

# THE STANDARD

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## MEDITATION

### OUR RELIABLE WEAPON

"Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin." I Peter 4:1.

A thought.

A single thought, or consideration.

That is obviously what the apostle refers to when he tells us to arm ourselves with the same "mind."

A thought, that nevertheless, is like a precious gem, a valuable asset, even a gold mine of truth for him who possesses it.

For it is a thought of God, that He reveals to us in His holy Word, and lays in our hearts by His Spirit, in order that we may know it and cherish it.

It is a thought that is the personal property of the believer to reassure him in his conflict in the flesh.

You can well compare it to the "faithful sayings" of which the apostle Paul speaks. These were maxims which were taken from the Scriptures, and were found on the lips of the believers of the early church, both in their private conversations and in their public worship. They used them to encourage one another in temptations, in persecutions, and even at the stake.

This is such a "faithful saying" that is presented here as a *thought*.

It is a thought that we can always remember, carry before our consciousness, to refer to it and address it to others as the need requires.

For with it we are able to resist and overcome the fiercest foe.

It is our sword and shield. It is our complete panoply, our only and sufficient arsenal in the spiritual battle of faith.

It has never failed yet and never will.

Arm yourself with this thought!

Saith your God.

The thought: He that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin.

A very simple statement, so lucid that a child can grasp it.

And yet after reading it a few times, and pondering on it, it seems to develop into an enigma.

We are inclined to say: This saying is hard.

What does it mean, to cease from sin? It cannot mean that the true child of God is so completely delivered from sin, that he never sins any more, and cannot as much as sin, but has attained to perfection. That would be in conflict with all of the Scriptures, and particularly with the passage in I John 1:8, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

And what does the expression "suffered in the flesh" mean? We know of suffering, for the world is full of suffering. Earthquakes, floods, famines and storms ravage all mankind, so that none escapes. What a misery you encounter in the hospitals and institutions all over the world. Every home has its problems. Every person meets his troubles anew every day. There is not a single moment of pure joy in the life of any individual upon the earth. But how can it be said, then, that he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin? For this would seemingly apply to all men. And then this word, that is intended to reassure the believer alone, would lose all its significance.

It is an enigma to ponder over.

And as we ponder over it new vistas of truth open up before us.

A thought, worth considering, worth remembering.

Arm yourself with it.

You have ceased from sin . . . if so be that you have suffered in the flesh.

The meaning of the word "ceased" becomes perfectly obvious if we translate it as "having come to rest."

Sin is a burden that is too heavy for us to bear. God has taught us to know and confess how heavily that burden of guilt weighs upon us, so that "my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long."

There is also nothing so wearying to the soul as the constant onslaughts of sin. The devil never ceases his attacks. The world finds daily new delight in making our life bitter. Our own flesh is always a ready victim to all the temptations round about us, while sin breeds sin within us. And through it all we grow hopelessly weary as we realize that we are always only prone by nature to hate God and the neighbor.

But Jesus proclaims the good news to our hearts: Come unto Me! Yes, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

By grace we experience that sin has no more dominion over us.

We have ceased, found rest from sin, for God is mightier than any foe. And grace abounds.

That is the confidence of our faith in the midst of the battle.

We have ceased from sin.

How do I know?

How am I reassured of this wonderful security?

The thought: "He that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin."

This expression, "suffered in the flesh," has its own peculiar significance in this epistle of Peter, in which he is addressing the elect strangers sojourning in the Babylon of this world.

In the previous chapter he already referred to it in the eighteenth verse, where he points out that Christ has suffered as the Just for the unjust, and was even put to death *in the flesh*.

Now he refers to that again by saying, "Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh."

So that "suffered in the flesh" refers to all the sufferings through the assaults of the powers of darkness as long as we are in the flesh.

Are you acquainted with that suffering?

Does the devil attack you? Does he seem to make it his particular business to assault you with his endless whisperings, cunning treachery, and lying deceit, as if you were an object of his special attention? In that case, blessed art thou. He never bothers about those who already are in his grasp, but he is interested in destroying the church of God.

Does the world ridicule you and pour out her hatred against you? Does she make you understand that you are a stranger in her midst? If so, count it all joy. She hates you because she hates God, and she treated the saints before you with the same "cure."

Does your flesh make your life grievous every day, so that you bitterly complain with Paul, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

Then be of good cheer. You have ceased from sin.

Arm yourself with this reliable weapon.

O, it cannot fail.

Remember, that Christ suffered in the flesh.

The Son of God came into the likeness of our sinful flesh, like us in all things, with only sin excluded.

He was born of Adam, flesh of our flesh, to walk our streets, associate with sinful men, and converse among us.

He was Abraham's seed, having taken on the flesh and blood of brethren according to divine appointment.

He was David's Son, the Lion of Judah's tribe, for Whom the victory was laid away as a crown of life in the heavens.

He was the Light that shone into the darkness, and the darkness hated Him, because their deeds were evil. Herod sought to kill Him before He could ever walk or talk. Scribes and Pharisees immediately laid plans to kill Him. His own brethren refused to believe in Him. His mother and His disciples were constantly offended by Him. Judas betrayed Him. Peter denied Him. Wicked hands took Him and nailed Him to the cross to get rid of Him once for all.

He suffered as the Just in the hands of the unjust in our flesh. He was hated just because He was the Son of God; just because He was the Light that shone into the darkness; yes, just because He was the Just among the unjust.

But God's divine purpose was realized through all this.

For notice how carefully Peter inserts two significant words here: "for us." "Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh."

He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, that by His stripes we might be healed.

He arose from the dead, entered into His rest, and pours out His Spirit into our hearts, drawing us unto Him by that powerful efficacious Word: "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

We have ceased from sin.

Wherefore we suffer in the flesh.

The devil attacks us, because he knows that he has but a little while.

The world hates us, because our presence among her condemns her.

Our own flesh makes our life bitter, because it is in the throes of the death-struggle of sin.

God's purpose is that through suffering we may be glorified.

Arm yourself with that thought.

The same thought that filled the soul of Christ.

He came to do the Father's will, for He carried in His hand the scroll of prophecy that had to be fulfilled.

He saw the heavens opened, and the devil descending like lightning into the eternal abyss.

He spoke boldly of His sufferings and the glory that would follow. Therefore, standing before the sanhedrin, He makes the confession: "Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.

For the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross, despising shame, and is set at the right hand of the throne of God.

He is the Captain of our salvation Who leads His army with Him into victory.

His thought is now your thought.

It never failed Him.

It cannot fail you.

It is your only reliable weapon.

Does this doctrine make men careless and profane? God forbid! The truth never does that, but the lie always does.

Sin has no more dominion over us. We need no longer live unto sin.

Besides the time is short. We have served sin long enough, and, don't forget, we owe her nothing.

Grace has made it possible for us to do the will of the Father, in love to Him and in hatred against all sin.

Stand therefore. Fight the battle of faith.

Always holding this firmly as your weapon.

A single thought.

Faith is the victory that overcomes the world!

C.H.

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## EDITORIALS

### Strange

In *De Wachter* of Oct. 2, 1956, the Rev. I. Van Dellen writes that the last synod the Christian Reformed Church left the impression that the Three Forms of Unity are no longer sufficient as a bond of fellowship, but that several items, synodical decisions, must be added to them.

When a minister from a different church connection with which the Christian Reformed Church has only what is called "restricted fellowship" asks to be admitted in his official capacity, as minister, therefore, in the Christian Reformed Church, a written document shall be presented to him, informing him of several synodical decisions in the past, such as the Conclusions of Utrecht, the stand against secret societies, the decisions concerning worldly amusements, and the three points about "common grace." The minister that applies for admission shall be asked to express agreement with these decisions and shall be asked to conform his preaching and teaching to them.

Now, according to the Rev. Van Dellen, the Christian Reformed Church moved in a wrong direction by making these decisions. Writes he (I translate): "In my opinion we are going the wrong way by imposing the above mentioned demands. Is it not sufficient that agreement is expressed with the Three Forms of Unity? The danger threatens that we are going to seek the basis of church fellowship in synodical decisions rather than in the confessions. We also forget that, within the limits of the confessions, there is room for difference of opinion. Think, for instance, about common grace and the Conclusions of Utrecht. If, from now on we assume this standpoint, we will build little walls that prevent us from uniting with churches that confess the same truth as we do, and also act according this confession. I am afraid that, in the long run, this will lead to sectarianism. Next to the confessions we still have something else that distinguishes us from other Reformed churches and that prevents us to live in fellowship with them."

I say: coming from the pen of the Rev. Van Dellen, this is, to say the least, very strange.

I am referring especially to what he writes about common grace and the "three points."

It seems to me that, before the Rev. Van Dellen can honestly assume the standpoint that the "three points" of 1924 are not binding as the confessions are, he should, at least, plainly express that, since 1924, he has changed his mind.

Still more, he should also confess that he grievously sinned when, on the basis of the "three points" he agreed to have the Rev. H. Danhof, the Rev. G. M. Ophoff and the undersigned deposed from office and expelled from the Christian Reformed Church.

Moreover, he should, at least, make the attempt to get

an overture to synod asking that they retract the "Three Points" as binding upon the office-bearers and members of the Christian Reformed Church, that they apologize to us for ever having cast us out, and that they ask us to return to their fold.

As it stands now, the article by the Rev. Van Dellen in *De Wachter* of Oct. 8, 1956 is, to say the least, very strange.

It is also dishonest.

Was not the Rev. Van Dellen president of the synod of the Christian Reformed Church in Kalamazoo, 1924, that adopted the "Three Points"?

Was he not the co-author of the "Three Points" together with one or two other ministers, that is, co-author of those points in the form in which they were finally adopted? I think he was.

Were not the Rev. H. Danhof, the Rev. G. M. Ophoff and the undersigned expelled from the Christian Reformed Church because we would not and could not agree that those three points were Reformed and in harmony with the Confessions? They were. And did not the Rev. Van Dellen agree with this expulsion and even gave advice, contrary to Dr. Van Lonkhuyzen at the time, as to how this might be done by Classis East and Classis West of Grand Rapids, in spite of the fact that the synod of Kalamazoo had not demanded deposition if the accused pastors did not agree with the "Three Points"? I think he did.

Was he not one of the witnesses in the Grand Rapids court designed to deprive us of our church property? He was.

And now he writes that the three points are, after all, not the same as the confessions and there is room in the Reformed Churches for difference of opinion in regard to the matter of common grace? And he does so without even blushing?

Once more, I say: Very strange, indeed!

H. H.

### Unbiblical Divorce and Remarriage

We were discussing a report on the question concerning unbiblical divorce and remarriage delivered to the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church in 1932. In that report the words of the Lord concerning divorce and remarriage were so distorted that all the parties concerned, the husband that forsakes his wife apart from adultery, the woman that is forsaken, and the man that marries the forsaken woman, commit no sin when they remarry or marry, although the Lord emphatically declares the very opposite in the texts quoted.

We promised to examine the arguments in the way of which this strange conclusion is reached. But in doing so we may as well, at the same time, present our own view of the matter and our interpretation of the texts concerned.

First of all, then, let us consider the two texts in Matthew that have reference to this matter.

In Matt. 5:32 we read: "But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery."

And in Matt. 19:9: "And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whose marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery."

Now, about the first party, the man that puts away his wife that did not commit the sin of fornication, the contention of the committee above mentioned that he is free to marry again is certainly contrary to the text as well as to the context. As far as the context is concerned, in Matt. 5:31 we read: "It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement." According to this, no one might leave his wife except in the legal way. This idea the Lord opposes and condemns in verse 32. Nothing, not even a legal divorce, can break the marriage bond. Fornication is, indeed, a violation of marriage, and if the wife commits this sin, the husband *may* (does not have to) leave her, but even this is not the same as the dissolution of the marriage bond by way of a legal divorce. At any rate, the man that thus leaves his wife is not free to marry again.

This is even stronger in Matthew 19. In the context of this passage, we read: "The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to leave his wife for every cause? And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder. They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement and to put her away? He said unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so." And then follow the well-known words: "But I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery."

Notice: 1. That, according to the Lord, Moses catered to wicked Israel, for the hardness of their heart, when he enjoined them to give their wives a divorce. 2. That the Lord, however, even in opposition to Moses, refers to the beginning and emphasizes that marriage, the joining of one man to one woman, is rooted in creation. It is a creation ordinance, which may not and, in fact, cannot be broken by any man. 3. That the organic relation in marriage, of one man to one woman, is even firmer than that of parents and children. This is the reason why a man will forsake his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife. 4. That a man

and his wife are not two after marriage, but they are one flesh. It is on the basis of all this that the Lord enjoins His people never to divorce, and never to leave their proper spouses except for the cause of fornication.

Now the committee, with respect to the first party, the man that leaves his wife for any cause, invented the subterfuge of inserting in the text of Matt. 19:9 the word "immediately." The text, then, reads thus: "If a man leaves his wife for any reason, not for fornication, and immediately, even before the forsaken wife has married another man, marries another woman, commits adultery, but if he waits until she is married again, he is free also to marry." But this is nothing but a subterfuge, as has been said. There is absolutely nothing in the text that even suggests such an interpretation. And I would like to know what right the committee has to insert words and phrases into any passage of Scripture and that, too, for the purpose of distorting the text that it supports their own notions.

Besides, the text in Matthew 5, certainly condemns this "interpretation" of the committee. There we read not only that when a man leaves his wife except for the cause of fornication he commits adultery, but that he causes his wife to commit adultery. How strange the reasoning of the committee becomes in this light. Notice: 1. He forsakes his wife. 2. By doing so, he not only becomes guilty of adultery when he marries another, but he is also the cause of his wife's adultery. He is, therefore, doubly guilty. 3. And now, according to the committee, that man, that is doubly guilty, is free, because of his own sinful actions, to marry another!

More about the question next time, the Lord willing.

H.H.

## Election and Reprobation

In his book on God's Election, Berkouwer also devotes a section to the question of "hardening," the hardening of man's heart. He is very averse to bring this hardening in causal connection with God's decree of reprobation. Beyond saying that hardening is the revelation of God's holy wrath over man's sin and guilt he does not want to go. He denies that God is absolutely sovereign in hardening man's heart, so that even in this God is first while man is second.

Hence, in this section of his book, pp. 29ff., he treats of self-hardening first of all. With great emphasis, according to him, Scripture speaks of the self-hardening: man hardens his own heart. This is true of Pharaoh who under all the plagues which God sent upon him constantly hardens his heart. But this is no less true of Israel to whom the word is, therefore, addressed: "Harden not your heart." This self-hardening Berkouwer defines as a walking in a way of increasing non-receptivity, in a way in which one does no longer hear and see. And of this self-hardening the whole of Scripture speaks repeatedly, in the New Testament as well as in the Old. But it is erroneous, according to Berkou-

wer, to bring this hardening in connection and that, too, in a causal connection with the doctrine of reprobation.

But, secondly, Berkouwer also treats of God's hardening man's heart. Pharaoh not only hardens his own heart but God hardens it also. And in Rom. 9 the apostle refers to this act of God's hardening man as an act of his sovereign freedom. And this applies not only to Pharaoh and the heathen nations but also to Israel of the old dispensation and to those that live under the gospel in the days of the New Testament. This Berkouwer explains as a righteous judgment of God. On the part of man, there is a process of corruption in increasing guilt. Guilt is transgression, according to him, and calls for the reaction of God's holiness and wrath. Then God acts in wrath over against or in the guilt of sin. Then he can deliver and abandon His people or separate individuals of His people or of the heathen, and in thus "giving them over" he reveals His holiness and judgment, p. 300.

In this connection, he also refers to the well-known passage in Isa. 6: "And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not, and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed." It is, according to Berkouwer, incomprehensible how one could possibly read in these verses a distinction and separation of elect and reprobate and a description of the hardening of the reprobate according to the counsel of eternal reprobation. It has nothing to do with reprobation. All that is taught in this passage is the judgment of God over the sin of the people, pp. 300-302.

The same is true of Jesus' application of the parable of the sower and similar passages: Lu. 8:9, 10; Matt. 13:10-17; Mark 4:10-12; John 12:37-40. Especially the text in Mark is strong, in connection with the passage from Isa. 6: "And when he was alone, they that were about him with the twelve asked him of the parable. And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables: That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them." And no less strong is the passage in John 12, again in connection with the passage from Isaiah: "But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them."

Now, how does Berkouwer interpret all these passages?

First of all, he emphasizes that one may not weaken the sense of these words. They must be allowed to stand in their real and serious meaning. But then, he immediately emphasizes that one may not give a "hard" meaning to these words. One may, indeed, plead for the sovereign freedom of God, but be very careful that this be not understood in a deterministic sense. One must understand that Scripture never speaks of man's hardening as a causal divine act, but it always places God's hardening of man's heart in direct connection with the preaching of the gospel that places man before a choice. If a man does not listen to and heed the gospel, he is driven in the way of alienation and judgment. In that way the ripening process is seen, so that finally they arrive at the stage in which it can be said of them: "they could not believe." But this is not an impotence that is the result of a determination of an absolute power, but rather of the holiness of God in judgment over man's sin. It is a terrible misunderstanding to interpret all this in the light of the symmetry of election and reprobation, pp. 303, 304.

From all this is plain:

1. That Berkouwer does not want a causal relation between God's eternal counsel of reprobation and the hardening of man's heart.

2. That the guilt and sin of man are always first and the hardening of man's heart by God is second and follows as an act of judgment upon the sin of man.

I maintain that all this is not Reformed. Any Arminian can subscribe to it.

And again, I claim that Berkouwer, in his heart of hearts, must have nothing of the Scriptural doctrine of reprobation.

This I still hope to prove, D. V.

H.H.

### Congratulations, Plus!

Yes, this book review is in the nature of multiple congratulations, and with a "plus" added.

First, I wish to congratulate the Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, and more particularly, Mr. William Eerdmans. This part of my article is sadly overdue. I should have given time and thought to this item years ago.

When the whole world that calls itself Reformed either ignored its most outstanding theologian, the Rev. Herman Hoeksema, or attacked him and his views, God gave us the foremost publisher of Reformed heritage to publish his works. God moved his heart and mind to open the door to the world of publications.

Most of us do not realize the outlay of money and the subsequent risks involved in the publishing of books. I know, for Mr. Eerdmans told me, and showed me the graphs of costs and sales.

And so I wish to publicly thank him at this occasion: a milepost in the publishing of Hoeksema's books.

You ask: "How come?" Why did this man, versed in



profitable printing and publishing matters, risk so much?

Here is his answer, and it is twofold: first, "The Rev. Hoeksema writes for the ages!" And, second, "This is my partial share of working for the coming of the Kingdom!"

And so, congratulations, Mr. Eerdmans, in finishing the publication of the most valuable set of commentaries on the Heidelberg. May God repay you for what you have done for the Reformed Churches in the United States.

\* \* \* \*

My second congratulations are directed to the author, the Rev. H. Hoeksema.

The first volume came off the press in June, 1943.

The 10th, and last, volume came off the press just a few weeks ago. (I was asked to write a review of both the 10th volume and the entire series which is now completed).

The Rev. Hoeksema's first word in the introduction of the first volume, June 1, 1943, was the word "if." And that was proper. We are as a mist, a vapour, a vanity at best. God is the only Rock. When God writes about Himself and His works He never prefaces His thoughts with this little word "if." His counsel stands, and He doeth all His good-pleasure.

But Hoeksema wrote: "If in God's inscrutable purpose there are left to me a sufficient number of days to work and labor, I intend to complete the work the beginning of which I offer to the public in the present volume." (Preface of Volume I: *In the Midst of Death*).

Well, dear reader, when Hoeksema wrote that sentence, God said: Amen! God knew that He would multiply his days in order to give to the Church of Christ this wonderful commentary on the Heidelberg.

It seemed in 1947 as though the same fate would strike him as it did Dr. K. Schilder, who might only complete Lord's Day 10 of our Catechism, in his exposition. Our beloved leader lay in Sioux Fall's hospital, bereft of voice and locomotion. We tearfully thought that his earthly pilgrimage was over.

But God in His mercy decreed otherwise.

He returned to us not only, but he returned with abundant vigor of body and soul and spirit, as the present completion of the Heidelberg exposition serves as indubitable proof.

The work accomplished is no mere exegesis of the Catechism. It is an able development of the doctrines presented therein. I have studied every volume and it is my conviction that it would be easy to construct a rather thorough dogmatics from its rich contents.

The outstanding thrust of this exposition is the Sovereignty of the Triune God. That outstanding doctrine of Scripture is found on all its 2223 pages. The Holy Bible begins with the majestic: "In the beginning God . . ." Well, the Rev. Hoeksema has kept the faith of that majesty.

The last volume's title is *The Perfect Prayer*, and I find no fault with it. However, I would have liked the title he

gave to the treatment of the same material in a separate work: *In the Sanctuary*. A title gives, or ought to give, the content of the book or article in brief. Perhaps the author did not want to create confusion by having two distinct publications with the same title.

I am confident that when you have read the Rev. Hoeksema's exposition of the Lord's Prayer, you will say: I have been in God's Sanctuary. There he takes you and your life. There he shows you how to behave before the Face of Jehovah, ever guided by the Word which alone is the safe guide when doing that most difficult work of prayer and supplication.

Here are the titles and prices:

Vol. No.	Titles	Prices
I.	In the Midst of Death.....	\$ 2.50
II.	God's Way Out.....	2.00
III.	The Death of the Son of God.....	2.50
IV.	The Lord of Glory.....	2.50
V.	Abundant Mercy .....	2.50
VI.	Baptized into Christ.....	2.50
VII.	Eating and Drinking Christ.....	2.50
VIII.	Love the Lord Thy God.....	3.00
IX.	Love Thy Neighbor for God's Sake.....	2.50
X.	The Perfect Prayer.....	3.00
Total.....		\$25.50

However, when last speaking to Mr. Eerdmans, he told me that I could include in my announcement that when buying the whole set you can get it for \$20.00.

\* \* \* \*

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(Continued on page 72)

## OUR DOCTRINE

### THE BOOK OF REVELATION

#### CHAPTER V

Revelation 2:8-11

#### THE CHURCH STRONG IN TRIBULATION

Nor must we entertain the erroneous idea that the Lord would have overlooked the weakness of this specific congregation, and pass it in silence, in view of the fact that in its tribulation it had need of encouragement rather than of rebuke. This would have been fatal and detrimental to the church. No, there is nothing to criticize. There is no reason to reprimand the church in any respect. And again, also here we must remember that it is not the individual believer, but the church as a whole that Jesus is addressing. It is not so that the members of the congregation in Smyrna had already reached perfection, and that they sinned no more. But addressing the congregation as a whole, the Lord finds no weakness, mentions no cause for rebuke, for the simple reason that it did not exist. The church of Smyrna possesses all the favorable features of the church in this dispensation. It does not present any of the weaknesses and signs of degeneration found in others. But further, this sound condition of the congregation is positively expressed by the Lord, when He says: "But thou art rich." Its condition is exactly the opposite of the church in Laodicea. The latter was rich and luxurious, filled to the full and in need of nothing, suffered no tribulation; yet it was poor and naked in the consideration of Him that walketh in the midst of the golden candlesticks.

But the church of Smyrna is outwardly destitute, poor and despised, a social outcast, in the midst of tribulation, and with more severe persecution to be expected in the near future. In this respect it offers a complete contrast to the church of Laodicea. But although the church in Smyrna was outwardly poor and in miserable condition, nevertheless she was spiritually rich, rich in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. There is no reason to limit this assertion of the Lord as to the condition of the church in Smyrna. It implies that it is rich in all the treasures and blessings of grace. She was rich in the knowledge of the truth. She was rich in works and patience. She was rich in bearing the cross, and revealed a strong spiritual life in the midst of tribulations. The church in Smyrna had not lost its first love, as was the case with the church in Ephesus. Strong the church was in the faith, firm in hope, ardent in love, abounding in works, patient in affliction, and in the midst of tribulation expecting the day of the Lord, the day of perfect deliverance. Rich the church was undoubtedly in sound experiential knowledge of the truth. The members of that church were prepared to give

testimony of the hope that was within them at all times. They were rich in actual fact. Though the world hated them, deprived them of their possessions, made them poor and naked and miserable from the temporal point of view, yet they knew that their King was the Lord of heaven and earth, and by faith they were saved in hope. Indeed, the church in tribulation is rich!

This is always true. It is not only applicable to the church of Smyrna, but equally much to the church in tribulation in all ages. It has even become proverbial that the blood of martyrs has become the seed of the church in history. Never does the church offer a more miserable and pitiable aspect than in times of prosperity from a worldly point of view, of peace and abundance. Never is its condition more precarious than when it caters to the good pleasure of the world, and craves for wealth and glory and honor after the measure of the world. The church of Laodicea is the warning example. But, on the other hand, it is equally true that the church is never more nearly perfect in this dispensation than when it is called upon to fight the battle of faith, to suffer and endure affliction for the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

And this is but natural. The question might be asked: why is it that the church of Smyrna, that the church in tribulation generally, is strong and rich? And the answer is not difficult to find. In the first place, there is no doubt a theological reason. Scripture reveals to us that among the elect of God there are not many wise and noble and rich in the world. The reason for this is very evident. The church does not exist for its own glory, but for the glory of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. And therefore the church does not exist for the purpose of showing forth its own strength and abundance from a natural point of view, but of manifesting the grace and power of the Lord her God. This it can do no more clearly than in times of tribulation, when it becomes manifest that it possesses no resources, no strength, no faith, no hope, outside of Christ; that its all is in Him; that from Him it receives its strength to stand and to be faithful.

Besides, there is also a spiritual reason why the church in tribulation flourishes and is strong. The root of its life is faith. For by faith it is connected with Him that walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks. By faith only it receives all the treasures of salvation. The stronger and the more conscious this faith is, the more the church will grow in grace and increase in all spiritual riches in Christ. But what is more conducive to the exercise and strengthening of this faith than a period of outward poverty and tribulation? It is when the storm howls in the woods that the oak strikes its root more deeply and firmly in the soil, and is strengthened. So it is when the storm of persecution sweeps through the church that the latter strikes the roots of its faith more deeply into Christ, and draws from Him more consciously the very strength of its life. And therefore, it is especially in times of trouble that the church flourishes. For



at such times it is taught to cling to its powerful King, and seek its all in Him.

Finally, there is also a historical reason for this concurrence of tribulation and spiritual strength and prosperity in the church of Smyrna and with regard to the church of Christ in tribulation in all ages. In times of prosperity and wealth and peace, when the church is honored rather than despised in the world, there is a grave danger that many an Israelite that is not spiritually of Israel becomes member of the church of Christ in the world from carnal motives and for selfish reasons. It becomes a matter of honor, or even of common decency, to be a church member. Hence, many join the church. These carnal members are a veritable danger to the church of Christ. They often become dominant, and assume leadership in the church. They impose their carnal desires upon the church. They lead her into the world, and, of course, to destruction. They are of the world, and would make the church a part of the world. In times of persecution, however, when church membership and the reproach of Christ are inseparable, this danger does not exist. On the contrary, when the faithful must suffer persecution and suffering for Christ's sake, the church is cleansed of these hypocrites. They are exposed in their carnal nature. If he must lose his life because of it, there is no danger that the hypocrite will join himself to the church, or that he will remain in her midst. And therefore, also from this point of view it is not difficult to understand that in times of persecution and tribulation the church is spiritually blessed.

What then? Shall we willfully incite the malignity and enmity of the world, and strive for the martyr's crown? Our answer is: there is absolutely no occasion for any such thing. If the church is truly faithful, faithful in its confession and in its walk, unfurling the banner of its King, and walking in the light in the midst of a world that is in darkness, the latter will naturally hate her, and the reproach and suffering from the side of Antichristendom is inevitable. But in all this we need not be afraid. For especially the sufferings for Christ's sake work together for good to them that love God, to them that are called according to His purpose. And besides, the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory that shall be revealed in us.

Now let us see how the Lord comforts the church in Smyrna.

First of all, we may call your attention to the manner in which the Lord announces Himself to the church of Smyrna. We observed in connection with the former letter that these announcements, these Self-introductions of the Lord to the churches, are in harmony with the condition of the church that is addressed. Thus it was also with regard to the church of Ephesus, where the Lord introduced Himself as the One that walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks and that holdeth the seven stars in His right hand. This is also the case in regard to the church of Smyrna. Here He introduces Himself as the One that was dead and lived again, as the first and the last. It is scarcely

necessary to point to the appropriateness of this announcement, especially with a view to the condition of the church in tribulation. It is certainly adapted to fill the members of the faithful church with courage and hope in the midst of suffering. Christ is the first and the last. He was before all things, and before all history, and will be when this dispensation shall have come to its finish. He is the principle of all that is, and its purpose. He stands above all time and controls all history. He will be the last also in the sense that He shall prevail in battle against the devil and against the power of the Antichrist. Not the devil, not the powers of evil, shall be the last on the battlefield; but Christ shall be the victor. Even with death He was in battle, and remained victor. For He was dead and lives again. He stands, as it were, before the congregation in tribulation, holding the keys of death and of hades in His right hand. and saying: "Behold, my people: I have overcome death, and have power to open and close, to condemn and to deliver. I, even I alone, am He that controlleth all these things." And therefore, with that powerful victor as their Savior and their King, they need not fear the enemy. The devil may cast them into prison, and terrible tribulation may come in the near future. What of it? Christ has overcome the devil, and he is subject to Him alone. Yea, even death may threaten them, as is implied in the admonition that follows. Nothing can harm them. Christ has power even over death. And in due time He shall deliver them, and give them life and glory.

This latter assurance the Lord gives them directly in the admonition: "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

Faithfulness surely is one of the most beautiful virtues that exists, even from a natural point of view. It implies, in the first place, that there exists an established relation between two persons, or parties, whether it be a relation of friendship or mutual contract and agreement. It implies, in the second place, that this definite relation is put to the test, whether it be by a long period of time or by adverse circumstances, that make it difficult to keep the agreement or the bond of friendship. And in the third place, it implies that in spite of these adverse circumstances the relation remains as it always was. A friend in times of prosperity is nothing special; but in adversity the faithfulness of a friend is put to a test.

In the spiritual sense, faithfulness is the chief virtue of the covenant people. They belong to God's party in the world. They confess Christ as their King. The question is, whether at all times they will be loyal to their King in the midst of a world that hates Him. There exists a certain definite relation between the King and themselves. And the question is whether they shall publicly confess that relation, never deny their King or be ashamed of His name, no matter what happens. Thus it was in the congregation of Smyrna.

H.H.

## THE DAY OF SHADOWS

### The Prophecy of Zechariah

#### Chapter VIII

*The Promises of always richer blessings.*

The preceding chapter reports that a deputation from Bethel came to Jerusalem to enquire whether the fast that had been instituted seventy years previous to commemorate the destruction of the holy city had still to be observed. In replying the prophet rebukes the formalism of the Jews and sets forth the dire consequences of disobedience. He reminds them of the troubles that overwhelmed their apostate fathers. Jehovah had scattered them with a whirlwind among the nations that they knew not. In chapter VIII, now to be treated, the prophet depicts the great good that Jehovah has in store for His people, the true Israel that love Him and keep His commandments.

The Lord will return to the city and she shall become known for her spiritual goodness, Vers. 1-3 — Wonderful peace and prosperity, vers. 4-6 — The Lord will save His people from every quarter, vers. 7, 8 — General fertility and peace in place of former want and affliction, vers. 9-13 — The certainty of Jehovah's promises, vers. 14, 15 — The obligation to keep Jehovah's commandments, vers. 16, 17 — Fasts shall become joy and gladness, vers. 18, 19 — Wonderful extension of Christ's kingdom: many nations shall seek Jehovah, vers. 20-23.

1. *Again the word of Jehovah of hosts came, saying, 2 Thus saith Jehovah of hosts; I was jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and with great fury was I jealous for her.*

The introductory formula of verse 1 does not mark the beginning of a new discourse; it introduces a new line of thought in the prophecy that commences in 7:4. *Jehovah of hosts* — This name characterizes God as king full of glory who, as surrounded by the angelic hosts, rules in the whole earth, so that by the utterance *Thus saith the Lord of Hosts*, which occurs ten times in this chapter, the Lord assures His people in their hearts first that the prophet speaks the promises of God and not his own words and second that God's promises cannot fail. *Jealousy* — The Lord's zeal for Zion, His vehement love of His people as His spouse. He was zealous for Zion with a great zeal and with great fury toward the nations because of their ill-treatment of Zion. He was but a little displeased with His people and the heathen had helped for evil (see on 1:13). Therefore He had cast out the horns of the gentiles, destroyed the worldpower that had been holding Israel captive and had thereby delivered His people, so that they were back in God's country. And He shall continue to overturn the world-powers successively, one after the other, until finally, at the second coming of Christ, the last of them to make its appearance and to

establish itself in the earth shall be made to pass away. And there shall be new heavens and a new earth on which righteousness shall dwell.

*Zion* — One of the mountains upon which Jerusalem was built and the sight of the palace of the king. There was also Moriah the temple mountain. It is sometimes called Zion, which indicates that the two must be thought of as one. And Zion is Jerusalem. She was the only city of her kind in all the earth. For here reigned Jehovah of hosts over all the powers in heaven and in the earth. And here He dwelt in His holy temple. Here the saints, therefore, entered His presence and beheld His glory in the face of Christ as foreshadowed by priest and sacrifice and the blood of sprinkling on the horns of the altar and on the mercy-seat of the Ark of the covenant in the holiest place. Jerusalem's inhabitants must be thought of as including the whole of Israel. For the whole of Israel and not merely the Jews that actually dwelt in the holy city, was covered by the blood that was shed at her altar. Jerusalem, therefore, is also Israel, the whole nation, the church of the Old Dispensation in the first instance. In Isa. 49:14, where Israel in exile complains that the Lord has forsaken her, Israel is called Zion, Jerusalem.

However, here all was shadow — Jerusalem, Israel, the temple, priest, sacrifice, blood, the ark of the covenant in the holiest place, the mercy seat, the glory of the pillar of cloud that filled the temple, the candle-stick, table of shew-bread and altar of incense — all was shadow. The body foreshadowed is the church in glory, the new Jerusalem that John in his vision saw coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband, thus the church as God eternally beheld her in Christ in His counsel.

Now it is of the church in glory that in the final instance the prophets of the Old Testament Scriptures are always speaking when they make mention of Zion, Jerusalem for which God was so zealous and this of necessity seeing that she foreshadowed, was a prophetic type of the heavenly. We must not end with the promise as set forth by the prophets of the Old Testament Bible in the earthly Jerusalem and in the Israel of that day. Jerusalem in the last analysis is not Israel as limited to the Jews but the church in glory as including both Jews and Gentiles according to the election of grace. Nothing could be plainer from the Scriptures than this.

3. *Thus saith the Lord: I shall return unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and Jerusalem shall be called the city of truth; and the mountain of the Lord of hosts, the holy mountain.*

*I shall return* — Not, "I am returned," as the versions have it. For the tense is perfect and places the action in the future and thereby expresses absolute confidence in the fulfilment of the promise. The Lord shall return unto Zion. This also looks back to what the Lord had done unto Zion. He had poured out on her His fury like a fire, covered her with the cloud of His anger, had swallowed up Israel. He

had swallowed up her palaces, violently taken away her tabernacle, destroyed the places of the assembly, caused the solemn feasts and sabbaths to be forgotten in Zion, destroyed in the indignation of His anger the king and the priests, cast off His altar, abhorred His sanctuary, and scattered Israel among the gentiles. The law was no more, and the prophets found no vision from the Lord (Jer. 2:4ff). Sin was no longer being atoned, the priest was not blessing any more, the temple where God had been throning lay in ruins. The ark of the covenant had been carried away by the heathen. They had come into the Lord's inheritance, defiled His temple and laid Jerusalem in ruins (Ps. 79:1). The glory of Israel departed.

But why had the Lord thus dealt with Zion? Because the city, once faithful, had become a harlot. Because the city was full of murderers—the city that once was full of judgment (Isa. 1:21). A sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil-doers, children that are corrupters, having forsaken the Lord, provoked the holy One of Israel to anger, having gone away backward—that was Zion, Israel (Isa. 1:5ff). For the law had entered in and sin had abounded.

But the Lord shall return to Zion and dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. Amazing news. But why will the Lord return to Zion? The city is sinful, ill-deserving, astonishingly so. The Lord has chosen Zion in Christ. He cannot forget her, cast her off utterly. She is engraved on the palms of His hands. And this answers the question how the righteous and holy God, whose eyes are too pure to behold sin, can return to Zion. He will return to her through Christ in whom He has chosen her and, therefore, her eternal righteousness. Through Him He will return to Zion, through the blood of His atonement, the blood of the Lamb, that was slain from before the foundations of the world.

That this is here the promise is plain. Let us consider that it is Jehovah who promises, the triune Jehovah, the God and Father of Christ. How could He return to Zion as Saviour, if He returned not to her through the blood of the atonement of the Christ. That this is here the promise is also plain from its fulfilment on the typical level. On this level the Lord was already returned to Zion. He had turned the captivity of Zion, so that His people were back in His country. The breaches in Jerusalem's walls were mended and her gates repaired. And what is most significant is, that the Lord had restored to His people His altar. For the altar was the meeting-place between Jehovah and His people. And on the temple-mountain His altar again burned, and the blood of sprinkling was again upon its horns as a covering for all of Zion's sins. That blood was Christ (typical). And, therefore, though the temple that was rising on the ruins of the old was not yet completed, the Lord was already returned to His people and dwelling in their midst. For He had restored to them His altar. What it means is that through Christ He had returned to them. Truly the promise has already been fulfilled.

However here all was again but shadow. It was the blood of bulls and of goats that was here again being shed. It could not take away sin. And therefore, from the vantage point of the church of that day, the promise had still to be fulfilled. But from our vantage point the promise has been fulfilled, though, seeing that the church has not yet appeared with Christ in glory, there still remaineth for us a promise. Nevertheless the promise has been fulfilled essentially. In the fulness of time God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law. And God laid all Zion's sins upon Him, her whole vast accumulation of sins. And He brought His only begotten under the burden of His wrath by smiting Him for Zion's transgression, crushing Him for Zion's iniquities. In that black hour of His sufferings on the cross He was heard to utter substantially that very cry that came from Zion's lips in that dark hour of her suffering." My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Then was He suffering for Zion the hellish agonies. Then when by His agonies He had fully satisfied God's wrath and fulfilled all the requirements of the law, He cried out with a loud voice jubilantly, "It is finished," gave up the ghost and committed His spirit into the hands of the Father. Then the Father returned to Christ, who centrally is Zion. He raised Him from the dead, set Him in the highest Heavens at the right hand of the throne and poured out of His Spirit on Him when the day of Pentecost was fully come. Then, too, Jehovah returned to Zion through His Spirit-filled Christ. Through Christ He poured out Christ's Spirit on the church in Heaven and on the church on earth.

Jerusalem shall be called the city of truth. For that is what she is. For God through Christ in His Spirit dwells in her midst, and in the hearts of all Her inhabitants,—in His Spirit, the Spirit of Christ that He merited for His church and therefore the life-giving Spirit, the sanctifying and beautifying Spirit, the Spirit that imparts unto the church the fulness of life and blessings—the fulness of the godhead—of which the Father is the fountain and that dwells bodily in Christ.

Truth—What is truth? The original word used for truth means: that which is firm, faithful, the amen. Truth is light. Truth frees. By truth iniquity is purged. Truth is a shield and a buckler. It reaches to the clouds and endureth forever. For truth is out of God. He is *the* truth. The lie is out of the devil. It is darkness, unrighteousness. It deceives, puts to shame, leads to destruction. They that speak the lie shall lie down, never to arise.

That is Jerusalem—a city of truth. Her inhabitants have the truth in their inward parts, love the truth, seek the truth, walk in the light of the truth, speak the truth every one with his neighbor before the face of God and are blessed of God.

Jerusalem is the mountain of Jehovah of hosts. Here He chose to dwell, not because Jerusalem's inhabitants had first

chosen Him and were seeking after God but because it pleased Him.

Being the city of truth and the mountain of Jehovah, Jerusalem is the mountain of holiness. Her inhabitants with all that they are and possess are wholly consecrated unto their redeemer God in love. And she is the only city of truth, holy mountain. All other cities are cities of ungodliness. For God does not dwell in them. He dwells in Zion only.

What Jerusalem is she shall also be called — city of truth, Mountain of Jehovah of hosts, the holy mountain. So she shall be known. All men shall call her blessed. She shall be the joy of the whole earth.

Such will be the blessedness of Jerusalem in glory. But Jerusalem, though in heaven with Christ, is not yet in glory. There are citizens of Jerusalem on this earth, in this world, in which they have many afflictions. For the world is Babylon and these citizens are in principle children of the light, sons of God, seekers of the heavenly city. And therefore the world knows them not. As Jerusalem is not yet in glory, Jehovah shall once more return to Jerusalem, Zion. Once more He shall be jealous for Zion with great fury toward her enemies. They shall be destroyed. The whole earth shall be cleansed of them so thoroughly this time that not one of them shall survive to plague God's people. The devil shall be cast into the bottomless pit. The heavens and the earth shall pass away and there shall be a new earth where the tabernacle of God will be with His people forever. That will be the final returning of Jehovah unto Zion. For never again shall He cover her with a cloud of His anger on account of her sins. For she will be wholly pure, the bride without spot or wrinkle, the city of truth, the holy mountain. If there was a time when she was full of murderers, there now will not be found a murderer in her. And Christ is her eternal righteousness, sanctification, wisdom and redemption. And in Him she is grafted by a faith that is living and cannot cease because He her eternal mediator will never cease to pray for her. For this final return of Jehovah unto Zion all the saints both in heaven and on earth cry day and night. And unto the promise of His final return to Zion they take heed as unto a light that shineth in our darkness. They take heed unto this promise until the day dawn and the day star rises in their hearts (**1 Peter 1:19**).

4. *Thus saith the Lord of hosts; there shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age.* 5. *And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof.*

*Old men and old women* — Jerusalem shall be inhabited by men and women who attain to a ripe age. *Staff . . . for very age* — Because of extreme old age they must lean upon staves. *Boys and girls playing* — There will be a wealth of children. Wives will be as fruitful vines by the side of their husband's houses. In the streets the children will be playing. The old men will be dwelling in the streets. Here

they will spend most of their time, visiting together. Jerusalem, therefore, will be a good place to dwell. Surrounded by peace and prosperity her inhabitant will be without care. Also these promises may be said to have been fulfilled on the typical level. At the time that they were spoken Jerusalem's inhabitants were few in number. For only a few of the exiles had returned. But they were fruitful and multiplied until the territory formerly occupied by the tribe of Judah was filled with them. And during the reign of the Maccabean princes they dwelt safely in the land. But this, too, was but shadow so that also with these promises we must end in the heavenly city, which, of course, does not mean that there are going to be old men in heaven.

A right understanding of the matter requires that we have respect to the following: When the people of Israel as a nation served God, they were blessed of the law and then earthly prosperity and physical well-being was their portion. But when Israel forsook God, they were cursed of the law, and then the nation was made to experience all manner of physical calamities (See Deut. 27 and 28). For it was the dispensation of shadows and Israel was under the law. And so the blessings and cursings of the law worked themselves out in that day in the existence of the people of Israel. Both the earthly prosperity and the physical, earthly calamities were typical. The former foreshadowed the blessings of the church in glory, and the latter the nameless sufferings and miseries of the damned in hell. This earthly prosperity was a token of God's favor toward the elect. It was a blessing only for them. For the reprobated in Israel it was a curse and also meant as such. As to this earthly calamity, it was a revelation of God's anger, of the anger of His love, with regard to the elect, and of the anger of His hatred with regard to the reprobated. For the Israel according to the reprobation it was punishment; for the elect it was not punishment but chastisement and here the purpose was to lead to repentance and to drive into the arms of Christ. And, therefore, though they suffered all these typical workings of the law, when in times of national apostacy and decay God would lay His strokes upon the nation, the law, God, did not curse them, their persons, for they were hidden in Christ by virtue of their being chosen of God before the foundations of the world.

Now these calamities included also barrenness of the womb. They included Israel's being cut off by death from Canaan and its temple and altars — Canaan, the land that the Lord had given His people. Accordingly the blessings of the law included living long in Canaan and a numerous offspring. For how could Israel continue in the possession of Canaan without offspring, seed?

We now perceive the Gospel of our text. The inhabitants of the new Jerusalem shall live long in Canaan, the new earth. They shall never die. For Christ, who fulfilled all the requirement of the law, shall raise them up unto an unending life, life everlasting. And the new Jerusalem shall be full of

(Continued on page 66)

## FROM HOLY WRIT

### Exposition of I Corinthians 1-4

22.

(I Corinthians 4:9-13)

There are some passages in Scripture which so graphically portray a given situation in life, in the life of God's church on earth in days of sin, error and schism, that one hardly needs to reflect upon them and give detailed interpretation.

About all one needs to do is to quote them. And they, in whose heart the Spirit of God dwells, and who, therefore, have a free conscience, which is not simply led by itself and having itself as a standard, but which is bound by the Word of God as the Canon of faith and all of life—*they* will surely see the striking parallel between the situation in Corinth and that of those, who ride high and handsome, in our day!

Both are a great vexation of spirit; such a vexation which only righteous men feel, who desire to live in thankfulness for the great redemption in Christ.

Paul's righteous spirit is not little stirred up over this state of affairs in the midst of the saints in Christ.

His wrath is justly and deeply stirred; for it is not the wrath of man, which does not work the righteousness of God, but it is the wrath of deep spiritual concern about the peace of Zion and prosperity within her palaces!

Hear him ironically write to the imaginary great in Corinth: "*Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us: and I would to God ye did reign, that we also might reign with you.*"

Let us try to understand the meaning here of Paul.

I would first like to remark that we have here a masterful description; we have here a bit of keenest irony. If the situation were not so serious one would be inclined to chuckle. For Paul surely takes these Corinthians in the proverbial wood-shed to administer to them a sound fatherly spanking. And they had it coming.

And to administer this bit of fatherly correction Paul employs an *ironical* form of speech. For note you well this is not simply some light and jovial banter. Evil man and "naughty children" might have said of this in our day "the old man blew his top" at us. Such is the speech, of course, of the flesh, if not indeed worse. And we have heard such speech, have we not?! Evil tongues had wagged against Paul. It is the devil's strategy to attempt to make Paul's work with none effect. Well, Paul will not only answer all the arguments; he will also try to silence the mad clamor for power in the church and silence the barking of the dogs!

Hence, this ironical speech.

Irony is the use of words and terms to signify the exact opposite of what they usually express. Thus, for instance, one may say: what a mighty man, when he really means: what a weak simpleton. Or again: one may say: Wisdom has indeed died with him, when we mean that such a person is nothing ~~but~~ a conceited fool, who deceives ~~none~~ <sup>no one</sup> but himself in his inflated ego. Or once more; one may say: what virtuous honesty, while he means that the fellow is nothing ~~but~~ a scoundrel and a knave!

Such is the use of the form of speech called irony.

And Paul employs such a form of speech here in the text, when he says, "Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us . . ." He really ridicules them here under the form of praise and compliment!

The reason for this particular form of irony then, someone may ask? Why does Paul here speak of their being "already" full, and "already" rich? To what does this being "full" and being "rich" refer?

This being "full" might, taken by itself, refer to the state of mind and heart in which unbelief becomes satiated by the riches of the Kingdom of glory and the beauties of the Lord. Thus we read in Deut. 32:15, "But Jeshuran *waxed fat*, and kicked: thou art waxen *fat*, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness; then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation. They provoked him to jealousy with strange gods, with abominations provoked they him to anger." Such was the case with Israel when they became tired of the good treatment of God in the Theocracy. The way of faith and trust alone in God becomes too boring; thankfulness to a God who brings out of Egypt land does not sit well with them — for they really liked Egypt.

Such is the interpretation of some.

However, that interpretation hardly squares with the facts in Corinth as we know them from this epistle, nor does it fit with the rest of this verse, nor with the sequence. For this sequence definitely shows that Paul is employing irony.

Wherefore we hold that Paul, in speaking of the Corinthians being "fat" already, rather is portraying them as being of a frame of mind of having "arrived." In their acting the part of rulers and "kings," that of being "many masters" they show that they have a spiritual psychosis that they really have come to the Messianic Kingdom. The entire church forsooth, will needs have to wait till the "Day of the Lord," but these Corinthians have an earlier calendar and schedule than the Lord of heaven has! Mirabile dictu! O tempores, o Mores! It is a sad state of affairs. But the puffed up, self-inflated Corinthians do not see their own folly. Slaves of sin and carnal passions, children who need to be fed with milk, acting part of kings. As we have said before, a great vanity and vexation of spirit under the sun — and in the church of the living God. Here none are lord and masters. Yet, the Corinthians have arrived *already*.

Does one know in such a state of affairs whether to laugh or to cry?!

A good thing that there are then true preachers in the church, who know how rightly to divide the Word, speaking it in season and out of season.

That is what Paul does.

That the Corinthians have "reigned with Paul" surely meant that they acted as if they could very well get along without him and the word of the Cross which he preached. They would be kings. True! Yet, they acted as such would-be kings all apart from the proper consideration of their also being called to be prophets and priests of God. They did not with a "free conscience fight against sin and the devil in this life, and afterwards reign with Christ over all things," but rather set up their own little "dominion" in Corinth. And the deep reason? They were not led by the Word. They acted as if Christ "were divided." The Priesthood of the believers was put on the background, namely, that they in their whole life and walk present themselves a *living* sacrifice unto God, since they are partakers of Christ by faith. And particularly they were lacking in walking according to the word, as God has revealed himself in mystery unto the church. And so they walked not according to the rule of faith.

In their fleshly lust they, therefore, acted as if they had arrived, and did not know what a miserable state of affairs they had created in God's church.

They so walked that Paul could not by any stretch of the imagination "reign with them" and walk in a good conscience before the Lord! For he says "would that ye had reigned!" Yea, would *to God*, they had! And this latter is not irony. It is a bitter lamentation! It is a heart-rending, a soul-searching cry from the heart of a "father" for his children.

However, instead of having ruled in good discretion they had acted, yea, were acting the part of little "lords" in God's flock.

No matter how desperately one might try to walk with such "brethren," the very walk of such makes it impossible to be with them without becoming accomplices in evil. Here the distinction between steadfastness and stubbornness has been obliterated. Rather than walking in a truly humble spirit that proves itself to be humble by bowing to the Word, much lip service is given to "humility" and "becoming like a little child," while all the while acting the part of kings and paying slight heed to the Word of the Cross, the work of Christ in us whereby we have become and shall forever remain living members.

When in our day we must read, if we are not blind, about a good conscience, of those who had "leadership" in creating schism in the Protestant Reformed Churches, while refusing to bow before the Word, then I question such "good conscience," particularly when such a writer once said to me at a crucial moment at Classis „dan zet ik mijn Geldersche kop er tegen!" It was at a moment when he and I stood at

the parting of the ways far more profoundly than I at that moment realized. I would bow before the Word of God and the confessions in re the point "no *Promise* to all if they believe." But he said: I will defend it; „ik zet mijn Geldersche kop er voor." It was then that I remembered the word of James: "Know ye not that the wrath of man doth not work the righteousness of God?"

What kingly leadership in the church when in one Court the "law of the church" is Congregational, even to the extent that those who said that it was Presbyterian were called "Benedict Arnolds!" However, *while* this "Congregational" church law is being defended in the Supreme Court of Michigan, it is being denied by the same witnesses in the Court in Pipestone! What royalty is this?! Did Christ change too in heaven concerning the „grondwet van Zijn Rijk?" This has the sanction of Him who stands between the seven candlesticks, and has the seven stars (Ministers) in his right hand?

Yes, they ruled like kings. Would that they had indeed ruled so that I could have ruled with them!

Meanwhile the judge of heaven and earth has judged too. He has judged to find men, his underlings, faithful. Woe, to them who have beaten the servants. It shall be more tolerable in that day . . . ! It were better not to have been born!

Sometimes I am approached and asked: how is it possible that students of the past of a School and theologians can so act? I ask in return: is that so strange? Were the Corinthians instructed by Paul? Does Paul not say, "For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the Gospel?" And was not Arminius a student of Beza; had he not been thoroughly instructed? And what do men always do when they become "fat," rich in their foolish imagination?

However, rather than dwell on what has happened, let us give all diligence to sound words of doctrine and heed the explicit and implicit instruction of Paul, lest we be many masters and a greater judgment be ours.

Meanwhile it remains true that "God standeth in the congregation of the mighty; he judgeth among the gods." Yes it is true, "They know not, neither will they understand; they *walk on in darkness*: all the foundations of the earth are out of course.

Arise, o God, judge the earth — and thy church!  
Thou shalt inherit all nations!

G.L.

### Men's League Meeting

Eastern Men's League meeting will be held at First Protestant Reformed Church, November 8, at 8 P. M.

Mr. John Dykstra, Secretary



## IN HIS FEAR

### Giving In His Fear

(2)

"The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world and they that dwell therein."

That truth David expresses in Psalm 24:1.

There are similar passages in Holy Writ.

"Who hath prevented me that I should repay him? whatsoever is under the whole heaven is mine," Job 41:11.

"For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field are mine," Psalm 50:10, 11.

"If I were hungry I would not tell thee: for the world is mine and the fulness thereof," Psalm 50:12.

"The heavens are thine, the earth also is thine: as for the world and the fulness thereof, thou hast founded them," Psalm 89:11.

All this is the speech of the Living God.

And that means that all that you and I have of this earth's goods we have only in a relative sense.

I have things which belong to me and are in no sense yours. You have things that are yours; and under no circumstances may I take them away from you. In relation to each other we have our own personal possessions. The cattle on this hill may be yours in distinction from the neighbour down the road. He has within his fence cattle that in no sense are yours and which roam and graze on his hills. He has cattle and he has hills. You have cattle and you have hills.

Yet his hills and cattle and your hills and cattle are the Lord's. The cattle on a thousand hills are His.

We have absolutely no possession that is not His. They may be ours in relation to our neighbour; but they are in the absolute sense of the word God's. Nothing is His relatively. All things are His absolutely.

They are His before we receive from Him. They remain His after we have obtained them.

It is His seed that we sow in His soil. It is His rain and sunshine that bring forth His plants. It is His harvest that we reap and His flour wherewith we bake our bread. It is His bread that crowns our tables. And when we have been nourished by that bread, it is His strength wherewith we are able to go out and work in His creation.

God gives and yet retains all that which He gives.

He gives and is no "poorer"—how strange that sounds when applied to God! Nor is He any richer by the gifts which we bring unto Him.

He never loses anything; nor does He find new riches.

We can add nothing to His wealth. And we can take

nothing away from Him of all the riches He has eternally as the God that He is.

For what we receive from Him we always receive as stewards of His goods. What He gives us He gives us to occupy for Himself. Whether He gives us little or much He always gives us these things as means wherewith He may and must be served. They remain, therefore, His though they are given to you. And because they remain His He may take them back again whenever it pleases Him.

He sees fit to let you have these things today in distinction from your neighbour. Tomorrow He may give them to your children and loosen your grip on them by death. These children claim them, hold on to them, defend them until they must leave them for your grandchildren. Yet all the while they are God's.

Living in His fear we will remember that undeniable principle of truth.

We will, then, be guided by that principle when the opportunity presents itself for us to give part—of what is relatively ours and absolutely God's—for the maintenance of the gospel and the welfare of those to whom God had given so little of this earth's goods that they are the poor amongst us.

We will, then, give in His fear!

For giving in His fear means exactly that: we give in the consciousness of the fact that also what is not given is also His; that we give willingly and cheerfully in love to Him Who has been pleased to give us all that we have in order that we may have means to serve Him.

It all comes down to this, we will give in His fear only as we have received in His fear!

If we do not know why we received all the possessions which God has given us, we surely will not use them aright. We will not use a proper proportion of them for the maintenance of the gospel, but we will not use the rest of it either in His fear. We do not hesitate to put down the principle that the amount and the cheerfulness and thankfulness wherewith you give your contribution on the Sabbath for the maintenance of the gospel and the schools indicates also whether you intend to use the rest in His fear or in the service of the flesh.

"Ye cannot serve God and mammon," Jesus said. Let us not twist this into saying that we ought not serve God and mammon both. Jesus says that we cannot, that it is impossible to serve both. This is no admonition that comes to us but a fundamental principle that cannot be denied!

And the way in which we give the fraction of all we receive to the maintenance of the gospel surely reveals the way in which we intend to use the rest of it. If our giving is truly in His fear so that we cheerfully and liberally give for the maintenance of the gospel we are serving God with that percentage of our goods; and that reveals that it is our desire to use the remainder also in His fear to serve Him therewith. But the reason why one parts with a percentage of his goods for the maintenance of the gospel with

such difficulty and heaviness of soul is exactly because he wants to keep it for himself; and that is serving mammon.

"The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof; the world and they that dwell therein." Let us remember that even when it is in our hands, on our land, deposited under our name in the bank. And even when we so speak, let us consider that those hands are also God's; those acres of land are His and wherever our goods rests or is found that place also is God's. If we remember these things and live accordingly we will give in His fear; and in these times of material abundance and prosperity the cause of God's kingdom will not suffer want of that which is necessary for the maintenance of the gospel.

But, you say, I find it very hard to give liberally to the maintenance of the gospel in these days of high prices. Everything costs so much more than it did a few years ago; and the price spiral increases as time goes on.

Indeed, it does and with it the price of maintaining the gospel.

However, are we putting it correctly when we say that we find it hard to give to the maintenance of the gospel? Is that the language of faith? Is that looking at the matter spiritually and with due consideration of the fact that all that we have is God's?

Would it not be the language of faith to say, "I find it getting harder and harder for me to buy the luxuries my flesh craves when I seek to maintain the gospel of Jesus Christ?" If, as Jesus admonishes us, we seek first the kingdom of God, will we not say, that it is going to be harder for us to build so lavishly that new house that we planned to erect for our physical needs; that it will be harder to put enough away for the pleasure trip that we had planned; that we will find it more difficult to save for the vacation we had in mind; that we will have to put up with this present automobile for a few thousand more miles because now it will be harder to get enough together for a new one.

In His fear, now, will we ever say that the maintenance of the gospel is hard when we find it easy to spend three or ten times as much for a television set, an automobile, a house, a farm, a vacation?

If without winking an eye we can write out a check for these things in full or in installments that per month are more than what we grudgingly give in the collection plate that month or all year, is that giving in His fear?

The answer is obvious.

Our income tax we will pay in full. To be sure, not cheerfully and with relish—though Jesus tells us to render unto Caesar what is Caesar's—yet to the last penny. Should then the Church of God suffer and receive far less from us than the government does?

Our grocery bill runs pretty high. At the end of the week it represents a tidy sum of dollars. But we need to eat. Our bodies need food; and God wants us to feed them well with plenty of food and with good food. But do we walk in

His fear and give in His fear when far fewer dollars a week is for us too much for spiritual food for our whole family?

Have we received with thanksgiving that which God has given us as the fruit of our daily toil when we grudgingly give a little of it to the support of His kingdom in its earthly manifestation? When He begins to take them away from us we suddenly remember where they came from. When we fail to live as those who know that all came from Him and still is His and He reminds us of it by lessening the amount He gives us, causes us to lose our good-paying job, have we learned our lesson when we, continuing to live in our former luxuries, now give even less to the maintenance of the gospel than we did before?

O, indeed, walking in His fear is not easy.

Giving in His fear likewise is for us a difficult thing to do.

For by nature it is an impossible thing to do. The flesh cannot walk in His fear. The flesh will not give one cent in His fear.

What does the flesh care about the maintenance of the gospel? What does the flesh care about the glory of God's name? The flesh must have all that it can lay its hands upon; and even then it is not satisfied.

The flesh says of the widow who cast into the treasury of the temple her last two mites that she is a fool. And your and my flesh says the same thing to the new man in Christ when he would cheerfully and liberally support the cause of God's kingdom here below. And we find with the Apostle Paul, also, that "the good that I would, I allow not."

But that must not be an excuse.

It will not be an excuse for him who loves God. In a fear of reverence and awe, of respect and love for God he will by his offering on the Sabbath declare with David, "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof . . . The heavens are thine, the earth also is thine: as for the world and the fulness thereof, thou hast founded them."

And he will first lay aside for the maintenance of the gospel and use what is left for his earthly needs. He will not first satisfy his flesh and then see if there might possibly be a few pennies left for God's cause.

With the man who walks in God's fear first things are first. And he, therefore, first lays aside, as God has blessed him with stewardship over His goods, for the maintenance of the gospel and then uses the rest for his earthly needs. For, he who walks in His fear cannot enjoy those earthly things unless his soul is satisfied that God's cause is not suffering at the expense of his own cause prospering. If our earthly cause prospers because we neglect God's cause, there is something radically wrong.

The child of God, thankful for the salvation in Christ, gives in His fear and enjoys doing so.

Do you?

J.A.H.

## Contending For The Faith

### The Church and the Sacraments

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

#### THE LORD'S SUPPER

##### *The Celebration of the Eucharist.*

The celebration of the eucharistic sacrifice and of the communion was the centre and summit of the public worship of the Lord's Day, and all other parts of worship served as preparation and accompaniment. The old liturgies are essentially, and almost exclusively, eucharistic prayers and exercises; they contain nothing besides, except some baptismal formulas and prayers for the catechumens. The word liturgy (*leitourgia*), which properly embraces all parts of the worship of God, denotes in the narrower sense a celebration of the eucharist or the mass.

Here lies a cardinal difference between the Catholic and Evangelical cultus: in the former the sacrifice of the mass, in the latter the sermon, is the centre.

With all variations in particulars, especially in the introductory portions, the old Catholic liturgies agree in the essential points, particularly in the prayers which immediately precede and follow the consecration of the elements. They all (excepting some Syriac copies of certain Nestorian and Monophysite formularies) repeat the solemn Words of Institution from the Gospels, understanding them not merely in a declaratory but in an operative sense; they all contain the acts of Consecration, Intercession, and Communion; all (except the Roman) invoke the Holy Ghost upon the elements to sanctify them, and make them actual vehicles of the body and blood of Christ; all conceive the Eucharist primarily as a sacrifice, and then, on the basis of the sacrifice, as a communion.

The eucharistic action in the narrower sense is called the *Anaphora*, or the *canon missae*, and begins after the close of the service of the catechumens (which consisted principally of reading and preaching, and extended to the Offertory, i.e., the preparation of the bread and wine, and the placing of it on the altar). It is introduced with the "*Avoo tas kardias*, or *Sursum corda*, of the priest: the exhortation to the faithful to lift up their hearts in devotion, and take part in the prayers; to which the congregation answers: *Habemus ad Dominum*, "We lift them up unto the Lord." Then follows the exhortation: Let us give thanks to the Lord," with the response: "It is meet and right."

The first principal act of the Anaphora is the great prayer of thanksgiving, the *eulogia* or *euchapistia*, after the example of the Saviour in the institution of the Supper. In this prayer the priest thanks God for all the gifts of creation and

of redemption, and the choir generally concludes the thanksgiving with the so-called Trisagion or Seraphic Hymn (Is. 6:3), and the triumphal Hosanna (Matt. 22:9): "Holy, Holy Lord of Sabaoth; heaven and earth are full of Thy glory. Hosanna in the highest: blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest."

Then follows the *consecration* and *oblation* of the elements, by the commemoration of the great facts in the life of Christ, by the rehearsing of the Words of Institution from the Gospels or from Paul, and by the invocation of the Holy Ghost, who brings to pass the mysterious change of the bread and wine into the sacramental body and blood of Christ. This invocation of the Holy Ghost appears in all the Oriental liturgies, but is wanting in the Latin church, which ascribes the consecration exclusively to the virtues of Christ's Words of Institution. The form of the Words of Institution is different in the different liturgies. The elevation of the consecrated elements was introduced in the Latin church, though not till after the Berengarian controversies in the eleventh century, to give the people occasion to show, by the adoration of the host, their faith in the real presence of Christ in the sacrament.

To add an example: The prayer of consecration and oblation in one of the oldest and most important of the liturgies, that of St. James, runs thus: After the Words of Institution the priest proceeds:

"Priest: We sinners, remembering His life-giving passion, His saving cross, His death, and His resurrection from the dead on the third day, His ascension to heaven, and His sitting at the right hand of Thee His God and Father, and His glorious and terrible second appearing, which He shall come in glory to judge the quick and the dead, and to render to every man according to his works, — offer to Thee, O Lord, this awful and unbloody sacrifice; beseeching Thee that Thou wouldst deal with us not after our sins nor reward us according to our iniquities, but according to Thy goodness and unspeakable love to men wouldst blot out the handwriting which is against us Thy suppliants and wouldst vouchsafe to us Thy heavenly and eternal gifts, which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man what Thou, O God, hast prepared for them that love Thee. And reject not Thy people, O loving Lord, for my sake and on account of my sins.

He repeats thrice: For Thy people and Thy Church prayeth to Thee.

People: Have mercy upon us, O Lord God, almighty Father!

Priest: Have mercy upon us, almighty God!

Have mercy upon us, O God, our Redeemer!

Have mercy upon us, O God, according to Thy great mercy, and send upon us, and upon these gifts here present, Thy most holy Spirit, Lord, Giver of life, who with Thee the God and Father, and with Thine only begotten Son, sitteth and reigneth upon one throne, and is of the same essence and co-eternal, who spoke in the law and in the prophets, and

in Thy new covenant, who descended in the form of a dove upon our Lord Jesus Christ in the river Jordan, and rested upon Him, who came down upon Thy holy apostles in the form of tongues of fire in the upper room of Thy holy and glorious Zion on the day of Pentecost: Send down, O Lord, the same Holy Ghost upon us and upon these holy gifts here present, that with His holy and good and glorious presence He may sanctify this bread and make it the holy body of Thy Christ.

People: Amen.

Priest: And this cup the dear blood of Thy Christ.

People: Amen.

Priest (in a low voice): That they may avail to those who receive them, for the forgiveness of sins and for eternal life, for the sanctification of soul and body, for the bringing forth of good works, for the strengthening of Thy holy Catholic church which Thou hast built upon the rock of faith, that the gates of hell may not prevail against her; delivering her from all error and all scandal, and from the ungodly, and preserving her unto the consummation of all things."

After the act of consecration come the *intercessions*, sometimes very long, for the church, for all classes, for the living, and for the dead from righteous Abel to Mary, the apostles, the martyrs, and the saints in Paradise; and finally the Lord's Prayer. To the several intercessions, and the Lord's Prayer, the people or the choir responds Amen. With this closes the act of eucharistic sacrifice.

Now follows the *communion*, or the participation of the consecrated elements. It is introduced with the words: "Holy things for holy persons," and the *Kyrie eleison*, or (as in the Clementine liturgy) the *Gloria in Excelsis*: "Glory be to God on high, peace on earth, and good will to men. Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord: God is the Lord, and he hath appeared among us." The bishop and the clergy communicate first, and then the people. The formula of distribution in the Clementine liturgy is simply: "The body of Christ;" "The blood of Christ, the cup of life," to which the receiver answers "Amen." In other liturgies it is longer.

The holy act closes with prayers of thanksgiving, psalms, and the benediction.

The Eucharist was celebrated daily, or at least every Sunday. The people were exhorted to frequent communion, especially on the high festivals. In North Africa some communed every day, others every Sunday, others still less frequently. Augustine leaves this to the needs of every believer, but says in one place: "The Eucharist is our daily bread." The daily communion was connected with the current mystical interpretation of the fourth petition in the Lord's Prayer. Basil communed four times in the week. Gennadius of Massilia commends at least weekly communion. In the East it seems to have been the custom, after the fourth century to commune only one a year, or on great occasions. Chrysostom

often complains of the indifference of those who come to church only to hear the sermons, or who attend the eucharistic sacrifice, but do not commune. One of his allusions to this neglect we have already quoted. Some later councils threatened all laymen with excommunication, who did not commune at least on Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost.

In the Oriental and North African churches prevailed the incongruous custom of *infant* communion, which seemed to follow from infant baptism, and was advocated by Augustine and Innocent I, on the authority of John 6:53. In the Greek church this custom continues to this day, but in the Latin, after the ninth century, it was disputed or forbidden, because the apostle (I Cor. 9:28,29) requires self-examination as the condition of worthy participation.

With this custom appear the first instances, and they exceptional, of a *communio sub una specie*; after a little girl in Carthage in the time of Cyprian had been made drunk by receiving the wine. But the withholding of the cup from the laity, which transgresses the express command of the Lord: "Drink ye *all* of it," and is associated with a superstitious horror of profaning the blood of the Lord by spilling, and with the development of the power of the priesthood, dates only from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and was then justified by the scholastic doctrine of concomitance.

In the Greek church it was customary to dip the bread in the wine, and deliver both elements in a spoon.

The customs of house-communion and after-communion for the sick and for prisoners, of distributing the unconsecrated remainder of the bread among the non-communicants, and of sending the consecrated elements, or their substitutes, to distant bishops or churches at Easter as a token of fellowship, are very old.

The Greek church used leavened bread, the Latin, unleavened. This difference ultimately led to intricate controversies.

The mixing of the wine with water was considered essential, and was explained in various mystical ways; chiefly by reference to the blood and water which flowed from the side of Jesus on the cross.

H.V.

## THE DAY OF SHADOWS

(Continued from page 60)

children, seed, offspring of God out of whom they are born, seed, offspring of Christ by whose Spirit they are brought into being as new creatures, and to whom it was said that, when He should have made His soul an offering for sin, He should see His seed (Isa. 53:10), and seed of Abraham to whom God said that unto him and his seed God would give this land, and, finally, seed of the totality of believers to whom God said that unto them and their seed was the promise. And there they shall securely dwell as free from every care and want and fear — carnal fear of God and fear of the enemy. For there the enemy cannot kill and spoil and devastate.

G.M.O.

## The Voice of Our Fathers

### The Canons of Dordrecht

PART TWO

EXPOSITION OF THE CANONS

THIRD AND FOURTH HEADS OF DOCTRINE

OF THE CORRUPTION OF MAN, HIS CONVERSION TO GOD,  
AND THE MANNER THEREOF

Article 1

(concluded)

We have yet to consider what the *Canons* here teach concerning the manner of man's fall. The article mentions three elements. In the first place, there is the fundamental fact that man revolted from God. This, after all, is the very essence of man's fall. God, His Creator, after Whose image man was made, was the very fountain of man's life. In the fellowship of his God there was life for man. To live apart from God is death. As long as he remained in the sphere of that fellowship, he lived. The moment he stepped outside the bounds of that fellowship he died, for he cut himself off from the very source of life. And the sphere of that fellowship of God was the sphere of the knowledge of God, righteousness, and holiness. It was the sphere of the service of God, the sphere of obedience. Furthermore, God made this very clear to man in the so-called probationary command, not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and in the warning appended to that command, "For the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." This is not to be understood as though death were a natural result of man's eating of the tree. But it certainly means that death would be the inevitable result of the breaking of God's commandment, due to the fact that God would maintain Himself as the righteous and holy God, could therefore not countenance anyone contrary to His own righteousness and holiness, and therefore would reveal His righteousness in wrath over against the sinner. Revolting from God, therefore, man revolted from the fountain of all life and blessing, and invoked upon himself death, as the expression of the fierce wrath of the God of all life.

But the question also remains: how did this rebellion take place? How was it possible for the creature who was **created after God's own image**, whose understanding was permeated with the true knowledge of God, whose heart and will were adorned with righteousness, all whose affections were adorned with purity, and whose whole being was holy, — how was it possible for such a creature to rebel?

Our *Canons* very briefly give a two-fold answer to this question: 1) Man rebelled at the instigation of the devil; and, 2) He rebelled by his own free will.

First of all, then, we are referred to the history of the fall as it is recorded in Genesis 3. It was by the instigation

of the devil, coming, as we know, in the serpent, that man fell. This certainly does not mean that Adam was at all *compelled* to fall, for he fell by his own free will. But we must remember, in the first place, that there was no evil in man's nature in the state of righteousness. Sin could not arise out of the perfect heart and mind and will of the man who was created in the image of God. Hence, in the second place, it had to come from without, and gain access to man's nature from without. This is also the reason undoubtedly why the tempter had to come through the visible instrument of the serpent. He had no direct access to the heart of man, as he has now. And in the third place, his temptation also had to be connected with an object in the visible world, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, to which the command of God had been attached, and which lent itself as a medium for the devil's temptation of man by the very fact that it was the medium of God's demand of perfect obedience of man. Taking all this in connection with the fact that God had created man with the power of imagination and conception, we can understand somewhat how it was possible for the Evil One to gain access to man's heart from without, to present to him the lie as something to be chosen in opposition to the Word of God, and thus to instigate the rebellion, on man's part, from God.

In the second place, however, the fathers emphasize that this rebellion took place by the freedom of man's own will. This is certainly an important statement in this connection. Before we point to its importance, however, let us briefly take stock of the meaning of this freedom of man's will. Negatively, the free will of man does not mean that with respect to good and evil Adam was neutral. Nor is freedom to be confused with license, as if man had the right and the ability to think as he pleased and to will as he pleased and to act as he pleased. The latter is not freedom at all. It is the corrupt and sinful counterfeit of freedom which sinful man has devised. In that state man sets himself up indeed as God, proposes to make his own God, and determines for himself what is good and what is evil. And along these lines we sail exactly into the dangerous waters of Pelagianism and Arminianism. It is the Pelagian who claims that sin is not a matter of the nature, but of the act. It is the Pelagian who maintains that even after sin man remains free, that his will is not become corrupt, but that he is still principally free to do either good or evil. And it is the Pelagian who, setting up his own notion of freedom as the norm, maintains that we deny the free will and the responsibility of man. No, man's freedom was not that he could and might do either good or evil. But his freedom consisted in this, that his inner nature was in perfect accord with the law of God. His heart and mind and will and his whole life were in harmony with the law of God. The love of God was in him, in his heart, and permeated all the issues of his life. Such was the freedom of man as he came from the hand of his Creator.

However, while man's freedom did not consist in that

he could either sin or not sin, but rather in the fact that he stood in perfect righteousness, his freedom was nevertheless not the highest freedom. The limitation of man's freedom lay in this, that he was created fallible. Sometimes this freedom of original man is negatively characterized by the Latin expression: *posse non peccare*, "to be able not to sin." This denotes that Adam's freedom was such that he could, while he was indeed capable of performing and did perform the will of God, he nevertheless could by an act of his own will renounce his freedom and subject himself to the slavery of sin. The highest freedom is that state in which it will be forever impossible for man to choose contrary to the will of God. That is the freedom that is attained only in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the freedom that is negatively expressed in the phrase: *non posse peccare*, "not to be able to be sin." But Adam's freedom was not thus. He was lapsible. And thus he also did indeed fall, and rebel against God.

We said that this statement of our *Canons* is important. And its importance lies in the fact that it gives the lie to the well-known Arminian charge that the Reformed fathers denied the freedom of the will and the responsibility of man. Positively this accusation took the form of charging them with making God the author of sin.

What shall we say of this charge?

Let it be noted that this charge can be registered only against those who maintain the absolute sovereignty of God with respect to election and reprobation, in the first place. Never will you find that the accusation is brought against any others. You see, if one maintains sovereign election and reprobation, he must needs maintain that included in that sovereign will of God is not only the destiny of His moral creatures, both wicked and righteous, reprobate and elect, but also the means and the way along which that destiny is reached. This must be perfectly obvious. If the destination of men, all men, is absolutely certain from all eternity by sovereign determination, then the way to that destination must also be absolutely certain from all eternity by sovereign determination. If the means and the way are outside of the determination of God, then there is no guarantee at all of an eternally certain destiny. If, as the Arminian has it, the reprobate go in the way of the elect, it follows that they end at the destination of the elect; and if the elect go in the way of the reprobate, the way of unbelief, it follows that they will end at the destination of the reprobate. It is thus that the Arminian denies sovereign predestination and maintains his conditional view. But the Reformed faith maintains that both the destiny and the way unto that destiny are by sovereign determination. They also certainly maintained, whether they were *supra* or *infra*, that sin and the fall did not take place apart from the predestinating purpose of God. And because they taught that the fall was according to the sovereign counsel of God, whether by a so-called "permissive will" or by positive determination, they were accused of denying the freedom of man's will and his responsibility, and of mak-

ing God the author of sin. Incidentally, it may in this light be deemed a good sign if these same accusations are brought against us today: it is a testimony that we maintain the truth of God's sovereign counsel.

In the second place, it is to be noted that the fathers in this article by a brief and flat statement fling this Arminian accusation far from them. It was not God Who sinned. It was not God Who perpetrated and instigated the rebellion in paradise. But man, rebelling against God *by the instigation of the devil and by his own free will, bereaved himself* of these excellent gifts. Could it be said more flatly? And what Reformed man does not always maintain this truth? What Reformed man foolishly and morbidly boasts of the fall, as if it were a thing to be glad of, instead of a reason for deep sorrow and humility and contrition? The Arminian himself could not more pointedly place the blame for sin and the fall on the proper party than do our *Canons*. Man *bereaved himself* of these excellent gifts! And he did so *by his own free will!* And let never the charge of the denial of the freedom of the will and the responsibility for sin be brought against the Reformed truth again.

Finally, we may notice that the article does not with so much as a single word qualify this statement. This certainly is not because our fathers meant to teach by this statement that man's freedom was such that it was not under the sovereign will of God. The very thought is sheer folly. But the subject under discussion here is the corruption of man. The other subject, namely, the sovereignty of God's predestinating purpose, has been already discussed in the First Head of Doctrine, and there the truth of the proper relation between sin and God's purpose has been sufficiently set forth. We too, therefore, shall not lengthen the discussion of this article by treating that subject anew. Suffice it to say that the fathers maintain both truths, and that too, not in unexplained coordination, nor in inexplicable contradiction, but in such order that they surely teach that according to God's sovereign purpose sin and the fall and the corruption of man must serve the realization of the eternal destiny of elect and reprobate, and therefore are under his sovereign control, both in their origin and their development.

H.C.H.

#### UNTO THEE, O LORD JEHOVAH

Unto Thee, O Lord Jehovah,  
Do I lift my waiting soul.  
O my God, in Thee I trusted;  
Let no shame now o'er me roll.  
On my enemy be shame,  
Oft without a cause transgressing;  
But all those who trust Thy Name  
Honor with abundant blessing.

Psalms 25:1



## DECENCY and ORDER

### Compulsory Retirement of Office Bearers

Those who are against the practice of retiring office bearers after a specified tenure of service present the following arguments in support of their position:

1. There is not to be found a direct command in the Word of God requiring this compulsory retirement!
2. Ministers serve in their office for life. It should be the same with the elders and deacons.
3. Elders and deacons vow before God and His church at the time of their ordination that they feel called to their respective offices. They do not specify "for a certain period of time."
4. The most capable and talented men are needed in these offices. They should not be replaced by men who are less capable as is frequently the case. This is detrimental to the church.
5. Experience is both desirable and very essential for the proper execution of the work of the church. This can best be gained where men are permitted to continue uninterrupted in office.
6. By changing the constituency of the consistory periodically the continuity of the labor of the church may be disrupted. This would be harmful and can easily be avoided by abolishing this practice.
7. Men who are really well qualified for these offices are scarce. This practice reduces this number still more and often necessitates using men inferiorly qualified. This is improper.
8. When many are retired and replaced in the offices periodically, the honor and respect for the office is reduced. The offices would hold more prestige if those serving were permanently ordained.
9. The incentive to apply one's self studiously and whole-heartedly to the task of the office is reduced when the period of service is only temporary.
10. Definite retirement breaks the connecting link between office bearers and the work of the major assemblies, to the hurt of both.

\* \* \* \*

On the other side are those who defend and argue to retain the practice of retiring office bearers at specified intervals. They base their claims upon the following reasoning:

1. There is in Scripture no direct instruction to the effect that elders and deacons are to serve for life. If the matter involved a serious principle, a clear mandate would be found in the Word. Scripture's silence on the matter indicates that the church is free to choose whom she will and to regulate all these things according to her discretion.
2. The practice is a good safeguard against the dangers

of heirarchy and a virtual preventive of its evil practices. These evils, generally present where men are continuously to office, are very harmful to the church.

3. The perpetuity of the office does not repose in the individual, as is claimed by Rome, but rather the office itself is continuous. This is not denied when individuals are retired and replaced by others.

4. To rightly administer the duties of the offices involves considerable time, effort, etc. As a matter of justice, it is proper that these be shared rather than borne by a select few.

5. The gifts of the Spirit are diversified among the members of the church. These can be utilized to the utmost advantage so that the church reaps the greatest benefits when there is a periodic change in the constituency of the consistory.

\* \* \* \*

Undoubtedly other arguments could be added to this debate. The list appearing above is not intended to be exhaustive but only purpose to bring out why this subject has for many years been one of disagreement and debate within the Reformed Churches.

It may also be stated that much more could easily be written concerning each one of these arguments. There is room to question many of them. This, however, is not our purpose now. The matter is not of such importance as to warrant a detailed discussion of each point in question.

In considering the arguments generally, it may be noted, first of all, that the first argument on both sides has little value. Both the pro and the con argue in their favor from the silence of Scripture. No definite conclusion can be drawn from this basis. The silence of Scripture neither approves nor condemns either side.

In the second place, it may be said that several of the arguments of those opposing the practice of retiring office bearers contain a mixture of sound and misleading reasonings. The result of this is that since part of the reasoning is factually correct, the argument appears to have considerable weight but, since another part of the reasoning is misleading, the conclusions drawn are often incorrect or have no real bearing upon the issue in question. An example of this may be cited from the fifth argument listed above. It is certainly true that experience is both necessary and desirable for the proper execution of the work of the church. From this, however, "permanent eldership" cannot be concluded. It can be just as well argued from this same premise that "temporary eldership" is more proper since under the system of periodic retirement a consistory is always retained in which the majority of members have had experience in church work and, what is more, under this system the scope of such experience is widened rather than limited to a select few. This is a definite benefit of the whole church.

Similarly some of these other arguments can easily be reversed. Some of them have no bearing upon the issue at all. Take, for example, the ninth one. If we grant for the

sake of argument that the statement itself is true, it still proves nothing since it is no reflection upon the system of retiring office bearers but rather only upon the office bearers themselves. We would answer such an objection by saying that anyone who has no desire to apply himself studiously and whole heartedly to his task as elder or deacon because his tenure of service is limited is not worthy of the task. If laziness or indifference is evident, he must be admonished and, if necessary, relieved of the office which then is given to one more worthy.

We, therefore, express agreement with those who favor the practice of retiring office bearers periodically as is also the current practice in our churches. This practice has many advantages and since Scripture is silent we may point to the fact that history has proven the dangers and evils of "permanent eldership." We must add to this, however, that we favor the practice of retirement only with the added provision that either where circumstances require it (in small churches where there is a scarcity of consistorial material) or where there are men of exceptional ability, elders or deacons may be considered for immediate re-election when their term expires. Retirement after two or three years must not be made compulsory. This must be controlled by local regulations so that ultimately the congregation itself decides through its vote whether it wishes to retain certain ones in office or replace them with others. In this way the best talents are always available for the services of the church. For this reason the 27th Article of our Church Order, which establishes periodic retirement as the rule but also allows the possibility of continued service, is most proper.

\* \* \* \*

To our department the following questions concerning this article have been submitted.

"1. May an elder be nominated for deacon?

"2. May a deacon be nominated for elder?

"3. If so, why?

"4. If you have a retiring elder, who has served faithfully, why may you nominate a deacon to succeed him? Is it not better in this case to nominate the elder to succeed himself rather than a deacon to succeed the retiring elder?

"5. Do we violate the spirit of the D.K.O. (Art. 27) if a retiring faithful elder is passed by in order to nominate a deacon for elder."

Our reply may be brief. Concerning the first three questions, we may say that this is not only permissible but it is frequently also done. We should remember, however, that the office of deacon is not a stepping stone to that of elder. I fear that oft times this erroneous conception prevails. The latter office is not a promotion—a step of higher rank in the church—to that of the former. The offices are of equal rank but differing in character. When then or if a deacon is nominated as elder from this motive, it is wrong. Merely the fact that he is a qualified deacon does not mean that he is suitable for the office of elder. However, it is

conceivable that there are men who are qualified for both offices. If then they have served in the one office, nothing bars them from being considered for the other. This also explains the "why" of question 3. Being qualified they may be considered and nominated. That they have served in one of the offices has nothing to do with their present nomination.

The fourth question is a bit more involved. Does the questioner mean to imply that the elder who has served faithfully is more qualified than the deacon? Is it further implied that failure to re-nominate the elder may indicate that his services are not regarded as having been faithful? Does the example cited mean that there are no other reasonable possibilities; no other material in the congregation that is suitable for the office? Is it a case where circumstances necessitate the nomination of a deacon or where the re-election of the retiring elder is deemed advisable? In the light of these things the "good, better and best" of the above question must be determined. There is nothing wrong in nominating a retiring deacon for the office of elder nor in nominating a retiring office bearer for re-election if circumstances are such that this is advisable. Let the consistory who knows the needs and circumstances of the congregation, nominate for the offices those whom they sincerely regard as the best qualified. The fact that men have or are serving in one of the offices has essentially no bearing upon the matter of eligibility for nomination.

In regard to the last question it may be said that there is no violation here provided the nominee is qualified. Such a nomination would be in harmony with the spirit of this article. However, if such a nominee lacked the qualities to be found in an elder and there is no other material available, the retiring elder should be renominated which is also in harmony with the provision of the last part of Article 27. This whole matter must be worked out by local regulation since it is a thing that properly belongs to the autonomy of the local church. No hard and fast rule will adequately cover every circumstance and, fortunately, our church order here does not impose such a rule. G.V.D.B.

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## ALL AROUND US

### *The Offer of the Gospel and Accepting Christ.*

A brother allowed me to read a little pamphlet he had received recently which I thought was most interesting especially in the light of our controversy with those who speak of the offer of the gospel, and the acceptance of Christ proffered therein.

The author of the pamphlet entitled: *Popular Phraseology Considered*, is C. Breed, principal of the Strict Baptist Bible Institute. And its contents constitutes a paper read at a Minister's Fellowship Conference of the Strict and Particular Baptist Group.

The writer begins his little pamphlet with the pointed remark: "It cannot be doubted that preachers of the everlasting gospel carry the responsibility of making themselves understood. If the preacher's language conveys a meaning different from that which he intends, he has failed in one of the primary requirements of his office."

He then goes on to say in effect that words have meaning, and that words and phrases often change in their meaning with time and use. He insists that "the words 'Bible', 'Scripture', 'Christian', and even 'Baptized Believer' have changed their connotation in the course of history." He is afraid that words and phrases coined by different theological systems than the Strict Baptist's are being imported into his churches which he considers regrettable. He has in mind such expressions as "Offer Christ" or "the Gospel;" "to make a full surrender;" or "to give the heart to Christ." The writer is especially apprehensive of the terms: "Gospel Offer" and "Accepting Christ." It appears from his writing that these expressions in his opinion have no place in Scripture and therefore should have no place in the pulpit. In respect to the "Gospel Offer" he writes:

"The language and import of 'Gospel Offers' needs careful attention. It is true that the phrase 'to offer' the Gospel is found in the Reformers, and is used by modern Calvinists such as Hodge and others, but the implications of this language would be denied by these theologians.

"In its modern popular use, the phrase cannot mean merely the offer of the story of Christ, but must involve the offer of Christ Himself and of salvation. Thus even Hodge says, 'In the general offers of the Gospel, God exhibits salvation . . . sincerely offered to everyone without exception.' The following points at least are implied and intended in offers of the Gospel:—

1. The offer of the Gospel means that grace itself and salvation itself is offered.
2. The offer of the Gospel is intended to mean that free grace and full salvation is offered to all promiscuously that hear, that they might be saved.
3. The offer of the Gospel to all without exception is

intended to imply that the acceptance of the offer is the necessary means of obtaining salvation.

"Now the offerers of the Gospel must admit, either that all men have a natural ability to close with the offer; or that all men have a natural disability to spiritual good. In the former case no salvation can be involved, because the 'natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned.' (I Cor. 2, 14). In the latter case, having a natural disability to spiritual good, how can a sinner close with the offer, before having a change of nature? (I would rather say: heart, not nature—M.S.)

"1. First let it be observed that offering the Gospel is not preaching the Gospel.

(a) The Apostles were ordained to preach the Gospel according to the commandment of Christ (Luke 9, 2; Mark 16, 15; I Tim. 2, 7; II Tim. 1, 11). The New Testament has ten verbs and one noun which mean 'preaching,' but not one of these ever means 'offer. Again the New Testament has eight verbs and four nouns which mean 'offer,' but not one of these is ever used of preaching. These considerations alone seem to shatter the notion that the Gospel is an offer of any kind whatever.

(b) The example of the Apostles and others shows what they understood the Master to mean when He commanded them to preach. Passages like Acts 2, 14-36; 4, 17-20; 5, 25-32; 8, 4-5; 8, 35, etc., show the attitude of these preachers with regard to this matter. There is no command to make an offer to those who are dead in sin, but there is a command to preach the Gospel to them. Similary Ezekiel was commanded to prophesy to the dry bones, but he did not make them any offer.

(c) There is in fact no passage of Scripture to show that preaching the Gospel means making an offer of the Gospel. On the other hand Paul asks, 'How shall they believe in Him of whom (this should be WHOM—M.S.) they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?' (Rom. 10, 14). Then he adds, faith cometh by hearing (not by accepting an offer), and hearing by the word of God.' In other words, faith where it has been implanted, is stirred to action by hearing the Gospel. Rahab heard what the Lord had done, and her faith became active. No offers had been made to her.

(d) The difference between preaching and offering is seen again, when it is remembered that Paul preached 'the whole counsel of God' (Acts 20, 27). This included such themes as the sovereignty of God, the election and predestination of the Lord's people, as witness the epistles of Paul. But how can the sovereignty of God be offered? Or how can election and predestination be offered? From Rom. 4, 25, we learn that Christ was delivered on account of our offences, and was raised again on account of our justification. Clearly there can be no salvation apart from the death and resurrection of Christ. How can the crucifixion of Christ

be offered? How can the resurrection of Christ be offered? But both these matters are to be preached.

(e) True preaching exalts the sovereignty of God (Gal. 3, 8), it is supreme and comes with authority (Matt. 28, 18-19); but offers are servile and debase the majesty of God, they are powerless to do anything but wait upon the acceptance of the sinner. Preaching is a revealing act (Rom. 1, 16-17), offering is a tendering act. An offer cannot accomplish anything, it cannot produce the desired result; but preaching the Gospel is a means to produce the desired result, for men are born again by the Word of God (I Peter 1, 23). In any case, since it is the Spirit that quickeneth, why not offer the Spirit rather than Christ?

(f) An offer entices a natural man into a conceit of self-ability. He is encouraged to suppose that he can hold God at arm's length pending an acceptance of the offer. On the other hand, preaching is not human flattery as chapters one and two in the 1st Epistle to the Corinthians amply demonstrate.

"2. Secondly, let it be observed that an offer of the Gospel is not the means of the Spirit's internal work whereby the sinner experiences salvation.

(a) The offer cannot be the means of the Spirit's work, because it is the Spirit Himself who is the author of spiritual ability (Rom. 8, 8-9; Gal. 5, 18; Phil. 2, 13). There is no means by which the Spirit comes. He comes sovereignly, and in person to impart life. Even preaching does not convey the Spirit. The Spirit is sent (John 14, 26; 15, 26; 16, 7; Luke 24, 19); the Spirit comes (John 16, 7; Acts 1, 8); the Spirit falls (Acts 8, 16; 11, 15; 10, 14); the Spirit is shed forth (Acts 2, 23; Rom. 5, 5; Titus 3, 4-6).

(b) According to Gal. 3, 2, the Spirit is received either in connection with works or in connection with faith, but if the sinner lays hold of Christ before the Spirit lays hold of the sinner, then the sinner receives life by works and not by faith. Yet the fourth Gospel teaches that the Spirit of the Father works in the sinner before the sinner comes to Christ (John 6, 45).

(c) Rom. 8, 9-17 compared with John 5, 12 and other passages show that to have the Spirit is to have Christ. But the sinner must have the Spirit before he has the faith which the Spirit works; and he must have Christ before he has life to close with the supposed offer. How then can the offer be the means of giving the Spirit and Christ, who must be possessed before the offer can be accepted?

"The fact is that offers of Christ and salvation are consistent only with a general redemption and an unfettered human will; but not with a particular redemption and the bondage of the will. If a man is non-elect how can he close with the offer of a salvation never designed for him? It may be said that the same thing applies to the non-elect believing the Gospel which is to be preached to all. Of course!

But the point is that if accepting is the same thing as believing, then offering is the same thing as preaching. If by offering ministers mean preaching, then let them say what they mean. Meanwhile, we must believe they mean what they say, and are completely out of harmony with the Free grace view point and the teaching of the New Testament. If the foregoing discussion is valid, then offers of the Gospel are ruled out by the Book which commands us to handle the Gospel by the method which is called preaching."

Because I do not have the space in this issue to quote the writer on "accepting Christ," I wish to continue this subject the next time, D.V.

However, in the material we quoted above, it is very plain that the writer speaks our language and that, too, in no uncertain terms. It does our heart good to know there are others who not only understand the Scripture truth concerning preaching, but who also have correctly analyzed the Arminian cargo that has been smuggled into the church with the phraseology "the offer of the Gospel" or "the offer of Christ in the Gospel."

Today, one appears like the voice crying in the wilderness who militates against this Arminian tendency. And what grieves us so much is the fact that our so-called Reformed brethren have become so deaf that they do not seem to be able to discern that voice.

M.S.

### CONGRATULATIONS, PLUS!

*(Continued from page 55)*

Our latest church statistics show that we number 588 families.

Five hundred eighty eight sets ought to be found there. Spiritually we cannot afford *not* to buy the set.

\* \* \* \*

If you read the title above this editorial, you noted the word "plus." I would write on "Congratulations, plus!"

You see, dear reader, I cannot, and may not congratulate the living God. That would amount to sacrilege.

But I may thank Him for this gift to us.

He gave His blessed Word which was faultlessly, infallibly inspired.

No word of man can stand in its shadow.

But His are also the good books.

The Holy Spirit still leads us into all truth. Well, this set is a fruit of such leadership.

After reading these books you will say: Thank Thee, Father, for the fruit of Thy loving providence.

For all the honor is His for evermore!

G.V.