to Jerusalem, vss. 9-11.

Upon a mountain high get thyself, O thou good-news bringing Zion;

Lift up thy voice with strength, O thou good-news bringing Jerusalem:

Lift up thy voice, be not afraid;

Say unto the cities of Judah, Lo, your God!

Lo, God the Lord with strength shall come,

And His arm shall rule with him.

Like a shepherd his flock He shall feed:

With His arm He shall gather the lambs,

And in His bosom carry,

And those that are with young He shall gently lead.

Zion, Jerusalem, and the "cities of Judah" collectively and separately represent the church, God's afflicted people in the captivity of the exile with this difference that the "good-news bringing Zion and Jerusalem are in contrast to the 'cities of Judah' the church as to her prophets or comforters. That the comforters in the church should be identified with Jerusalem and Zion and not with the other cities of Judah can be explained. In Jerusalem had dwelt the Lord in His holy temple between the cherubim above the mercy-seat. Here had flown the blood of atonement and burned God's altars. Hence Jerusalem was known as the good-news bringing city.

From out of Zion had gone forth to the saints the glad tidings of the Aaronic blessing; "The Lord bless thee and keep thee . . ." But the voice of blessing was now silent. For Jerusalem was in ruins and the church was in exile a captive of the world-power.

But the time of her deliverance is at hand, now that she has received double from the hand of the Lord for all her sins. The comforters therefore shall get them on a high mountain and without fear of the powers of darkness let their voice be heard with strength. They shall say to the cities of Judah, God's afflicted people, "Lo, your God!" According to the lines that follow, this means that He *comes*. Hence, "Lo, your God!" And He comes with strength that is infinite, for He is the infinite God. Hence, *His* arm shall rule for Him and none other. The deliverance of the captives is a certainty. For He comes irresistably.

And His reward is with Him and His recompense before Him—life and immortality for His afflicted and contrite people that war His warfare in Babylon, but death and destruction for the unbelieving and disobedient.

His penitent people He loves. He shall feed them. They are His flock. And how tender His regard for each one of His sheep. In the imagery of the text, the lambs He gathers in His arms and carries in His bosom and gently leads them that are with young. In this manner will He bring His captives home.

Twice mention is made of God's arm of which it is said that it is with Him and that by it He rules and gathers His sheep. His arm—the arm of the Triune Jehovah—is the personal servant of Jehovah (of subsequent chapters) the incarnate Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ.

God is only, XL:12-26,

It is a great salvation that the Lord holds forth to His captive people. Its realization calls for infinite might, wisdom, understanding. Doubts arise (see vs. 27). Can the Lord do as he promised? To these doubts the Lord replies in the present section.

Who measured with His hollow hand the waters,
And the heavens with a span measured,
And included in a measure the dust of the earth,
And weighed in scales the mountains,
And the hills in a balance?

Who directed the Spirit of the Lord,
Or what man was His counsellor that instructed Him?
With whom did He take counsel, and who caused Him to understand,
And taught Him the path of judgment, and taught Him knowledge,
And made Him to know the way of understanding?

The prophet is here occupied with the work of creation. Who hath measured with the hollow of his hand the waters, etc. According to some, what the prophet meant is, that no man is able to measure God's works, but without meaning to say that God did that. According to others, that precisely is what the prophet means, namely that God alone is able to

weigh the mountains and the hills, measure the works of His hands. According to still others the thought conveyed is, that no man can ascertain the wisdom or correctness of God's works, because he has no means of measuring them, or that God's works defy man's power of comprehension.

To my mind the meaning is, that God's works cannot be measured by man, that, in the words of Paul, His judgments are unsearchable, and His ways past finding out, and that therefore man cannot know the wisdom and the knowledge that they represent, except God reveal it to him.

This would be different if man directed the Lord's Spirit, were His counsellor that instructed Him, caused Him to understand, taught Him the path of judgment etc. But were this true, than man were God and God were man's creation.

- But who is man? And who is God? The prophet tells us.
15. Behold, the nations are as a drop on the bucket,
And as small dust on the balance are they counted:
Behold, isles as small dust He taketh up.
 16. And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn,
Nor the animals thereof sufficient for a burnt offering.
 17. All nations are as nothing before Him;
And they are counted as less than nothing.

God's aloneness is absolute.

Therefore, "Who shall weigh the mountains with a balance?" and, "who shall teach Him knowledge?" Some man or association of men or some other god? Absolutely no one.

The drop on the bucket—let us take notice, *on* and not *in*—has no significance before the bearer. It is nothing. As to the small dust on the scale, it does not influence the weight, so that it, too, is nothing. So all the nations before God, they are nothing. Worse than that, they are vanity, emptiness before God. Why is this so? For two reasons. First, God being *God* is the foundation of His own blessed existence and therefore conditioned by no one. Second, all nations exist solely by His power. And to His power there is no limit. He could, if He chose, take up the islands of the sea without any effort. So again: He is *only*. His sublimity is absolute. He alone is great. And because He is so great, all the forests of Lebanon do not suffice as a worthy sacrificial fire, nor all the beasts of those forests as a worthy sacrifice.

18. To whom then will ye liken God?

Or what likeness would you compare to God?

God can be likened to no one, for He is alone. For the same reason, no creature or its image can be likened, compared, to God. To do the former is to draw God down to the level of the corruptible creature. This is to destroy Him conceptually. To do the latter is to raise the corruptible creature to the level of God. This is likewise to destroy Him conceptually.

The people of Israel at Mt. Horeb committed this great sin. They made carved image of a calf and said to the image and thereby to the creature imaged—the calf, "Thou art the God that delivered us from our bondage." In Psalm CVI they are charged with worshipping the molten image

(Continued on Page 116)

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of II Timothy 2:15-19

In our former article we noticed how Paul enjoins Timothy to constantly keep the Church in mind of the central truth of the Gospel, that Jesus Christ is indeed in a perpetual state of being risen from the dead, and that He will come again upon clouds to judge the living and the dead. That gives reason for hope and godliness to the pious and causes them, in all tribulation, to lift up their weary heads knowing that their redemption is nigh! Thus, Paul is willing to suffer for the Gospel's sake, even as evildoer. But he is of good cheer. Faithful is the saying that was upon the lips and in the hearts of all those who suffered and died for the faith: if we die with Him we shall also live with him; if we endure we shall also reign with Him! And Paul is warned by the equally faithful saying: if we deny Him, by not preaching or falsifying His Gospel and the word of His patience, he will deny us, and if we are unfaithful he will not follow an unfaithful preacher with His Holy Spirit and grace; for He cannot deny Himself.

He that hath ears to hear, among preachers, let him listen to what the Spirit through Paul saith unto preachers!

For this is a "Pastoral" letter!

And this letter is full of those exhortations which are not simply "good advice" but they are the solemn charge from the King of the Church to His messengers and servants. And let not a servant think that he can act the part of a "lord" with impunity! The Lord is not mocked!

There is nothing that puts our feet on the solid ground, the holy ground of God, as the remembrance that it is God with whom we have to deal! The sobering reality is that we are those who care for the souls of the saints as they *who must render an account*. (Hebrews 13:17) And let no one deceive himself among ministers of the gospel: there is no creature that is not manifest in His sight: but all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do!

Before the face of this God Paul gives Timothy a most solemn charge. It is a charge wherein God and man are called to witness. The term employed by Paul is "di-marturomai," that is, "earnestly and religiously to charge." Thayer. Compare I Tim. 4:1. Such is the charge to which every Minister in the Protestant Reformed churches, past and present, has solemnly with up-lifted hand said: "Yes, I with my whole heart!"

The evil of "striving about words" must indeed be a grievous one! Were it not so, the inspired Scriptures which are profitable unto instruction, correction reproof and the pedagogy in righteousness, that the man of God be thoroughly

equipped unto good works, would not issue such a solemn warning to preachers against the same! And let no one amongst preachers, the undersigned included, flatter himself, that he does not need this warning, lest he fall into this snare of the Devil! For such striving about words, as we pointed out in our former essay, serves no positive purpose of edification in the church. It is not the preaching of the inspired Scriptures, the holy words of God. All it does is to bring the catastrophe in the church by subverting the hearers from the sound words unto godliness!

Hence, the further charge is indeed to the point: "*Give diligence to present thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, handling aright the word of truth*" (or: rightly dividing the word of truth) Verse 15.

This is a word of Scripture which gives us a sure remedy in a godly preacher against battling about words; the ungodly do not heed this word and rush on to more ungodliness. They go from bad to worse. But the godly minister fears God. He only fears God and stands in holy awe and obedience before Him. Says Calvin on this verse in his Commentary. "Since all disputes about doctrine arise from this source, that men are desirous to make a boast of ingenuity before the world, Paul here applies the best and most excellent remedy, when he commands Timothy to keep his eyes fixed on God; as if he had said 'some aim at the applause of a crowded assembly, but do thou study to approve thyself and thy ministry before God.' And indeed there is nothing that tends more to check a foolish eagerness for display, than to reflect that we have to deal with God."

The proof of such being a "workman that needeth not to be ashamed" one will find in one's "rightly dividing the word of the truth."

What is this "word of the truth?"

It is nothing more and nothing less than the infallible Word of God contained in Holy Scriptures, as all God's truth is in Jesus Christ and His crucified. It is the full council of God concerning our redemption. The central truth by which it can be tested is whether one believes in the "resurrection of Jesus" with all its implications in regeneration, calling, justification, sanctification and glorification. This Hymeneus and Philetus did not do. They did not hold to the line of all that is implied in "that Christ is raised from the dead out of the seed of David according to my Gospel."

A godly preacher is not interested in anything else but the bringing of this message. He heeds the guide-posts set up by the church of all ages in the great Creeds of Christendom. He will wish to cling to the confessional lines as they are the expression of the Church, the pillar and ground of the truth. He does not work slavishly, but does not see with how much he can get away within the boundaries of the Confessions, but he has one thing in mind: he wishes to see how well he can be an approved workman of God. He has profound respect for the godly workmen who have labored before him. He calls to memory that these Confessions

were so precious to godly workmen that they would rather die than not build on the only foundation, besides which there is none other! To thus build he gives all diligence!

Such is a godly preacher!

He will not carp about words if it be pointed out to him in "sound words of doctrine" that he is not hewing to the line. Why? Because he does not serve man but knows that God judgeth a man to find him faithful. And trembling before God, lest his work be burned and he saved as by fire (I Cor. 3:13), he freely admits that his work was not according to the Confessions when this is pointed out to him. For he knows that if he rushes on from this point he is no longer "giving all diligence to present himself before the Lord, a workman that does not have to be ashamed." Fact is, from here on he will in shame need to be silent over his poor workmanship, and/or he will have to whimper about his good intentions! But His workmanship was such that it showed that he did not labor sufficiently to present himself a good workman before God! He had not rightly divided the word of the truth as it is in Jesus.

A good instance of poor workmanship is that of a Minister of the Gospel who will prove his orthodoxy to the congregation with the Psalter Versification of a Psalm, rather than giving a good exegesis from the original Hebrew and a solid study of the entire Psalm itself. If that is good workmanship, then our schools must cease giving instruction in the science of interpretation called Hermeneutics. On the other hand there is more truth than fiction in the word of Calvin, when reflecting on the phrase "to the subversion of the hearers," he says, "I wish that this were attended to by those who are always armed for fighting with the tongue, and who, in every question are looking for grounds of quarreling, and who go so far as to lay snares around every word or syllable. But they are carried in a wrong direction by ambition, and sometimes by an almost fatal disease; which I have experienced in some. What the Apostle says about *subverting* is shown, every day, by actual observation, to be perfectly true; for it is natural amidst disputes, to lose sight of the truth; and Satan avails himself of quarrels as a pretense for disturbing weak persons, and overthrowing their faith."

Yet, when we see men apostatizing from the faith, having fallen into the snare of Satan, we should not be too unduly alarmed. Let us keep in mind that the labors of him who is diligent in presenting himself before God as a workman that needeth not be ashamed, are not in vain in the Lord. It is true, that much scandal is created by those who apostatize and once walked with us in the faith. And at such times the hearts of those, who will be faithful are severely put to the test. It then seems that great pillars are falling, men who once were known as pillars in the church turn away from the truth. What can lesser spirits then do? Such is the experience of the godly preacher, who does not merely prate

about a good conscience, but who measured by the objective standards of God's Word presents himself as before God to the conscience of every man, since his sufficiency is of God! He sees men and women leave his congregation. He is put to the test then of either presenting himself acceptable to these deluded and fickle souls or he must prepare himself acceptable to God. And the latter he does. He would rather die than do anything contrary to the will of Him that says: Preach My Word, feed My sheep! He will rightly divide the word of truth. For they who do this have a good conscience. And with a free and good conscience they fight against sin and unbelief. Also the sin and unbelief in fickle and evil men, be they ministers or laymen!

He sees this evil-teaching proceed farther and farther. The anxious question cannot be downed: has God forgotten to be kind? Is His mercy clean gone? Must unrighteousness triumph in God's church for which Christ shed His precious blood on Calvary? Must he too follow the multitude, adapt his preaching so that they will not be offended? No, he will give the *more* diligence before the Throne of God to show himself approved of God. That is all that matters. That is all that matters more than ever before. He will not engage in "word-strife" but will preach the Word.

And what about the outcome?

To use the words of Paul "nevertheless the foundation of God standeth firm"!

Jesus said: My sheep hear my voice! The elect do not depend on the changing of events, but rest on the solid and immovable foundation; the foundation is in the hand of God. The sheep will indeed know who are the faithful shepherds. They will know who are concerned about their salvation in Christ and who would take from them the "word of truth" by not rightly dividing it. And that will be the deciding factor.

Paul did not write this word simply for dogmatical purposes. He wrote this word for the consolation of the faithful. Just as in the days of Korah, Datan and Abiram God determined who were they, who ministered faithfully before Him, so He does this still in present time! Moses, the man of God, did not gloat that the Lord found him faithful. He saw in it a reason for added humiliation. He knew what it meant to put off all iniquity that he might be fit for the Master's use. Let no one who has not yet run the race to the end in any way slacken his pace in the running.

The godly preacher has good reason to take heart. He is always more than a conqueror; he is such both in those who are perishing and in those who are being saved. All may seem against him. *Nevertheless!* the Lord knows those who are His. And, therefore, the godly preacher commits God's work into His faithful hands. For he is a workman that will not be ashamed in that day when the crown of life is given to all the faithful servants.

G. L.

IN HIS FEAR

More Straws

In their grasping at straws and in their desperate search for something that will as much as give the appearance of defense for their awful act of schism, those who chose to leave the path of truth and justice read and reread the works of Rev. H. Hoeksema and of the Rev. G. M. Ophoff very carefully.

They went through their works with a fine-toothed comb to try to find what little appearance of "support" for their stand that they could. And in the case of Rev. Kok, sad to say yet undeniably true — so true that he dares not deny it and has not even tried to prove it to be untrue — also to see what *must not* be called to the attention of the public, lest his whole straw house fall in pieces.

But this frantic and thorough search of the writings of these men shows the greatness of the evil in which they walk. *They do not want the truth.* They did not read and reread the writings of these men to do them justice. *They do not want to guard truth and justice.* They want to pick out just what *seems* to defend their case of schism and will not quote their writings in all honesty.

For that reason, also, Rev. De Wolf is inexcusable when in his cross bill he swore: "That the said Herman Hoeksema and his followers took possession of the property located on Eastern Avenue and insisted that he, said Herman Hoeksema, and others, were entitled to the use of the church edifice and parsonage, and did for a long period of time following said schism occupy said premises."

Now he cannot do here, as he tried to do with other passages of this unchristian cross bill, grasp the straw that this is simply the legal record of the Supreme Court of the State of Michigan. The very opposite is true. *The Supreme Court* said the very opposite.

Having gone through the Rev. H. Hoeksema's book, "The Protestant Reformed Churches in America," with a fine-toothed comb, he must undoubtedly have read pages 228 and 229. At least before swearing before God to such a thing he should have (as we suggested last time) looked up the facts and not have signed a document under oath just because it made the Rev. H. Hoeksema look so evil in the eyes of the civil courts. Anyone may read in clear type the following on pages 228 and 229 of the latest edition of that book of the Rev. H. Hoeksema:

"The preliminary skirmishes before Kent County Circuit Court, however, had no serious consequences.

"When on the date specified by the injunction the opposing parties appeared, the judge proceeded to lecture to them and postponed judgment for one week, in order to give the opposing parties time to reach an amicable settlement. In

case such a settlement was not reached on the appointed date, he would then render a verdict.

"No settlement having been reached during the week of grace, the judge rendered a preliminary verdict, that the contending parties should occupy the church-building on alternate Sundays, till the matter was finally and definitely settled in the courts.

"This temporary arrangement, however, which was received with evident joy by the minority group, but equally evident dismay by the majority group, was reversed on the following day by the *Supreme Court of the State of Michigan. The deposed consistory was held entitled to hold the property until the matter should have been finally disposed of in the courts.*" The italics are ours. But what then becomes of the evil accusation of Rev. De Wolf to which he was ready to swear before God?

It is not difficult to see why such a statement *had to be* in that cross bill. It is not difficult to see that after witnessing the whole court trial. Those of our readers who ordered a copy of the complete court record will find that statements such as the above quotation of the cross bill fit in perfectly with the pattern of the "defense" *ordered* by Rev. De Wolf and his deposed elders, *paid for* by them and for which, therefore, they are also responsible before God.

The Rev. H. Hoeksema must be made out to be one who time and again was in trouble with the authorities of both Church and State. Judge Taylor must understand what kind of man it is with whom he is dealing in this case! Just bear this in mind when you get your copy of the complete record and you will then see that we are not misrepresenting facts nor that cross bill. Revs. De Wolf, Blankespoor, Cammenga and Petter will remember that the undersigned asked them during one of the intermissions, "Are you going to stand for such a godless defense of your case?" When you get your court record you will understand why we asked them this question.

The answer given to that question was, "You made it necessary!" Now that we made a defense necessary by taking the matter to court is one thing. Conveniently, however, our honest attempt to settle it out of court is brushed aside. But let them before God ask themselves whether *this* kind of defense became necessary. Sin is never necessary, although it often is convenient and is enjoyable for the flesh.

There is, however, another grasping of a straw which we had in mind when we began this series. And we would call your attention to one which was seized in desperation in the court room, yea even on the witness stand. Not having the official records of this testimony as of this time, we will refer to our own abbreviated long hand record which we took of the whole trial. And though what we wrote may not be literal, (though we personally believe that it is) we are convinced that the official record when published will not reveal any misrepresentation on our part.

Rev. De Wolf was on the stand the afternoon of Wednesday, June 2, 1954. Mr. Tubbs was referring to the clas-

sical sessions wherein the case of Rev. De Wolf was being treated. He asked: "Do you claim that you did not have a chance to be heard at the meetings?"

Rev. De Wolf replied: "No sir, I claim that I did not have a chance to win."

Mr. Tubbs countered: You had no chance to win because your statements were heretical?"

Rev. De Wolf replied: "No Sir. I claim that I had no chance to win because the Classis was packed."

What an evil and unfair accusation to hurl at us after we *patiently* discussed his case for almost seven days! What an evil accusation to present in a civil court when he never gave the slightest inkling to the Classis that he had that opinion of the Classis! Nor did a word of it appear in his protest to the Classis in October, 1953!

One of the lovers of Conditional Theology and of schismatic action felt the need of writing the undersigned to tell him that he did not like the "insinuations" in our articles. Here are no insinuations but very unjust *accusations*. Let him write Rev. De Wolf a letter now. You may be sure no such letter will be written and sent. It is easy to accuse one of insinuations when you cannot prove one's statements to be wrong.

But even the unbiased and experienced judge was apparently surprised to hear this accusation of Rev. De Wolf. His honor, Judge Taylor interrupted the questioning at this point to ask the witness to repeat his last statement.

Rev. De Wolf, evidently realizing that his accusation is untrue and cannot be proven, and yet wanting to maintain it said, "Maybe I do not know the meaning of that word. Maybe I used the wrong term. Perhaps I should have said that the Classis was stacked."

Now besides the fact that to say that the Classis is stacked or to say that it is packed does not change the idea that there was underhanded work done and that the various consistories so arranged their delegates that justice was not done to the case and only those delegates were picked to attend the Classis who were known to be "against" Rev. De Wolf, (look up what Webster says about "packed" and "stacked." I believe I would prefer "packed") this is a downright untruth.

Let us look at the facts.

Rev. De Wolf knows as well as anyone else that our Church Order stipulates that one of the delegates from a congregation to the Classis shall be the minister of that congregation. See article 41. That means that there is no choice in regard to *half* of the delegates to Classis. The various consistories send their ministers as delegates. This half cannot be packed or stacked. There was in Classis East only one possibility of packing by the choice of the minister-delegate, and about that Rev. De Wolf should have kept still. For his own church had three ministers and therefore had choice. AND THEY SENT REV. DEWOLF HIMSELF even though his case was to come up! If there was packing as far

as the ministers are concerned, Rev. De Wolf, it was on your side!

What is more, three of the minister-delegates were proven to be in agreement with him, and one of them was to be treated, even as he was, in regard to heretical statements at that same Classis.

The only possible packing could have been among the elders. And then, if you please, Rev. De Wolf's consistory sent AN ELDER WHO SUPPORTED HIM and not one who had voted against him in the consistory! The churches in Illinois and Wisconsin we doubt even knew that this case was to appear at Classis. Our own consistory sends the elders in rotation. They take their turns. And we did not depart from this procedure in April, May and October of 1953. Let Rev. De Wolf mention those consistories that looked over their constituency and then said, "You go to Classis because you will vote against Rev. De Wolf." If he can do that — which he cannot — then it still is not true that the Classis was packed. For at best he can only point to a small minority that would have been sent to Classis in that way. But we are convinced that there was not *one* sent that way. A straw it is. And an evil one.

Does he mean packed because the Rev. Hoeksema was there to defend his protest? No, Rev. De Wolf, that is not so either. He had no decisive vote. Do you want to know why the undersigned — and others — decided the way he did? First undersigned's eyes were opened to the real interpretation by your group of your first statement by Rev. Blankespoor, when he *repeatedly* refused to accept all Protestant Reformed explanations of the word of God to reprobate Cain and to reprobate Jeroboam. The Rev. Ophoff showed from the word of God that Moses, as inspired by the Spirit of Truth, says not: "Behold I have *promised* you life and threatened you with death on the condition that you believe or disbelieve," but that God says instead through Moses: "Behold I have *set* before you life and death, blessing and cursing: Therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live." This was not enough for Rev. Blankespoor, who says there is no *doctrinal* issue. That interpretation satisfied Protestant Reformed people ever since 1924. And still does today. What more does *he* want. Never did he offer a better or even another interpretation. He simply continued to say that he was not satisfied with this Protestant Reformed interpretation. (We can say more about this, and will if need be.) All you can have, if you reject this *declaration* of the promise to all who hear, is either the error of 1924 that God *offers* salvation graciously to all who hear the preaching or else the Liberated corruption that God *promises* it to all the baptized on the condition of faith.

Another factor that opened the eyes of the undersigned (and also those of the Rev. Lubbers who once defended the majority report) was Rev. De Wolf's defense of his first statement. It was not the Rev. H. Hoeksema who convinced us but Rev. De Wolf. In the course of defending that first

(Continued on Page 120)

Contending For The Faith

The Church and the Sacraments

VIEWS DURING THE SECOND PERIOD (300-750 A.D.)

THE CHURCH

Continuing with the account of Gardiner's conversion, we quote the following: "When engaged in serious meditation on a Sabbath night in July, 1719, Gardiner suddenly thought he saw an unusual blaze of light fall on the book while he was reading, which he at first imagined might have happened by some accident in the candle. But lifting up his eyes, he apprehended, to his extreme amazement, that there was before him, as it were suspended in the air, a visible representation of the Lord Jesus Christ upon the cross, surrounded with a glory; and was impressed as if a voice, or something equivalent to a voice, had come to him, to this effect: 'O sinner, did I suffer this for thee, and are these the returns?' After this event he changed from a dissolute worldling to an earnest and godly man. But the whole apparition was probably, after all, merely an inward one. For the report adds as to the voice: "Whether this were an audible voice, or *only a strong impression on his mind*, equally striking, he did not seem confident, though he judged it to be the former. He thought he was awake. But everybody knows how easy it is towards midnight to fall into a doze over a dull or even a good book. It is very probable then that this apparition revolves itself into a significant dream which marked an epoch in his life." — thus far the account in the life of Gardiner.

We now proceed with Schaff's discussion of the "sign of the cross" which appeared to Constantine upon the eve of his important victory at the Milvian Bridge: "The facts, therefore, may have been these. Before the battle Constantine, leaning already towards Christianity as probably the best and most hopeful of the various religions, seriously sought in prayer, as he related to Eusebius, the assistance of the God of the Christians, while his heathen antagonist Maxentius, according to Zosimus, was consulting the sibylline books and offering sacrifice to the idols. Filled with mingled fears and hopes about the issue of the conflict, he fell asleep and saw in a dream the sign of the cross of Christ with a significant inscription and promise of victory. Being already familiar with the general use of this sign among the numerous Christians of the empire, many of whom no doubt were in his own army, he constructed the *labarum*, or rather he changed the heathen *labarum* into a standard of the Christian cross with the Greek monogram of Christ, which he had also put upon the shields of the soldiers. To this cross-standard, which now took the place of the Roman eagles, he attributed the decisive victory over the heathen Maxentius.— end of quote. This *labarum*, by the way, was a heathen sym-

bol, consisting of a long spear overlaid with gold, and a cross-piece of wood, from which hung a square flag of purple cloth embroidered and covered with precious stones. This symbol, then, appeared to Constantine in a dream, with the monogram of Christ (consisting of the first two letters of the name, Christ, in the form of a cross. This monogram, consisting of the first two letters of the name, Christ, was in use among the Christians long before Constantine, and therefore known to the emperor. This symbol, then, as appearing to Constantine in his dream, was interpreted by Constantine as the sign of the cross.

This quotation, I believe, explains itself. Schaff interprets the incident of the sign of the cross in the heavens as a subjective internal experience. Constantine had been friendly toward the Christians already for some time. He was certainly acquainted with the cross as the symbol and heart of Christianity. He was confronted by an army which far outnumbered his own. The excitement and tenseness of the moment may well have contributed toward a dream of this nature and which was experienced very vividly by the emperor. This does not deny the Divine origin, of course, of this incident. All things, we know, are of the Lord. Also this was of the Lord and surely for the sake of His Church. The battle of the Milvian Bridge was certainly one of the most significant battles in history because of its far-reaching results. It led to the Edict of Milan of 313.

The battle of the Milvian Bridge was surely a turning point in the life of Constantine the Great. We will not discuss at this time the question whether the emperor was truly a Christian. We know that he committed acts of atrocity and cruelty during his reign as Constantine the Great. The possibility certainly exists that he may have embraced the Christian religion because he recognized that it was essential to the life and welfare of his empire. After all, heathenism had not been able to destroy it. Christianity was indeed a "growing thing." Be this as it may, Constantine felt that he had won the victory over Maxentius because he had received help from the God of the Christians. Until now he had been a worshipper of the sun-god, Mithrax. He now became a Christian, be it in a formal sense of the word. He renounced heathenism and embraced Christianity as the true religion. Hence, the battle of the Milvian Bridge not only made him master of the entire western part of the Roman Empire, but it also led to his becoming the first Christian emperor.

What is the Edict of Milan? This decree goes far beyond the decree of Galerius of 311. Whereas the latter simply granted the Christians permission to hold their assemblies again, the former placed Christianity upon a footing of equality before the law, equal with the other religions in the Empire. Hence, it did not merely tolerate Christianity but gave it equal rights before the law. It did not, therefore, set up Christianity as the only and official religion within the Empire. At the same time the church buildings and property which had been confiscated during the Diocletian persecution were ordered to be restored, and private property-owners to

be indemnified from the imperial treasury. This Decree of Milan surely marked a turning point in the history of the Church.

From this time Constantine decidedly favored the Church, although he did not persecute or forbid heathen religions. He always mentioned the Christian church with reverence in his imperial edicts, and uniformly applied to the Church the name of Catholic. He exempted the Christian clergy from military and municipal duty; he abolished various customs and ordinances offensive to the Christians; facilitated the emancipation of the Christian slaves; legalized bequests to catholic churches (we must not confuse this with the Roman Catholic Church of today); enjoined the civil observance of the Sunday, although not as a day of the Lord; contributed liberally to the building of churches and the support of the clergy; erased the heathen symbols of Jupiter and Apollo, Mars and Hercules from the imperial coins; and gave his sons a Christian education. When later Constantine became the sole head of the entire Roman Empire, including the eastern half, he came out with still greater decision. He now issued a general proclamation to his subjects to embrace the Christian religion, although he still left them to their own convictions. In the year, 325, as patron of the church, he summoned the Council of Nicaea, and himself attended it; banished the Arians although he later recalled them; and, in his monarchical spirit of uniformity, showed great zeal for the settlement of all theological disputes, while he was blind to their deep significance. He first introduced the practice of subscription to the articles of a written creed and of the infliction of civil punishment for non-conformity. In the years, 325-329, in connection with his mother, Helena, he erected magnificent churches on the sacred spots in Jerusalem. The emperor diligently attended Divine worship, and is portrayed upon medals in the posture of prayer. He kept the Easter vigils with great devotion. He would stand during the longest sermons of his bishops who always surrounded him, and, unfortunately flattered him only too much. And, he himself even composed and delivered discourses to his court, in the Latin language, from which they were translated into Greek by interpreters appointed for that purpose. General invitations were issued, and the citizens flocked in great crowds to the palace to hear the imperial preacher, who would in vain try to prevent their loud applause by pointing to heaven as the source of his wisdom. He dwelt mainly on the truth of Christianity, the folly of idolatry, the unity and providence of God, the coming of Christ to judgment. He was baptized in the year, 337, in the sixty fifth year of his life, and died a few days later, on Pentecost, May 22, 337. His remains were removed in a golden coffin by a procession of distinguished civilians, and the whole army, from Nicomedia to Constantinople, and deposited, with the highest Christian honors, in the church of the Apostles, which church became the burial place of the Byzantine (Constantinople) emperors, till in the fourth crusade the coffins were rifled and the bodies cast out. However, the Roman senate, after its an-

cient custom, proudly ignoring the great religious revolution of the age and the fact that heathenism and paganism had suffered a crushing defeat with the defeat of Maxentius at the accession of Constantine to the throne of emperor of the Roman Empire, boldly proceeded to enroll him among the gods of the heathen Olympus, and this in spite (of the fact that they endorsed a religion which had been set aside by this Constantine and substituted by that of Christianity. From the fifth century he began to be recognized in the East as a saint; the Greek and Russian church to this day celebrate his memory under the extremely extravagant title of "Equal of the apostles." The Latin church, on the contrary, with truer tact, has never placed him among the saints, but has been content with naming him "the Great," in grateful remembrance of his services to the cause of Christianity and civilization. This is, in brief, a summary of the significance of Constantine the Great. We cannot doubt that the title "the Great," is fitting with respect to this first Christian emperor. Whatever may be our appraisal of the man from the viewpoint of whether he was or was not a Christian, it is certainly true that he was used by the Lord to serve the interests of His Church in the midst of the world. And whatever may have been his motive when granting Christians full and equal rights with other heathen religions, it is simply an undeniable fact that his famous Edict of Milan constituted one of the turning points in the history of the Church of God. There had been other such turning points in the history of the Church. But the Edict of Milan certainly ranks in importance with other turning points which had preceded it. We do well to remember, however, that this turning point presently exposed the Church of God to a danger fully as great as any that had preceded it. When Christianity received rest from the attacks of the enemy without, this rest gave the enemy within an opportunity to attack the truth and to undermine the very foundations of the Church of God. An attack from within is always fully as dangerous as from without. Be this as it may, Constantine's influence upon the Church of God was indeed very great.

H.V



If I could always clearly see
The reason for God's way with me;
If I could fully understand
And see all things as He has planned;
Then I of faith would have no need
Nor constantly for grace to plead.

But now, I cannot see the way;
What shall I ask, what shall I say?
Lord thou art Great, and Wise, and Good;
In deep humility, I would
But blindly follow in the way,
And live by faith anew each day.

The Voice of Our Fathers

The Canons of Dordrecht

PART TWO

EXPOSITION OF THE CANONS

FIRST HEAD OF DOCTRINE

OF DIVINE PREDESTINATION

Article 14 (continued)

In the remainder of this article we find a discussion, first of all, concerning the manner in which the truth of election is to be preached. The fathers mention here the following elements: 1) the spirit of discretion; 2) piety (The Dutch has here: „*met Godvruchtige eerbiedigheid, heiliglijk.*” The Latin has: „*religiose et sanctè.*”; 3) in due time and place (literally: in its own time and place); 4) without vainly attempting to investigate the secret ways of the Most High. In close connection herewith, the *Canons* speak, in the second place, of the two-fold purpose of election-preaching; 1) the glory of God’s most holy name; and, 2) the lively comfort of His people.

It is probably not out of place to inquire a little into the reason why these stipulations were proposed by the fathers. Did they have the Arminians in mind, or some particular Arminian objection or accusation, when they adopted this language? Or did they possibly have in view some of their own number, who had strong views about election and who were by some accused of using unwarranted expressions? Or, perhaps, is this language to be conceived of as some kind of concession to an element in the Reformed churches that was afraid of “election preaching?” Or, to mention one more possibility, did the fathers have in mind a certain concrete situation, some real dangers, when they added these qualifications to their insistence that the doctrine of election must still be proclaimed in the church today?

In the light of the context of this article, especially the immediately preceding context of Articles 12 and 13, and in the light of history, both past and present, I find it extremely difficult to believe that the fathers had anything else in mind than the reason suggested in the very first of the possibilities mentioned above. And I consider it dangerous and contrary to the intentions of Dordrecht to explain the language of Article 14 in any other way.

There was no strife about this article at the Synod. It was no subject of disagreement on the part of the supralapsarians and those who were supposed to be guilty of using strong language and even unwarranted expressions concerning predestination. Fact is, that the attempt to condemn these so-called strong expressions was actually made after the *Canons* were adopted. But it failed. And the *Canons* themselves were signed by all delegates. Hence, the second possibility,

namely, that the fathers had in mind some of their own number who were guilty of making unwarranted expressions and placing undue emphasis upon election, must be ruled out.

However, this article is interpreted by some as though the fathers had in mind a certain real danger in election preaching, and as though its language is some kind of concession to an element in the Reformed churches that saw this danger and wanted to counteract it. And it is my considered opinion that this is not true, and that those who still today are of such a feeling can find no solace in this article. There are those who, when all is said and done about the truth of election, and when it is duly established that this truth must be preached, say: “Yes, *but* you must be careful with election preaching. You must be careful that you do not shove this doctrine on the foreground in the preaching, so that it is always and everywhere the main content of the preaching. It leads to passivism and indifference, etc.” Thus, for example, J. G. Feenstra writes in “De Dordtse Leerregelen,” page 60, as follows: „In de praktijk des levens wordt helaas van de leer van de verkiezing, uit onverschilligheid, of lijdelijkheid, misbruik gemaakt. Zo is het ook mogelijk, dat bij de prediking misbruik binnensluipt. Daartegen kunnen wij niet ernstig genoeg waarschuwen. Een dienaar des Woords heeft hier vooral de voorzichtigheid te betrachten.” And T. Bos, in a commentary by the same title as the work of Feenstra, page 56, writes: “Toch moet men in de Kerk met de prediking van de leer der verkiezing voorzichtig zijn. Zij moet niet tegenstaan de prediking des Evangelies in het algemeen en aan alle menschen. Op zijn tijd en plaats moet de verkiezing voorgesteld worden, zoodat het niet goed is, altijd over de verkiezing te prediken en overal met dat leerstuk op te treden . . . Het was in het bijzonder Calvin, die het leerstuk der verkiezing weer helder begon voor te stellen in de dagen der Hervorming. Hij begon met de leer van God, en tot de werken Gods van eeuwigheid behoorde de Voorverordineering. Zijn uitgangspunt was de verheerlijking van God, en dit komt juist in de verkiezing het duidelijkste uit. Maar nu is het zeker niet Calvinistisch, wanneer in de prediking de leer der Voorverordineering zoodanig vooropgeschoven wordt, dat zij er altijd en overal de hoofdinhoud van is. Deze leer is te heilig en te heerlijk, om er als ’t ware mee te spelen.”

Now I would not question the motives behind the above quotations, nor the good intentions thereof. Nor do I question the truth of some of their claims in the abstract. But I very definitely question the realism and the necessity of such warnings. First of all, let us look at this matter in the light of the *Canons* themselves. If the doctrine of election is set forth, not merely as an abstract and unconnected doctrine that God has chosen a certain number of people to salvation but as it is expounded in the *Canons*, and as we have viewed it in the first thirteen articles adopted by Dordt, where is the danger so earnestly warned against? And especially if we bear in mind that in articles 12 and 13 the fathers have

precisely denied that the truth of election can lead to passivism and indifference on the part of the elect, this danger certainly recedes still more into the background. And in this light I certainly cannot agree that "Daartegen kunnen wij niet ernstig genoeg waarschuwen. (Against this we cannot warn earnestly enough)." And in the second place, in the light of history I consider this warning altogether unrealistic. Has it ever actually been the case that the doctrine of election was too much shoved on the foreground? Pray, when? Has it ever been really thus, that the doctrine of election was always the subject of the preaching? Has it been so that the truth of election was made to stand over against the preaching of the gospel in general and to all men? It may perhaps be granted that there have been isolated instances of preachers who became guilty of this to a degree. But that there have been whole movements and entire denominations in the main stream of church history that were guilty of these things I deny. Has not the case rather been thus, that in the history of the church there has been no doctrine more difficult to maintain both in the pulpit and in the official utterances of the church in her confessions than the truth of sovereign predestination? Has it not been so that even Reformed churches have been loathe to bring this truth in the pulpit, have even become ashamed of their "Calvinistic" views of predestination, have contradicted them with the heresy of a general and well-meant offer of grace, and have far too often maintained an almost complete silence about election? Has it not only too often been thus, that those who proclaimed the truth of election freely and boldly, and who properly proceeded from the truth of election in all their exposition of Reformed truth and of the gospel, were roundly criticized and opposed and charged with the supposed wrongs mentioned above? Yea, has not much of the controversy and struggle of the faithful church concentrated exactly in the life-and-death effort to maintain the sovereign and particular character of the gospel? Such is the light which history sheds on this question. And therefore I would much rather say: *one cannot warn earnestly enough against the danger of not allowing the truth of predestination its proper place in the preaching!*

The explanation of the language of this article is rather to be found again in the false accusations of the Arminians. In harmony with their whole false presentation, they accused, and still often accuse, the defenders of the truth of election of indiscretion and impiety in the preaching of this truth. They accuse us of curiously prying into the secret ways of the Most High. They object that the preaching of election is not for the lively comfort of God's people, and is not to the glory of God. Instead, we must have "the good old invitation." And it is to the glory of God to save souls and to offer divine salvation to all men. They object that election is not kept in its proper place, nor brought at the proper time in the preaching. And of course, they will also define that proper place and time for us. And in answer to these calumniators of the truth and of those who faithfully

preach the truth the fathers make clear here that they are not such evil men as the opponents would picture them, and that all these calumniations of the gospel of sovereign election are imaginary and false. For they certainly maintain that this truth must be preached "with the spirit of discretion, piously, holily, in its own time and place, for the glory of God's most holy name and the lively comfort of his people, without curiously scrutinizing the ways of the Most High.

In general, we may note that what is here said about the preaching of election is also true of every individual Christian doctrine, in a greater or lesser degree. What truth is there that must not be preached in a spirit of discretion, piously, holily, in its own time and place, etc.? This becomes the more true when we bear in mind that Christian doctrine is essentially one, and is from that point of view essentially all theology, doctrine of God. It always then behooves us to exclaim: "How wondrous are the ways of God, unfathomed and unknown!" But we may immediately add that whenever we deal with the doctrine of God in the narrower sense of the term, what the *Canons* here say about the proper attitude and manner of the preaching is most emphatically true. When we speak of God, His names, His Being, His Persons, His attributes, His works *ad intra* and *ad extra*, we cannot emphasize enough that we stand on holy ground, and that it behooves us to take off our shoes from off our feet. And this is perhaps above all true of the predestination. It is by no means something to be played with. But the awareness of this fact is not the private possession of the Arminian! His doctrine surely gives no evidence of discretion, piety, holiness, etc. And woe unto him who willfully plays with such holy things by corrupting the truth! Woe to him who deliberately keeps silence about the truth of such holy things of God! It had been better for him if he had never pretended to preach!

(to be continued)

H.C.H.



God forbid that the following should be said of us:

Ye call Me Master and obey Me not.
 Ye call Me Light and see Me not.
 Ye call Me Life and desire Me not.
 Ye call Me the Way and walk not therein.
 Ye call Me Wise and follow Me not.
 Ye call Me Beautiful and love Me not.
 Ye call Me Rich and ask Me not.
 Ye call Me Eternal and seek Me not.
 Ye call Me Gracious and trust Me not.
 Ye call Me Noble and serve Me not.
 Ye call Me Righteous and fear Me not.
 If I condemn you, blame Me not.

DECENCY and ORDER

The Ministry Of The Word

(Continued)

As Overseer

We have observed that the calling of the minister is to bring the Word of God in different ways and under various circumstances. Among these is his task to bring the Word in a disciplinary manner unto those that walk in sin. In general this is also done through the ministry of the Word in the public assembly of the people of God on the Lord's Day where the minister must "say unto the righteous that it shall be well with him, for he shall eat of the fruit of his doings and woe unto the wicked! it shall be ill with him for the reward of his hands shall be given him", (Is. 3:10, 11) but we speak now of the specific application of the Word to individual circumstances that require admonition and discipline. Frequently, in cases where this is necessary, the preaching of the Word on the Sabbath no longer reaches those that are the objects of this special ministerial labor. The pastor must apply the key power of christian discipline which is a special form of the ministry of the Word.

In this particular labor he is not alone, however, for Article 16 states that "*with the elders* he is to exercise church discipline and see to it that everything is done decently and in good order". He is not a pope who receives into and excludes from the fellowship of the church those whom he pleases but he functions as an elder, who, together with the other elders of the church, perform this important labor. No doubt christian discipline, in the strict sense of the word, could be enacted with greater simplicity and executed with greater expediency if put in the charge of one individual but this would not be best for the church. There is always too much danger of bias and misuse of a power unequalled for, remember, it is a power that opens and shuts the kingdom of heaven. Beside, it is contrary to the plain testimony of the Scriptures which exhort the congregation to "obey them (plural) that have the rule over you and submit yourselves, for they watch for your souls as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy and not with grief, for that is unprofitable for you". (Hebrews 13:17) Christ has given authority to the office bearers of His church to punish transgressors with spiritual means. (Belgic Confess. Art. 30) The minister and elders must not take this aspect of their calling lightly nor shirk from those duties that are in their very nature grievous and unpleasant for then "the covenant of God is profaned and the wrath of God is kindled against the whole congregation". (Heid. Cat. q. 82) In general the church today is very weak with respect to discipline. In many circles it is an unheard of thing; even would-be Reformed circles. The elders of the church are

considered as business administrators rather than as disciplinarians. If the minister points out sin, he is regarded as being critical and if he insists that evil doers be punished, he is accused of being domineering. In other circles the discipline that is found is virtually without power and the members who are living in various forms of iniquity, though perhaps softly admonished, are nevertheless unreservedly admitted into the fellowship of the church and the table of the Lord.

This is easily understood. This work, properly speaking, belongs to the ministry of the Word. Maintaining order and decency in the congregation is a matter of applying the Word unto the life of the members. There is a close affinity between these two. Because of this, neglect of christian discipline is inevitably the consequence of corrupting and distorting the Word. When the Word is no longer purely preached, proper oversight of the congregation cannot be maintained. Likewise, where the truth of the Word is maintained, the necessity of discipline will be felt and its presence will be evident. Mark that church well for there is the true ministry of the Word of God.

Concerning the actual execution of the work of discipline we will have occasion to write in another connection when we discuss Arts. 71-80 of the Church Order but a few remarks are proper here in as far as this pertains to the duties of the minister. First, of all, the minister (and elders too) should not forget the positive purpose of this work. Whereas the work concerns not only discipline in the narrow sense, namely, in the sense of excommunication, but also all protective and corrective pastoral labors, the aim of these labors is always to maintain the purity of the church of Christ and to bring the members of the church to a richer enjoyment of their salvation. It is a work of grace which aims to build and save. It aims at the abolition of the forces of evil that seek the destruction of the members of the church and the church itself. Because of this it is imperative, of course, that those, who under the name of christians, maintain doctrines, or practices inconsistent with the command of Christ and who, after having been often brotherly admonished, will not renounce their errors and wicked course of life, and despise these admonitions, shall be forbidden the use of the sacraments whereby they are excluded from the christian church and, by God Himself from the kingdom of Christ; and when they promise and show real amendment they shall be received again as members of Christ and of His Church. (Heid. Cat. q. 85)

"A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump!"

Or, as the Psalmist expresses it, "I will early destroy all the wicked of the land that I may cut off all wicked doers from the city of the Lord". (Psalm 101:8) Remember how Moses, the minister and servant of the Lord, was instructed by God to cut off from Israel those that transgressed the holy commandments! The first concern of the faithful pastor must always be that the sheepfold of Jesus Christ be kept

clean. With this in view he labors with admonitions, rebukes, exhortations and corrections.

This brings us, in the second place, to the consideration that this kind of labor is always very difficult. It lies in the very nature of matters that it should be so. The difficulty springs from a double source. Firstly, the minister, knowing himself to be a sinful man, is often reluctant to apply the Word with the severity of Christ. His own sinful self is often projected into his labor. And there is nothing that is more difficult than that one sinner is called upon to admonish and correct another. That such is possible is only due to the fact that the minister labors in the strong consciousness of his calling and in the humble acknowledgment that he has nothing that he has not received. He brings to the sinner not his own word but that of Christ. He comes with the "Thus saith the Lord", confessing at the same time that that word of Christ also condemns him as he is in himself. That he does not fall under the same disciplinary blow of that word is only due to the grace of Christ. By that grace "I am what I am." Such labor takes an abundance of grace, indeed!

Secondly, it is a difficult labor because the people of God who need admonition are frequently not receptive thereto. This is especially so when they are plagued with special sins and for a time are apparently in the power of the evil one. There is the element of sinful, human pride. Often it is difficult, if not impossible, to reason with those who cling to certain sins. These sins obstruct their vision of the Word of God and the way they should go, making it difficult to convert them from the error of their way. So today, for example, we know of those who complain about the preaching of the Word. Though they never register a proper protest showing the defects of the preaching, they do a great deal of wicked slandering, back-biting, gossiping, etc. They say that there are not enough admonitions in the preaching. When they complain they walk in rebellion. When the elders visit them and admonish them (these are the people that complain because of the lack of admonitions in the preaching) concerning their sinful walk, they become furious and refuse to hear of an admonition. What must you think of people like that? O consistency thou art a jewel! It is indeed difficult to continue to admonish and call such to repentance. It takes much patience, longsuffering and prayer. It is a spiritual labor that is possible only through the Spirit Who alone can break down the barrier of sin that the heart may be reached by the Word.

Finally, the pastor must avoid haste. It is a natural tendency to hastily apply the steps of censure to recalcitrant members in order to rid the church of them but it is not the way prescribed by the Lord. It is the way dictated by the flesh. Of course, there are instances where the sinner gives evidence of nothing but hardening in sin, leaving no other alternative, but where there is still a faint hope, arduous and painstaking labor ought to be expended to save the erring one from the error of his way. However, it should

also be remembered that the welfare of the church, her name, her reputation and honor which is the honor of Christ, may never be sacrificed for the sake of one or a few members. The church is more than the individual and her purity may not be defamed by those who wantonly persist in sinful ways.

Decency and order! The task of the overseers of the church is to see that these are maintained. Truly, a high calling! "But our sufficiency is of God, Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament, not of the letter, but of the spirit, for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life". (II Cor. 3:5)

G. Vanden Berg

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

(Continued from Page 106)

and thus with changing the glory of God into the likeness of an ox that eateth grass. This is the great sin of all idol worshippers both ancient and modern. The modern man invents a doctrine of God, that is, forms in his mind a conception or image of God according to his own liking, and that image he worships. Though he is not in the literal sense prostrated before a carved image of wood or stone, he is an image worshipper as actually as were those Jews at Horeb that worshipped the golden calf.

In the two verses that follow, the prophet holds up for scorn and ridicule all such vile doings.

19. A carved image the engraver moulds,
And the goldsmith spreads it over with gold,
And chains of silver refines.

20. He that is so poor that he has no gift, a tree that will not root chooses;

An engraver cunning he seeks for himself to prepare him a carved image that will not rot.

The idolater has a carved image made for himself overlaid with gold and provided with chains for fastening it to the ground in order that it may not accidentally be toppled over. If he can't afford an image so costly, he has one made of durable wood. That dumb, lifeless thing he now worships. From it he expects all his salvation. He does this despite the fact that his reason tells him that it is foolishness to trust in a dumb idol. God gave men over to this folly, because, though they knew God, they honored Him not as God.

In view of the fact that God made man in His own image, it might be asked why it is so sinful to liken the creature with God. To this it must be answered that God did not make man another God equal with Him but He made man a creature. As *creature* he reflected God's glories while he stood. Idolatry identifies the creature with God and thereby destroys God conceptually by deifying the corruptible creature. Essentially worshipping the creature, be that creature the mightiest of men, is as senseless as to worship lifeless stone or wood, as before God the one as as much a nothingness as the other.

G.M.O.

ALL AROUND US

Woman Suffrage in the Church.

The October-November, 1954, issue of *Torch and Trumpet* presents the first in a series of articles by the Rev. Martin Monsma on: The Question of Woman Suffrage in the Church. In this issue he treats only the issues involved. Rev. Monsma was requested by *Torch and Trumpet* to contribute this series. What he will have to say on this subject should prove to be interesting, since he is supposed to speak with some authority. Not only is he at present an associate professor of church government at Calvin Seminary, but he is also a co-author of a commentary on Church Polity as well as one of the committee members appointed by the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church to study this matter of woman suffrage in the church. We shall follow with interest all that he shall have to say on this subject, and report to our readers when there are any worthwhile developments.

The first article, above referred to, is intended to be only informative. Rev. Monsma writes that it is his intention only to "try to reproduce the issues involved objectively." The question: Should our woman receive the right to vote at Congregational Meetings? is one, so he writes, that "has been before our Christian Reformed Churches the past few years; officially ever since 1947. Classis Muskegon overtured the Synod of that year 'to study further the question of the proper function of the Congregational Meeting among our ecclesiastical assemblies and to properly delineate the authority of that assembly with a view to the solving of the problem of allowing women members to vote in Congregational Meetings.'

'Synod decided in harmony with the Muskegon overture and appointed a committee to study this matter.

"This committee reported to the Synod of 1950. The findings, tentative conclusions, and advice of the study committee may be found in the Synodical Acts of 1950, pages 267-280. In harmony with the recommendations of the committee, Synod of 1950 decided to ask the advice of the next Reformed Ecumenical Synod. Our Synod suggested that advice from Ecumenical Synod should especially concern the nature and authority of Congregational Meetings in our Reformed system of church government and that it should include an exegetical study of all Scripture passages which have bearing on the question at hand.

"The Ecumenical Synod of 1953, meeting at Edinburgh, Scotland complied in part with the request of our Synod, in that it adopted an expression on the question of women suffrage in the churches. This advice reached our Christian Reformed Synod this past summer. Our Synod appointed a committee to study the report of 1950, together with the advice of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod, and to come with recommendations to one of our early Synods."

At this point in his article professor Monsma informs his readers that he is not at this time going to present his own views on the subject, and then he states his reasons for not doing so. One of these reasons is that he is on the committee that must advise Synod and he considers that it would be both unwise and premature should he at this time print his own views on the matter.

When I read this I thought it rather strange, since I thought that he on another occasion did express his views on this subject, and I began to wonder whether he is about to change his mind. Rev. Monsma some years ago was a co-author of a commentary on Church Polity in which he along with the Rev. I. Van Dellen explained the Church Order of the Christian Reformed Churches. I happened to have this book in my library, and so opened it to see what he advised his churches regarding this matter. This is what the co-authors wrote on page 25: "The question whether or not women should take part in congregational elections we would answer negatively. Voetius, the great expert in Reformed Church government, excludes women from church elections inasmuch as congregational elections are church governmental in character. And women, according to Holy Writ, are not to teach in the churches nor to help govern the same. (I Cor. 14:34.) Bouwman judges likewise. So does Jansen. Those who have not yet made confession of faith have no right to vote inasmuch as they are, ecclesiastically speaking, minors. Members being disciplined have no right to vote inasmuch as censure implies that all rights of church membership are held in abeyance, rendered non-active, temporarily at least."

From the above quotation it is obvious that Rev. Monsma emphatically denies women the right to vote in congregational elections. It will be interesting to learn therefore whether he has changed his mind now, or whether he is going to influence the committee that must advise Synod to show the Christian Reformed Churches how they should decide in favor of the advice he gives in his commentary.

Rev. Monsma writes further, "The mandate which the Synod of 1947 gave the study committee appointed by it included particularly two matters. A delineation of the nature and authority of Congregational Meetings, and a study of the question of women suffrage at our Congregational Meetings.

"Why should Synod of 1947 include a study of the nature and authority of Congregational Meetings in its charge to a study committee? The answer to his question is near at hand. For the answer to the question whether or not our women should vote and take part in the activities at our Congregational Meetings stands closely related to this other question: what are our Congregational Meetings? Are they essentially governing in character, or are they merely advisory in character? When our men discuss various issues at Congregational Meetings and vote on these issues, then are they merely expressing their opinions and are they advising the Consistory, or do these gatherings reach certain decisions which have binding significance and according to which the Consistory must take certain actions?"

"If decisions reached at Congregational Meetings are really no more than advice then it cannot be said that if our women should speak and vote at these meetings, that they are exercising a measure of governmental authority. If, on the other hand, decisions reached at Congregational Meetings are more than advice, more than an expression of opinion on the part of the congregation for the benefit of the Consistory; if these decisions are binding and authoritative, then it follows that our women, taking part in these meetings, would be exercising governmental authority in and for the church of Jesus Christ. The assumption, it should be noted, is that the men, according to the Bible, may help to govern the churches, but not the women. Whether or not this assumption is correct, is another question; that question we are not now considering. I merely call this assumption to the reader's attention to indicate why the question of the nature and authority of Congregational Meetings comes to the fore as a prior question, as soon as we seek to answer our first question, i.e., may our women vote at Congregational Meetings?"

"Now the study committee of 1947 pointed out that the generally accepted opinion in our circles has been that our Congregational Meetings are not authoritative, but advisory in character. Not the congregation, but the Consistory, is the ruling body of the church."

Here Rev. Monsma points to several authorities which the committee refers to which appear to be in favor of its position. Among these are the Kerkrechterlijke Adviezen of Dr. F. L. Rutgers and Prof. Wm. Heyns' Kerkrecht en Kybernetiek and Handbook for Elders and Deacons. Besides, the committee also pointed to Art. 29 of the Church Order. It was pointed out that among the governing assemblies this article mentions Congregational Meetings are not mentioned. The Church Order "repeatedly speaks of matters which are to be submitted to the congregation for its *approbation*," not decision.

"The study committee however came to the conclusion that the traditional position cannot be maintained. It took the position that our Congregational Meetings are governmental in character and not merely advisory."

"Here are the arguments of the Committee in brief summary: 'The Creeds attribute more than advisory power to the congregation. The answer to question 85 of the Heidelberg Catechism speaks of the office-bearers as 'those who are appointed by the church.' Art. 31 of the Confession of Faith speaks of Elders and Deacons chosen 'by a lawful election by the church.'

"The Form for the Ordination of Elders and Deacons speaks of these office-bearers as 'lawfully called of God's church.'

"Art. 22 of the Church Order speaks of nominees being presented, 'to the congregation for election,' and of the one-half of the nominess 'chosen by it.'

"A model set of Articles of Incorporation, sanctioned by our Synod of 1926, contains statements such as the following, '... no such purchase, sale or conveyance, mortgage, lease, or fixing of salaries shall be made unless the affirmative vote of a majority of the members of this church organization, of which said trustees, are officers, shall first be obtained at a meeting of such members of this church or congregation present and entitled to vote ...'

At this point, Rev. Monsma mentions several authorities "in the field of Reformed church government" which attribute more than an advisory voice to the congregation. Among these are Voetius, Prof. H. Bouwman, Prof. S. Greydanus and with some reservations Prof. K. Dyk agrees with them, who all teach that the election of office-bearers belongs to the governmental authority of the church. Monsma also points out that the committee also quotes Calvin's Institutes at length to show that he too spoke of the "authoritative voice of the congregation."

And finally, Rev. Monsma also quotes in full the arguments which the committee of 1947 found in Scripture to prove that the character of Congregational Meetings is more than advisory. Accordingly they exercise a measure of ruling power.

Now it would seem that unless the committee that is now appointed to study the matter more fully will negate the findings of the committee of 1947, they will come to the same conclusions. And if this is the case, that they find that Congregational Meetings are authoritative in character, then according to what Rev. Monsma has already judged women voting in the church would be exercising governmental authority.

As I said, it will be interesting to see whether the Rev. Monsma will change the views expressed in his commentary. I'll predict that he will. It isn't so bad that a man changes his mind if he is wrong. But it is bad if the man is right. Rev. Monsma and the committee have a host of supporters for the view it is decidedly wrong for women to vote in congregational meetings. Among these is Dr. H. Bouwman who strongly condemns the practice in Vol. I of his Gereformeerd Kerkrecht. We have great respect for his judgment. But I say again, I predict that Rev. Monsma and the committee will change. It is the trend of the church not only in this country but also in the Netherlands. And the Christian Reformed Churches will follow the latter, not lead them.

M.S.



... Away from home one learns also to evaluate what the church in which he was reared, has done for him. One learns to be less critical and more appreciative. After all, it was in Father's providence that we were placed in the surroundings that helped form our character and brought us the Christ. If now we have meat to eat that others have not, let us share it with them.

CONTRIBUTIONS

Kok's Corruptions!

Dear Editor of the Standard Bearer:—

If room permits, please publish the following: Kok is not only church politically *corrupt*, but, even still worse so, doctrinally CORRUPT! *The following, however, is only a sample* taken from Kok's cesspool, which for the most is as yet still uncovered: *to the public*. We must still deal with that stench continually wherever we read, in Scripture or the Confessions, for Kok has so grievously mutilated, and distorted God's holy Word, and the doctrine of Salvation, so much so, that his evil explanations, must be counteracted continually as we read or study same. If Kok dares to do so with God's Holy Word, then be no more surprised that he will do the same with anyone's writings.

I. Kok maintained that, man could *frustrate* (destroy). The Decree of God's will, *by disobeying* The Decree of God's command. Altho God might have determined something as he willed it to be, man could choose not to obey God's command, and by so doing, the purposed end of the will of God's would be nullified. Thus God's will, was dependent on man's obedience. Kok's Reformed Conditions? or futilism: there is no God! H.V.P.)

2. In a certain sermon, Kok, set forth, and stressed the point that, the doctrine of God's (as we confess and preach it H.V.P.) sovereign grace salvation, was stocks and blocks-pulman-car-sleeper-service-salvation; which denied man's moral, rational, natural responsibility. Kok's denunciation of said doctrine was strengthened by stamping his foot on the platform, evidently to make it stick. It worked in some, and wrecked(?) Holland's congregation. (I prefer to say: It purified it. H.V.P.) and a bird escaped are we: Thank God!

3. In a sermon on John 1:17, "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." He explained that, law was one thing, and grace and truth, the other; but where Jesus Christ disappeared to no one knows!

And how that gulf between 'law' and grace and 'grace and truth', was ever spanned, Kok did not explain (the work of the Holy Spirit conditional? H.V.P.) Thus the law says "You MUST;" and 'grace and 'truth' are man's vehicles to employ, by God's command (law) and IF HE OBEYS, man will obtain God's promise(s)(????), based on verse 16 of Kok's TYPE grace: But as many as received him etc., verse 12; at the expense of, or hushing to death verse 13: "Which were born, not of blood etc." But what Kok did with the Holy Spirit of regeneration is BLANK. He hushed it!

4. His sermon on the last petition of the Lord's Prayer, he entirely omitted the little word "For," to then give us a discourse on "The kingdom;" "power;" "glory," which were God's. So far Kok! And that is what Kok names the basis for our comfort, that as truly as we pray it, just so truly we shall receive it??? In plain English, then the proper answer to such is: "HELL." KOK! KOK!, it sent the chills down our spines!

5. Following said discourses, was a sermon on "Thine only Comfort," Lord's Day 1. "What is thine only comfort in life and in death" etc.; and I wondered just how Kok would explain THIS conditionally! The work of the Father was one thing; that of Jesus Christ the other; BUT! BUT! when he came to the work of the Holy Spirit of our complete salvation, then he *emphasized* that the Holy Spirit *would make us* sincerely willing and ready *to live unto him* to then say: "SEE!" So far Kok. In other words: There is *your and my* (Kok's) proof, that Hoeksema-Ophoff, Et Alii, *deny* that WE MUST; but here anyone can read it with his very own eyes.

6. On Ephesians 5:8, "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light": Darkness and light were explained entirely in the natural sense (NATURE) BUT! BUT! WALK AS CHILDREN OF LIGHT really put PEP into his homiletics. How this darkness *became* light was omitted; and verse 9, The fruits of the Spirit evidently didn't belong to his text; BUT! HOW KOK CAN AFFORD TO DENY THE TRINITY and still expect to be saved, is his problem.

7. Heb. 2:14, "... him that hath the power of death, that is, the devil;" was Kok's text and topic for discourse, BUT AGAIN AT THE EXPENSE OF ANY AND ALL HOPE OF OUR SALVATION: which the first part of the very same verse sets forth: "For as much then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he (Jesus our Saviour: H.V.P.) also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he (Jesus) might destroy him..." (namely: the devil. H.V.P.) "who had the power of death." KOK! KOK! is that what your "Conscience as your guide" leads you to? If that were my conscience, I'd throw it away! for it sure is a ROT! May God give you grace to purify that CONSCIENCE of yours, is my humble prayer for you. If such wanton destruction of God's Word, and the doctrine of the Holy Spirit and salvation by God's elective grace in Christ Jesus our Saviour must not be branded as the sin described in Hebrews 10:29, then I ask: what must it come to, before the truth of that verse comes to its own? I have lots of it, more; but I must end. To all of you who alike with us have treated Kok with the silk gloves of christian love: NOT WILLING TO BELIEVE, NOR ACCEPT, THAT KOK'S ENTIRE PROGRAM IS THOROUGHLY CORRUPT AND SINFUL, I ask: If Kok will do SUCH with

the Word of God, as above referred to; can we still then entertain the faintest hope that he will NOT do the same with everyone's writings? WE KNOW KOK! And that is the reason for our protests against him, now still lying at Classis: simply because he hung himself with the Reformed Church Order, to which he refused to subscribe as a delegate to Classis East. There is MUCH MORE in that CESS-POOL of CORRUPTION, both church-political and doctrinal, but my space allowed is FULL; yours in Christ, for the truth.

H. A. Van Putten

P.S. Kok, "What think ye of the Christ? whose son is he?" "We would see Jesus."

IN HIS FEAR

(Continued from Page 110)

statement, the majority of the committee presented a document which tried to defend that statement by suggesting that Rev. De Wolf had the elect in mind when he said that "God promises *everyone* of you . . ."; even as we have the elect in mind when the benediction is pronounced in our services. But Rev. De Wolf changed the mind of the undersigned and of the Rev. Lubbers when he got up and said that he did not mean that and that he believed that he could say to any man that he meant that God promises to him that he would be saved if he believes. The cat was out of the bag then.

What, especially convinced the undersigned of the evil of the second sermon—we say sermon and not statement merely—is that the cross as the gate to the kingdom was nowhere in the whole sermon even though it was a preparatory (?) sermon, and instead we had our act of conversion as the condition to be fulfilled to enter. Indeed, as we wrote before, the condition takes the place of Christ and His cross. Now one can in hasty preparation present such a Christless sermon, but that one defends it tooth and nail is something else.

Besides, the majority report based its whole argument on a Greek construction which the Rev. Hoeksema questioned as ever appearing in the Scriptures. He said he doubted that it ever appeared but was not sure. He did not domineer the undersigned into seeing the evil of Rev. De Wolf's second sermon. But the failure of the majority of that committee and of the supporters of Rev. De Wolf to show that such a Greek form ever appears in Scripture is what convinced us.

No, Rev. De Wolf, the Classis was neither packed nor stacked; but we thank God that in His providence and grace He had filled *our* Classis with men who loved the Protestant Reformed truth, the truth of the Scriptures and of our Confessions.

There was a sequel to this accusation of a packed Classis. But, perhaps, we better leave that for you to read in your own court record.

J.A.H.

THY ROD AND THY STAFF THEY COMFORT ME

Psalm 23:4

I have been through the valley of weeping,
The valley of sorrow and pain;
But the "God of all comfort" was with me,
At hand to uphold and sustain.

As the earth needs the clouds and sunshine,
Our souls need both sorrow and joy;
So He places us oft in the furnace—
The dross from the gold to destroy.

When He leads through some valley of trouble,
His omnipotent hand we trace;
For the trials and sorrows He sends us
Are part of His lessons in grace.

Oft we shrink from the purging and pruning
Forgetting the Husbandman knows
That the deeper the cutting and paring,
The richer the cluster that grows.

Well He knows that affliction is needed;
He has a wise purpose in view,
And in the dark valley He whispers—
"Hereafter you'll know what I do."

So we'll follow wherever He leadeth,
Let the path be dreary or bright;
For we've proved that our God can give comfort,
Our God can give "songs in the night."



ALONE

It is human to stand with the crowd; it is divine to stand alone. It is man-like to follow the people, to drift with the tide; it is godlike to follow a principle, to resist the tide.

It is natural to compromise conscience and follow the social and religious fashion for the sake of gain or pleasure; it is divine to sacrifice both on the altar of truth and duty.

"No man stood with me, but all men forsook me," wrote the battle scarred Apostle in describing his first appearance before Nero to answer charges brought against him by the Jews.

Truth has been out of fashion since man changed his robe of fadeless light for one of faded leaves.

Noah built and voyaged alone, His neighbors laughed at his strangeness and perished in style. Abraham wandered and worshipped alone. The people of Sodom smiled at the simple shepherd, followed the fashion, and fed the flames. Daniel dined and prayed alone. Elijah sacrificed and witnessed alone. Jeremiah prophesied alone. Jesus lived and died alone.