

The Standard Bearer

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

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*Meditation***The Repentance of the Immutable**

Rev. M. Schipper

"And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them."

Genesis 6:5-7

The Immutable repents!

When He saw that the wickedness of man was great, and the imagination of the thought of his heart was

only evil continually, it repented Him that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart. And He determined to destroy him and every

living thing from off the face of the earth. Such is the plain teaching of this portion of the Word of God.

But does not this present a plain contradiction?

When we say that God is immutable, do we not confess that He is forever unchangeable? And when we say that He repents, does this not precisely deny His immutability? How shall we understand this apparent contradiction?

That the Lord is immutable is the testimony of all Scripture. Listen to the Lord speaking through the prophet Malachi (3:6): "For I am the Lord, I change not, therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." Or, listen to the psalmist when he declares (102:25-27): "They (the heavens and the earth) shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end." This same truth is repeated by the writer to the Hebrews (1:11, 12). Or, listen to James when he writes in his Epistle (1:17): "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights with whom is no variableness neither shadow of turning." With clarity, indeed, the Scriptures teach this unchangeableness of God.

And this truth is implied in the text itself. This is to be observed in the Name which God ascribes to Himself. The term "Lord" is literally "Jehovah." And Jehovah, as He Himself explains in Exodus 3, means: **THE I AM THAT I AM**. This not only sets Him off as the eternal One Who never became, but also as the Immutable God, Who is not subject to change.

God's immutability is that virtue of God whereby He is both in His Being and Works, the eternally perfect One; and Who, therefore, remains continually the same, and above all change. Nothing can ever be added to Him, nor can anything be subtracted from Him. Perfection is the state of being beyond change. What He is, He was, and ever shall be — eternally the unchangeable God. That He creates, adds nothing to Him. That He destroys, subtracts nothing from Him. And as perfect and unchangeable as God is in Himself, so is He also in all His works; which are unchangeably decreed in His counsel, and in time they are realized exactly as He eternally decreed them.

Yet the text tells us that He repents and grieves!

What can this mean? And how can we understand these expressions in the light of other Scriptures which declare: "The Strength of Israel will not lie or repent: for He is not a man, that He should repent?" (I Samuel 15:29). And again, "God is not a man that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent?" (Numbers 23:19).

The terms "repentance" and "grief" are called anthropomorphic expressions, that is, human characteristics are ascribed to God. And the relation between the terms is what may be called a Hebrew parallelism; that is, the term grief is a further explanation of the term repentance. Together these terms, speaking of God in human terms, reveal His holy reaction over

against the wicked and show us how that holy passion in God to maintain Himself and His purpose began to take on action. This does not mean that there was actual change in God. In the light of the texts mentioned immediately above this could never be. But repentance and grief have to do with the carrying out of His counsel in time, and that, too, in agreement with the nature and condition of the creature. In His counsel He wills the nature and condition of the creature, in this case the development of the sin and corruption of the fallen race. In that same counsel He wills His own disposition in respect to that condition as it manifests itself in time. This means that in His counsel God from everlasting determined to destroy the world with a flood only after that world had filled the measure of its iniquity. And when God repents and is grieved in His heart, it means that that world has reached its measure of iniquity in time, and now His counsel to destroy that world must be carried out. While in us repentance and grief signify a change, in God it signifies no actual change, but points to the manner in which He is going to react over against the world's wickedness. This idea of repentance in God you can apply in the same way to all the other instances mentioned in Scripture which speak of His repentance. The Lord repented that He had made Saul to be king over Israel (I Samuel 15:11). God did repent of the evil He said He would send upon Nineveh (Jonah 3:10). The Lord did not carry out the threatened death of Hezekiah when he prayed to be spared. In Jeremiah 18:7, 8 we read: "At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; If that nation, against whom I have pronounced turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them." In all these and more passages of Holy Writ where God is said to repent, we are not to conclude an actual change in God, but repentance is His holy reaction over against the creature as that creature in time fulfills the good pleasure of His eternal counsel. Most important, it is therefore, to keep in mind that what God says of His counsel is true, namely, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." (Isaiah 46:10).

God's repentance was evoked when He saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and it measured up to the amount that He had already determined in His unchangeable counsel.

And how great the wickedness!

The earth was filled with violence! All flesh had corrupted itself. The world became a boiling pot of iniquity. In those days there were giants in sin. Along with the capacity to perform great worldly feats, in industry, in science, and invention, there were also great minds to do evil. And when the church began to mix with the world, the wickedness developed all the faster. The sons of Seth married the daughters of Cain.

The result was — not a betterment of the world — but a still greater capacity to do evil.

There was not, as some would maintain, a certain restraint and checking of sin. Nor was it so, as some would interpret verse 3 of this chapter, that the Spirit of the Lord was striving with man with a view to restraining the sin of his heart and thus to improve him. Those who hold to this view must admit in the light of our text that then man was stronger than God, and the Lord failed miserably. O, indeed, the Lord's Spirit strove with man in that He judged him and testified against him through the preaching of the antediluvian patriarchs, Enoch, Noah, etc. But also here as always the Word was a savor of life as well as a savor of death. It saved God's people, while it hardened the wicked. And this it did until God's eternal purpose is realized in time, when Noah would find grace in the eyes of the Lord and with his family would be saved by a flood; and when the wicked would only increase in their wickedness until the measure of their iniquity, determined also in God's counsel, would be full, and He would repent and destroy them. Such was the awful state of things in time, determined in the divine counsel from eternity, that moved God in holy wrath to bring upon the wicked His destroying flood.

Nor should we interpret this holy reaction in the Immutable as indicating that He felt sorry that He had made man. As though God was frustrated in His creational purpose. For how could this ever be true of God? Did He perhaps make man without knowing what was in man? Did He perhaps make man and set him on the earth to see whether or not he would continue to serve God? And after man fell, did He perhaps wait to see if man would improve under the sweet influences of the preaching of His Word? In answer to all these questions, we reply: God forbid! Should your answer be in the affirmative, you make yourself guilty of denying His omniscience, and you drag God down from His eternal immutability to the level of the creature who is subject always to change. Though God speaks of Himself to us in human terms, the only lan-

guage we can understand, He is, and forever remains, God! Who is unchangeable in His love toward His people in Christ; and Who is unchangeable in His holy wrath over against the wicked who go on in their wickedness until their cup of iniquity is full, and He must destroy them. Indeed when the Immutable repents, the wicked are consumed!

A preview of the judgment to come!

These things were written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the world are come. Does not the Lord Jesus remind us of this when He delivered His prophetic testimony concerning the last days? Listen to Him declare!

"But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be . . ."

As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be in the day when the Son of man shall be revealed.

Awful prediction!

Once more the Immutable shall repent!

When wickedness shall abound, and the ungodly shall have filled their measure of iniquity according to the counsel of the Most High, then shall the Immutable, as He is revealed in the Lord of glory, appear, and in His wrath shall He destroy them.

But also then, as it was in the day of Noah, when this saint found grace in the eyes of the Lord; so shall it be with the righteous who are looking for His appearance.

They shall experience by His grace their final and perfect deliverance, and in the judgment shall be acquitted and through the judgment shall be ushered into a new creation wherein righteousness shall dwell.

Then shall the Immutable be seen in the glory of all His perfections and receive the praises of all His redeemed!

Editorial

More About ACT — A Contemporary Translation of the Bible

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

At the close of the July editorial on this subject, mention was made of three items for discussion in connection with ACT, the new Contemporary Translation

of the Bible being prepared under the auspices of the New York Bible Society: 1) The matter of textual criticism; 2) The question whether the language has

been improved and brought up to date. 3) The question whether the translation is faithful to the original.

The first of these questions we will discuss in greater detail in a separate editorial in connection with the Eye Opener Tract about the King James Version and the Textus Receptus (also mentioned in the July issue). Since, however, the Committee on Bible Translation makes mention in the Preface quoted in the July issue of "recent papyri discoveries" and the "new light" shed on the text of the Greek New Testament by "intensive textual study during the present century," it is not amiss to make a few remarks in this connection: 1) The science of textual criticism involves much more than a comparison of various manuscripts of parts of the New Testament. In fact, though this aspect of textual criticism is not to be minimized, it is a mistake to think of it as an extremely exact science; and, moreover, it is a mistake to attach too much value to this aspect, in preference to what is called "internal evidence." 2) While the mention of "recent papyri (a certain kind of manuscript) discoveries" may impress the ordinary reader, who is unacquainted with the mysteries of textual criticism, it ought to be stated that there have been no *major* discoveries of recent date — certainly none of earth-shaking significance. 3) The same should be remarked concerning the alleged "new light" shed by "intensive textual study during the present century." In the first place, one must be very careful about "new light." Sometimes what is new is not actually light, you see. In the second place, we venture to say that also in this respect there has been nothing earth-shaking in its significance. In the third place, to this writer it is, to say the least, highly doubtful whether the general calibre of the scholarship in this alleged "intensive textual study during the present century" measures up to that of past scholars, as well as highly doubtful in some instances whether it has been *believing* scholarship. And, in the fourth place, we would have to see a great deal of evidence before being convinced that recent discoveries and textual study warrant an entirely new translation. While we would grant that it would be preferable to have a translation by "evangelicals" rather than by unbelieving liberals — all other things being equal — we are nevertheless unconvinced of the basic necessity of any new translation whatsoever.

With respect to the attempt to clothe Scripture in contemporary language, we remark the following: 1) We have already stated our opinion as to the need and the utility of such an effort in the July editorial on this subject. A thorough and repeated reading of the sample published by the Committee, far from changing that opinion, has rather convinced us more firmly that the disadvantages of a new translation far outweigh the advantages. 2) We believe that the Committee has succeeded, generally, in its goal of achieving contemporary language. 3) The Gospel According to John (used

for the Committee's sample offering) is, in our opinion, because of its simplicity of language both in the Greek and in the King James Version, not a very well-chosen sample. It seems to this writer that of all the books of Holy Scripture the Gospel according to John is so very simply phrased in the King James Version that no one could have any grave difficulty in understanding its language. 4) While space does not permit the reproduction of our pages of ACT's version of John, I will make a few general remarks about my impressions, based on my repeated reading through of the entire book. In the first place, the committee has made unnecessary changes. Even apart from the question of accuracy of translation, for example, is there any reason under the sun to change the word "guile" to the word "false" in John 1:47, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile. [Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false.]" As far as I am able to detect, the reason for this change cannot be one of a more accurate translation: for the word "guile" is a far more accurate rendering than the more general "false." One must come to the conclusion, then, that the translators considered "false" to be clearer and more up-to-date. But, pray, has the understanding of the English language fallen to such a low estate that the clear and expressive word "guile" is beyond the grasp of the average Bible reader? And even if such is the case, must we cater to this and substitute the word "false" at the obvious expense of accuracy? There are many such changes throughout the sample translation; and in many instances the changes appear to be so unnecessary that one can only come to the conclusion that change is introduced for the sake merely of being different. Perhaps this may sound like a rather harsh judgment; but I am stating my impressions frankly. 5) In general, the translation as a whole does not leave the impression of being smooth-flowing, but rather of being stilted, stiff, and choppy. Perhaps I am too accustomed to the majestic and dynamic simplicity of the King James Version; but — again, after several readings — I must state frankly that I am unimpressed, but left with a strange and cold feeling. 6) There are far too many instances where accuracy of translation has apparently been sacrificed in the interest of trying to achieve twentieth century English, the Committee evidently thinking that the English of the King James Version in these instances was difficult to understand. Now once again, let it be stated that these difficulties with King James English are, in our opinion, much overplayed as any kind of serious stumblingblock in the understanding and reception of Scripture. But surely, no one has the right to play fast and loose with the accuracy of the translation for any reason whatsoever; and the latter is what ACT has done in more than one instance. This, however, brings us to the third — and most important — item of our discussion.

Is ACT an accurate rendering of the Gospel accord-

ing to John? And: is it, in fact, more accurate than the King James Version, both textually and in its translation?

The answer has to be an emphatic "NO!"

We cannot take the time or space to make a total verse-by-verse comparison. Let us, for the present, take note of a few items.

We call your attention, in the first place, to a change in the use of the term "only begotten." For this purpose we quote three passages, in each instance citing the King James Version and ACT:

KJV, John 1:14, And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

ACT, John 1:14, The Word became flesh and lived for a while among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the only son of the Father, full of grace and truth. [Note: "lived for a while" is certainly a loose rendering of the Greek *eskeenoosen*, "tented, tabernacled," and surely no better than the KJV's "dwelt." HCH]

KJV, John 1:18, No man hath seen God at any time: the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.

ACT, John 1:18, No one has ever seen God, but God the only Son, who is at the Father's side, has made him known. [Note: There is a textual question involved here; and there is rather good ground for the version which ACT adopts and then proceeds to mistranslate, namely, "... the only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father. ..." HCH]

KJV John 3:16, For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

ACT, John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whosoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life." [Note: ACT adds quotation marks here. HCH]

We should notice, in the first place, that ACT is at least consistent in its substitution of "only" for "only begotten."

But the question is: is ACT *correct*?

The answer is negative. And in this connection we ought to notice the following:

1) As far as the linguistic question is concerned, the translators of ACT were all very well aware of the fact that their translation "only" was not the correct rendering of the Greek term. This is plain from the fact that in the footnotes they offer the rendering "only begotten" in all three instances. But let this be plain: as a matter of simple Greek, the term which the original uses can by no stretch of the imagination be rendered by "only." In all three instances the Greek uses a form of the word *monogenees* [*mono-* = only; *genees* = begotten]. Hence, linguistically this is plainly

incorrect. This should be sufficient reason to condemn ACT's translation of these verses, especially since there is no difficulty in finding a proper translation of the term involved. Sometimes the latter is true, and it can be difficult to find an English word which expresses the idea of the Greek without doubt; but this is the case here.

2) We may ask the question: was this change necessary, perhaps, in the interest of a *contemporary* translation? This question is not really proper, since accuracy should surely not be sacrificed for contemporaneity. But let us explore the question nevertheless. My answer is that this suggestion is absurd. Is *only begotten* such an old-fashioned and Elizabethan word that twentieth century Americans with at least a slight degree of intelligence and knowledge of English cannot understand it? Not to my knowledge! In fact, is not John 3:16 as rendered by the KJV so well-known, even to people who have very little additional knowledge of Scripture, that it almost makes one stumble to leave out the word "begotten" in reciting this text?

3) But we may ask: is this change of such great importance that it deserves all this criticism? The answer is an emphatic YES! In the first place, again, simply because of the inaccuracy of translation. Do the translators of ACT have so little faith in the *verbal inspiration* of Holy Scripture that they are willing to change its words? My position is that if the Holy Spirit had wanted "only" here, He would have seen to it that "only" was written. But He did not! He saw to it that "only begotten" was written; and all translators had better respect that! In the second place, this is a matter of great importance as far as the *meaning* is concerned. Negatively, it is simply not true that Christ is the "only" Son of God; believers are also sons of God. Now even from the point of view of the uninitiated, in whose language ACT is supposed to speak, what confusion this must create. Christ is the only Son of God, but there are also other sons of God? And, positively, it is a simple fact that the Scriptures reserve this term "only begotten" for the Lord Jesus Christ, Who is the Second Person of the Trinity. This is the term which expresses the truth of eternal generation. Never do the Scriptures speak of believers as being the "only begotten" of the Father. They are adopted; and they are begotten of God. But Christ is the "only begotten" of the Father. In the third place, this change of language is not confessionally correct. The use of the term "only begotten" dates not only to the time of our Heidelberg Catechism (which very definitely calls attention to the distinction between our sonship and Christ's precisely in connection with this term "only begotten") and our Belgic Confession, but all the way back to the Nicene Creed. It only creates confusion — besides being inaccurate — to make this change which involves this important doctrine.

There are other questions of translation in these same passages which we may briefly note:

1) Is there any real reason to change "in the bosom of the Father" to "at the Father's side"? The word "bosom" is totally accurate in this instance, and the text definitely does not say "at the Father's side." Besides, there is no apparent difficulty in understanding the word "bosom" for anyone. Why this inaccurate and unnecessary change?

2) Why the change from "should not perish" to "shall not perish" in John 3:16? Is the force of this change this, that purpose is changed to result? Has the use of "should" also become archaic? In the opinion of this writer, "should not perish" more clearly expresses the meaning of Greek purpose clause (*hina* + the subjunctive form of the verb).

We will interrupt our discussion at this point, until the next issue.

Contending for the Faith

The Doctrine of Atonement

FIRST PERIOD — 80-254 A.D.

Rev. H. Veldman

Returning to one of the Apostolic Fathers, in connection with the doctrine of the atonement, we would quote briefly from Polycarp. Polycarp was instructed by the apostles, and was brought into contact with many who had seen Christ. We have this information from Irenaeus, a disciple of Polycarp. In his epistle to the Philippians, its authenticity being unquestioned, Polycarp writes as follows:

I have greatly rejoiced with you in our Lord Jesus Christ, because ye have followed the example of true love (as displayed by God), and have accompanied, as became you, those who were bound in chains, the fitting ornaments of saints, and which are indeed the diadems of the true elect of God and our Lord; and because the strong root of your faith, spoken of in days long gone by, endureth even until now, and bringeth forth fruit to our Lord Jesus Christ, Who for our sins suffered even unto death, but "Whom God raised from the dead, having loosed the bands of the grave. In Whom, though now ye see Him not, ye believe, and believing, rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory;" into which joy many desire to enter, knowing that "by grace ye are saved, not of works," but by the will of God through Jesus Christ Wherefore, girding up your loins, serve the Lord in fear and truth, as those who have forsaken the vain, empty talk and error of the multitude, and believed in Him Who raised up our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, and gave Him glory, and a throne at His right hand.

In his general estimate of the writings of the Apostolic Fathers, Reinhold Seeberg writes the following (Book I, 78):

(5) Jesus Christ is the Redeemer. He revealed the Father and taught the new moral law; but, above all, He by His passion and death freed mankind from sin and death. He brought to men a new life, forgiveness of sins, knowledge of God and confidence in Him:

He gave the impulse to true morality, the hope of immortality. Although this is made dependent upon His sufferings and death, we fail to find any distinctive conception, or original religious apprehension, of the latter. The death of Christ arouses and moves religious feeling, but it is not understood nor pursued to its consequences. Our authors miss entirely that interpretation of The Old Testament premises which is so prominent in the canonical Scriptures. (6) The salvation which Christ has obtained and brought to men is quite differently described: (a) Forgiveness of sins through baptism, new creation. In Hermas and 2 Clement, only the sins of the past are included. There is a great lack of clearness in conception; it is particularly noticeable that the significance of the forgiveness of sins for the whole subsequent Christian life is greatly obscured. "Righteousness" is always merely an active, actual righteousness. Paul is not understood, but even the influence of his specific doctrinal ideas falls noticeably into the background. The type of doctrine which is followed corresponds generally — though in a cruder form — with that of the catholic epistles of the New Testament. (b) Communion with God, the indwelling of the Father, or Christ, or the Spirit in the heart (Ignatius, Hermas). (c) Knowledge of God as the One God, the Creator, Lord, Father, etc. (d) The new law. (e) Eternal life as the reward of moral living.

The Apologists were Christian writers who defended the teachings of the Word of God against heathen attacks upon the truths of Scripture. The foremost of these Apologists was Justin Martyr, whom we have already quoted in previous articles. Concerning the development of the doctrine of the atonement in this period of the Apologists, who followed the Apostolic Fathers, Reinhold Seeberg writes the following, (Book I, 116):

Although it does not appear from such presenta-

tions of the subject why the sufferings and death of Christ were necessary (except as in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy), yet the Apologists very positively testify that the belief in the significance of these experiences of the Lord formed an essential part of the common Christian faith. The sufferings of Christ deliver men because He thereby took upon Himself the curse which rested upon them; they bring forgiveness of sins and set free from death and the devil. He who now believes in the Crucified is purified from his past sins, the Spirit of God stands by his side to help in all assaults of the devil, and Christ will deliver him from all trouble and receive him to His kingdom if he will but keep His commandments. The wood of the cross, the water of baptism, faith, and repentance are the means by which to escape from condemnation on the day of judgment. There was no attempt to enlarge upon these ideas in the controversial writings of the period; but there can be no doubt that they held the same place in moulding the life of the church at large as in the post-apostolic age.

Also Dr. H. Bavinck calls attention to the historical development of the doctrine of the atonement in his "Gereformeerde Dogmatiek," Vol. III, 450-451, and we quote (we translate):

Intensively the word of Christ is of infinite value, but also extensively it broadens out to include the entire world. Even as the world was the object of the love of God, John 3:16, so also Christ came, not to condemn that world, but to save it, John 3:17, 4:42, 6:33, 51, 12:47; in Him God has reconciled the world, all things in heaven and upon the earth, unto Himself, John 1:29, 2 Cor. 5:19, Col. 1:20, and gathers them in this dispensation to be one, Eph. 1:10; the world, created by the Son, is also destined for the Son as its heir, Col. 1:16, Heb. 1:2, Rev. 11:15. Origen concluded from this that Christ has redeemed the entire world by His suffering and death, not only all people but also all other rational creature, namely the fallen angels and also all creatures. It is true that He dies only once, in the end of the ages, Heb. 9:26, but the power of His death is sufficient unto redemption, not only for the present world, but also for that world, which existed formerly but which also shall exist later, and not only for the people, but also for the heavenly spirits. This universalism, however, has been unanimously rejected by all Christian churches, and, as a matter of fact, these churches were always particular in their viewpoint to that extent that they limit the "all things" in Col. 1:20 and did not broaden this term out to include the fallen angels. Nevertheless the conclusion was drawn from these and other passages, where the word "world" or "all" is brought in connection with the sacrifice of Christ, Is. 53:6, Rom. 5:18, 8:32, 1 Cor. 15:22, 2 Cor. 5:15, Heb. 2:9, 1 Tim. 2:4, 6, 2 Pet. 3:9, 1 John 2:2, that Christ had satisfied for all men, head for head, and that therefore the vicarious satisfaction must be interpreted as universal.

The church fathers, before Augustine, speak generally very universalistically concerning God's will of salvation and the atonement of Christ, but the actual

question did not exist as yet in that time and could not arise in that time, inasmuch as they accepted a foreknowledge as far as God is concerned, and, as far as the side of man is concerned, laid the emphasis upon man's freedom of the will, although weakened by sin. In the Pelagian controversy this question could not be subdued; and Augustine was the first who clearly taught the doctrine of particular atonement.

We need not quote from Bavinck beyond this. We may undoubtedly have opportunity in subsequent articles to quote him again, but we are now calling attention to the doctrine of the atonement as presented in the years, 80-254.

Tertullian was a prominent church father. Of his conception of the atonement Hagenback writes as follows, and we may include also other general remarks:

The incarnation of the God-Man, in and of itself, had a redeeming and reconciling efficacy, by breaking the power of evil, and restoring the harmony of human nature, through the life-awakening and life-imparting influences which proceeded from this manifestation of deity. But from the very beginning, in the basis of apostolic Christianity, the redeeming element was put chiefly in the sufferings and death of Christ. The first teachers of the church regarded this death as a sacrifice and ransom (lutron), and therefore ascribed to the blood of Jesus the power of cleansing from sin and guilt, and attached a high importance, sometimes even a magical efficacy, to the sign of the cross (the undersigned wishes to state that this tendency to attach a magical efficacy to the sign of the cross need not surprise us, inasmuch as the fathers were certainly characterized by this tendency in general during this early period of the Church in the New Dispensation, H.V.). They did not, however, rest satisfied with such vague ideas, but, in connection with the prevailing views of the age, they further developed the above doctrine, and saw in the death of Christ the actual victory over the devil, the restoration of the divine image, and the source and condition of all happiness. But, however decidedly and victoriously this enthusiastic faith in the power of the Redeemer's death manifested itself in the writings and lives of the Christian fathers, as well as in the death of martyrs; yet this faith had not yet been developed into the form of a strict theory of satisfaction, in the sense that the sufferings of Christ were a punishment, necessarily inflicted by divine justice, and assumed in the place of the sinner, whereby the justice of God was strictly *satisfied*. At least several intermediate links were wanting, ere the doctrine could assume this shape. The term "*satisfactio*" occurs, indeed, first in the writings of *Tertullian*, but in a sense essentially different from, and even opposed to, the idea of a *vicarious* satisfaction. Nor was the death of Christ, as a reconciling power, considered as an isolated truth, dis severed from other aspects of it. The same *Origen*, who, on the one hand, along with the notion that the devil had been outwitted in this matter, likewise developed the idea of sacrifice as ap-

plicable to it on the basis of the Old Testament typology, on the other hand, spoke just as definitely in favor of the moral interpretation of Christ's death, which he did not hesitate to compare with the heroic death of other great men of primitive times. He also ascribed a purifying power to the blood of martyrs, as *Clement* had done before him. And, besides, he understood the death of Jesus in a mystic and idealistic sense, as an event not limited to this world, nor to

one single moment of time, but which occurred in heaven as well as on earth, embraces all ages, and is in its consequences of infinite importance even for the other worlds.

The Lord willing, we will continue with this in our following article, calling attention to what these church fathers have to say on this doctrine of the atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Come Ye Apart... And Rest A While

Rev. C. Hanko

Dear Philip,

Thanks for your response to my recent letter. It was good to hear from you, and especially to know that the calling and work of the deacons has been also your concern. Maybe together we can look for some proper solution.

I could hardly help but wonder what a minister might think, if he were called to a certain church, arrived there in eager anticipation of taking up his duties, only to discover that he had nothing to do. Suppose, for example, that he was making plans to preach, and that he was informed by the consistory that this was not necessary, since seminarians and visiting ministers would supply the pulpit. Suppose he was arranging material for the catechism classes, only to have the consistory tell him that the children received all the Biblical instruction that they could absorb right in the Christian School, where the teachers were very capable of handling these things. And when he was thinking of family visitation or sick visitation he was told that the consistory had always taken care of that work and would continue to do so. He certainly would wonder why the congregation called him. He would wonder still more whether there actually was room for the office of the ministry of the Word in the church. And did Christ actually call him?

Many deacons probably feel the same way. We have always maintained, and correctly so, that there is a threefold office in the church, that of ministers, elders and deacons. (Maybe at this point you reach out for your Red Book to check whether or not the Church Order speaks of a fourfold office rather than a threefold office. And right you are. Article 2 speaks of four kinds of offices in the church, and includes the office of professors of theology. If we ever decide to revise our present Church Order, we might change that article to include the professors of theology under the ministers of the Word.) There are in Scripture three offices, that of prophet, priest and king. These three are one in Christ, Who is our eternal Prophet, our exalted High

Priest, and our Glorious King. Christ exercises that threefold office in the church institute through the ministers who function in the prophetic office, through the elders who rule the flock, and through the deacons who minister mercy in His name.

That is exactly the point that must always be maintained: Christ fulfills His office in the church through the duly called office bearers. Christ calls whom He will to that office, and He does so through the consistory and the congregation. No one may intrude into that office by his own appointment. No church can call apart from Christ. And on the other hand, Christ never calls apart from the church institute. (Rom. 10:14, 15; Acts 13:2). These are principles that may never be ignored. Often we lose sight of them, because we are accustomed to see a nomination for elders and deacons on the bulletin, and after a few weeks the congregation meets and chooses from that nomination. After the meeting the question is asked: Who were chosen? Or, who were voted in? Actually we should ask, since we know that this is true: Whom did Christ call? Those whom Christ calls He also qualifies by His Spirit. True, the consistory places men on nomination whom they regard fit for the office, according to the directions of I Timothy and elsewhere in Scripture. But a man's qualifications mean nothing unless Christ will use them and carry out His work through him.

We may well remind ourselves that when a minister preaches, he is not giving a dissertation on some popular subject, as for example, the generation gap, the Viet Nam war, the race problem. Nor is he giving a speech or a lecture. He is preaching the Word, expounding the Scriptures. He comes in the name and on the authority of Christ and says: "So saith the Lord." That is His mandate. And that Word alone is effective, powerful as a two-edged sword, because CHRIST makes it effective and powerful. When a minister teaches catechism he is officially ministering the Word to the covenant youth of the church. When the minister and elder call on us

for family visitation, we must receive them as we would receive Christ. If the young people of our day were a bit more aware of all this, they would not dare to commit the sacrilege of playing church in their "underground church," for they are playing with holy things. As to the elders, to them are entrusted the keys of the kingdom of heaven, to declare within and outside of the kingdom in Christ's name. Therefore when they discipline members of the congregation, these members do not run away to a less strict church, but they submit to the authority of Christ as vested in the elders, even as they promise when they make confession of their faith.

Now let us apply that to the office of deacons. And what do we get? It is obvious that the office of deacon is no less important than the other two offices. The three are one in Christ, and therefore of equal importance. Christ fulfills His Highpriestly office in the church institute through the deacons, *ministering mercy to the saints*. This is the one calling and duty of the deacons, according to Scripture and also the Form for Ordination. They are called to collect and distribute alms for the poor. This does not mean that the individual person may not visit the poor or extend a helping hand to those in need. But we must still be careful that we do not infringe on the office of the deacons. Christ has instituted that office so that we may give expression to our love and thankfulness to God by aiding the needy and the distressed. Freely we have received, and therefore freely we can give. And we do this through the deacons who carry out their calling with prayer and words of comfort in Christ's name. (Matthew 25:40)

But what has happened? The deacons have become the business men in the church to care for the finances. Most churches have no needy, it would seem. And therefore, apart from an occasional visit to some widow or orphan, the deacons find themselves without an opportunity to fulfill their calling.

Yet, is it true that we have no needy? I attended synod a few weeks ago, and there discovered anew that our churches do have various funds for benevolent purposes. We have, for example, a needy churches fund. We have also a needy student fund. We also have a Jamaican Poor Fund, and there is a fund for students who desire to prepare for the ministry in Jamaica. So we do have needy, there is no question about that. And there may even be people in the churches who would rather seek benevolent aid from the government than to "go to the deacons."

This, it appears to me, points out at least one possible solution to our problem. The Jamaican Poor Fund has been placed under the supervision of one particular diaconate. But could not something like that be worked out on a broader scale? For example, could not some diaconate of one of our churches assume the responsibility of one of the students in the seminary? Could that not be arranged with the approval of the congregation? And could that student not keep in close contact with the deacons of a local church, who would provide for his needs as long as he is in the seminary? And if the burden became too great for one church, could they not call in the aid of some other congregation?

I realize that the objection could readily be raised that our seminary, even as our ministers, is the property of all the churches. And that, therefore, the responsibility of the seminary and its students is the responsibility of all of our churches. But do not synodical funds remove the needy too far from our local diaconates? Or should the churches each in turn take this responsibility upon themselves?

You realize that I am groping for a solution. Maybe you can come up with something. I am eagerly awaiting your reply,

fraternally,

C.H.

In His Fear

Coming Down: A Section of the Wall

(Concluded)

Rev. John A. Heys

Last time we began to quote from the report we gave to the Mission Committee of our churches concerning the labours spent on the island of Jamaica and in our mission field there the months of February through April of this year. We began to point out how these children of God have received the Reformed

Faith; and we continue now to show what has been accomplished by God's grace among these of His children who differ from us in race, color, and temperament.

"As to the schooling with the ministers, I took along complete sets of the mimeographed outlines which I

use at home in my class on Heidelberg Catechism for Juniors; and we went through the first eight lessons, school being held every other Tuesday because of the expenses and travel difficulties. Before leaving for home I drew up a set of 29 questions and answers on the instruction I had given; and when the 'students' pleaded for more copies and enough for each of those in their consistories that could read, I had 50 copies mimeographed at the cost of \$3.20. One Sunday morning we were gladdened to hear Rev. Ruddock drilling his people at Mt. Lebanon in Sunday School on these questions and answers as we arrived at church. The remarks of Elder Johnson of Lucea's Congregation at the 'farewell' sermon April 19 were to the effect that Rev. Lubbers and I can be sure that what we taught the ministers in school at the missionary home in Coral Gardens, they in turn do bring to the congregations; and he thanked us for our labours. This work also must by all means be continued.

"The two highlights of the work during these twelve weeks came during those 21 days when the Meulenbergs were with us. We spent an enjoyable week with the six of us from January 27 through February 4. Then Rev. and Mrs. Lubbers left for Grand Rapids, and Mr. and Mrs. Meulenberg left for Florida. We then stayed alone for a month, and the Meulenbergs returned March 4 to remain with us till March 23. We were then alone again for a month until we left for home on April 22. But during those three weeks when the Meulenbergs were with us the conference was held at Reading, a district of West Lacovia, and Kenneth Brown was enrolled in Heralds High School to begin his training for the ministry of the Word of God in the Protestant Reformed Churches in Jamaica.

"I understand that the Mission Committee is already busy with the report of this conference, having been supplied with details by Mr. Meulenberg, so I will give no further report on this matter than to state that the churches are in the process of deliberating on this move. Several have already signed the agreement. (We have signed agreements from four of Rev. Ruddock's five churches in our possession.) One or two have indicated that they are not ready to sign. One probably will not do so at all. We urged them to move slowly and to be sure of what they are doing. A man in the field while they come to their decisions would be very beneficial.

"Kenneth Brown has now completed some five weeks of school, and I was furnished with a report from the principal of the school — at my request — of his progress and abilities for study. The report is quite favourable. Her concluding remarks are, 'I trust that at the end of this term when his report sheet is sent to you, there will be plenty of reason for you to be proud of the efforts you are expending on him.' Incidentally, the name of the school is misleading; and upon finishing his studies there Kenneth will have the equivalent

of a junior college education and not simply high school. And educational standards in Jamaica are high, the final examination and test papers being marked not by the local teacher but in England. Kenneth has signed a contract with us in the presence of Rev. Frame and myself and I am attaching a copy of it for the Mission Committee to keep in its files. I am including one also for Synod's files. But Kenneth needs more than the \$18 (Jamaican money, which roughly is \$22 U.S. money) per semester, of which there are three a year. He needs room and board and *encouragement*, for he is a member of a divided family, being the only one belonging to the Protestant Reformed Church at Shrewsbury. And at school as well he stands *alone*.

"I also earnestly request our committee to consider advising Synod to release the building fund collections so that those churches which declare themselves willing to form the association of churches that will be incorporated as the Protestant Reformed Churches in Jamaica, and have placed or promise to place their properties in the name of the congregation can receive from this fund at once. The reasons are three in number: (1) This incorporation may take a year to be realized, (2) some of the churches need to buy land which is now available and may not be a year from now, and (3) some churches are badly in need of repairs and cannot hold services when it rains. (This matter has been taken care of, and while we were labouring in Jamaica and missed the committee meetings an arrangement was accepted whereby some help can be given at once from this fund to the churches in need, and more help can be given after they have become organized.)

"Finally, since this is the report and opinion of one, I strongly recommend to the Mission Committee that Mr. Meulenberg be asked to submit a brief report of his findings and opinion of the progress or lack of it in this field for Synod's benefit and information. Elder Meulenberg was one of the first emissaries to the island. He has laboured there with Rev. C. Hanco, Rev. G. Lubbers, and with myself and witnessed first hand the work and the reaction to the work. He has observed the field closely for some seven, eight years, and has just returned from it after seeing a concentrated effort of six consecutive months of labour. He is in a position to give the committee and Synod a valued evaluation of what has been done or needs to be done.

"On my own part, after four visits to the field from 1965 till the present, and after four periods of labour in the field I have found two significant elements which give hope for the future. Through these few brethren and sisters with whom we have been working a new sound is being heard on the island; and those around about them are beginning to become aware of such a sound that is so different from the Arminian messages that are so universally proclaimed today. In

the 'farewell' sermon we pointed out to them what a blessing and privilege they have to be the only group on the island that knows this truth of the Reformed Faith and the Five Points of Calvinism. And we urged them to beware lest they fall from their steadfastness in that truth. We may be thankful to our God that through us the truth that shines so brightly in our midst now is reflected and sent forth also here in Jamaica by these brethren and sisters of a different color, race, and temperament. The truth IS being sounded forth by them. And the other element is that being attacked they fight back with the instruction which we gave them. This is indeed a blessing for them. For nothing strengthens the muscles of faith like a prayerful use of them in maintaining the truth. May our covenant God keep them in this faith and watch over them that they remain steadfast in that truth."

To this report was added the following which was not possible when it was drawn up on April 29, 1970: "P.S. In verification of the last paragraph above I received a letter today, May 4, 1970, from Rev. Frame in which, referring to the blackboard instruction sessions which we had for the Lucea congregation in Middlesex, he writes, 'The people outside of the church (who came in goodly numbers to these sessions) believe this truth, and as they talk with me they decide to add (join) the church at Middlesex, Praise the Lord.' The Lucea congregation is moving to Middlesex where most members of the congregation live.

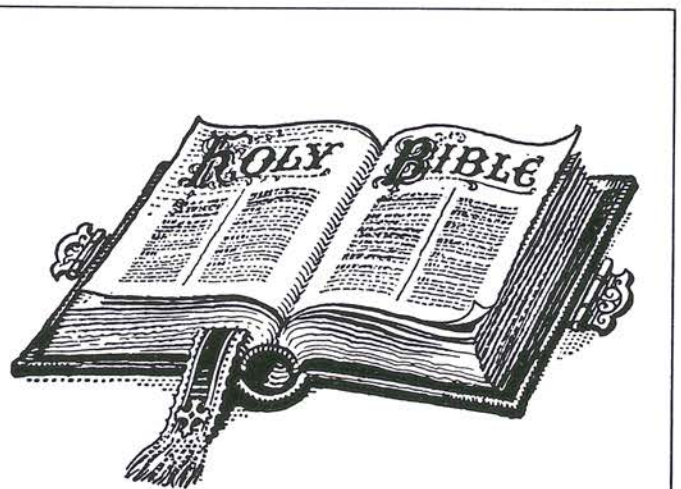
"Of course all this does not mean that all or that any understand this truth fully and can answer every argument that is brought against the truth. But they know the principles. They know and believe that man by nature is spiritually dead and not simply weak or sick. They know and believe that God chose a people not because these *dead* people did something or would do something, but because it pleased Him to choose them. They know and believe that we are chosen UNTO faith and good works and not because of faith and good works. They know and believe that Christ died only for these elect, that God hates the sinner as well as his sin, and that He loves the elect sinner because He sees him in Christ. They know and believe that God calls to repentance and does not offer, invite, and plead with *dead* people to let Him save them; that we must be born again (and thus have the process of salvation begun in us) before we can even want salvation; and that God by an irresistible grace does all this, making His elect the 'whosoever wills.' They know and believe that the Almighty and Unchangeable God, having begun a good work in us, will perform the work of salvation until the day of Christ and cause each and every elect to persevere to the end.

"And with the truth and instruction which we gave them (and by 'we' I mean Rev. C. Hanco, whom they still remember very keenly, and Rev. G. Lubbers, as well as myself) they do strive to defend this glorious

truth. Kenneth Brown told us of an argument which he had with a young man at school. This young man insisted that God loves everybody and that therefore all children who die in infancy go to heaven, because they did not sin. Kenneth answered with a pointed question: What about those infants that died at the flood under that terrible wrath of God? Avoiding the point the young man responded that this was in the Old Testament dispensation and that today God deals differently. Kenneth again countered with a question: Does God, of Whom the Bible says that He is the same yesterday, today and forever, change?

"Indeed, it does one good to hear others defend the truth and to speak that which glorifies God rather than denies Him some of His glory. And it does one good especially to see this in those of another race, and color and temperament WHERE WE HAD NOT SEEN THIS BEFORE. To see a section of the wall come down and to see the hand of God lifting out of the Arminian man-exalting and God-debasing philosophies to place upon the solid ground of the truth that "Salvation is of the Lord," as Jonah stated it, and that God is the alpha and omega of our salvation as well as of our creation, and that in Him we live and move and have all our spiritual as well as our physical being, is indeed a joy. To see and hear men with black skin stand beside us with white skin and give God ALL the glory is a thrill we would like to have all of you experience.

"In a day and age when so many drift from the truth into Arminianism and Pelagianism and from them into modernism, it is like rain upon the dry ground to witness a turning to this truth of the Reformation and to see the fulfillment of the words, "The ends of all the earth shall hear And turn unto the Lord in fear; *All* kindreds of the earth shall own And worship Him as God alone."



All Around Us

News from Church Assemblies An Interesting Quote

Prof. H. Hanko

NEWS FROM CHURCH ASSEMBLIES

Spring and early summer is the time for the broadest assemblies of the various denominations to meet. The decisions which these assemblies take makes for sad reading. The decisions are the measure of the trouble, unrest, and spiritual weakness of the church world today.

To turn, first of all, to the 182nd General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church, probably the decision which created the biggest stir had to do with a report adopted by the Assembly entitled "Sexuality and the Human Community." This report, prepared by a part of the Council on Church and Society, was the clearest definition yet of what precisely the church means by "situation ethics." The report overtly denied that the Bible can serve as ethical and moral guidelines for our time.

After this basic and all-important decision, the rest was comparatively easy and to be predicted. It declared that present laws condemning homosexuality were not morally defensible. It urged that contraceptive devices be made available to all. It urged that laws against abortion be dropped. It vacillated on the question of premarital and extra-marital sexual intercourse. But really this was condoned. This part of the report reads:

If couples have taken a responsible decision to engage in premarital intercourse, the church should not convey to them the impression that their decision is in conflict with their status as members of the body of Christ.

The report was adopted by a vote of 485 to 259.

There was irony here and a bit of silliness. An attachment to the report was later passed by a margin of nine votes. The vote was 356 to 347. This attachment "reaffirmed its 'adherence to the moral law of God as revealed in the Old and New Testaments' and acknowledged that lust, adultery, prostitution, fornication, and the practice of homosexuality are sin." (Quoted from *Christianity Today*.) Present laws condemning homosexuality are not desirable, but homosexuality is sin. Couples engaging in premarital intercourse are sinning, but their conduct is not incompatible with membership in the church of Christ. These kinds of decisions are silly.

The UPUSA Church decided on many other matters. Among the more interesting and important:

— Dealing with the subject of special gifts of the Holy Spirit such as tongue speaking, healings, etc., the Assembly decided that, on the one hand, these gifts should not be despised or forbidden; but, on the other hand, they should not be considered as the norm for Christian living.

— Addressing itself to the burning issue today of the offices in the Church, the Assembly rejected the historic Calvinistic position that the offices are important. They abandoned all ideas of an ordained clergy and spoke of a call of God which is to all the people of the earth. This, quite naturally, leads to the participation of laymen in the preaching, the administration of the sacraments, and other work which has been limited to the ordained clergy.

— Approval was given to baptized children to attend the Lord's Supper. This must still be approved by the presbyteries.

— Once again spoke out against the war in Viet Nam and called for an immediate end to the fighting of U.S. troops in Southeast Asia.

— Decided to broaden the present merger talks with the Southern Presbyterians to include the United Church of Christ, the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, and other North American churches affiliated with the World Alliance of Reformed Churches. This is still subject to the approval of the Southern Presbyterians. These other churches include the Reformed Church of America.

To turn now to the Reformed Churches of Australia, we find that these churches also were forced to deal with the question of special gifts of the Holy Spirit. A certain Dr. A. Schep had taught a baptism of the Holy Spirit apart from the preaching of the Word and special gifts imparted to select individuals by this baptism.

The Synod rejected this position and insisted that the work of the Spirit takes place through the preaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments.

Dr. Schep resigned from the ministry and membership in the church before Synod met.

This matter of special gifts of the Spirit is increasingly attracting the attention of the church. Apparently the whole idea of tongue speaking, gifts of healing, exorcism, etc. is spreading. It is not our intention

to discuss this matter here; we have discussed some aspects of it in an earlier column in our paper. Suffice it, for the present, to note that, when the church becomes doctrinally weak and unsound, when unfaithfulness to the Scriptures is the order of the day, then there are these strong and irresistible tendencies towards this type of mysticism. These things are not signs of renewal in the church; nor are they signs of a strong and healthy church; they are signs of a critical weakness and terminal illness.

To refer again to a comment made above concerning merger proposals set forth by the UPUSA, we quote from the *RES Newsletter*.

(Grand Rapids, Michigan) Monday Morning, a fortnightly magazine for United Presbyterian ministers, reported that "a proposal to merge the Synods of New Jersey of the United Presbyterian Church and the Reformed Church in America will be voted on by the two bodies in May. If approved, the union would create the largest Protestant church in New Jersey — 550 congregations and more than 250,000 communicant members. The merger plan requires ratification by the General Assembly of the UPUSA and the General Synod of the RCA." For the plan to go into effect, it will need the approval not only of the RCA's General Synod but also the subsequent ratification of two thirds of the classes. This proposal follows upon the defeat in June 1969 of a plan for union of the Reformed Church in America and the Presbyterian Church in the US (Southern).

While this is not, strictly speaking, a news item concerning decisions of an ecclesiastical assembly, we quote from the *RES Newsletter* concerning a recent development in the Gereformeerde Kerken in the Netherlands:

(Grand Rapids, Michigan) Two pastors of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands have called for the formation of a Consultation of Confessional Reformed Christians. The Rev. Messrs. M. P. van Dijk and J. Vlaardingerbroek, who are deeply concerned that the church not polarize more than it has into a left and a right group recently issued the call. In an interview with *Kerknieuws* they stated that many people are at a loss what to think of the new views that are propounded in the churches. The consultation should not, however, become a new modality in the church, the two organizers hold. On the basis of the Holy Scriptures as the Word of God, the two preachers stated, we are forced to take a stance against the various forms of horizontalism which have crept into the Reformed Churches. Against those who stress the need for a renewal for the structures of society at the cost of neglecting personal salvation, they maintain that the Christian's only comfort, that he is not his own but belongs in life and death to Jesus Christ, may not be pushed into a corner of the Christian life. The two pastors are largely in sympathy with the 'concerned' people in the churches, but de-

cry their conservatism and regret their bad image.

Previously the two pastors had limited their speaking to church assemblies. With the issuing of their call for a consultation, however, they have made an appeal to the 'great crowd of people who are neither left nor right and can scarcely make themselves heard.'

The two hold that the church confessions faithfully reflect the teaching of Scripture and should be maintained. Although they see the need for improvement in the confessions, these should be observed in a juridical sense. Desiring to stress the positive side of their plan, they appeal to the church to confess and live its faith in the world of today.

The pastors have reacted negatively however to what they see as

— an activism that would make man's works an 'extra' above the redemptive work of Jesus Christ.

— the thought that the Kingdom of God will come in its perfection by man's works in the world, not in the return in Jesus Christ.

— the idea that the Gospels are the deposit of the faith of the early congregation, but not a true presentation of what actually happened;

— the error that authority is valid only when it is recognized as such;

— the tendency to make the church a political pressure group.

The announcement of the new movement has aroused a variety of reactions. The Rev. D. van Swigchem, editor of the *Amsterdams Kerkbode*, wrote that the effect of the new movement would be to exclude those who are accused. "In spite of the good intentions, this is not the way toward a healthy church society."

This whole matter is of considerable interest to us. In the light of all the departures from the truth which characterize so much of the Reformed Church world, a Consultation of Confessional Reformed Christians is a very desirable thing. This would be especially true if the purpose would be to discuss, on the basis of Scripture and the Confessions, what is our calling today to maintain the Reformed heritage. This question would have to be discussed in the light of the departure of so many denominations from this Reformed faith.

But it seems as if this is not what the two pastors have in mind. They speak of the fact that they do not want the consultation to become a new modality in the church. Presumably this means that they do not want the consultation to become a permanent organization and they do not want to face the prospect that church reformation may be the order of the day; even church reformation by secession. They deplore what they call the right wing; they want to appeal to the "middle-of-the-roaders"; they decry the "bad image" of the conservatives.

It is, in the light of this, a masterly stroke on the part of Rev. D. van Swigchem to write that such a movement as this would result in the exclusion of those who are accused. Apparently, these two men,

calling for this consultation, do not want that. But is there any other way to preserve the heritage of the confessions and the Reformed faith?

We hope that such a consultation will be held. We hope that it will, ultimately, include all Reformed believers. We hope that the plea is earnestly and sincerely made — to preserve the Reformed faith in these times of apostasy.

AN INTERESTING QUOTE

In a recent issue of *Lutherans Alert* we read the following interesting “fable” in an article entitled

“Heterodoxy or Realignment — Part II.”

I don’t wish to follow the example of the bear hunter who, after a long and tiresome hunt, finally cornered a bear. When the hunter raised his rifle to shoot, the bear raised one paw and said, “Don’t shoot! Let’s sit down and talk this over. After all, what you want is a fur coat and all I want is a full stomach, so let’s sit down and negotiate.” So the hunter, being one of these reasonable, middle-of-the-road, fence-straddling Lutherans, put his gun down and sat down to discuss the problem . . . and, the hunter got a fur coat and the bear got a full stomach. This is, indeed, the usual result of “dialogue.”

A Cloud of Witnesses

Solomon’s Ascension To Israel’s Throne

B. Woudenberg

Now the days of David drew nigh that he should die; and he charged Solomon his son, saying,

I go the way of all the earth: be thou strong therefore, and show thyself a man;

And keep the charge of the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself:

That the LORD may continue his Word, which he spake concerning me, saying, If thy children take heed to their way, to walk before me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, there shall not fail thee (said he) a man on the throne of Israel.

I Kings 2:1-4

Solomon was now king.

He was still young, very young, and the circumstances of his coronation were such as demanded the utmost of discretion.

Chief was the problem of Adonijah. Here was a matter to challenge the discernment of the most experienced of men.

Adonijah, the eldest of David’s living sons, had tried to intercept Solomon’s succession to the throne and to take it for himself. And his effort had been cleverly devised. He had obtained the backing of Joab, the captain of the army, and of Abiathar the priest, two of the most influential men in the whole nation. Already the meeting had been gathered, with all of the royal sons except Solomon present, for the purpose of announcing Adonijah’s succession to the throne of Israel. But two things Adonijah had overlooked, the will of Jehovah Israel’s God and the natural resilience of David the king.

Thus in the last crucial hours, Nathan the prophet exposed the purpose of Adonijah to the old king in his sick chamber. Immediately it had had its effect. It

aroused in David a quick and strong response such as none had thought possible any longer. He ordered that without delay Solomon should be taken and made king with his royal approval. And it worked. The aged and weak king still held the love and respect of the people, and they received the successor he designated with enthusiasm.

For Adonijah the whole situation was suddenly a crisis. It was in the midst of the merriment of his banquet as he was preparing to announce his intentions to take over the kingdom that suddenly a great noise seemed to fill the city. Hardly had they had time to inquire as to its meaning before Jonathan the son of Abiathar entered with the announcement, “Verily our lord king David hath made Solomon king. And the king hath sent with him Zadok the priest, and Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and the Cherethites, and the Pelethites, and they have caused him to ride upon the king’s mule: and Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet have anointed him king in Gihon: and they are come up from thence rejoicing, so that the city rang again. This is the noise that ye have

heard. And also Solomon sitteth on the throne of the kingdom. And moreover the king's servants came to bless our lord king David, saying, God make the name of Solomon better than thy name, and make his throne greater than thy throne. And the king bowed himself upon the bed. And also thus said the king, Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, which hath given one to sit on my throne this day, mine eyes even seeing it."

There was no need for any explanation of the news brought by Jonathan. For a moment all of the merriment was over and the grip of cold fear held the whole hall in paralysis; but then it was over. As a man the whole crowd rose to their feet and fled without a backward look from the hall. Only Adonijah was left, alone, completely deserted by all of those which he had counted to be the friends who would put him upon the throne of the kingdom.

But even Adonijah could not afford to stay and reflect upon this sudden and unexpected reversal in his fortune. He who had but minutes before appeared to be the man of the hour was now the chief enemy of the king and his people. He was a traitor caught red-handed in his treachery. It was no wonder that everyone had fled him. No one's life could be more worthless than his for the moment.

But Adonijah's mind was quick, and he saw one possibility of saving himself. He knew that Solomon was a religious young man who took the service of Jehovah seriously. The last thing with which Solomon would want to begin his reign was with anything that might be taken as a desecration of the worship of Jehovah.

As quickly as he could, therefore, Adonijah too left the hall of banqueting and made his way to the tabernacle. There he threw himself upon the altar of burnt offerings and clung to its horns with all of the strength that was in him. Publicly it was an admission of guilt and a plea for mercy to God and in His name. But at the same time it was a challenge to the ruling king. He could not exert punishment upon Adonijah without introducing violence and the shedding of blood into the very tabernacle of God where such ought not to be. Accordingly also he informed any who inquired of him, "Let king Solomon swear unto me to day that he will not slay his servant with the sword."

It was soon, of course, that the word about Adonijah was passed on to Solomon, for already the young king found himself surrounded by fawning people who thought that they could please him by passing on information concerning his enemy. But Solomon indeed had no desire to begin his reign with the shedding of blood. Neither did he feel either fear of or hatred for Adonijah. His only concern was to secure the well-being of his kingdom. Thus, the answer he gave back was this, "If he will show himself a worthy man, there shall not an hair of him fall to the earth: but if wickedness shall be found in him, he shall

die." Moreover, Solomon sent and had Adonijah brought into his presence so that the promise and the warning might be repeated in his own ears. And with that he dismissed him saying, "Go to thine house."

To all appearances, Solomon's position upon the throne of Israel was securely established. In fact, it was not long before David his father passed away too, but not without first calling Solomon to him and saying, "I go the way of all the earth: be thou strong therefore, and show thyself a man; and keep the charge of the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself: that the LORD may continue his word which he spake concerning me, saying, If thy children take heed to their way, to walk before me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, there shall not fail thee (said he) a man on the throne of Israel."

The promise was extremely beautiful. A more fitting thought could hardly be passed on by a departing father to his son and royal successor. It was essentially the covenant promise, the promise of the son who some day would come to sit upon the throne of Israel forever. Nevertheless, the words of David also contained a warning. Solomon must be careful to live in obedience to God and according to the precepts of His law. Only in this way would God be with him and would he remain in the covenant line.

But Solomon's troubles were not over, not even with Adonijah. The dream of grandeur does not die easily once it has found root within the human breast. Once Adonijah had nearly succeeded in supplanting Solomon, and in an amazingly short time he was ready to try again. His plan centered in Abishag the Shunammite, David's last concubine.

It was the custom in that day that a new king arising to the throne would inherit the harem of his predecessor, as David had done with Saul's (II Samuel 12:8), and Absalom had done briefly with David's (II Samuel 16:22). It was one of the most emphatic indications of one's authority in office.

Now Adonijah knew as a member of the royal family, and he knew that Solomon knew, that David had never actually been united to Abishag. Thus he thought it might well be possible that he might be able to talk Solomon into letting him take Abishag to himself as wife. It was a clever move. To the members of the royal family who knew the true situation it might appear quite innocent, but to the nation as a whole it would appear that Adonijah still had certain royal prerogatives within the nation. Thus he could slowly begin to establish himself anew within the eyes of the people.

Moreover, Adonijah did not go himself to Solomon. He was much more careful than that. He went first to

Bathsheba, Solomon's mother. Not only was she a simple and kindly woman in whom sympathy was easily aroused, but she was dearly loved by Solomon so that he would not easily deny her anything. In this way Adonijah was quite sure that he would be able to take advantage of Solomon's youth and the tenderness of his feelings.

Bathsheba was indeed quite surprised by Adonijah's approach to her so that her first inquiry was, "Comest thou peaceably?" To which he answered, "Peaceably," and then went on to say, "Thou knowest that the kingdom was mine, and that all Israel set their faces on me, that I should reign: howbeit the kingdom is turned about, and is become my brother's: for it was his from the LORD. And now I ask one petition of thee, deny me not . . . Speak, I pray thee, unto Solomon the king, (for he will not say thee nay,) that he give me Abishag the Shunammite to wife." It was a daring approach to use his own failure to take over the kingdom as a means of gaining sympathy with the king's mother; but with Bathsheba it worked. She suspected nothing.

Naively Bathsheba went immediately into the presence of Solomon. After the usual formalities in which a special seat was set for Bathsheba and during which Solomon promised, "Ask on, my mother: for I will not say thee nay," Bathsheba went on to repeat Adonijah's request, "Let Abishag the Shunammite be given to Adonijah thy brother to wife."

Solomon at that time may well have been young and inexperienced, but he was not naive or foolish. He saw immediately through the plan and retorted with anger, "And why dost thou ask Abishag the Shunammite for Adonijah? ask for him the kingdom also; for he is mine elder brother; even for him, and for Abiathar the priest, and for Joab the son of Zeruiah . . . God do so to me, and more also, if Adonijah have not spoken this word against his own life. Now therefore, as the Lord liveth which hath established me, and set me on the throne of David my father, and who hath made me an house, as he promised, Adonijah shall be put to death this day." So Solomon ended the first great threat to his throne and his life.

From Holy Writ

Explanation of I John 2: 1-3

Rev. G. Lubbers

"My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for (the sins, sin) of the whole world. And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. . . ."

We ought to notice, that, in the KJV of the Scriptures here in verse 2, the translators have inserted the words "the Sins" of the whole world. The Holland translation inserted the singular "sin" of the whole world. This should make every teacher of a "Christ dying for all men" sit up and take notice, and not jump to the hasty conclusion that the text teaches universal and general atonement, a general grace for all!

The implication of the aforementioned paragraph we trust will become evident in our positive exegesis of this very well-known, yet little understood passage from Holy Writ. We may state here and now that whatever this text teaches in this phrase "for the sin of the whole world," it does not teach and cannot teach on its own merits and intent a Christ for all, for every man head for head in the entire human race that came forth from the loins of Adam!

John writes a very general letter to all churches, in all times of this New Testament era.

We do well to give close heed to the message which he heard directly from God, and which he here preaches and writes as a herald and Ambassador of God in Christ.

THESE THINGS WRITE I UNTO YOU (I John 2:1)

John writes with a very definite purpose in mind. His aim is not to write purely polemically. He will not merely use the sword, but he will employ the trowel and build the saints in the faith in Christ. He will instruct them not merely in *doctrine* but also in *Christian ethics*, whereas these two are inseparably connected in the covenant of God, the New Testament of the fellowship which we have with the Father and with His Son.

The basic and all controlling truth is "*God is light and there is no darkness in Him at all*" (I John 1:5). This is not a mere philosophic premise of man's invention, but this is "the message." It is something which

John must proclaim as the very Word of God in the Church.

In the first place, let it be noticed that this is a message which John *heard from God!* John did not simply hear someone else say that God is light. On the contrary John heard this message from the mouth of God Himself!! John heard this so very really as did Moses hear God speak on the holy mount of Sinai in the Wilderness of Paran. This is the message which we have heard of him. (*ap' autou*) John heard it without the intermediate agency of another. He heard it directly from God Himself.

In the second place, we must observe closely that the verb "and *declare* unto you" is a term in the Greek which is used for authorized, official announcements and pronouncements. John has heard this message from God, and he is told to hide it not. He must speak this word from the house-top, declare it far and wide: God is light!

In the third place, the implication of the truth that God is "light" and that there is no "darkness" in Him ought to be observed. This writer feels that this is here a necessary emphasis on the part of John not only for doctrine but also for ethics, Christian ethics. This truth is just as basic as is the "Hear, Israel the Lord our God is one Lord." That is the *doctrinal* part! The *ethics* is, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, with all thy strength." (Deuteronomy 6:5; Matthew 22:37) Two things here joined: doctrine and ethics!

We see this demonstrated in the verses 6-10. Five different conditional sentences bring out this truth of the relationship between sound doctrine and Godly ethics. Wherefore John can write "If we say that we have fellowship with God (who is light!! G.L.) and walk in the darkness, we lie and do not the truth."

Yes, that is it. Doctrine and ethics. And the absolute statement of John concerning it. If God is light (and that is the unifying principle between what He is and does) then also this light-life must be the unifying principle in the children of the light. Only those who walk in the light have fellowship with God and do the truth and not the lie. It is not simply what we say that counts but what we do as the fruit of the Spirit. And by the fruits we shall be known. For he that walks in the light as God is the light, he has fellowship with God, and the blood of Christ cleanses him from all sins. He is wholly clean: heart, mind, will and power! In him is the love of God perfected, the great "Shamah" on which all the law and the prophets depend!

This Great Commandment is placed once more in writing. It is the writing of the "old commandment" which is at once also the "new commandment!" We are dealing with the same God who is light in both Testaments. This message is placed in writing. It must not be lost as a mere statement would be of one of the

philosophical teachers on metaphysics and ethics. It is written as the Word of God. It is God's Word inscripturated. No, it is not God's Word in the Bible. It is: the Bible is the Word of God!

It is the rule of life and faith for the "little children." It is the rule of faith for the little children with all their sins and weaknesses in their battle against sin and unbelief. It is the pure milk of the word by which to grow. Thus only will we keep our feet on the straight paths of the Word and will we not build our house upon the sands of men's philosophy, but upon the solid rock of ages, Christ!

THAT YE SIN NOT (I John 2:1)

The term "sin" is very important, and is equally prevalent in this epistle of John. A survey will show that the noun "sin" occurs fourteen times, and that in the following passages: I John 1:7, 8, 9; 2:2, 12; 3:4, 5, 8, 9; 4:10; 5:16, 17. The verb "to sin" occurs some nine times, and as follows: I John 1:10; 2:1; 3:6, 8, 9; 5:16, 18. John does not count the sins, he weighs sin in the balance of the light-life of God. All unrighteousness is sin. Unrighteousness is "*adikia*"; it is the negation of what is just, right. That is true of unrighteousness. It is not as the relativist would have it. According to the latter, the figure of a string will explain. This string is white on one end and it is dark on the other end. Now, the one end is not absolutely "white" and the other end is not absolutely "dark." The light end is less dark than the dark end, and conversely the dark end is less light than the light end. That is the way with ethics too, so these unbelievers teach. That is the teaching today of the yes-no teaching called existentialism. That must even be true in the "god!" of whom they speak, now as "dead" and then as "alive," but who is not the living God of the Bible! Even in their idol-god they posit two poles, the good and the evil, and these are necessary. For evil is a counterpart of the good! But John says: God is light and there is no darkness in him at all!

I write you that ye sin not. I write you that ye miss not the mark. I write you, not ungodly world, which passeth away; but I write you, my little children. And that makes a difference. For John does not refer here to the sins of the world, the sins of those who walk in the entire circumference of their life *in the darkness*. He is not addressing those who in whom the truth is not. Nay, he is addressing those who basically walk in the light, who have been born from above and who are truly "my little children!"

These little children have a peculiar mark which they must not miss. They must walk in the light even as God is in the light. And when they stumble in many and sometimes through weakness fall into sin, they miss the mark. They sin. Now the entire writing of John is "that ye sin not." The aim of this writing is even our sanctification; that the love of God be perfected in our hearts.

This sin of missing the mark of the upward calling in Christ Jesus is an ever besetting sin with us. God is light and therefore if one sins against one commandment he sins against all of them. When John says "If any sin" he is not really saying "if *any man* sin" in all the world. Rather he says: if any of you little children sin, we the little children have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous.

Now, I write you in order that ye sin not, but press on in sanctification and holiness of life!

IF ANY ONE SIN WE HAVE AN ADVOCATE WITH THE FATHER. (I John 2:1)

"If any one sin." This is a conditional sentence. This presents this matter of sinning not as permissible, nor admirable, but rather as sin which is transgression. The *possibility* of our sinning is that God has not completely sanctified us yet. We still have an old man, a sinful nature against which we have to battle all our life-long. It is the battle to fight against sin with a free and good conscience. To so stand in the battle that our consciences are not defiled by dead works and sinful works, but that we serve the living God, Who is light and in Whom there is no darkness at all!

Yes, and then it does not make any difference which member in the church sins. There is here, too, no respect of persons with God. All who are called to the

faith and conversion, should they sin, have an advocate! Race and color, nationality and culture, sex and age, all standing in life, king or servant, if any of these are the "little children," they have an advocate with the Father — if they sin! However, no one outside of the "little children" has such an advocate as we hope to show when we come to "he is the propitiation for the . . . of the whole world." (Verse 2)

If any of the little children sin, they have a need of having their consciences cleansed from the guilt of sin. What a need this is for every David! Wash me, make me pure within, cleanse, O, cleanse me from my sin.

O, then we stand in need of forgiveness, of confessing our sins before the face of the Lord. To be cleansed with the blood of Jesus Christ, and to know that God is faithful and just. That He does not require payment twice. Yes, we have an advocate with the Father, who intercedes for us. He ever lives to intercede for us, and therefore can save us to the uttermost. (Roman 8:27, 34; Hebrews 7:23; Romans 8:26) He has entered for us once and for all into the holy place through His own blood, which speaketh better things than does Abel. He is our peace with God! And, therefore, if any of the "little children" have sinned, we have such an advocate which becomes us: holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners and made higher than the heavens!

Pages from the Past

Believers and Their Seed

THE ORGANIC IDEA IN SCRIPTURE

(continuation of Chapter IX)

Rev. Herman Hoeksema

Thus, finally, we also understand the fact that the apostles repeatedly address the congregations as the church of Christ. A congregation may appear to be never so bad, but the Apostle Paul addresses it as the church of Christ, as beloved in the Lord, as brethren in Him. That congregation may be divided by party-strife; it may be guilty of drunkenness and adultery; it may even deny or doubt the truth of the resurrection of the dead; it continues to be the church of Christ to which the apostle writes. It may even be necessary at the end of his epistle for the apostle to pen the dreadful words, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha." Yet he writes to that congregation as the one organism of the body of Christ. Thus we can also understand the letters which the Lord Himself addresses to the seven churches of Asia Minor through the Apostle John. Those congregations are praised and are reproved; they are comforted

and encouraged with various promises, but also threatened with various punishments and judgments; but it is always one and the same congregation, and as such it is repeatedly addressed. Even in the case of the very congregation which is threatened by the Lord that He will spew her out of His mouth, He nevertheless stands at the door, and knocks, so that they may hear His voice and He may sup with them. One congregation, with the same name, the same labor bestowed, the same covenant, the same calling of God in the world; but in that one congregation always and again the elect kernel, which can never go lost, in the reprobate shell.

If we have understood this truth somewhat, then what otherwise remains a riddle to us in Holy Scripture or with which we would tend to go in an Arminian or Pelagian direction will also be much clearer to us.

Thus, in recent times, appeal has been made once again to Psalm 81 in defense of a general grace of God

in the preaching of the gospel. Alas, in recent times in the Christian Reformed Churches appeal is made more and more to texts which also the old Remonstrants quoted in order to prove their *Christus pro omnibus*, (Christ for all) their doctrine of general grace. This lies, indeed, in the nature of the case. In order to be able to maintain a theory of Common Grace, they have declared that the preaching of the gospel is grace for all who hear it. It is but human that when this proposition is contested by us, they exert themselves to the utmost in order nevertheless to find proof for it in Scripture. And thus it comes about that they appeal to Psalm 81. After all, it is clear — thus they reason — that God meant it so well, that He indeed intended to be gracious, to the very people whom He has given over to their own hearts' lust. He laments about it. He cries out, "Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways!" Don't you see — thus they cry almost triumphantly — that God was well-meaning toward Israel, toward reprobate and ungodly Israel, and that therefore there is a well-meant offer of grace to all? And if then you point out that in this way they make God's Word speak Arminian language, then they quickly add that this is the one line of God's Word, while the other is that of sovereign election and sovereign grace. And if then you insist that those two completely exclude one another, that God cannot well-meaningly offer what He never intends to bestow, then they boldly try to get away with the argument-silencer that this is a mystery and that we must not even want to understand those things. But this is playing with Scripture and with the Reformed truth. In this way one is Reformed according to a dead confession, but in actual fact a thoroughbred Arminian. In this fashion we may as well abandon every attempt to understand Scripture. Following this course, we can make Scripture say anything whatsoever, under the pious motto that "the hidden things are for the Lord our God."

But we surely may not deal thus with Scripture. We have indeed the calling to contemplate and study the Word of our God until we understand it. And although we gladly concede that there are mysteries, things which for our finite understanding are never to be fathomed, because our God is unfathomable, yet we maintain that in Scripture we have a revelation of God which is adapted to our thinking and our understanding, and which we indeed can understand. We maintain that this Scripture does not teach and cannot teach that black is also white, that God will not bestow but also will bestow grace on the same persons, that He offers what He does not will to bestow. Scripture is not both Reformed and Arminian.

And thus it is also with Psalm 81. If only we keep in mind the organic unity of the people of God in the midst of the world, then every problem with this passage disappears. Then you can compare God's people

on earth with the individual believer. He is one person, a child of God, called by God's name, baptized in His name. But there is also still in him the operation of sin; he still carries about with him the body of this death. If now he acts in harmony with that old nature and walks for a time in the paths of sin, and the Lord chastises him then, leads him in ways of adversity and suffering, then it appears as though God is angry with him, and it appears as though God rejects His own elect child. And this is true, too, if only it be properly understood. For also then the Lord does not reject His elect child, but gives him over *as he exists historically*, in order to save that child. Thus it is also with Israel in the old Dispensation. That people is one. It has one name. It is called "My people." Thus the Lord also addresses that people: "Hear, O my people, and I will testify unto thee," (vs. 8). To that people He said: "There shall no strange god be in thee; neither shalt thou worship any strange god. I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt: open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it," (vss. 9, 10). But that one people consisted of an elect kernel and a reprobate shell. Besides, the sinful nature of that reprobate shell penetrated even into the elect kernel: for also the spiritual children of the promise were not perfect. This is the reason why that people as a unity could sometimes apostatize as it did, and could make its ways more abominable than the ways of the heathen. And if then that people revealed itself under the domination of that wicked shell, then the Lord said of that people: "But my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me." And then the Lord gave that people over, according to its wicked and reprobate shell, unto the lusts of their own hearts. But that never changed the fact that hidden in that people was always the real people of the promise, the elect kernel toward which the heart of Israel's God went out in love. And if then the enemies subjugated that people, and Israel was given over into captivity, then God lamented over His people: "Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and that Israel had walked in my ways!" And not only did the Lord lament thus, but thus it also came about again: for the remnant according to the election of grace was always preserved. This presentation is surely in harmony with Scripture in general; it is in accord with Israel's history; and it is free from all Arminianism.

Thus, to mention but one more passage, what God says to Isaiah at the time of his calling to be a prophet in Israel also becomes clear. In connection with this we read in Isaiah 6:9-13: "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. Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered,

Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate, And the Lord have removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land. But yet in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return, and shall be eaten: as a teil tree, and as an oak, whose substance is in them, when they cast their leaves: so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof."

Those who want to see in the preaching of the gospel a well-meant offer of grace to all who hear certainly do not know what to do with this passage of Scripture, no more than with the similar word of the Savior which is put still more sharply in Mark 4:8-12. If they will be honest, they will have to admit that they do not hold to the line of Scripture which is here presented, but reject it altogether. Notice that the subject here is precisely the preaching of Isaiah, his calling as prophet. And he is told from the outset that he must serve as prophet in order to make the heart of this people fat, and to make their ears heavy, and to shut their eyes, lest they convert and be healed. And when the prophet, almost afraid of such a calling, asks, "How long must this continue, Lord?" he receives the answer that this must continue until all is destroyed. Only he has the promise of a remnant, a remnant which in turn shall also be eaten away, but of which the holy seed shall be the substance. In other words, the real object here is that remnant and that holy seed. But precisely for the sake of the salvation of that holy seed the preaching of Isaiah must serve for the blinding and hardening of the reprobate shell. If now you keep in mind the organic idea, then you will understand this very well. There come times in Israel's history when the ungodly segment of the nation gets the power and has the upper hand; times when it becomes well-nigh impossible for the elect kernel to exist in the midst of that reprobate shell. In such times judgment must come upon Israel: Israel must be eaten away, precisely in order to save it from the domination of the ungodly. However, if this is to happen, if a portion of that reprobate shell is to fall away, then it must first become ripe for judgment. And Isaiah's preaching must serve exactly to accomplish that ripeness of the reprobate shell. Then presently the tenth part shall be preserved, and the remnant, of which the holy seed shall be the substance.

With this organic conception of God's covenant people in the line of generations we are in a strong position, we have a Scriptural-Reformed point of view. Then we stand strong over against the Baptist position, which exactly does not see and know that organic idea, and therefore also holds that baptism may only be administered to persons who are themselves able to confess that they belong to Christ. Then we also stand strong over against Arminianism, also over against that form of Arminianism which wants to view the preaching to the congregation as a well-meant offer of grace.

Instead of this, the matter stands thus, that labor is bestowed upon the entire congregation, that to the entire congregation Christ is proclaimed, and the promises of God in Him, that the entire congregation is exhorted to walk in the ways of the Lord and as friends of God in the midst of the world, but that all this is never grace, cannot be grace, and cannot be intended as grace by the Lord, except for the elect kernel, after which the entire congregation is named, while the other branches are cut off. Also in the congregation the preaching is a savour of life unto life, but also a savour of death unto death.

With this conception we stand strong, too, over against those who want to teach a presupposed regeneration of all the children of the covenant. For that idea we exactly do not teach. Nor can such a presupposition ever be maintained in the light of Scripture and in the light of reality. No, we understand that there is also carnal seed which nevertheless comes under the very same labor as is bestowed upon the entire congregation, and that, too, according to the will of God. What God's purpose is with this carnal seed in the church, and what influence is exercised upon that carnal seed because of their affinity with the congregation, this we shall see later. And thus it will also be clear that it is exactly not our view that all in the visible church, head for head, are elect, and that there is also room in the preaching to the congregation, according to our conviction, for the proclamation of an everlasting woe for those who will not walk according to the rule of God's covenant.

Chapter X

THE REPROBATE IN THE SPHERE OF THE COVENANT

By this time it will surely be plain that we exactly do not believe that the entire actually existing and visible church in the midst of the world is elect, as we have sometimes very wrongfully been accused of teaching. Neither do we believe that this may be presupposed with respect to the visible church on earth, that is, believers and their seed, and that only on the basis of such a presupposition can holy baptism be administered to infants, and that only on the basis of the same presupposition can we subscribe to the language of our Baptism Form and make it our own. No, but we believe that Scripture instructs us very clearly — and that therefore also we may never present matters differently than Scripture instructs us — that among God's covenant people as they, according to His will, exist here on earth not all is Israel that is called Israel. We believe that essentially the covenant of grace pertains to the elect alone, whom God regenerates in time and on whom He bestows faith and conversion, according to His eternal good pleasure. All the elect and only the elect are saved. And they receive that salvation not out of works, but out of grace, in order that no one may boast. No one regenerates himself, and no one has

faith of and by himself. No one converts himself; no one *can* convert himself or even *will* to be converted. The Lord God Himself, through His Word and Spirit, and in His own time, makes all His elect people partakers of the benefits of His covenant and forms His people in order that they should show forth His praise.

Strictly speaking, therefore, no one can maintain that anyone who has been reprobated by God can really belong to the covenant of grace. God's covenant is the living and eternal relation of friendship between Him and His elect people in Christ Jesus. This must necessarily be maintained because otherwise we simply find ourselves again in Arminian waters and make everything dependent upon the free will of man. But he who would deduce from this that we believe or even presuppose that the church on earth, believers and their seed as we know them and can recognize them up to a certain point, are also all elect would be seriously mistaken. No, but this people of the covenant reveals itself historically as intertwined with and connected with an evil and reprobate shell, carnal Israel. Indeed, that entire people, according to the will of God, is addressed and treated as God's people. As the covenant people they are baptized, admonished, comforted, stirred up to repentance, instructed in the way of the covenant. But in all this we may never lose sight of the fact that, positively speaking, the purpose is the salvation of the elect kernel, and that not all who are born in and from the church on earth are saved.

This, according to our conviction, is the Scriptural presentation and also the presentation of our fathers in the Baptism Form, as we have demonstrated in detail.

There remain, however, a few questions in connection with this view of God's covenant in the world.

In the first place, there is this question: what is the significance of God's covenant for the ungodly and reprobate who historically are born in that covenant and who temporarily, or even all their lifetime, live under that covenant?

We have intentionally formulated the question thus. For to speak only of "the unconverted" would create confusion. After all, there may also be unconverted *elect* among believers and their seed. We believe, indeed, that this is not *according to the rule* of God's covenant. We prefer to believe that the Lord God *as a rule* regenerates the elect seed of the church in childhood and brings them to repentance and faith gradually. It is also by far the most wonderful when a child of the covenant is endowed with the new life in his earliest childhood and then under the influence of instruction and preaching gradually grows up in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. That this is the rule is also the teaching of experience. For by far the majority of the children of the covenant are brought to faith and repentance in that gradual way. But the Lord God is free and sovereign in His dealings. Though that gradual way is the usual one in which He endows His elect

covenant children with His grace, it is not necessarily the only way in which He works. There are those also who first depart from the way of the covenant and who only later come to repentance. There are even those who only in their old age begin to bear the fruits of faith and conversion. And to accept the possibility that also those who first come to conversion and to the consciousness of faith when they are seventy or eighty years old were nevertheless already regenerated in their youth creates a separation between regeneration and conversion which, in our opinion, does not exist. We may therefore surely assume that there are among believers and their seed also those who are unconverted but who are nevertheless elect. However, we do not have in mind at present these unconverted elect, who certainly will come to conversion. No, we refer to the unconverted who never come to conversion because God does not intend to lead them to conversion. We have in mind the reprobate in God's covenant on earth.

You must not say that this is an idle question because we can never with certainty point out whether anyone is a reprobate. This does not even touch upon the question with which we are now confronted. For although we do not know who are reprobate, we know with certainty that there are also such reprobate ungodly brought by God into the sphere of His covenant. All Scripture teaches this. The entire history of the church teaches this. Experience teaches this again and again. It is important, therefore, that we place ourselves before the question what we are to think of such reprobate in the sphere of the covenant. They come under God's covenant according to His will and good pleasure. The question arises therefore: what is God's purpose with this? If nevertheless only the elect are saved, why are those reprobate temporarily in God's covenant on earth? There is also no doubt about it that in a certain sense they are children of the kingdom: for Scripture speaks of such children of the kingdom who are cast out. They are not to be placed on a par with the heathen, with those who never come into contact with God's covenant. The question arises, therefore: what is their relation to Christ and to God's covenant? Wherein are they distinguished from the children of the heathen? What is and will be their spiritual condition? What do they receive by reason of their relation to the people and the fellowship of the covenant?

To begin with the last question, it may be observed that there certainly can be no doubt whether there is indeed a certain influence of God's covenant upon the children of the kingdom who are cast out. All Scripture reveals this very clearly. Already in the figure of the vine and the branches, used by the Lord Himself (John 15), there is the idea that also the branches which are cast out, which are cut out, nevertheless stood in a certain connection with the vine and also drew their life-sap out of that vine. Plainly, the distinc-

tion between the branches which abide in the vine and those other branches which are cut out is not the same as the difference between living and dead branches. The branches which are cut out are not dead branches, which stand in no living connection with the vine whatsoever. No, the distinction is between branches which *do* bear fruit and other branches which *do not* bear fruit. Also those non-fruitbearing branches are in the vine. The Lord Jesus states it as follows: "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit . . ." There is, therefore, a certain being in God's covenant in Christ without bringing forth fruits of faith and conversion. There is indeed an influence of the vine upon those unfruitful branches. So also there is an influence of God's covenant upon those who are in it without ever coming to repentance. This is also clear from the previously cited figure of the vineyard, described by Isaiah. Everything that could be done has been to that vineyard. But under all that labor wild grapes are brought forth.

(to be continued)

NOTICE!!

All ministers and clerks of our congregations please note this change of address. Please send all orders for catechism books to:

Mr. Seymour Beiboer
2193 Clyde Park Ave., S.W.
Wyoming, Mich., 49509

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet in Hull, Iowa on September 2, 1970, at 8:30 A.M. Rev. G. Lanting will lead in the opening devotions. Material for the Agenda of Classis should be sent to the Stated Clerk thirty days before Classis convenes. Delegates in need of lodging are to inform the Clerk of the Hull consistory.

Rev. David Engelsma, Stated
Clerk of Classis West

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On August 21, 1970, the Lord willing, our parents, MR. and MRS. WILBUR G. BRUINSMA SR. will celebrate their 25th wedding anniversary.

We are thankful for the covenant instruction we receive and for a home where we may know the fear of God.

Our prayer is that the Lord may richly bless them in His grace in the way that lies ahead, and that in all their experiences they may enjoy that blessed peace which is found in the blood of Christ.

Their grateful children and grandchildren —

Mr. and Mrs. John Kalsbeek Jr.
Jordana Lynn & Jason Nathaniel
Mr. Lewis H. Bruinsma
Mr. Wilbur G. Bruinsma Jr.
Mr. Keith A. Bruinsma

ATTENTION PRIMARY TEACHERS

Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School is in need of two First Grade Teachers for the 70-71 school year. Call (453-9717) or write the school, 1545 Wilson Ave., S.W., Grand Rapids, Mich. 49504, for information.

ANNIVERSARY ANNOUNCEMENT

God in His sovereign grace and abundant mercy has been pleased to permit our loving parents,

REVEREND AND MRS. GEORGE C. LUBBERS

to be bound in holy matrimony these FORTY YEARS.

The words of Moses were used by Rev. G. Vos the evening of their marriage August 17, to give them directives in their life. "If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence." Exodus 33:15.

We pray that God may continue to sustain them with His presence as they work in the gathering of the Church of God.

Their loving children,

Miss Agatha Lubbers
Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Newhof, Jr.
Mr. and Mrs. Case Lubbers
Mr. and Mrs. Lamm Lubbers
and 10 grandchildren

ANNOUNCEMENT AND INVITATION

LANGUAGE ARTS WORKSHOP

August 3-7, 10-14, 17-21, 1970

at: Covenant Christian High School
Grand Rapids, Michigan

sponsored and financed by

FEDERATION OF PROTESTANT REFORMED
CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

General Purpose: This workshop is being conducted to improve the instruction of the language arts in the Protestant Reformed Christian School classroom. The workshop will be most concerned with the teaching of literature and an associated composition program.

Participants:

1. Any teacher who is interested in the improvement of the quality of instruction in his classroom and school and in the Protestant Reformed Christian Schools.
2. All teachers and ministers and parents are invited to attend sessions of this workshop.

Please contact for details and additional information:

Miss Agatha Lubbers, director
7501 Terrace Lane
Jenison, Michigan 49428
Telephone: 616-475-1372

News From Our Churches

REPORT OF CLASSIS EAST

July 1, 1970

At Holland, Michigan

Rev. G. C. Lubbers, chairman of the April Classis, led in the opening devotions, and after the credentials were received, declared Classis properly constituted. All the churches were represented by two delegates each, except Kalamazoo. It was reported that they could not appear because of a death in that congregation, the funeral being held while Classis met.

Rev. M. Schipper, following the order of rotation, then presided, while Rev. Lubbers recorded the minutes.

This was one of the shortest meetings of Classis on record. All the business was finished in one and a half hours.

The Stated Clerk and the Classical Committee tendered their reports. The Church Visitors reported their having found the churches of Classis East in spiritual prosperity.

Rev. J. Kortering, upon the request of Southwest Church was approved moderator during their forthcoming vacancy.

Classis approved a schedule of appointments to Southwest Church as follows: Sept. 6 — G. Van Baren, Sept. 13 — J. Kortering, Sept. 20 — Open, Sept. 27 — H. Veldman, Oct. 4 — J. Heys, Oct. 11 — M. Schipper.

Elders C. Westra and T. Newhof, Sr. served on the Finance Committee, H. C. Lubbers thanked the ladies of Holland for serving lunch, and the Revs. Heys, Van Baren, and Elder B. Windemuller served on the Classical Appointment Committee.

Classis decided to choose a member to the Classical Committee to fill the unexpired term of Rev. Lubbers — Rev. J. Kortering was chosen.

Questions of Art. 41 of the Church Order were asked and answered satisfactorily.

Classis decided to meet next time, D.V., on October 7th, in Southeast Church.

After the chairman made a few closing remarks especially directed to Rev. G. C. Lubbers who is leaving soon for Jamaica, to which remarks Rev. Lubbers also responded, the Rev. H. Veldman closed the meeting with thanks to God.

M. Schipper, S.C.

We warned you last time that you were in for some old news this month. How's this for a start: "It is a

privilege beyond explanation to be able to worship together again after having been snowed out the last three services." Actually, that's not as old as one would think. It came from the *April 26* bulletin of Rev. R. Moore's congregation in Isabel, South Dakota.

Our South Holland Church reports problems of a different sort. "The Council was informed by the village of South Holland that we must install a sidewalk in front of the parsonage and old church. This involves some 255 running feet and a cost of approximately \$650.00." That's the kind of unexpected item that makes the preparation of proposed budgets so interesting.

Most church bulletins have recently made mention of the fact that the Mission Committee has appointed the diaconate of Hope Church in Grand Rapids to conduct the next clothing drive for Jamaican Churches. Some bulletins had more lengthy announcements than did others. Holland's, for example, noted that "sweaters can be included for the cooler nights of the winter months." Rev. Heys, no doubt, was speaking from experience. The Mission Committee also suggested that the Western churches should not feel left out because of the distance involved. "Perhaps clothing could be sent along with someone who might be traveling to Grand Rapids sometime during this summer."

Rev. Lubbers plans to preach his farewell sermon in Southwest on August 30. On September 2 he will be installed in First Church, and will preach his installation sermon there on Sunday, September 6.

Plans are being made by our ministers for another "retreat" this summer. You probably remember that last summer our ministers of the Grand Rapids area spent two days and an evening at a small lake. There was opportunity for swimming, boating, and fishing, as well as discussions around a campfire. They were able, according to reports, to fellowship together on a more personal basis than is possible in the formal meetings of classes and synod. And their wives accompanied them. They enjoyed it so much that they decided to do it again this summer — for *three* days this time. Their hope is that the ministers of Classis West will be able to attend also.

And the hope of every member of their respective congregations is, certainly, that the experience will be as enjoyable and as profitable as last year's. D.R.D.