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MEDITATION

Wisdom's Judgment

"And the Scribes and Pharisees brought unto Him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst,

They say unto Him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act.

Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned; but what sayest Thou?

This they said, tempting Him, that they might have to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down, and with finger wrote on the ground, as though He heard them not.

So when they continued asking Him, He lifted up Himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.

And again He stooped down, and wrote on the ground.

And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. When Jesus had lifted up Himself, and saw none but the woman, He said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.

John 8:3-11

And it happened one day that the Scribes and Pharisees put a very deceitful question to our Lord Jesus.

No, not as such; not at the surface.

The woman was guilty, and the accusation as such was correct. Moses did say that such should be stoned. There was really no need for a thorough investigation: they had caught her in the very act!

The accusation was right as such.

Although one thing was strange; and we can see it right away. Jesus might have asked them: why stop on your way to the Sanhedrin? Why waste time with Me? Who has made Me a judge over you or your people? Cf. Luke 12:14.

But the Lord has revealed to us what their motive was. They stopped on their way to the judges in order to tempt

Jesus: that they might have to accuse Him. They hated Him, and the reasons are many. They hated Jesus for He seemed to condone sin. He would at times smile on harlots with the smile of wondrous compassion and pity. At such times He would say to such harlots; and then in accents that reminds me of a crooning mother to her very sick child: Peace be unto thee! Be of good cheer: your sins are forgiven you! And Pharisees do not like that.

The second reason why they hated Jesus: He would consort with sinners. Imagine: at one occasion a publican (of all people!) would make a great feast for Jesus, and he invited many publicans, and . . . Jesus with His disciples! For shame!

The third reason: the Lord cared not for their company. Oh yes, at two or three occasions He had visited the Pharisees in their house, but with what results? Ask Simon the Pharisee. He will tell you how this stranger of Galilee had preferred *and* justified a common prostitute above HIM! Of all things!

The fourth reason: He seemed to abrogate the Mosaic laws and customs that were delivered to God's chosen people.

There is a legend about Jesus that I would like to pass on to you. Remember: it is only a legend, but there is a lesson in it, if you can grasp it. According to this legend Jesus saw on a certain Sabbath day a Jew who was chopping kindling wood. And Jesus said to him: If thou knowest what thou art doing, thou art blest; but if thou dost not know what thou art doing, thou art cursed!

Yes, it seemed that Jesus did abrogate the Law of Moses and the prophets. Although the truth of the matter is that He came with the express purpose to fulfil them.

But they did hate Him, and this history proves it again: they stopped on their way to the judges, in order to tempt Him that they might have to accuse Him. Hence, the question.

* * * *

I called it a very deceitful question.

They were not concerned about the breaking of the seventh commandment. Neither were they concerned about the poor sinner's soul.

Oh no, they had it all figured out: if Jesus would condemn her according to the Mosaic verdict, He would come in conflict with the Roman authorities. The Jews might not sentence anyone to death. And adultery was not regarded as a capital sin by the immoral Romans. If Jesus would have said: you are right; I condemn her to death, they could have taken Him to the court of the governor, and Jesus would have been branded as a rebel against instituted authority.

On the other hand, if Jesus would have said, Let her go! they could have taken Him to the Sanhedrin, as one who would have come in open conflict with Moses, and the Lord would have been branded by all devout Jews as an arch-heretic.

They had it all figured out! Jesus cannot escape the dilemma.

There was no evident way of escape. He is caught in the conspiracy of the devil.

* * * *

But wait!

Jesus is wisdom personified. He is the Wisdom of God. Cf. I Cor. 1:24b.

How could a mere worm catch the lion?

How can Wisdom of God be caught in the snare of the devil?

Let us look strongly on Jesus and see His power of wisdom.

As they approach, Jesus is stooped over, writing with His finger on the ground. The English version adds to the inspired word the reason for such conduct: as though He heard them not. Note that these words are written in italics, indicating that they are added by the translators.

And He did not answer. So they renew their question. They question Him again and again. But Jesus was stooped over and acted very strange.

Why? I think He would indicate how deeply He despised them. He knows all our hearts and the secrets within. He is God. God stooping over and writing with His finger on the ground, while hell spews out its poison.

The speculations as to *what* Jesus wrote are vain, therefore. *That* we should exactly *not* ask. The accent does not fall on *what* He was writing, but that He wrote at this occasion. He simply wanted to show them how much and how deeply He despised them!

And when they continued their foul questioning, He arose and looked upon them. Oh, that look! That look of God in our sinning!

"He that is without sin among you let him first cast a stone at her!"

There you have wisdom's answer.

No, I do not think that Jesus meant that the man who has no sin at all should be the executioner. I think that such explanation would rob the whole matter of its terrible sting. I think Jesus meant sin against the seventh commandment.

There was a very particular sin under discussion. And I think further that the Scribes and Pharisees saw the point.

Wondrous wisdom of Jesus, of God!

That answer made it impossible to stone her.

They were sinners all.

I think that this is also the reason why we read in Matt. 7:1: "Judge not, that ye be not judged!"

There is really only One who may judge, and that One is God.

You will say to me: yes, but do not the consistories of God's church, and the magistrates judge? And my answer is: yes, but they are judges by a special dispensation of God. Every court, be it in the church of Christ, such as our consistories, or the worldly courts, are anticipations of the great Judgment Day when God in and through Jesus Christ shall judge the whole world.

And do never begrudge these judges their prerogative. I would almost say: pity them! It is terrible to be a judge among men. And no one therefore, should judge. Judge not that you be not judged! Let it stand: it fits us.

Accuse! That you may do, but even then, be careful, loving, true, full of compassion. And never judge. Leave it to the men who deserve our pity. Pity, for we are so wicked ourselves, and so short- and near-sighted. Moreover, we are so prejudiced. Who is sufficient to be a judge among men? Judges must be as righteous in their interrogations, examinations deliberations, and . . . judgment as God in heaven. Do not envy the human judge!

Well, after Jesus expressed the wisdom of God in His answer, He had again stooped down to write with His holy finger on the ground.

At long last He lifted Himself, and looked.

And what had happened? All the Scribes and Pharisees had left. And the woman was standing, still standing in the midst.

In the *midst*? Read the text. What can that mean? There was no one left of the encircling mass of clamoring men, clamoring for her condemnation. How can the Holy Ghost then write: the woman standing in the *midst*?

I think the answer is this: God had convicted the woman of sin. And although the accusing mob of *men* were gone, the woman still stood in the chorus of condemnations she had heard. They abided still. She stood in the midst of the chorus of voices, crying: Thou art that woman! And she stood nailed to the spot.

Don't you see that she could have run for her life? There was ample opportunity. The accusers were gone, and Jesus was stooping down. But she remained. Because God held her there.

But the men were gone. That was strange. First that old, wrinkled, greybeard, that patriarch among Pharisees. Mumbling something under his breath, he had withdrawn. Then the next oldest, and so on, until that brash young fellow was left. And he finally left too.

Why?

They were convicted in their consciences. And the older we are the greater the mountain of sin.

The conscience is just what it says: con-science. Knowledge with Someone else. And that Someone else is the living God.

The living God had said in the depth of their hearts: You are a very dirty man! And they had said at the same time with God: that is right, blast it all!

Yes, blast it! For this admission was not prompted by the love of God. If love prompts the answer of your conscience, you prove that you have a *good* conscience. They simply had the conviction of their conscience, nothing more.

But it was enough. They absented themselves. Wonder, how they explained it to their wives at night, or to one another the next day.

But they are gone.

And the woman still stands in the midst!

Woman, hath no man condemned thee? Where are those thine accusers?

No man, Lord.

Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more. Here again, the Lord has reference to that particular sin, and not to sin in general. That is rather plain.

But one question is left: how could Jesus so act when the sin was there and proven?

The answer is: the woman died for her sin of adultery in Jesus: He was even then dying the eternal death for His own.

The answer of Jesus contains a twofold truth, and both are made up of the music of heaven: justification in His blood, and the call to sanctification through His wondrous grace!

Very quietly I would say: Amen, my Lord and my God!
G. V.

Notice for Classis West

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet, the Lord willing, in Edgerton, Wednesday, March 7, 1956. The consistories are reminded of the rule that they are expected to nominate an elder or elders who are able to serve as synodical delegate.

Rev. H. Veldman, Stated Clerk

IN MEMORIAM

The Men's Society of the Hull Protestant Reformed Church wishes to express its sincere sympathy to one of its fellow members, Mr. Tom Van Maanen and his family in the loss of their stillborn daughter.

May the God of all grace comfort and sustain the bereaved in their sorrow.

Rev. J. Heys, President
Bert Van Maanen, Secretary

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EDITORIALS

The Apostates of 1953 and the Three Points

Do the apostates, those that departed from us and from the Protestant Reformed Faith, still stand principally opposed to the "Three Points" and their doctrinal implications, or do they agree with them?

Our reply is that they, fundamentally and principally, agree with them.

We are convinced that, if they had been ministers or members of the Christian Reformed Church in 1924, they would never have joined our ranks.

And it is also our conviction that those members that followed us in 1924 and now belong to the apostates, either never understood the issue or simply went along for personal reasons whatever these reasons may have been.

This is evident from what they all teach today and teach so enthusiastically that, because of it, they were willing to create a schism in the Protestant Reformed Churches.

Today they are convinced:

1. That the promise of God is general, not particular and for the elect only.
2. That this promise of God is well meant for all that hear the gospel.
3. That this promise of God is conditional: it is, on the part of God, sincerely meant for everyone that hears the preaching of the gospel, but, on the part of man, it is limited by the condition of faith.
4. That also the entering into the kingdom of God is, on the part of God, left general: the kingdom of God is left wide open to all that hear the gospel.
5. That, however, man must convert himself in order to enter into that kingdom of God.
6. Hence, also the entrance into the kingdom, although, on the part of God, left wide open, is conditioned by an act on the part of man: he must fulfill or accomplish the act of conversion as a prerequisite before he may or can enter the kingdom of God.

All this they, at least the leaders of the apostates, teach very deliberately and consciously, for it is intended as a refutation of the "Declaration of Principles" which was adopted by the Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches.

That declaration states very plainly that the promise of God is unconditional and for the elect only.

And because the apostates could not get their way officially in the Synod, though they attempted it repeatedly, they agitated against the declaration from the pulpit by emphasizing that the promise of God is general and not only for the elect.

Hence, we claim that they propagated their conditional theology in the churches deliberately and consciously and that, too, in opposition to the "Declaration of Principles."

But let us examine their doctrine somewhat more in de-

tail. I am well aware that this has been done before, but it certainly can do no harm to enter into and explain the matter once again. It concerns the very life and distinctive existence of our churches.

The doctrine of all the apostates is briefly expressed in two propositions:

1. God promises every one of you that, if you believe, you shall be saved.

2. Our act of conversion is a prerequisite to enter the kingdom of God.

These are the two principles on which the apostates justify their schismatic action and on which they attempt to maintain their separate existence as churches, even in distinction from the "liberated" and from the Christian Reformed Churches and their Three Points of 1924.

A superficial glance at the above mentioned two principles is sufficient to draw the conclusion that in this, at least, they must surely and utterly fail. They have no future as distinctive churches. I am not even convinced that they care for any separate existence as a distinct church. It is not impossible that, when the court case of the First Church is settled (now in the Supreme Court of Michigan), whether they win or lose, they will no longer even care for the name Protestant Reformed, and try to join some other denomination, whether the "liberated" or the Christian Reformed Church, — it cannot possibly make any difference to them.

Their own lawyer stated in his plea to the Supreme Court (according to reports. I myself was not there because I felt sure that their lawyer, the coward, now that I could not speak, would slander me right and left and this he actually did) that if they did not win their case for the property, they would be ruined as churches. This, I would not be surprised, is true, simply because they have no basic principle for their existence as a church. But I would add to this statement of their lawyer that this will be true whether they win or lose. You simply cannot maintain a church except on the basis of a fundamental principle.

But let us return to our discussion of the two principles above mentioned.

The first maintains the error, as I have stated, that the promise of God is general and not only for all the elect, that it is, on the part of God, well-meant for all that hear the gospel, but that it is, on the part of man limited by the condition of faith.

This is, fundamentally, the same as the doctrine of the First Point of 1924, only worse.

The fundamental error in this statement is found in the words:

1. God promises salvation;
2. To everyone of you.

What does it mean that *God promises?*

The answer to this is very clearly and succinctly stated in Heb. 6:13-18: "For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multi-

plying I will multiply thee. And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them the end of all strife. Wherein God, willing to show more abundantly unto the heirs of the promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath; That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us."

Notice, in the first place, that the text speaks of the promise of salvation. It is, first of all, the promise of the seed to Abraham, and, therefore the promise of Christ. For that very reason it is the promise of salvation, which is also evident from the last part of this passage which makes the promise of God the very basis of our strong consolation in respect to the hope that is set before us.

Notice, in the second place, that the promise of God is absolutely sure of its being fulfilled, for it is an oath of God. Its realization is not conditional. It is not in any wise dependent upon man, but on God and on His immutable counsel alone.

And, finally, notice, too, that, for this very reason, the promise is not general, but particular. If it were general, if we could ever say: "God promises every one of you salvation" every one would surely be saved, because the promise is not a mere offer but an oath of God, and its realization is not dependent on any condition man must fulfill, but solely on God and His immutable counsel. Hence, God promises with an oath, not to all men, but only to "the heirs of the promise" that are heirs, moreover, according to His immutable counsel of election, that they shall be saved.

All this confirmed in many other parts of Scripture.

Thus, for instance, in Rom. 9:8: "They which are children of the flesh, these are not children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed." Also from this it is evident that you could never say to all that come under the preaching of the gospel: "God promises salvation to every one of you, head for head and soul for soul."

But let this be sufficient.

Besides, according to Scripture and the Confessions, the atonement effected by Christ is limited. Christ did not die for all men, but only for the sheep the Father gave him. This implies that there is no salvation for all men, nor for "every one of you." And if there is no salvation for every man or for "every one of you" God cannot possibly promise salvation in that unlimited sense.

But, of course, I must say more.

The apostates will otherwise object that I omit a very important part of their fundamental statement of Doctrine. We do not teach, say they, that God promises salvation to every man, but we ourselves limit salvation. For we teach "God promises to every one that comes under the preaching of the gospel salvation, *if he believes.*" This is an important addition, they say.

Very well.

I never meant to omit this. On the contrary, I wish to discuss this conditional clause in the light of the entire statement.

And then I wish to emphasize that no statement like that to which the apostates subscribe can be found in all Scripture, nor in any part of our Confession.

Bellflower, i. e., Doezema, made an attempt in his overture on the matter to Classis West at the time, but he utterly failed. Writes he, in that document: "This first statement is not heretical, because its equivalents are found in Scripture and the Confessions. (Acts 16:15, 16; 16:31; Rom. 10:9; John 3:16. Canons II, 5; IV, 8. Heid. Cat. Q. 84.)"

Let us check up on some of these references.

Acts 16:15, 16 is evidently an error. The text there has nothing to do with the matter.

Acts 16:31 is Paul's address to the Philippian Jailer: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." Is there even the remotest similarity between this text and the statement: "God promises every one of you that, if you believe, you shall be saved"? Here Paul calls the jailer to believe on Christ and assures him that then he shall be saved. This call by the apostle was, evidently, made efficacious by the Spirit of Christ, for the jailer believed and was saved. But what has this to do with a general conditional promise to "every one of you"? Paul's address was not general but very particular and personal, and that, too, to a man that already sought salvation, as is evident from his question: "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Where, then, is even the similarity? There is none.

H. H.

"It is by our good works, that we know that we possess true faith, because the effect is not without its own proper cause, which is always known by its effect; so that if we are destitute of good works and new obedience, we are hypocrites and have an evil conscience instead of true faith; for true faith (which is never wanting in all the fruits which are peculiar to it) as a fruitful tree produces good works, obedience and repentance; which fruits distinguish true faith from that faith which is merely historical and temporary, as well as from hypocrisy itself." Ursines, page 483, idem.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On February 16, 1956, the Lord willing, our beloved parents, HESSEL DEJONG and ANNA DEJONG (nee Dantuma) will celebrate their 40th wedding anniversary.

We are thankful to our covenant Jehovah for all the blessings he has bestowed on them and us. Our prayer is that the Lord may grant them His peace all the remaining days of their pilgrimage.

Mr. and Mrs. John Kalsbeek
Mr. and Mrs. Charles De Jong
Mr. and Mrs. Henry Veltman
Mr. and Mrs. John Van Beek
and 12 grandchildren.

Grand Rapids, Michigan.

OUR DOCTRINE

THE TRIPLE KNOWLEDGE

AN EXPOSITION OF THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

PART III — OF THANKFULNESS

LORD'S DAY 51

Chapter 2

Asking For Complete Remission.

When we bow our heads in prayer and utter this fifth petition, it is well that we elaborate upon it somewhat, and instead of referring to the general concept *sin*, we say: "Our Father in heaven, please forgive the evil thoughts that arose in my mind and still arise within me; the evil desires of murder and adultery and theft and rebellion of which I am now conscious, as I bow before Thy throne; the evil speech, the evil words which I spoke against Thee and against the brethren; and all the evil deeds which I have committed. Forgive them all, our Father, and remember them nevermore. Dismiss them from Thy mind, for they all make me worthy of Thy wrath. And give me grace to believe that in spite of them all, even as I am sorry for my sins, I am righteous before Thee in Jesus Christ my Lord."

But according to the Heidelberg Catechism I pray in this petition not only for my sins, which I have committed in thought, word, and deed, but also for the non-imputation of my depravity, of the depravity of my nature. We are, as we know and confess, depraved by nature, totally depraved, so that there is no good left in us. Our heart and mind and will and all our desires are depraved. Our body and our soul are totally corrupt by nature. And it is from that evil and corrupt nature that all the sins we have mentioned in the preceding, and many more, arise as from an evil source. And, when in this fifth petition we pray for the forgiveness of our total depravity, we confess, of course, that the very corruption of our nature is our guilt, and that we are responsible for it, and not God. God created us good and after His own image, in true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. But, as the Canons of Dordrecht have it, in III, IV, 1: "Revolting from God by the instigation of the devil, and abusing the freedom of his own will, he forfeited these excellent gifts; and on the contrary entailed on himself blindness of mind, horrible darkness, vanity and perverseness of judgment, became wicked, rebellious, and obdurate in heart and will, and impure in his affections." Now let us note that this revolution from God, this abuse of the freedom of his will, was not committed by one individual, Adam, but by man. The whole human race was legally represented by and organically present in Adam when he sinned. All are responsible for that one sin of Adam, and are guilty of death. For thus the Scriptures teach us in Rom. 5:12: "Wherefore, as by one

man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." It is because we are guilty of death, and death passed upon all men, that we are organically corrupt and depraved in our whole nature. As the Canons once more correctly state, in III, IV, 2: "Man after the fall begat children in his own likeness. A corrupt stock produced a corrupt offspring. Hence, all the posterity of Adam, Christ only excepted, have derived corruption from their original parent, not by imitation, as the Pelagians of old asserted, but by the propagation of a vicious nature." Such is the truth. And of this guilt of our depraved nature we are conscious before the throne of our Father in heaven when we pray, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." That is, according to the Heidelberg Catechism, not only that we pray for our actual sins, but also for the depravity of our old nature, which is always with us, and of the presence of which we feel guilty before God.

For all this we ask in this fifth petition. We desire to have the forgiveness of sins. We desire to possess it, to be assured of it in our deepest heart. We long to know and be assured that God has so forgiven, dismissed, cancelled my debts, and so clothed me with eternal righteousness that I am still the object of His favor, and that He gives me eternal life. We want to have that blessedness of the forgiveness of sins *now*, at once, in this world, while we are still in the flesh, in which everything testifies against us, condemns us, speaks of wrath and death and hell. We desire to have it, not as something that will deliver us from the guilt of sins that we have committed in the past, but even while we are still sinful, while we are still sinning. That is the amazing wonder and boldness of this petition. We do not say: "Father, last week we sinned," or, "Yesterday we sinned," or, "This morning we sinned; please forgive." But we say: "Father, we are sinning all the time. We are sinning at this very moment, while we are praying. Please dismiss our debts from Thy book, and clothe us with righteousness in Thy judgment. And Father, we must have an answer. Please give us the unspeakably blessed assurance and peace of forgiveness in our hearts."

This is indeed a great wonder!

We are, of course, very much used to the idea, at least to the sound of the words, "forgiveness of sins." Perhaps we are so accustomed to it that we hardly feel the amazing marvel of it all. Yet, a great wonder it is. And in this fifth petition we ask the Lord for grace and faith to lay hold on God's own wonder of redemption, the wonder of reconciliation in the death of His only begotten Son. For in the mystery of the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ alone is found the ground of the forgiveness of sins. And in that cross only can we conceive of the possibility of this prayer. For it may sound very paradoxical, but it is a fact nevertheless, that forgiveness must be an act of strictest justice on the part of God. It is an act of boundless grace and abundant mercy, to be sure; but of mercy that itself is strictly just.

God is holy and righteous and unchangeably just. He cannot possibly deny Himself. And therefore all His acts are truth and justice, also His acts of grace and mercy. If then the sinner is ever to receive forgiveness, this act of God's great mercy must be based on strictest righteousness. In other words, if the sinner is to be forgiven, he must be completely justified. Now how can a sinner be justified before God? Only by expiation of his sin. Sin must be blotted out, other wise there cannot be forgiveness. But how can sin be blotted out? Only by an act of atonement. And what is atonement? The heart and essence of atonement is satisfaction of God's righteousness with respect to sin. And what may satisfy the righteousness of God with respect to sin, so that the sinner is truly justified before God? Only such an act of perfect obedience, of the obedience of love, whereby the sinner bears the full wrath of God against sin in all its implications and consequences willingly. In other words, if the sinner willingly, obediently, from the love of God descends into the suffering of deepest death, and thus sacrifices himself on the altar of God's righteousness, he thereby expiates his guilt and becomes righteous before God. But this the sinner can never do. If he could, he would need no forgiveness. But this is forever impossible. The sinner is an enemy of God, and he can only increase his debt with God daily. And this is the unfathomable mystery of the love of God, not that He justify the ungodly, winks at sin and sets aside His justice, but that in the Person of Immanuel, His only begotten Son in our flesh, Jesus Christ our Lord, God Himself accomplishes this act of perfect obedience for the expiation of our sins: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16. And: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." II Cor. 5:19. That is the mystery of the cross. In the moment of the cross God forever blotted out all the sins of all the elect. They *are* justified. Their sins are no more. And it is on the basis of the atoning, justifying act of God in Christ that our sins are forgiven us.

But how shall we possibly lay hold on this mystery of reconciliation?

How shall we obtain for ourselves the forgiveness of sins? How shall we, who are still in the midst of death, who sin daily, yea, every moment, constantly, even while we pray for the forgiveness of sins, receive the assurance in our hearts that our sins are forgiven us?

The only possible answer to this question is this: we can lay hold on the mystery of the cross and the resurrection of Jesus Christ our Lord, and therefore on the forgiveness of our sins, only when God Himself by the Spirit of Christ and through the Word of the gospel says to us: "Your sins are forgiven you."

We must hear God Himself speak to us through the Word of the gospel. And this is possible only through faith, which He Himself gives unto us, and which He alone

through the Spirit of Christ and through the Word of the gospel can bring to that conscious activity whereby we lay hold upon the blessing of forgiveness.

Thus, you understand, it is all of Him, none of self. It is all of pure and sovereign grace. It is of sovereign grace alone, not of our own work, that we become truly sorry for our sins, confess them before God and before one another, and lay hold by faith on the precious blessing of forgiveness. Of God, and of Him alone, is the glorious blessing of reconciliation through the blood of the cross. It is of God, and of Him alone, that the Word of justification, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, is proclaimed unto us. It is of God, and of Him alone, that we receive the Spirit of Christ, through Whom He applies the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ to our hearts. It is of God, and of Him alone, that the true knowledge of sin and the sorrow after God is wrought in our hearts, that causes us to need and to cry out for the forgiveness of our sins. Of God, and of Him alone, is the faith, as well as the activity of faith, whereby we may and do lay hold on this abundance of grace. Thus, and thus only, the prayer is born in the heart of the believer, a prayer to which he must have an immediate answer, a prayer not of unbelief or of doubt, but exactly of faith: "Our Father Who art in heaven, forgive us our debts." And the answer to this prayer thus wrought by grace in our hearts, thus uttered by faith and in true sorrow after God, surely comes, and it comes at once. Unless it come, you cannot utter another word. In fact, unless the assurance of this grace of forgiveness was already in your hearts, you cannot even have begun your prayer. But this petition is surely heard. You surely receive the answer by the Spirit of Christ and through the Word of the gospel: "My son, my daughter, thy sins are forgiven thee."

Chapter Three

A Serious Limiting Clause

Let us finally note that the Lord adds to this prayer for forgiveness a very serious limiting clause: ". . . as we forgive our debtors."

You understand, of course, that this clause cannot mean to express a ground for our plea for forgiveness. Nor can our act of forgiving one another possibly be a condition for God to forgive our debt. God's covenant and promise are absolutely unconditional. We do not make ourselves worthy of forgiveness by forgiving one another. And God's act of forgiveness is forever based upon His act of reconciling us to Himself by the blood of the cross, and is in deepest sense rooted in His eternal election.

For the rest, however, we must take this clause very seriously. You probably ask whether it means that God will not forgive my sins if I do not forgive the brother that sinned against me? And the answer to this question is an emphatic "Yes." It means exactly that. It means nothing else. God gives us the grace of forgiveness only, not on the

ground or on condition that, but *as* we forgive one another. The Lord Jesus emphasizes this point very strongly. He even singles it out, and puts it in bold relief. At the close of this prayer as we find it in the gospel according to Matthew we read this special explanation of the fifth petition: "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses." Matt. 6:14, 15. And in Matt. 5:21-24 we read: "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." And most emphatically this truth is taught in the well-known parable of the unmerciful servant, which the Lord Himself applies in the well-known words: "So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses." Matt. 18:35. If, therefore, you appear with this plea for the forgiveness of your sins before the face of God, you must be quite sure that there is no one toward whom you assume an unforgiving or unmerciful attitude, lest the Lord deliver you to the tormentors.

In this connection it might be well to offer a brief explanation of the parable of the unmerciful servant. It is found in Matt. 18:23-35, and I will quote it here: "Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and his children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and

delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses."

According to the context, the apostle Peter had been asking a very practical question: "Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?" It is evident that Peter considers himself rather liberal when he proposes to forgive his brother seven times. But the Lord answered him: "I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven." The meaning is, of course, that our forgiving the brother has no end. When he comes to us and confesses his sin, we must always forgive him. And of this the parable of the unmerciful servant is a concrete illustration.

Without entering into minute detail, we will make a few remarks about this parable in connection with our present subject of the limiting clause of the forgiveness of sins.

The parable illustrates the kingdom of heaven, according to verse 23. The question may be asked immediately: from what point of view is the kingdom of heaven likened unto the king mentioned in this parable, that takes account of his servants? The viewpoint is evidently that in the kingdom of heaven God our Father forgives His people their sins as they forgive everyone his trespasses. But again we ask: what is the specific teaching of this parable concerning this subject? Does the parable intend to teach that the Lord first forgives, and later imputes the same debt to anyone? This is quite impossible, because it would be in conflict with all the rest of the Word of God. Scripture teaches quite plainly that one who is once justified is justified forever. But we may emphasize that the parable instructs us in the truth that God is merciful to them that show mercy, that He forgives the sins of those that forgive the sins of their brethren, not as a condition or ground on which the Lord forgives them their sins, but as an inevitable fruit and manifestation in life of those to whom the sins are really forgiven and that therefore tasted the mercy of God. Those that tasted the mercy of forgiveness surely will show mercy in forgiving one another their trespasses. On the contrary, those that shut up the bowels of compassion to the brethren that employ them for forgiveness have never tasted the mercy of God. Such is the plain teaching of the parable.

We must emphasize, therefore, from the outset, as will become very evident in the rest of our explanation of this parable, that the unmerciful servant was never sorry for his sins, that he never tasted the grace of his lord, that he was not a believer, but evidently an unbeliever and reprobate.

Notice, then, that the relation of the servant to his lord in the parable is like unto the relation of men to God. In the parable the lord was sovereign over his servant, and his servant's duty was to obey. The same is true of the relation of men to God. They are but servants, and God is their Lord and Sovereign, Who must be obeyed willingly and from love.

H.H.

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

The Prophecy of Zechariah

Chapter II

The third vision — the man with the measuring line, I-13.

The Gospel of this vision is that, with the kingdoms of the nations overthrown and thereby rendered harmless, Jerusalem shall be exalted, Jehovah shall come and dwell in her midst, and many nations shall be joined to Jehovah in that day, and shall be His people.

1. *And I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a man and in his hand a measuring line.*

2. *Then I said, whither goest thou? And he said unto me, To measure Jerusalem, to see what is the breadth thereof, and what is the length thereof.*

3. *And behold, the angel that talked with me went forth, and another angel went forth to meet him.*

4. *And said unto him, Run, speak to this young man, saying, As towens without walls shall Jerusalem be inhabited for the multitude of men and cattle therein.*

5. *For I, saith Jehovah, will be to her a wall of fire around about, and will be to the glory in the midst of her.*

1. *And I lifted up mine eyes* — Again indicating that a new vision absorbed the prophet's attention. *A man with a measuring line* — An extension of the promise of I, 16. This man is not to be identified with the interpreting angel, for in verse 3 the latter is distinguished from him. Nor must he be regarded as the angel of Jehovah for a reason that will become plain.

2. *And I said, Whether goest thou?* — In all the other visions the prophet directs his appeals for instruction to the interpreting angel, here to the man with the measuring line. The interpreting angel does not appear upon the scene until the question is answered. *And he said unto me, To measure Jerusalem* — The succeeding clause is a statement of the purpose of the measuring. *To see what is the breadth thereof, and what is the length thereof* — ascertain the dimensions of the city. But why must the man come to be in the possession of this knowledge? According to some, because much more space must be marked off for the city, should it be discovered that, as a result of the anticipated phenomenal growth of the city's population, the present space will be much too small. But according to verse 4, it is told the man that the city will undergo a marvelous growth, and this implies that he is not anticipating it. According to others, the man had to measure the city in order to know where to build the new walls. But this could not have been the purpose. For the old walls, though broken down in many places, still stood. It was not necessary, therefore, to build new walls but only to mend the old.

It is plain that these are mistaken views. It is admitted that they are not stated by the man, but that they are clearly

to be inferred from verse 4 and the general tenor of the chapter. But this cannot be.

The Scriptures make more mention of such measurings. In Ezekiel's vision a man measures not alone Jerusalem but also the temple in all its parts (Chapter xlff). In his vision the apostle John is given a rod that he may measure the temple, its furniture and even the worshippers therein (Rev. ii, I). The angel that talked with him measures the new Jerusalem with its gates and walls (Rev. xxi, 14-17). And it is found that the city forms a square and even a cube (verse 16). But let us have the text here, "And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth; and he measured the city with a reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height are equal." What now do these measurements bespeak? The perfection of the church in glory, here symbolized by the new Jerusalem that John sees coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband (verse I). This clearly suggests why John must come to know the measurements of the Jerusalem the beautiful of his vision. The reason is that he must become fully and lively aware of the future spiritual and numerical perfection of the sinful, ill-deserving, small, despised and persecuted flock of God on this earth and thereby be fully assured that the church shall be gathered, that is that all that the Father has given to Christ shall surely come to Him, so that, when the temple of God eventually appears with Christ in glory it shall be without one superfluous stone and without one stone missing and without sin, spotlessly clean.

But can this also be the reason why the man of Zechariah's vision must measure the holy city and thereby come to know its dimensions, namely that he may become fully aware of the future glory of God's little flock? This cannot well be. For unlike the Jerusalem of John's vision, the Jerusalem that the man of Zechariah's vision must measure has no beauty. It is in a sad state. Its walls are broken down. Its gates are burnt. Its houses are in ruins. Its inhabitants — the remnant of Judah — are sinful men that continually have to be admonished to repent in order that they may be forgiven. And they are but a small group, poverty-stricken and beset on all sides by hostile powers. From a human standpoint the case of the city is hopeless. Yet the man must measure this Jerusalem, the reason being that he and the prophet with him must become aware of its wretchedness. And certainly the plight of the city will deeply grieve him and all such that love Zion. But, as appears from the succeeding verses, even before the man has opportunity to address himself to the task of measuring the city, the Lord tells him what great good He has in store for the city by hanging before his eye a word-picture of Jerusalem the beautiful.

3. *And behold, the angel that talked with me went forth* — The interpreting angel. From whence did he go forth? Doubtless from the place where he stood beside the prophet, or from the background to which he had retired after he

had interpreted the preceding vision. *And another angel went forth to meet him* — As the interpreting angel goes forth, he is met by another angel that comes upon the scene from the opposite direction.

4. *And said unto him* — The interpreting angel is the speaker. *Run, speak to the young man* — Mandate of the interpreting angel to the other angel, so that the latter becomes his servant that he, himself, may remain with the prophet, whose interpreter he is throughout all the visions. The young man is not the prophet but the man with the measuring rod, who meanwhile has gone his way. But he must not be allowed to measure the city before he hears the glad tiding regarding its glorious future. The messenger, therefore, is admonished to run, *saying, As towns without walls shall Jerusalem be inhabited because of the multitude of men and cattle therein* — This could be taken to mean that, because of the wonderful increase of Jerusalem's population, the inhabitants of the holy city would be crowded for room as was the case in those days with the people that dwelt in towns without walls. But why should open towns with no walls to prevent them from sprawling be crowded places and the walled cities have room to spare? The reverse must have been the case. Doubtless, therefore, the meaning must be taken to be this: The new Jerusalem will not be encompassed by walls as is the case with the post-exilic capital of the kingdom, but the city will be like a vast wide-open country covered with towns and villages. And this extension is owing to the marvelous increase of Jerusalem's population.

What we have here in language typical and earthly is a description of the felicity of Jerusalem — the church — in glory. With all her children gathered, a multitude that no man can number will then be dwelling in her. And she will not be crowded for room. For she then will have inherited the new earth over which she will be spread.

5. *A Wall of fire* — But will the city be a safe place to dwell? Will not the absence of walls expose her inhabitants to hostile attack? There need be no fear. For the city has a protection that the strongest wall cannot give. She is encompassed by Jehovah. He will be unto her a wall of fire round about, a defence of fire that will consume any force or combination of forces that dare to approach her with hostile intent.

But on the new earth the enemies are no more, so that here the promise can apply only to the church — God's little flock — on this earth, beset, as she is, on every hand by enemies. But as her citizenship is in the Holy city, the Jerusalem which is above, Jehovah is her defence, so that all her enemies that come near her as bent on her destruction are cut off. The wicked are dying every day by the thousands the world over. God does that. He kills them in His anger through every kind of agency and casts them into perdition and thereby He sees to it that His little flock is not overwhelmed by hell's gates. Certainly, we deal here in these prophecies with realities. *And will be the glory in the*

midst of her — In the midst of Jerusalem. This glory — the total of God's virtues — shines first in the face of Christ in whom the fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily, and through Him in the face of every redeemed and glorified inhabitant of Jerusalem and thereby it fills the whole city so that she has no need of the sun.

Exhortation to the exiles in Babylon, verses 6-13.

6. Ho! ho! flee out of the land of the north, saith Jehovah, For as the four winds of the north I have scattered you, saith Jehovah.

7. Ho! Zion, save thyself, Thou that dwellest with the daughter of Babylon.

8. For thus saith Jehovah of hosts, After glory hath He sent me to the nations that plundered you, For he that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of His eye.

9. For behold, I swing my hand over them, And they shall become a spoil to their own servants, And ye shall know that Jehovah of hosts hath sent me.

It cannot be determined whether these words of exhortation were uttered by the interpreting angel in the hearing of the prophet that the latter might proclaim them, or whether they were spoken by the prophet himself, in which case the vision ends with verse 5. But in either case, the words are an expansion of the Gospel contained in verses 4 and 5. And a glorious Gospel it is. Jerusalem will be exalted. This is its promise. But it can go into fulfilment only if the Lord overthrows the hostile political powers that beset His church. Because that is what he will now begin to do, His people still in exile must return to the Holy City, the only safe dwelling-place, without any further delay, lest they, too, be overtaken by the storm of His judgments about to break over the kingdoms of the nations.

6. *Ho, ho* — The Hebrew word is translated also "woe" "alas." It is more than an interjection calling to attention. It is an expression of grief and pain that is caused by the consideration of the sad plight of those addressed, here God's people that remained in exile. *Flee* — The time of the realization of the promise has come, when Jehovah will send judgment upon their present abode. So, let them flee. *The land of the north* — Babylonia the land of the exile. There were, no doubt, many Jews who, because of age or attachment to property, chose to remain in exile rather than endure the hardships of a journey back to the Holy City. Doubtless, therefore, the number that received the grace to heed the call was small. But the call was not alone intended for them. Its purpose was also to show God's despondent people in Palestine that the hour in which He would punish their adversaries for the wrong that they had done His people was now at hand. *For as the four winds of the north I have scattered you* — There are many interpretations of these words. Some, regarding the tense of the verb as a prophetic perfect (often used by the prophets to describe a future event as if it already had taken place) translate here, "I shall scatter you," and then take the meaning of the clause

to be that the people are to flee because Jehovah does not want them to perish with their enemies, seeing that He has decreed to make of them a great nation, whose influence will be felt everywhere, just as the winds of the heaven blow in every direction (so Keil). But this is not in agreement with the content. Doubtless the reference of the clause is to the scattering of the covenant people in exile, and then *as* — not *to* — the four winds, that is with “a violence that would result from the combined force of all the winds of heaven.”

7. *Ho* — a repetition of the call of verse 7. *Zion* — The inhabitants of Zion who still dwell in exile. Others take the clause as an accusative of direction — escape to Zion. That dwell with the daughter of Babylon — among the inhabitants of Babylon personified by a woman.

8. Verses 8 and 9 give further reason why they are to flee from Babylon. Jehovah is about to visit the oppressors with judgment. *For thus saith Jehovah* — A statement that introduces Jehovah as the speaker of the discourse that follows. Yet of the remaining sentences of this verse the prophet (or the angel) is the speaker. These sentences therefore seem to be a parenthesis and to require that the passage be punctuated as follows: — *For thus saith Jehovah of Hosts (after glory hath He sent me to the nations that plundered you, for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of His eye) for behold, I swing my hand over them, and they shall become a spoil to their own servants (and ye shall know that Jehovah of hosts hath sent me.*

The words that prove a puzzle are the following: *After glory hath He sent me to the nations that plundered you.*

The question is, what are we to understand by “glory.” Some, taking “glory” to be the promise of verses 5 and 6 interpret here: After my proclamation of the promise of Jerusalem’s exaltation, He — the Lord — sent me to the plundering nations. Others, taking “glory” to be the fulfilment of the promise, that is, Jerusalem’s actual exaltation, interpret: After Jerusalem’s exaltation, Jehovah sent me etc. But it seems to me that both these interpretations must be set aside as being too unlikely. There is a better interpretation, one that has the support of the context and that takes into account the two parenthesis. Let us see what this better interpretation is.

First this remark: That Jehovah sent the prophet to the plundering nations means that he must prophecy against them, proclaim that they are about to be overthrown. It does not mean that he must tour the lands of the nations as an itinerant preacher.

Now the expression “after glory.” By “glory” is to be understood the salvation and glory of the church that is promised in the verses 5 and 6 (see above). “After” glory must be taken to mean *in pursuit of it*. The meaning of the statement then is that Zechariah was sent of Jehovah in pursuit of the promised salvation and glory of the church. This is what he must pursue, seek, set his heart upon in the discharge of His office as Jehovah’s prophet. And under the constraint of a living faith and as impelled by the love of

God in his heart, that precisely is what he will do. And at this moment his pursuing the salvation and glory of the church consists in his prophesying against the plundering nation’s, that is in his proclaiming unto them that the Lord is about to overtake them with His judgment for all the harm that they had done and were still doing God’s chosen people. So then, rightly considered, his pursuing in the discharge of his office the salvation and glory of the church consists in his proclaiming the full Gospel, namely the redemption of the church, the body of the elect, by the blood of Christ and the overthrow and final passing away of the reprobated world in order that in this way the church may be gathered and eventually appear with Christ in glory.

So, in this way, does the prophet pursue the salvation of the church. And the Lord will surely bring all the words of the prophet to pass. For he speaks God’s word and not his own. And the result will be that God’s believing people shall know that Jehovah sent him (vs. 9). This I consider to be the meaning of the statement in question. Thus the Hebrew word rendered in the versions by “after” I construe in the sense of “in pursuit of,” as in the sentence, “As the heart panteth *after* the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God” (Ps. xlii. I). That precisely is the idea, namely that, in the discharge of his office, as a preacher of the Gospel, the heart of the prophet pants after the salvation of the church and thus after the glory of God. (Gesenius construes the preposition *after*, its Hebrew equivalent, in this sense).

For he that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of His eye — literally the door of the eye, that is the pupil, which is at once most precious and most sensitive and therefore call for double protection. The connection between this clause and the preceding is evident. That the prophet in his preaching must pant after the salvation of the church necessarily implies that the church is the object of his endearment and that therefore He will surely punish the nations for plundering her.

To think that God’s people are to Him as the pupil of His eye. How determined and ready He must be to shield them. How it must pain Him when His people are being spoiled by the adversary. How His wrath must burn. How angry He must be with the spoilers.

9. *For behold, I will swing my hand over them* — That is, He is about to do so. The event is eminent. With what infinite ease He brings the adversaries to nought. Merely by swinging His hand over them. It cannot well be otherwise, seeing that He is God and that apart from His power the nations have no existence. *A spoil to their servants* — A spoil to the Israelites, whom the adversaries had pressed into their service and were holding captive. It means that by the atonement of Christ they shall be overcome unto victory.

And ye shall know that Jehovah hath sent me — Behold in this mighty word of Jehovah as foretold by the prophet, God’s believing people shall know that he truly spake in the name of Jehovah.

G. M. O.

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of I Corinthians 1-4

8.

We have repeatedly taken notice of the beautiful *pedagogical approach* of Paul in this letter to a church, full of sin and imperfections of the flesh!

Paul never ceased to be mindful of the fact that he is addressing the church of the living God, called into the fellowship of His Son, and who, therefore, will be placed one day without spot or blemish before God in the light. He never addresses her as being simply mankind, potential candidates for heaven or hell, but as those who have the First-fruits of the Spirit, and are partakers of the heavenly calling.

Such, we have noticed, is Paul's pedagogical approach. The term pedagogy exactly means: training of children, does it not?

Such Paul does here. He instructs, reproves, corrects in the pedagogy of the righteousness of the Kingdom, and that, too, to the children of the Kingdom.

Paul in this correction and reproof warns these children of God, church of Christ, living members, not to glory at all in the flesh, but that it is comely to her to glory alone in the Lord, Jehovah God, who has completely saved her, redeemed her from all her sins.

Shall the Corinthian church, (and we with her,) rightly humble themselves before the living God, boasting alone in Him and in His work, then they must notice a very peculiar characteristic of His having called them into the fellowship of His Son.

Two things we must notice.

The first is that God's having called us is rooted in a deeper consideration of God. It is this: God has called us *even as He elected* us in Christ before the foundation of the world. The reason why the Apostle brings this up is that this stresses the sovereignly free grace of God's *efficacious calling*, and it is this *consideration* of this calling, as rooted in sovereign election, which makes for profound and true humiliation. And let me add: this is not *a* reason for the humble gratitude of the believer, but it is *the* fundamental reason and ground for the proper *consideration* of faith which makes for humility in the *called* saint. A man truly reformed alone can be truly humble; he alone can truly adore the mercies of God, which lift him from his sin and guilt into the glorious liberty of the church of God!

Such is the glorious confession of the fathers of Dort in Head of Doctrine I, Art. 13, where we read "The sense and certainty of this election afford to the children of God additional matter for daily humiliation before him, for adoring the depths of his mercies, for cleansing themselves, and rendering grateful returns of ardent love to him, who first manifested so great love towards them. The *consideration*

of this doctrine of election is so far from encouraging remissness in the observance of the divine commands, or from sinking men in carnal security, that these, in the just judgment of God, are the usual effects of rash presumption, or of idle and wanton trifling with the grace of election, in those who refuse to walk in the ways of the elect."

Now we should notice in these verses of I Corinthians 1:26-31 that the admonition of Paul is: the *proper consideration* of their efficacious calling into the fellowship of God's Son.

Such *proper* consideration is conducive to cause us to walk in the ways of the elect," and God brings us into these ways by the efficacious grace of good warnings and admonitions, His own means of grace! We should notice this very clearly expressed confessional truth in our text also, lest by insisting that the preaching is not grace for all who hear, we forget to emphasize in which manner the preaching, together with its implicit and explicit warnings, is indeed grace for the called saints — causing them to persevere in the faith and the walk of faith. Not to do this is tempting God! Canons III, IV, 17.

However, the "warnings and threatenings" of the Word of God are never such that they *promise* salvation to *every one*, if they believe, but are such that are directed to "the called saint" in Christ Jesus. The former is no pedagogical approach at all, but it is the approach of the "street-hawker," who cries Christ for sale in the public market place! Such is also the clear language of the Canons in V, 17. The fathers here clearly are speaking of the means whereby God "prolongs and supports life," comparing the spiritual life, in its being supported by means of grace, with the natural life as it is supported by means also. Such is the pedagogy of which our fathers speaks in the Canons, V, 17, and in doing so they simply trace the A-B-C lines of Paul as the master-builder, who layed down in our text the master lines, according to the grace of apostleship given him.

We will not complain that the fathers make a simple thing complicated and involved when they compare the need of nourishment of the new-born babe in Christ with the need of nourishment of the child in natural life!

Those who wish to distill a "promise to all" out of V, 17, complain about this as being involved, when they would have a simple gospel, which is neither "simple" (nothing added) nor is it "gospel!" We will with Canons V, 17, and Paul, here in this Scripture passage, maintain the "simple" truth that to properly consider our "calling" we must keep it properly linked with our election! That is Scriptural and confessional pedagogy! And the other? It is neither Scripture nor is it *peda-gogy*!

Forsooth, Paul does not say: consider *your calling*. And in this "consideration" you having nothing to do with "election;" these two lie on two altogether different planes, to wit, on that of the "revealed" and the non-revealed," but he would have us see our election *in our calling*, particularly in its marvelous manner, its strikingly obvious manner: that

God called not many wise-men according to the flesh, not many of the world's great, and not many of noble and prominent birth!

It is a marvelous fact that Paul in these verses changes from "called" to "elected" in our text. Says he "For consider your *calling* that it indicates that God *hath chosen* — God *hath chosen* — God *hath chosen* . . ."

And who hath God chosen, when we see this choice of God, this sovereignly free election crystalized before our believing and considering eyes?

They are: not many wise according to this world, not many mighty, and not many of noble birth. Paul is here speaking of the general, observable rule of election as it is revealed in the *efficacious calling*. That makes the matter very concrete, does it not? It, however, does not limit the *power* of God's efficacious calling, as if God could not call also the wise of the world and the mighty into the fellowship of His Son. This indeed God did upon several occasions. But such was not the rule in general in God's work, and such was surely not the rule in the congregation of God at Corinth! That God does not generally call the world's great, having elected them, is not due to the fact, that God has no power to save them! However, in our text, another consideration of the Lord is to be noticed. It is expressed in the virtue, the perfection of God's "wisdom!" The Gospel is not merely a *power* of God to us, but it is also the *wisdom* of God to us in the Cross of Jesus Christ, and *as such* the power.

Wherefore, the rule in this calling this *wise* and *efficacious* calling is: not *many* wise according to the flesh, not *many* mighty ones, and not *many* of noble birth, kings and rulers!

Were God's calling not rooted in election, but were the Gospel merely an offer—then one would expect that the wise, the noble and the strong would accept it.

But that would not be to the glory of God's grace in his elective love and mercy; and the point of our "considering" our calling would fall flat.

Now, however, it is the chief consideration (for in considering our calling we notice which rule God follows, having set it for Himself in His good-pleasure) is that God has elected:

1. The *foolish things* of the world in order to put to shame the wise men (not *things*) of the world. To these foolish "things" belong the Cross, the salvation accomplished on the Cross, the victory in Christ's resurrection, the preaching of the Word of the Cross, the power of God and His wisdom in the same—all of which are accounted by worldly wisdom to be so much foolish "things." But these God chose in his sovereign foreordination, in which all things must lead to the eternal glory of the Church in the ages to come.

This first observation shows us the general plan of God.

However, Paul enumerates a few more particulars in this general over-all plan and design of God.

In this plan of God wherein all, that is great in the world's estimation, must be put to shame also fits the election of a certain type of people as these live and move and exist historically! Wherefore God elected:

2. The "weak" of the world, that which is of "ignoble" birth, that which is "despised" and that which is "nothing!"

Such stones God chose for His body, the church, to make living members of them and to make them partakers of the heavenly calling. Such were the living stones which God by His efficacious calling fashions for His temple of the Holy Spirit.

Thus the stones get no glory at all.

Here we can only tremble in the beauty of meekness and lowliness of mind. Here we see the work of the Architect and Builder, God. Here we exclaim, considering our calling: What God hath wrought!

Wrought how?

That we are out of God, out of His sovereign election, as the fountain and cause of our salvation, in Christ Jesus. The only reason why we are *in* Christ is because we are *out of* God. And we are out of God having been chosen by him. And this is evidenced in our calling into the fellowship of His Son!

And thus we see it: *Wisdom* Christ is for us in our complete redemption. And this complete redemption is; righteousness and *sanctification*.

A dogmatic truth that Christ is our sanctification? Indeed, it is. Only it is meant here to be a motive toward putting away all glory in man, boasting alone in the Lord.

For the proper consideration of the calling and the proper boast in the Lord is what we are in Christ's sanctification and in His righteousness.

Thus we see how Paul masterfully teaches those who contradict themselves and oppose themselves, without falling into the error of *striving* with them, so that through his good instruction God may work in their hearts the grace of boasting alone in the Lord.

Thus Paul is free from the blood of those who repent not, and can glory in the Lord in their turning from sinful party-strife and schism, to a glorying alone in the Lord!

G. L.

IN MEMORIAM

The Martha Ladies Aid Society of the Hull Protestant Reformed Church herewith expresses its sincere sympathy to one of its members, Mrs. Tom Van Maanen, in the loss of their infant daughter at birth.

May the God of all grace sustain and comfort the family in their sorrow.

Rev. John A. Heys, President
Mrs. Nellie Brummel, Secretary

IN HIS FEAR

The Sabbath In His Fear

(3)

“It is not so much a question as to whether we may do this or may do that as it is a question of what we ought to do.” That remark is often made about keeping the Sabbath.

That there is an element of truth in the statement we will not deny. In fact, if understood in the proper sense, if the proper construction is placed upon it, that is the question in regard to the Sabbath in this New Testament dispensation.

However it is so easy to place a wrong construction on these words and to quote it in order to defend things that definitely destroy the whole idea of the Sabbath. And our philosophy and hatred of the Sabbath as given by God soon results in the fact that we have lost it and lost one of the commandments in the Decalogue. And our day does not display love to God in His works but love for self in our own works.

The positive approach to the meaning of the commandments is always good and even essential for a proper and full understanding of our calling here below. We have no desire to make the commandments negative in meaning and application and to fail to stress the positive side of them. But we certainly are opposed to all that which sets no limits, never says that this or that is out of place and improper on the Sabbath and lets the sky be the limit after the positive side of the commandment has been complied with briefly and half-heartedly.

It is so easy to insist positively that we “frequent the church of God to hear His word, to use the sacraments, publicly to call upon the Lord . . .” as the Heidelberg Catechism positively presents the meaning of the Fourth Commandment, and then defend the filling of the rest of the day with all the things of the flesh which — as we wrote before — we would not take time for during the week because it would cost us some hard earned cash or we did not want to give up a little of our much needed sleep.

We live in an age when sermons have to be made shorter and shorter, services have to be crowded closer and closer together — or spaced wider and wider apart — so that we have more time for ourselves, for our flesh. Everything else must have more time, and services of divine worship must be treated almost as a “necessary evil” instead of a blessed hour. O, we must frequent the house of God. We must hear His word. We must call upon the name of the Lord. But these must not hold us up too long. After all, we have to go here and there yet too today. We just have to go and see so and so whom we have not seen for so long. Give up my fishing trip Saturday for that. Oh, no! What do you think I am anyway? That is the only pleasure I get all week. Go

after work some night? I should say not! Man, I have to get some sleep because I have to work the next day!

Sure, it is not a question of what we may not do but what we should do. But what we should do is set a *day* aside to hear His word, to call upon Him and to worship Him for the great work of salvation. It certainly is a question as to what helps us use the day aright and as to what hinders us and keeps us from hallowing the day. This all may sound old-fashioned and narrow-minded; but that is far better than losing the Sabbath. And if one is sincere in his statement that it is not a question as whether I may do this and instead a question of what is my calling with the day, he will find that there is so much that he can and should do on the day that he will not find time for those things about which he has questions, nor want to be interrupted in doing the things he must do by the things after which he places a question mark.

That there are things which we may and can perform without being guilty of walking contrary to the commandment cannot be denied. That there is legitimate work which we may accomplish, yea often ought to perform, is also granted. The Israelites walked around Jericho on the Sabbath day. In fact it is not impossible that it was the Sabbath when they walked around it seven times and rushed forward with victory when the walls fell down. And this was *after* Israel had been given the Decalogue with this Fourth Commandment in it. After God had clearly told Israel “Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt do no manner of work . . .”, God Himself told Israel to perform this work on the Sabbath. The reason for this is plain, if you have followed us in our former writings on this matter. On the Sabbath we are busy with God’s glorious work of salvation in a way and to a degree impossible during the week. And that victory of Israel over Jericho is typically identified with this glorious work of salvation. Israel was not defiling the Sabbath by being busy with a work that taught the truth of salvation by the grace and might of God! Israel was busy with God’s work when Israel walked about Jericho. It was an act of faith. It was a work in which Israel entered into the blessedness and assurance of salvation. That work was not and is not to be condemned. No need to put a question mark behind such works and ask whether we may do them.

Jesus rebuked the Pharisees who denied that there are works that are proper on the Sabbath. He pierced them with the truth when He called their attention to the fact they would save a beast that fell into a pit on the Sabbath. He surely might heal on the Sabbath and so display by physical and psychical healing that He is come to heal and save us spiritually. There again you have that great and glorious work of salvation by the power and grace of God brought to man’s attention by works upon the Sabbath.

But our point is that we do not have a license to satisfy our flesh by a day when we may leave the factory, the field,

the shop, the store behind. It is not a time given us by God to choke the word that has been sown in the morning and evening service by a card game after that service! It is not a day given us to forsake and leave divine services behind and to fly by the fastest plane across more than half of our country, from the West Coast to the Great Lakes region to try to cast our illegal vote at a consistory meeting where we intend to defend heresy. It is not given us to get ready for Monday's sins. Then let us apply the rule and say that it is a question of what we ought to do and not of whether we may do this or that! There may be and is legitimate travel on the Sabbath. Paul undoubtedly traveled much on the Sabbath and was on the high seas many a Sabbath on his journey to Rome. But let us concentrate on what we ought to do and understand that if we do it properly and with a pure heart, we will not ask whether we may do this or that; and many of the things after which we place a question mark will fall away, because we are too busy to do them and will lose interest in doing them.

There is no work that is in itself wrong to perform on the Sabbath that is not wrong to perform also on the other days of the week. No act in itself suddenly becomes wrong when a new day rolls around. And the rising of the sun in the East does not cast certain works, lawful in themselves according to the other nine commandments in the Decalogue, in a different light one day in the week so that on that day they become "shady" and works of darkness. Of course, that which is evil to perform on Monday is also evil to perform on the Sabbath. But equally true it is that what is good and according to God's law on Monday is also good and according to God's law on the Sabbath. The works God forbade Israel on the seventh day of the week were not works that in themselves were corrupt. These He forbids every day and every minute in every day of the week. No, God Himself gives the reason why Israel shall not work on the Sabbath. And that reason is not that they have been performing works that are sinful. In fact the Fourth Commandment takes us back to the original creation. It speaks of God creating the heavens and the earth in six days and of God resting the seventh day from that work of creation. The Sabbath was for Adam to observe even before there was sin in the world, even before there were works performed that did not comply with the other nine commandments.

The point we wish to make and which we believe Scripture makes is that a work becomes wrong on the Sabbath when its execution is due to a despising of God's work of salvation and when it is carried on in contempt of His glorious work of salvation. It is wrong when we let it interfere with our calling to "frequent the church of God, to hear His word, to use the sacraments, publicly to call upon the Lord . . ."

We like that answer of the Heidelberg catechism. But we do not like the wrong use that is made of it as though it approves of everything just as long as we have "put in

our time" for a few brief minutes in doing these things prescribed in that answer of the Heidelberg Catechism. It is always wrong when we are dealing with things spiritual and with our calling before the Infinite and Sovereign God to be asking about a "minimum" or service. Such a thing always reveals that the heart is not right. It reveals that the heart is not in that activity for which we seek to ascertain the minimum which is required in order to get it over with as quickly as we can. One almost gets the impression when observing the Sabbath activity of some, that those things prescribed in the Heidelberg Catechism as the New Testament interpretation of the teaching of the Fourth Commandment — to which outwardly they will agree — that they consider such church attendance with all that it implies as some bitter medicine that has to be taken for spiritual health and recovery; and we better get it over with as quickly as we can. With these it is not as with the psalmist who sings:

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

We condemn, and correctly so, the idea of going to early Mass to confess our sins of the past week — and I mean *early* Mass — so we can have plenty of time that Sabbath day to go and do some more of the same things we just confessed. And the present trend in Sabbath observance seems to suggest that man in his wisdom(?) now sees that God made a mistake by allotting a whole day to the observance and worship for His glorious work of salvation. He should know that we in this age of speed and culture and higher education do not need nearly that much time! That trend surely is not in His fear. Sabbath observance in His fear is Sabbath observance *Coram Deo*: in the consciousness of being in the presence of God. And yet on the Sabbath we all too easily and plainly reveal that we do not care to be in His presence too much or too long. The day has to be before us for all kinds of other things. If we only dared, the present trend would lead us to decide to have our services some night during the week so that we could have the whole day for our works of pleasure, sleep, and a host of other things.

It is strange what men dare to do with this commandment while they maintain the others with vigor and vehemence. That we are not to be idle as the Old Testament form of the commandment literally *seems* to teach is one thing. But how the cross and resurrection and ascension of Christ suddenly alter this commandment *alone* so that a whole new series of actions are approved and the day loses its peculiar character, we fail to see. Adam in the state of perfection had a *day* and not simply an activity to perform. And Jesus says that the Sabbath, not some little part of it, is made for man.

We like next time, the Lord willing, to give some positive content to that activity of that day. J. A. H.

Contending For The Faith

The Church and the Sacraments

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

THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

THE PAPACY (by Philip Schaff).

(Continued)

While Peter himself passes over his prerogative in silence, and expressly warns against hierarchical assumption, Leo cannot speak frequently and emphatically enough of his authority. While Peter in Antioch meekly submits to the rebuke of the junior apostle Paul (see Gal. 2:11), Leo pronounces resistance to his authority to be impious pride and the sure way to hell. Obedience to the pope is thus necessary to salvation. Whosoever, says he, is not with the apostolic see, that is, with the head of the body, whence all gifts of grace descend throughout the body, is not in the body of the church, and has no part in her grace. This is the fearful but legitimate logic of the papal principle, which confines the kingdom of God to the narrow lines of a particular organization, and makes the universal spiritual reign of Christ dependent on a temporal form and a human organ. But in its very first application this papal ban proved itself a brutum fulmen, when in spite of it the Gallican archbishop Hilary, against whom it was directed, died universally esteemed and loved, and then was canonized. This very impracticability of that principle, which would exclude all Greek and Protestant Christians from the kingdom of heaven, is a refutation of the principle itself.

(Concerning this Hilary we may note the following. Hilary owes his importance chiefly to his attitude toward Augustinianism. He repudiated the Augustinian doctrine of predestination, accusing Augustine of fatalism. He believed that every man had sinned in Adam and could be saved only by the grace of God in regeneration. Salvation by the blood of Christ was offered to all men without exception, and all who are willing to accept faith and baptism could be saved. God predestined for his kingdom all whom he foresaw would be worthy of their election after their gratuitous call, and therefore every man is to be exhorted to take part in the divine institutions in order that nobody may despair of attaining eternal life, since this depends upon voluntary consecration. As Augustine maintained his independent judgment against a great authority, so also Hilary tried to vindicate the independence of his position. On account of the political importance of the city of Arles — Hilary was bishop of Arles — in the fifth century, its bishops took the first rank in the Gallic episcopate, and Bishop Patroclus had already attempted to extend the primacy or Arles over the

whole of southern Gaul. Hilary renewed his efforts, but was opposed by Leo the Great, who finally deposed him. Hence, it is worthy of note that this Hilary — irrespective, now, of his arminian position and denial of the Scriptural truth of sovereign predestination — having been deposed by Leo the Great, was later canonized — H. V.)

In carrying his idea of the papacy into effect, Leo displayed the cunning tact, the diplomatic address, and the iron consistency which characterize the greatest popes of the middle age. The circumstances in general were in his favor: the East rent by dogmatic controversies; Africa devastated by the barbarians; the West weak in a weak emperor; nowhere a powerful and pure bishop or divine, like Athanasius, Augustine, or Jerome, in the former generation; the overthrow of the Western empire at hand; a new age breaking, with new peoples, for whose childhood the papacy was just the needful school; the most numerous and last important general council convened; and the system of ecumenical orthodoxy ready to be closed with the decision concerning the relation of the two natures in Christ.

Leo first took advantage of the distractions of the North African church under the Arian Vandals, and wrote to its bishops in the tone of an acknowledged over-shepherd. Under the stress of the times, and in the absence of a towering character like Cyprian and Augustine, the Africans submitted to his authority (443). He banished the remnants of the Manichaeans and Pelagians from Italy, and threatened the bishops with his anger, if they should not purge their churches of the heresy. In East Illyria, which was important to Rome as the ecclesiastical outpost toward Constantinople, he succeeded in regarding and establishing the supremacy, which had been acquired by Samasus, but had afterward slipped away. Anastasius of Thessalonica applied to him to be confirmed in his office. Leo granted the prayer in 444, extending the jurisdiction of Anastasius over all the Illyrian bishops, but reserving to them a right of appeal in important cases, which ought to be decided by the pope according to divine revelation. And a case to his purpose soon presented itself, in which Leo brought his vicar to feel that he was called indeed to a participation of his care, but not to a plentitude of power (*plenitudo potestatis*). In the affairs of the Spanish church also Leo had an opportunity to make his influence felt, when Turibius, bishop of Astorga, besought his intervention against the Priscillianists. He refuted these heretics point by point, and on the basis of his exposition the Spaniards drew up an orthodox *regula fidei* with eighteen anathemas against the Priscillianist error.

But in Gaul he met, as we have already seen, with a strenuous antagonist in Hilary of Arles, and, though he called the secular power to his aid, and procured from the emperor Valentinian an edict entirely favorable to his claims, he attained but a partial victory. Still less successful was his effort to establish his primacy in the East, and to prevent his rival at Constantinople from being elevated, by the famous twenty-eighth canon of Chalcedon, to official equal-

ity with himself. His earnest protest against that decree produced no lasting effect. But otherwise he had the most powerful influence in the second stage of the Christological controversy. He neutralized the tyranny of Dioscurus of Alexandria and the results of the shameful robber-council of Ephesus (449), furnished the chief occasion of the fourth ecumenical council, presided over it by his legates (which the Roman bishop had done at neither of the three councils before), and gave the turn to the final solution of its doctrinal problem by that celebrated letter to Flavian of Constantinople, the main points of which were incorporated in the new symbol. Yet he owed this influence by no means to his office alone, but most of all to his deep insight of the question, and to the masterly tact with which he held the Catholic orthodox mean between the Alexandrian and Antiochian, Eutychian and Nestorian extremes. The particulars of his connection with this important dogma belong, however, to the history of doctrine.

Besides thus shaping the polity and doctrine of the church, Leo did immortal service to the city of Rome, in twice rescuing it from destruction. When Attila, king of the Huns, the "scourge of God," after destroying Aquileia, was seriously threatening the capital of the world (A.D. 452), Leo, with only two companions, crozier in hand, trusting in the help of God, ventured into the hostile camp, and by his venerable form, his remonstrances, and his gifts, changed the wild heathen's purpose. The later legend, which Raphael's pencil has employed, adorned the fact with a visible appearance of Peter and Paul, accompanying the bishop, and, with drawn sword, threatening Attila with destruction unless he should desist. A similar case occurred several years after (455), when the Vandal king Genseric, invited out of revenge by the empress Eudoxia, pushed his ravages to Rome. Leo obtained from him the promise that at least he would spare the city the inflictions of murder and fire; but the barbarians subjected it to a fourteen days' pillage, the enormous spoils of which they transported to Carthage; and afterward the pope did everything to alleviate the consequent destitution and suffering, and to restore the churches.

Leo died in 461, and was buried in the church of St. Peter. The day and circumstances of his death are unknown. Of Leo it has been said that he was without doubt a man of extraordinary parts, a superior to all who had governed that church before him, and scarce equalled by any since.

The literary works of Leo consist of ninety-six sermons and one hundred and seventy-three epistles including epistles of others to him. They are earnest, forcible, full of thought, churchly, abounding in bold antitheses and allegorical freaks of exegesis, and sometimes heavy, turgid, and obscure in style. His collection of sermons is the first we have from a Roman bishop. In his inaugural discourse he declared preaching to be his sacred duty. The sermons are short and simple, and were delivered mostly on high festivals and on the anniversaries of his own elevation. Other works ascribed to him, such as that on the calling of all nations, which takes

a middle ground on the doctrine of predestination, with the view to reconcile the Semipelagians and Augustinians, are of doubtful genuineness.

THE PAPCY FROM LEO I TO GREGORY I

A. D. 461-590.

The first Leo and the first Gregory are the two greatest bishops of Rome in the first six centuries. Between them no important personage appears on the chair of Peter; and in the course of that intervening century the idea and the power of the papacy make no material advance. In truth, they went farther in Leo's mind than they did in Gregory's. Leo thought and acted as an absolute monarch; Gregory as first among the patriarchs; but both under the full conviction that they were the successors of Peter.

After the death of Leo, the archdeacon Hilary, who had represented him at the council of Ephesus, was elected to his place, and ruled (461-468) upon his principles, asserting the strict orthodoxy in the East and the authority of the primacy in Gaul.

His successor, Simplicius (468-483), saw the final dissolution of the empire under Romulus Augustulus (476), but, as he takes not the slightest notice of it in his epistles, he seems to have ascribed to it but little importance. The papal power had been rather favored than hindered in its growth by the imbecility of the latest emperors. Now, to a certain extent, it stepped into the imperial vacancy, and the successor of Peter became, in the mind of the Western nations, sole heir of the old Roman imperial succession.

On the fall of the empire the pope became the political subject of the barbarian and heretical (for they were Arian) kings; but these princes, as most of the heathen emperors had done, allowed him, either from policy, or from ignorance or indifference, entire freedom in ecclesiastical affairs. In Italy the Catholics had by far the ascendancy in numbers and in culture. And the Arianism of the new rulers was rather an outward profession than an inward conviction. Odoacer, who first assumed the kingdom of Italy (476-493), was tolerant toward the orthodox faith, yet attempted to control the papal election in 483 in the interest of the state, and prohibited, under penalty of the anathema, the alienation of church property by any bishop. Twenty years later a Roman council protested against this intervention of a layman, and pronounced the above prohibition null and void, but itself passed a similar decree against the alienation of church estates.

H.V.

"To say that good works are necessary in them that *are to be justified*, is to speak ambiguously, because it may be so understood as if it were *required before* justification, and so become a cause of our justification."

Ursinus, Page 485

The Voice of Our Fathers

The Canons of Dordrecht

PART TWO

EXPOSITION OF THE CANONS

SECOND HEAD OF DOCTRINE

OF THE DEATH OF CHRIST, AND THE REDEMPTION OF MEN THEREBY

Article 5 (continued)

Our English translation of this article is rather accurate. It might have been improved by placing the words, "together with the command to repent and believe," in closer connection with the words "ought to be declared and published," as the Dutch translation has them. And also the Dutch terms "verkondigd en voorgesteld" are more accurate than our English "declared and published" as a translation of the Latin *annunciari et proponi*. There is no inaccuracy, however, that fundamentally affects the meaning of the article.

As to the historical background of the article, we may note the following. In the first place, the occasion for this article lay in the fact that the Arminians claimed that with their doctrine of sovereign predestination and limited atonement the Reformed had no basis for a general preaching of the gospel. In fact, the Arminian claimed that the Reformed man could not really preach the gospel at all. And in the second place, the Arminian also charged that the Reformed view left no room for the preaching of faith and repentance. Both of these Arminian charges were aimed ultimately at the Reformed view of sovereign election. We should not overlook this fact. On the one hand, the Arminian charged that since the atoning work of Christ was limited to the elect, and since the preacher would have something to proclaim, therefore, only to the elect, but since he does not know who the elect are, he cannot preach at all. He does not know whom he must approach with his message of limited atonement since only God knows who is elect and who is non-elect. On the other hand, the Arminian charged that since salvation is, according to the Reformed view, only for those who are sovereignly elected, and surely for them, so that their salvation is not dependent on any act of faith and repentance on their part, therefore it is both unnecessary and impossible really to call upon men to believe and repent. I need not refer to the official record of the Synod of Dordrecht in order to show that this is the background of the article; for this is conceded by all who know the *Canons*. Even those who speak of a well-meaning and general offer of the gospel, and of a well-meant invitation to faith and repentance on the part of God to all, concede this. I will quote in this connection from a commentary on the

Canons by the Rev. T. Bos: „Dit wordt opzettelijk tegen de Remonstranten uitgesproken. Dezen toch redeneerden aldus: Indien de prediker gelooft aan de verkiezing, en hij gelooft niet dat Jezus voor alle menschen gestorven is, dan staat hij met zijn Evangelie geheel verlegen, want zijne verkiezing en zijne particuliere genade staan hem in den weg. Wel een bewijs, dat de Remonstranten de Gereformeerden of niet begrepen of niet wilden begrijpen. De prediking des Evangelies is immers niet de aankondiging in den naam des Heeren, dat allen door den Middelaar Jesus Christus zalig zullen worden, gelijk zij allen in Adam verdoemelijk zijn, maar veeleer de aankondiging, dat er voor het verloren menschelijk geslacht een weg tot zaligheid is gelegd in Jezus Christus. Die prediking gaat niet van de vooronderstelling uit, dat de mensch door zijn eigen kracht de door Christus aangebrachte gerechtigheid kan aannemen ter zijner verlossing, maar veeleer, dat heel de zaligheid van zondaren ligt in God, zoowel de verwerving als de toepassing.”

Now this bit of history is significant for the proper understanding of the article. In the first place, let it be noted that this is the same objection that is often raised against the Protestant Reformed position in one form or another. It is claimed that the view of the Protestant Reformed Churches is such that they lose the "addressability" of the gospel. We too are charged with believing that only the elect must be preached to, foolish as the charge is in the light of the fact that we do not know who the elect are. And although such an argument is not conclusive, nevertheless let it be noted that this charge puts us in good company, in the company of the fathers of Dordrecht. And I submit that while this charge was indeed levelled against the fathers of Dordrecht, and will be levelled against any genuine Calvinist, — was, in fact, brought against Calvin himself, — it is at the same time indeed striking that it will not be brought against any who teach a general, well-meant offer of salvation to all that hear the preaching or a general, conditional promise. If the fathers of Dordt had taught such a general, well-meant offer, they would, it is safe to say, never have had to face this Arminian charge and answer it in *Canons* II, 5.

In the second place, this historical background is significant because it gives an indication of what to expect in this article. The accusation of the Arminians concerned the *preaching* of the gospel, and the *preaching* of the command to believe and repent. And the charge was that the Reformed could not engage in such *preaching*. This charge was based on the fundamental position of the Reformed faith regarding sovereign election and limited atonement. Now what would you expect in the way of an answer to such a charge? Would you expect the fathers to desert that fundamental position in some way, to compromise, and to say after all that God wills and intends the salvation of all who hear the preaching? That would not be an answer to the accusation, but a removal of the occasion for the accusation. No, it is to be expected that the fathers say something about the *preaching*. And the latter is exactly what the fathers do. For the main

proposition of this article is: "This promise . . . ought to be declared and published . . . together with the command to repent and believe." And notice too that this proposition is such that the fathers do not appear to feel the need of explaining any contradiction between it and their preceding teaching of sovereign election and limited atonement by seeking refuge in a claim of "paradox" or "mystery." Nothing of the kind is found in our *Canons*. Why not? Because a Reformed man has no need of such subterfuge; he does not involve himself in such obvious contradictions, no more than Scripture does.

With this in mind, let us turn to the article itself. Does it actually say something about the preaching? Does it say something about the scope of the preaching? Does it in any way teach that the scope of the preaching is general? And: what does it say of the content of the preaching?

Let us treat these matters through a process of elimination, gradually narrowing down the subject until we come to the core of the whole matter.

First of all, let us note that according to this fifth article also the preaching of the gospel follows the path determined for it by God's good pleasure. God sends the gospel. And He sends it according to His good pleasure, or in behalf of His good pleasure, *pro suo beneplacito*. Hence, when the gospel comes to certain nations and persons through the preaching, it does so strictly according to divine determination. And when it does not come to certain nations and persons, that is, conversely, also according to that same divine good pleasure. To put it very negatively: it was not God's good pleasure to send the gospel unto them. Now this is significant, even though the same truth was already set forth in the First Head of Doctrine, Article 3. It is significant because it shows the absurdity of the Arminian error of general atonement. Surely, if the Arminian teaches that Christ died for all men, he must teach also that Christ thus died according to the divine good pleasure. And such was literally his teaching. The second article of the Remonstrance begins with the words, "That agreeably thereto, Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, died for all and for every man . . ." And the words "agreeably thereto" refer to the first article, which speaks of an "eternal, unchangeable purpose" of God. Hence, the Arminian position is: Christ died for all and for every man according to God's good pleasure. Yet, as also the Arminian must admit, the gospel of that death of Christ was by no means preached to all men and to every man. As we pointed out previously, there were millions upon millions of individuals and many nations in the old dispensation who never heard the preaching of the gospel at all. And in the new dispensation the same has been true. Was that an accident? Was that merely due to the vagaries of human conduct? Is it to be attributed to a gross failure and neglect on the part of men, on the part of the church? Is it to be said that the church must hasten to fulfill its mission mandate before any more poor sinners for whom Christ died go lost? Was God perhaps powerless to see to it that the gospel of

Christ-crucified-for-all-men was also preached to all men? The answer is in the negative. The preaching of the gospel has ever gone in the course determined by God. And therefore, it never was His good pleasure that the gospel should be proclaimed to all men and to every man. Even the *preaching* of the gospel, according to God's good pleasure, is by no means general and universal in the sense of including every individual human being. But then how absurd it is to teach that according to that same divine good pleasure Christ died for all men and for every man. Was it truly God's good pleasure that the precious merits of Jesus Christ should be wasted? Did God intend that the blood of His Son should be shed in vain? Such must be the conclusion on the basis of the Arminian position. And therefore, not the Reformed truth, but the Arminian error makes real gospel preaching impossible. But the gospel of God goes on. And it is preached not upon the basis that there is a possible salvation for all men in the blood of Christ; but it goes forth according to God's good pleasure exactly to those nations and those persons whom it is destined to reach.

If the question is asked as to how that course of the gospel is determined, the answer is not difficult to state. Also that course of the gospel is not arbitrary. For not only is it true, as has been stated earlier, that the preaching of the gospel has ever followed a certain easily discerned course in history, so that it can be traced quite clearly; but certainly, that gospel preaching has ever been directed there, where God has His elect. Not one of them can perish. And therefore, they must all be brought into living contact with Christ crucified. And since that contact is wrought through the preaching of the gospel, that proclamation must surely reach all God's elect. And from this positive point of view, therefore, it may be said that the preaching of the gospel surely reaches, according to God's good pleasure, those nations and those persons among whom God has His elect people. In that process also the reprobate are reached by the preaching of the gospel. And even this is not arbitrary: God surely has a reason and a purpose in having the gospel proclaimed to the reprobate also. But the positive purpose of the preaching of that gospel is always that the elect may be brought to a saving knowledge of Christ our Savior.

H.C.H.

"No man can come unto Christ unless it shall be given unto him, and unless the Father shall draw him; and all men are not drawn by the Father, that they may come to the Son."

Art. 8, Lambeth Articles, A.D. 1595, composed by Dr. Whitaker, Regius Professor of Divinity at Cambridge, and accepted by the Dublin Convocation of 1615, and engrafted on the Irish Articles.

COMMON OR INDIVIDUAL CUP IN COMMUNION

It was common practice in the Reformed Churches for the participants in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper to drink of the wine from a common cup. In rather recent years the change has been made in many churches from the common or communal cup to the individual cup. By the former is meant a rather large cup from which many communicants drank. In larger congregations more than one of these cups would be used. By the latter is meant a small cup or glass which would hold enough wine for one person, so that each person would have his or her own glass from which to drink. Undoubtedly the tendency toward individual cups arose with the more recent discoveries of germs and communicable diseases.

The question has therefore, often come up whether or not the change from a common to an individual cup detracts from the symbolical significance of the sacrament.

Although in the Protestant Reformed Churches it has become rather common to use the individual cup, nevertheless, it might be well to discuss briefly whether this usage does in reality detract from the beautiful symbolical significance of the table of the Lord.

The relevant article of the Church Order, Article 62, reads as follows: "Every church shall administer the Lord's Supper in such a manner as it shall judge most conducive to edification; provided, however, that the outward ceremonies as prescribed in God's Word be not changed and all superstition be avoided, and that at the conclusion of the sermon and the usual prayers, the form for the administration of the Lord's Supper, together with the prayer for that purpose, shall be read."

It will probably help us to an understanding of the problem if first of all we discuss the various elements that enter into the symbolism of the Lord's table. The signs themselves are two, namely, the bread and the wine; but the symbolism is more inclusive. We may say that there are seven elements to that symbolism of the sacrament of communion. 1) There is first of all the symbol of the bread which points to the body of Christ. 2) Secondly, there is the symbolism of the broken bread, symbolic of the broken body of Christ upon the cross. 3) Thirdly, there is the wine signifying Christ's blood. 4) Fourthly, the poured out wine which signifies the shed blood of the Lord. We may add here parenthetically that this should be a part of our celebration of the sacrament of communion. It is often not done where the individual cup is in use, but this is undoubtedly a mistake. For the wine poured out is also a part of the symbolism which is essential to our celebration of communion. 5) Fifthly, there is the symbolism of the congregation as they eat the bread and drink the wine. This symbolizes to the believers the truth that by faith he eats and drinks the body and blood of His Savior, and thus becomes partaker of all the benefits merited by Christ for him in His suffering. 6) Sixthly, there is the

gathering together of the believers about the table of the Lord. This is symbolic of the communion of the saints as they are one in the Spirit of Christ and as they dwell together with their God in covenant fellowship, which fellowship is only possible as based upon the sacrifice of Christ. 7) Finally, there is the Word of the minister which he speaks. This is not in reality part of the symbolism, for when the minister speaks, Christ speaks through him the Word of Life. But it is, nonetheless, a very important, or let me say, the most important part of the celebration.

Besides the various elements of the symbolism of the sacrament, there are also various elements as to the general form of celebration of the sacrament. I would say that the former constitute the content of Lord's Supper while the latter constitute the form. The form has varied and may very well vary according to the locale of the particular congregation and also according to the circumstances of the times in which a particular church may live. The important thing to remember, however, is that the variations in form may never effect in any way the essential symbolism. The content is all important, for by it the conscious believer in Christ is assured of his union with Christ through the Holy Spirit. So that if the general form of the sacrament changes from time to time, with varied circumstances, the church must always be on her guard that this form never effects the true contents. So also it is important to notice the language of the Church Order in this connection. In the article which we quoted we read, "Every church shall administer the Lord's Supper in such a manner as it shall judge most conducive to edification; provided, however, that the outward ceremonies as prescribed in God's Word be not changed and all superstition be avoided . . ." Thus the form of the celebration of this ceremony is left to the discretion of the local church as long as it does not change "the outward ceremonies as prescribed in God's Word" and as long as "all superstition is avoided."

Among the various elements that constitute difference in form we may mention: 1) The posture of the participants. In times past and maybe in some reformed churches of the present it has been customary to sit or to kneel or even to walk past the minister while one receives from the minister the bread and the wine. In this connection also may be mentioned the fact that sometimes the minister himself gives the bread and the wine to the communicants while at other times the elders will do this. 2) Secondly, there has often been variation as to where the communicants sit during the sacrament. Sometimes the congregation would come to the front in small groups and sit about the table of the Lord literally, and the minister would conduct the ceremony without the reading of the form for each group. The form would be read first to all. Or at times the communicants would come to the front rows of pews and partake of the bread and wine as a group. Or again, the communicants may remain in their pews with their families scattered throughout the auditorium of the church building. 3) Sometimes it is

customary for the minister to break all the bread in the presence of the congregation; or, in places where the congregation is quite large, the minister may break only a part of the bread. 4) Again, it may be customary for a passage of Scripture to be read or an appropriate Psalm sung while the people are partaking of the bread and wine. Then again, the communicant may be silent and in meditation upon the sacrifice and atonement of Jesus Christ while the elders or minister distribute the wine and the bread. These matters all relate to the form of the celebration of the Lord's Supper and in no way effect the essential symbolism of the sacrament.

Now the question is, whether the common or individual cup is a part of the content, the symbolism of the sacrament, or whether it is a part of the form of the ceremony.

Those who argue in favor of the communal cup insists that it is a part of the symbolic significance of the whole ceremony. And the symbolism lies in this, that by it is expressed the communion of saints. They say that it is necessary in order to preserve the distinctive feature of the sacrament that the believers partake in the fellowship of the Spirit and therefore in the fellowship of one another of the benefits of Christ's atonement. If this were the case, it certainly would be necessary to retain the communal cup in favor of the individual cup.

Yet such is hardly the case. For, in the first place, the symbolism is not in the cup but in the wine. As Rev. H. Hoeksema remarks, "There certainly can be no objection against the use of the individual cup. An especially for large congregations the individual cup is undoubtedly to be preferred. The symbolism is not in the cup, but in the wine. Yet, where the individual cup is used, there certainly could be no objection, and on the contrary, it would be entirely proper if the minister would pour out the wine into one cup in the sight of the congregation, rather than immediately passing all the cups already filled to the communicants." (Eating and Drinking Christ, p. 26). Secondly, the symbolism of the communion of saints is not expressed in the drinking of one cup, but rather in the gathering of the congregation together on the Sabbath under the preaching of the Word by the consistory and around the table of the Lord. As is expressed in the Notes on Reformed Church Polity by Rev. Ophoff, "Some regard the one cup—all drinking from the one cup—as an element in the institution of the Lord's Supper by Christ, thus regard it as being a symbol setting forth the truth of the oneness of God's people in Christ, he being the one spiritual nourishment of them all of whom all the believers partake. But the words of the institution of the Lord's Supper do not indicate that the one cup has this symbolical significance. According to Scripture (I Cor. 10:17) the oneness of the believers is symbolized by their all partaking of the one bread and of the one wine. 'For we being many are one bread and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread.' Our Reformed Fathers had

understanding of this as appears from the following passage contained in the form for the administration of the Lord's Supper, 'For as out of many grains one meal is ground, and one bread baked, and out of many berries being pressed together, one wine floweth, and mixeth itself together; so shall we all, *who by a true faith are engrafted in Christ*, be altogether one body, through brotherly love, for Christ's sake . . .' Thus believers are one by reason of their being grafted in Christ *by a true Faith* and hence by their eating his flesh and drinking His blood by faith. The question of the one cup (necessity calls in most churches for more than one cup) (and we may add that that already destroys the "principle", H.H.) belongs to the 'Things indifferent.'" (p. 147.) Thus Rev. Ophoff finds the symbolism of the communion of the saints not in the communal cup, but in the wine made from many berries, and the common drinking from one wine. Not one cup, but one wine.

Thus far our conclusion is that either one of the two may be used. It remains yet to say a word about the question of which the two is the better. It can probably be argued that the individual cup is the better of the two. This in the first place, because in a large congregation not as much time is taken in the celebration of the sacrament with the individual cup as with the common cup. Thus there is left more time for the sermon which precedes this celebration. Secondly, the preference of individual cups may be argued on the basis of the Church Order. "Every church shall minister the Lord's Supper in such a manner as it shall judge most conducive to edification; . . ." It is conceivable that the possibility of the transference of germs and the communication of colds and illnesses should detract from the edification of some people, so that they become more concerned over this than the spiritual significance of their participation in the Lord's Supper. As Van Dellen and Monsma observe in their Commentary on the Church Order, "In this day of widespread and more thorough knowledge concerning disease germs, of individual drinking cups in the home, of individual paper cups and drinking fountains in public places, it is very natural that the common cup at the Lord's Table, going from mouth to mouth, constitutes a detraction and a hindrance for at least some communicants. By using individual cups this source of detraction and hindrance is removed. And that is gain." (p. 261.)

Therefore, in the light of all these considerations, the individual cup does not detract from the symbolism and essence of the celebration of communion, and is even to be preferred over the communal cup.

H. Hanko

"Good works do not precede them that are justified, but follow them that are justified."

— Augustine

ALL AROUND US

"No Hope for Reunion?"

This question Rev. John H. Piersma asks in the January issue of *torch and trumpet* in his rubric "Under Church Spires." He reflects on an editorial which the Rev. E. Knott wrote in the November 10th *Reformed Guardian*.

Rev. Piersma, it seems, along with many others in the Chr. Ref. Church, had hopes that the group Rev. Knott represents were ready to hop right over to his churches. But after reading Knott's editorial Piersma observes some things that Knott poses as obstacles in the way of such a union. However, at the conclusion of his article Piersma sees a ray of hope not only that ultimately such a reunion can be worked out, but also that Knott's group can be made to see that "The Three Points of 1924 are not necessarily a hindrance but an aid to unfettered Gospel preaching."

It's all very interesting, not only to see how these men spar each other with no intention of really hitting, but also how they maneuver to gain the same objective, namely, to bring the schismatic group which left us back into the Chr. Ref. Church. Knott in his editorial feigns with his right and really says that he, like Van Weelden, would desire much to get back into the Chr. Ref. Church, but he will not go in like Van Weelden did. Van Weelden just collapsed and was carried in. But Knott, who always was a little stubborn, says that he just wants to walk in by himself, i.e., on his own power. Can't the Chr. Ref. Church see that it is no longer a case of just one man with a few of his parishioners that wants to come in, but now it is a considerable group? Therefore the Chr. Ref. Church ought to make quite a concession, and say nothing about the Three Points. But Piersma feigns with his left, and he says to Knott et al, now really its not so bad that those Three Points are there; if you can only hurdle over them you will find that they will work right down your alley. The thing you really want is with us and that is: expanded Mission endeavor, ecumenicity, and unfettered Gospel preaching. You can preach conditions in our churches to your heart's content. Yes sir, it looks like Knott and Piersma are fighting each other, but really its just a friendly sparring match in which no one gets hurt, and in the end they walk off together arm in arm. But why should I tell you all about this, when you can read it for yourselves? Here is what Rev. Piersma wrote:

"The fact of a recent division in the Protestant Reformed Churches is not a valid reason for rejoicing on the part of anyone. Church strife is most unpleasant, and its consequences too grievous to allow any other reaction but sadness. This is not to deny that there may well be occasion for struggle and battle and separation in the history of Christ's Church on earth. After all, there is a situation worse than church strife, and that is the indifference and

lukewarmness which prevents anyone from being sufficiently serious about the church to care to fight.

"Ever since things came to open division among the Protestant Reformed brethren many have wondered if there was a possibility for reunion of at least one section of that denomination with the Christian Reformed Church from which the original separation was effected in 1924. Reports were that those who separated from the leadership of the Rev. Herman Hoeksema had changed their attitude on the all-important matter of the well-meant offer of salvation, long regarded as most crucial in the common grace dispute of 1924. Revived interest in evangelism and missions, a more cordial attitude toward ministers and members of other denominations—these and other indications have been interpreted by some to mean that those who no longer identify themselves with the Rev. Mr. Hoeksema have in effect taken over the Christian Reformed position at more than one point, and that they might as well return to the fellowship of that denomination.

"Two incidents have occurred recently which seem to indicate that there is little reason to hope for such reunion, at least for the present time. The first—not in itself proof for the above opinion—is the application of the Rev. James Van Weelden for admission to the Christian Reformed ministry. The Rev. Mr. Van Weelden has served the Protestant Reformed congregation in Sioux Center, Iowa, for several years. We understand that with few exceptions his entire congregation has decided with him to re-enter the Christian Reformed denomination.

"The October 7, 1955 issue of *The Banner*, Christian Reformed denominational weekly, carried an announcement of Classis Sioux Center to the effect that Mr. Van Weelden had been granted licensure to preach in the churches of the Christian Reformed denomination with a view to his possible acceptance as a full-fledged minister pending synodical approval. To this announcement the Rev. Edward Knott reacts in an editorial in *The Reformed Guardian*, November 10, 1955. His attitude is reflected in the editorial's title, 'No Change.'

"The aptness of this title for its writer is determined by the fact that Classis Sioux Center declared in the aforementioned announcement that they had 'heard his (Van Weelden's, J.H.P.) confession of guilt that he was co-responsible in both misrepresenting the Chr. Ref. Church and in engaging in un-Christian practices against our denomination . . .'

"This, declares brother Knott, is certain evidence that there has been 'no essential change in the position or attitude of the church in which we were denied a place some thirty years ago. And seeing that such is the case, it is our emphatic position that there is no more room in that church for us today than there was then . . . that if we took the correct position in 1924, which I am convinced that we did, we cannot before God, silence our conscience today and simply go

back.' This second incident seems to destroy all hope for reunion.

"All in all, we feel that Mr. Knott's editorial is a very helpful statement of at least his own personal reaction to the fact of his former colleague's return to the Christian Reformed denomination, the manner in which this return was handled by Classis Sioux Center, and of the desirability and possibility of others doing the same thing. This editorial is marked by fairness, charity and frankness—there is no need to be in dark as to the writer's position if it is read carefully.

"And yet we wonder, is there no hope for a healing of at least this breach in the forces of Christ? 'I am convinced that the *direction* which is indicated by the official adoption of the three points' is the *direction* of error and that as long as she (the Christian Reformed Church, J. H. P.) maintains those 'points' as part of her official confession I cannot, and before God, may not become a member of that church as long as I can be a member of and preach the gospel of Christ in a denomination that stands unfettered on the Three Forms of Unity only'—Knott asserts (*italics inserted*). We like to think, however, that even for the writer 'No Change' does not mean 'No Hope,' for he adds, 'That does not mean that we cannot have, or should not have, any contact with the Christian Reformed Church.' May that 'contact' be more than a desire for vindication of some pet theory or the satisfaction of knowing that 'we were right all along.' May it yet be a fruitful contact, one out of which mutual understanding and willingness to consider even each other's admonitions will come. And such contact may even bring to light that the Three Points of 1924 are not necessarily a hindrance but an aid to unfettered Gospel preaching."

The Views of H. Hoeksema and K. Schilder.

In the same issue of *torch and trumpet*, in the rubric titled: Is It Worth Reading? edited by Prof. H. R. Van Til, appears a review of the book recently produced by Dr. Alexander C. De Jong titled: *The Well-Meant Gospel Offer, The Views of H. Hoeksema and K. Schilder*, and signed by Joseph A. Hill, Walton, New York.

We have not read the book referred to and therefore cannot check the statements Mr. Hill makes in his review. Assuming that what he writes in criticism of De Jong's book is based upon a correct interpretation of the text, then Mr. Hill is generally pleased with De Jong's analyzation not only of Hoeksema's and Schilder's views but also of De Jong's argument for *The Well-Meant Gospel Offer*.

Mr. Hill, however, does not go along fully with De Jong's "reaction against an absolute parallelism between election and reprobation." He claims that De Jong "perhaps goes a bit too far in the other direction in his constant emphasis on sin as the cause of reprobation. In underscoring man's responsibility he fails to do full justice to God's will as the ultimate cause of reprobation. On page 130 he says, 'The cause of faith is election in Christ, and the cause

of condemnation is the rebellious sinner's persistent rejection of God's unsimulated call to salvation. No one disbelieves because he is reprobate. He is a reprobate because he does not want to believe, because he wills to live without God, and because he resists the redemptive will of God revealed in the gospel call. His unbelief, his rejection, his resistance bears an indirect relation to the will of God's decree similar to God's 'permissive will' in relation to sin.'"

Mr. Hill does not deprecate this writing of De Jong as the speech of Arminius, but very carefully he writes: "Calvin did not accept this view of reprobation. While holding man fully responsible for his condition, Calvin always goes back to God as the first cause of reprobation."

Apart from this light criticism the reviewer is quite satisfied that De Jong has properly done away with the "logic" of Hoeksema. He approves of De Jong's assertion that with Hoeksema's logic you must destroy man's responsibility. Rather he would go along with De Jong in believing that "the problem of a well-meant gospel offer involves a complex of paradoxes or apparent contradictions: universal offer—limited redemption; conditionality—unconditionality; common grace—particular grace; divine sovereignty—human responsibility; grace—freedom. There is no real conflict between any of these pairs of truths. The unlimited offer of the gospel is not inconsistent with the doctrine of particular redemption. These two truths involve a paradox which human reason cannot solve. But as both are clearly taught in Scripture, we should accept both on the authority of God, and reverently refrain from trying to explain the paradox by human reason. The weakness of both the Arminian and the hyper-Calvinist is that they try to solve the paradox logically . . ."

Well, that's enough of that! It amuses me how these bright lights hate the "logic" of Hoeksema, yet they are always talking about it. They take trips way to the Free University of Amsterdam to do research on the theology of Hoeksema. What do you know about that! But that "abominable logic" of his! We hate it! We love paradoxes rather, paradoxes that we can philosophize about and have more material for more of our confusing books.

In the meantime they do away with the clear, uncontradictable truth of the Word of God and keep on maintaining the Arminianism of the First Point. What a pity!

M.S.

"We are assured of our election by our justification; and that we are justified in Christ (which benefit is never granted unto the elect without sanctification) we know from faith; of which we are again assured by the fruits of faith, which are good works, new obedience and true repentance."

— Ursinus, *Idem*.

"There is predestinated a certain number of the predestinate, which can neither be augmented nor diminished."

— Article 3, Lambeth Articles, *Idem*.

CONTRIBUTIONS

"Playing Church"

The "Contributions" of the Rev. G. Lubbers and brother J. King appearing in the S. B. of Jan. 15, 1956, reflecting on an article the undersigned wrote in the S.B. of Dec. 15, 1955, demand an answer. Both of these brethren, and perhaps there are others, were deeply offended by a certain expression undersigned used which appears in quotation marks above. These brethren applied it to the little church at Creston, while others may have applied it to themselves, especially those who were described by me as bypassing a church to attend elsewhere.

It is this offense that I desire to remove if possible by apologizing for the use of that expression. I confess that I used the expression carelessly, not being conscious at the time I wrote it of all the evil implications it contained, as both the brethren have ably pointed out to me. I realize more than ever that words have meaning, and one who writes or speaks should weigh them carefully. I want to assure these brethren that the thought never entered my soul that Creston was "playing church" when it stood firmly in the midst of the battle recently waged in our churches when by the act of schism or by the exercise of christian discipline the greater portion of this church fell away. Nor did I ever think Creston was "playing church" when each Lord's Day she preaches the Word and administers the sacraments, and at each Classical meeting asks for Classical appointments. If I did, I would have refused to accept such appointments and stated publicly my reasons for doing so. Nor is it so that when I keep such appointments at Creston that I feel in my soul that I am helping her to "play church." Nor do I believe that everyone who bypasses Creston, or any other church for that matter, to attend the church of his choice across town is necessarily guilty of "playing church." I feel now that I have offended good people by the use of that expression, and for this I am sincerely sorry.

However, I do not wish to have my apology destroy all that I wrote. The intent which was not evil, but good, I will defend.

I purposed to lay it upon the heart of all those who bypass the church of their neighborhood to attend another of their choice to weigh heavily their reasons for doing so. And I admit that I had in the back of my mind the church at Creston when I wrote. That surely could not be considered evil of me that I addressed myself to Creston's neighbors to cause them to reflect seriously on the reasons why they do not attend there. I was seeking the good of Creston as well as that of the people in question. I realize, of course, that you cannot legislate church membership, you cannot force people to go to any particular church though I

did suggest that maybe such a rule might be helpful. I also realize that there may be good, cogent reasons why a family goes across town to worship. But I also have reason to believe these reasons are not always sound. It was therefore my purpose to impress upon them the necessity of weighing seriously in their own minds the reasons why they by-pass a small struggling church to attend a larger one where this condition does not obtain. I know this is a ticklish subject, and please do not think it evil of me that I say what I think.

I am also of the conviction that the small struggling church that resides in a city where three or four other churches are flourishing should ask itself the question not only why it is being by-passed, but ultimately also whether it should continue. I do not believe that just because the Lord has led the church through deep and bitter ways that this necessarily means that it is His will it should continue. The condition of the Church of Philadelphia (Rev. 3) is beside the point, as I see it. It was separated by at least 25 miles from the nearest church. I am not talking about little, stranded churches, but about a church in a city where three or four or more churches reside. And mark you, I do not say by this either that I believe it is the Lord's will that Creston should disband. I don't know what the Lord's will is for Creston. But I do believe it is Creston's duty to seek the Lord's will in this matter. I do not believe that just because the church has had a trying experience and the Lord has brought to manifestation His faithful few, that the few ought to conclude that this is necessarily a sign from heaven that they must continue.

Rev. Lubbers does not like the word "ridiculous" which I also used in my article. I don't either after I read his contribution. His article suggests that I should rather have used the antonym "commendable" instead. This, not only I but our Classis as well has already done. We say it is indeed commendable that a little group of eight families pays a budget almost twice as much as anybody else. But I assure these brethren that my commendation turns to pity if that condition continues and it should prove to be unnecessary.

It is not my purpose to discourage Creston, nor to tell her to disband. Creston will solve her own problems. But I do like to look at things objectively and factually.

M. Schipper

"The moving or efficient cause of predestination unto life is not the foresight of faith, or of perseverance, or of good works, or of any thing that is in the person predestinated, but only the good will and pleasure of God."

Article 2, The Lambeth Articles, Creeds of Christendom, Schaff.