

Our Covenant God

An Exposition of the Doctrine Of The Covenant From Scripture

By Rev. Herman Veldman

with an appendix:

The Expression "Sanctified in Christ" In Our Baptism Form

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The Expression "Sanctified in Christ" In Our Baptism Form

Introduction

By Rev. Thomas Miersma

Rev. Herman Veldman served in the ministry of the gospel in the Protestant Reformed Churches for some forty-six years. In 1947 and 1948, while pastor of the church in Kalamazoo, Michigan, he was also writing for the *Standard Bearer* under the rubric “Our Doctrine.” At that time he was treating the Doctrine of God, or the first locus of dogmatics in what would become volume 24 of the *Standard Bearer*.

An Expository Treatment

Having treated God’s oneness and the doctrine of the Trinity in prior articles, he turned his attention to “Our Covenant God” and the doctrine of the covenant. The series itself begins with a discussion of the propriety of treating this subject under the first locus. With that introduction and a discussion of various views of the covenant, he then proceeded over a series of seventeen articles to develop the doctrine of the covenant from Scripture.

His treatment is properly called, therefore, an “exposition” of the doctrine of the covenant and that from Scripture, for that was plainly his intention. In the course of that treatment he discusses the current teaching of Scripture concerning the doctrine of the covenant, illustrating it from passage after passage. He also enters into a detailed discussion of various passages and their bearing on the doctrine of the covenant. This approach makes the material valuable and instructive in its own right.

It is clear from the material that Rev. H. Veldman was concerned especially to set forth the doctrine of the covenant for the young people in the churches, and no doubt also the men who had returned from military service after the second world war.

A Historically Significant Treatment

The material from Rev. Veldman has also a twofold significance historically. In the first place, it is in some respects the first and most extended treatment of the covenant in English in the Protestant Reformed Churches.

Rev. Herman Hoeksema had written on this subject at length in the *Standard Bearer* in the Dutch language shortly after the split in 1924 and separation after 1926. This material, published in booklet form, became the book *De Geloovigen en Hun Zaad (Believers And Their Seed)*. It was later translated into English and published in the *Standard Bearer*, beginning in volume 44, 1968, and then was published by the Reformed Free Publishing Association in 1971 in book form.

In 1933, Rev. Hoeksema wrote what was in some respects a sequel to *Believers And Their Seed*, in a series of articles in the Dutch language which were a response to further writings of Prof. W. Heyns and his view of the covenant which were being promoted in the Christian Reformed Dutch language periodical, *De Wachter*. Hoeksema's response was "Het Evangelie of De Jongste Aanval Op De Waarheid Der Souvereine Genade" (The Gospel or The Recent Attack Upon The Truth of Sovereign Grace). This material has not been translated and published.

The result was, in a sense, a certain vacuum in the churches of material on the covenant in English. The younger generation, beginning already in the 1930s, no longer knew Dutch well. The *Standard Bearer* was bilingual at this point, but much of the material would have been closed to the younger generation. This was increasingly the case as the churches moved into the 1940s and '50s. Rev. Herman Veldman's exposition was intended exactly to address this problem and to pass the doctrine of the covenant along to the next generation.

In the second place, Rev. H. Veldman was engaged in writing this material beginning in December of 1947 and continuing on into 1948. In the 1930s prior to the war, the Protestant Reformed Churches had had some contact with Dr. K. Schilder of the churches in the Netherlands. During the war a split took place in the Gereformeerde Kerken in which Schilder and others were deposed and formed the Liberated churches. The war made it difficult to find out what had happened, except that the doctrine of the covenant stood at the center of the controversy. The Synodical churches, as they are called, of the GKN went in the direction of Dr. Abraham Kuyper's presumptive regeneration. The Liberated followed Schilder's view. (For a discussion of Kuyper's view and a critique, see chapters 3 and 4 of *Believers and Their Seed*).

At the time Rev. H. Veldman was writing, the Protestant Reformed Churches were again pursuing contacts with Dr. K. Schilder and his group, particularly in the light of the waves of immigrants coming to Canada and the USA from the Netherlands.

In the summer of 1947, Rev. Herman Hoeksema suffered a stroke which would incapacitate him for months. Shortly after this, K. Schilder came to Grand Rapids, Michigan, in October of 1947. The result was a number of meetings at which the different views of the covenant were discussed. Rev. H. Veldman was part of these discussions. The covenant view of the Liberated was not clear and Schilder himself seemed evasive on a number of points.

This becomes clear from the editorials which were written at the same time as the articles, also in Volume 24 of the *Standard Bearer*. When Herman Hoeksema was incapacitated, Rev. G. Vos took over the post as editor. His editorials reflect the

meetings which had taken place and the concerns arising from them. They address the ambiguity of the Liberated covenant view.

Rev. Veldman, in the articles which follow, reflects this also. On the one hand, Schilder made it clear that he did not want what is called the Heynsian view of the covenant. At the same time he wanted to hold elements of that view. He wanted to teach both a covenant that was unconditional in origin but yet conditional in the establishment of the covenant. The discussion centered also around the promise of the covenant and its objects, particularly the children in baptism. (For a discussion of the Heynsian view of the covenant, see *Believers and Their Seed*, chapters 1 and 2. Rev. Veldman assumes the reader is familiar with this view and the Arminianism inherent in it.)

Rev. Herman Veldman's articles lay out the Protestant Reformed view of the covenant, particularly in the light of the issues under discussion. Herman Hoeksema, in his book *Believers and Their Seed*, focused especially on the organic idea of the covenant. Rev. H. Veldman also assumes some familiarity with that viewpoint and focuses more on the fact that the covenant is not a pact or agreement, that the establishment of the covenant is unconditional and that the promise of the covenant is particular.

Sounding a Warning

In the articles, Rev. H. Veldman also sounds a warning which in the light of modern developments, particularly the Federal Vision covenantal heresy, is somewhat prophetic. He warns about the ambiguous use of the term "conditions" which the proponents claimed, in his day to want to use, but in an allegedly non-Arminian sense. He writes at the end of his seventh article:

"The use of terms is highly significant. The primary question is not: How do we interpret various terms? A question of greater importance is: How *can* they be interpreted? Vague, indefinite, ambiguous terms are exceedingly dangerous. The reason is apparent. The Church of God must fight to preserve the truth once delivered to the saints. The history of the Church of God throughout the ages testifies to this fact. The forces of heresy and the lie are always ready to creep into the Church and work havoc with the Cause of the Lord. Hence, the people of the living God must ever be on the alert against these destructive forces, as they operate within and without. Never must the Church of God surrender one square inch of territory, give the enemy a single opportunity to make an inroad into the Church of God. For this reason the use of terms is highly significant. If we use a term which is ambiguous and permits more than one interpretation the result will

invariably be that the wrong interpretation will be adopted in the course of time.

Hence, let us be clear, concise, definite, succinct in our speaking. Let us leave no doubt as to our conception of the truth of the Holy Scriptures. If we mean with the use of the word “condition” that man is a moral-rational being and that he must be active in the things of God’s covenant because it is God Who works in him both to will and to do, let us express ourselves in that manner. Let us discard the use of the word “conditional.” And let us speak of God’s unconditional covenant and our calling within that covenant, not as a condition upon which God’s fellowship may possibly rest, but as the fruit of the irresistible operation, of the Spirit of God in Christ Jesus within our hearts and lives.”

The need for that warning, also for the churches, would shortly show itself in the controversy in the Protestant Reformed Churches in 1953 and the troubles leading up to it. The problem with a contractual conditional covenant, in which man fulfills conditions, is that it leads inherently into error. It is simply inconsistent with the truth of sovereign grace. The Federal Vision, which claims K. Schilder as the source of its covenant view is a testimony to this fact.

Editing the Material

The material is taken from pdf files of the *Standard Bearer* which were produced by using optical character recognition, or OCR. The condition of the material varies somewhat. This is, in part, due to printing techniques in 1948. Corrections had to be made by hand, using a line correction technique which involved pasting in a missing word or corrections. This does not copy well in OCR. The text also was double column and various approaches were used to maintain the two column format. The paper of the original had yellowed and this together with ink blotches has introduced into the pdf version a whole range of misreadings, insertions of multiple periods and other extraneous punctuation, all of which had to be corrected and cleaned up.

The articles have been left in their basic form and reflect that they are articles from a periodical printed over an extended period of time. Rev. H. Veldman, therefore, will often summarize what was said in a preceding article before further pursuing the subject. He also uses the convention of capitalizing the words and pronouns with reference to God or Christ, also in Bible quotations. This has been left largely intact.

Rev Veldman uses very long paragraphs, sometimes running a column and a half. These have been broken up by the editor for the sake of readability on the web. The articles have been given chapter headings by the editor to facilitate posting the

material on the web site, as well. These are largely the work of the editor, as is the title of the work as a whole. A few corrections have been introduced, in which it is clear that either Rev. H. Veldman misspoke himself or the proof reader misunderstood the sense. There are a few changes which were also necessitated by the line correction technique and by places where a word or phrase has dropped out. One change which was deliberate, is that Rev. H. Veldman refers to L. Berkhof's work as *Reformed Dogmatics*. Current editions of this work are titled *Systematic Theology*, and the current title is used and the page references correspond to the present editions.

The Appendix

“The Expression 'Sanctified In Christ' In Our Baptism Form” is a speech given by Rev. H. Veldman on April 9, 1948 at First Church, Grand Rapids, MI. It was printed in the *Standard Bearer* as two articles in the course of Rev. H. Veldman's series on the covenant. The two articles have been merged into one. The material treats an important issue in its own right but is also intimately connected with the discussions on the covenant which were taking place. The paper which he delivered fills out an aspect of the discussion and was plainly intended to do so. It has therefore been added as an appendix to the series.

Chapter 1

The Concept of the Covenant, Reformed Perspectives

The Propriety of Discussing the Covenant under the Doctrine of God.

Reformed writers or theologians of the past have not always accorded the subject of the Covenant the same place in their discussion or treatment of Reformed dogmatics. The late Professor Bavinck of the Netherlands, in his “*Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*” treats this subject in his Christology, the doctrine concerning the Christ. Prof. L. Berkhof, in his “*Systematic Theology*,” discusses the Covenant in Anthropology, the doctrine of man. The late Dr. A. Kuyper of the Netherlands speaks of the Covenant immediately prior to Christology and following upon his discussion of the fall of man and its consequences. Others, among whom also the late Prof. Ten Hoor, treat this subject in Soteriology, the doctrine of. salvation.

Until now we have discussed the Knowledge of God, the rational proofs of His existence, God's Revelation in the Holy Scriptures, His Oneness, and the doctrine of the Trinity. We now purpose to continue our contributions to the rubric, “Our Doctrine,” with a series of articles on the Covenant. We believe that a series of

articles on this subject can be of benefit to the readers of our *Standard Bearer*, particularly to our Protestant Reformed young people. We are also convinced that God's living fellowship and relationship with His people, His covenant fellowship with His own, is inseparably connected with His own being and life – theologians, such as Kuyper and Bavinck, have recognized and given expression to this truth. We believe the trinitarian life of God to be the basis of the Lord's covenant fellowship with us. Hence, having treated the doctrine of the Trinity in our last article, we would at this time begin our series of articles on the covenant.

A Tremendously Vital Subject.

The subject of the Covenant is of tremendous and vital importance. It is surely Scriptural. The Word of God speaks of a relation between God and man in various ways. The Scriptures speak, among other things of the covenant; God's dwelling with man and man's dwelling with God, Enoch's and Noah's walking and talking with God, the tabernacle and temple of the Old Testament, Abraham as the friend of God, God's eternal tabernacle with man in the new heavens and upon the new earth. Of importance is this subject, however, not only because of the emphasis which it receives in Holy Writ, but also because of the many questions which it occasions within the heart and mind of the child and church of God. Should we speak of parties or of parts in the covenant? Our Protestant Reformed Churches prefer to speak of "parts" instead of "parties." Also our Baptism Form speaks of "parts" in the familiar expression: "Even as in all covenants there are contained two parts."

Prof. K. Schilder of the Liberated Churches of the Netherlands, however, prefers to speak of "parties" This was emphasized by him during his recent visit among us. He spoke of God as the large or capital "P" and of man as the small "p." In all justice to the learned theologian of the Netherlands it must be noted that he spoke of the large "P" and the small, "p" exactly because he would emphasize the *infinite* distinction which exists between God and man. Repeatedly he emphasized that he spoke of God and of man as parties in the covenant not because they must be considered independently in any sense of the word. Nevertheless he preferred to speak of God and of man as the capital "P" and the small "p" respectively. And the reason which prompts him to make this distinction is that, although we must maintain the infinite distinction between God and man, we must nevertheless not lose sight of the fact that man, as a moral-rational creature, assumes an active part, plays an active role within the sphere of the covenant.

Another question, always of vital interest for the anxious child of God, is that which concerns the position which our children occupy within the covenant. Must we regard, presuppose them to be regenerated? This is the position of the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands today. In this they follow the conception as conceived and developed by the late Dr. A. Kuyper. According to Dr. Kuyper, presupposed regeneration is the

ground for the baptism of infants. Or, must we regard all our children as essentially of the covenant, as covenant-children in the essential sense of the word? This was the position of the late Prof. Heyns. He declared the promise to constitute the essence of the covenant. And, inasmuch as he applied the promise to all, he placed all within the covenant in the essential sense of the word. And, although Prof. Schilder, during his visit among us, vehemently rejected the Heynsian conception of Baptism and the Covenant, also the Liberated Church of the Netherlands seem to desire to say something positive for all the children of believers. The writer of this article is of the conviction that the most important question for the believing parent is not the salvation of this particular child or children. God's covenant and the realization of that covenant is and must remain the supreme question. The church gives birth to a two-fold seed. And in this we must be willing to be a sweet-smelling savor of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish 2 Cor. 2:14-16.

Fundamentally but two conceptions of the covenant are possible. The covenant is either a means unto an end, or it is the end itself. The covenant is either the way of salvation or a contract which God has sovereignly established with man unto his salvation, or it is salvation itself, the expression of God's eternal and blessed fellowship with His people in Christ Jesus.

Various Conceptions of the Covenant.

The first conception of the covenant to which we would call attention is that of the late Prof. Heyns. He sought the essence of the covenant in the promise. However, we must bear in mind that he did not understand the promise in the Reformed sense of the word. The promise, according to the Holy Scriptures and understood in the Reformed sense, is the word of Divine faithfulness whereby He declares unto His people that he will bestow upon them the eternal salvation which He has laid away for them from before the foundation of the world. The Reformed conception of the promise is not that of an offer but exactly that of a promise. And in a *promise* the question whether we will receive something is determined *solely* by him who gives the promise. But Prof. Heyns understood the promise in the sense of an offer. God's promise of salvation was therefore an offer of salvation. And, according to him, this offer of salvation is extended to all. To support this view, Heyns advanced his pelagianism as applied to the baptism of infants. The professor was well aware of the fact that, according to the Holy Scriptures, all are conceived and born in sin and therefore wholly unable to accept this gracious offer of salvation. He, therefore, advanced the theory that the Sacrament of Baptism confers upon each child a sort of qualifying grace, not saving grace, enabling that particular child to accept the promise or offer of salvation which would later be extended to him in the preaching of the gospel.

This Heynsian view of the covenant is impossible. In the first place, it must be

rejected because it is guilty of Pelagianism. It declares that each child is rendered able to accept the “offered salvation” without regenerating grace. Man, therefore, is not wholly corrupt apart from the regenerating grace of God, This is Pelagianism. Secondly, this view must be rejected because it contradicts the Scriptures, Paul, confronted in Romans 9 by the promise of God on the one hand and by the destruction of thousands of Israelites and their evident damnation on the other hand, declares that the word of God (the promise) had not taken none effect exactly because the promise had never been extended to all. According to Paul in Romans 9 the objects of the promise are not all who are called Israelites but only the true Israelites according to election. Thirdly, the Heynsian view must be rejected because it involves a virtual denial of the Trinity in its interpretation of the first part of our Baptism Form. According to our Baptism Form, and we quote:

“**Second.** Holy baptism witnesseth and sealet unto us the washing away of our sins through Jesus Christ. Therefore we are baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. For when we are baptized in the name of the Father, God the Father witnesseth and sealet unto us, that he doth make an eternal covenant of grace with us, and adopts us for his children and heirs, and therefore will provide us with every good thing, and avert all evil or turn it to our profit. And when we are baptized in the name of the Son, the Son sealet unto us, that he doth wash us in his blood from all our sins, incorporating us into the fellowship of his death and resurrection, so that we are freed from all our sins, and accounted righteous before God. In like manner, when we are baptized in the name of the Holy Ghost, the Holy Ghost assures us, by this holy sacrament, that he will dwell in us, and sanctify us to be members of Christ, applying unto us, that which we have in Christ, namely, the washing away of our sins, and the daily renewing of our lives, till we shall finally be presented without spot or wrinkle among the assembly of the elect in life eternal.”

Heyns, in that particular part of this quotation which deals with the work of the Holy Spirit, laid all emphasis upon the word “will,” “that He *will* dwell in us,” and emphasized that this will or desire of the Holy Spirit to apply the blessings of Christ unto us was dependent upon our acceptance of the gospel or willingness to permit this sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. And this involves us in a virtual denial of the Trinity. The Father has made an eternal covenant of grace with us and adopted us to be His children and heirs –this is a fact. The Son has washed us in His blood and incorporated us into the fellowship of His death and resurrection –this, too, is a fact. The Father and the Son have, therefore, witnessed and sealed unto this eternal covenant of grace, the adoption unto children and heirs, the washing away of our sins, and the incorporation into Christ’s death and resurrection. But the Spirit? Does He witness and seal unto us the bestowal of the blessings of the Father and the Son? Not at all. He will do this, if only we accept the proffered blessings of

salvation. The Father and Son on the one hand, and the Spirit on the other hand, therefore, are not in complete accord.

A second view of the covenant to which we would call attention is that which conceives of the covenant as a contract or mutual agreement, with mutual stipulations and obligations. Prof. Berkhof's definition of the covenant, virtually the same as the definition of the late Prof. Ten Hoor (page 121 of his *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*), page 277 or his *Systematic Theology*, reads: "The covenant of grace is that gracious agreement between the offended God and the offending but elect sinner, in which God promises salvation through faith in Christ, and the sinner accepts this believingly, promising a life of faith and obedience." We should note in this definition that God promises salvation through faith in Christ, and the sinner must promise faith and obedience. Older theologians, such as Mastricht, also regarded the covenant as such a mutual agreement or contract (see *Standard Bearer*, Vol. 1, No. 12, pages 15-16). We must bear in mind; in our evaluation of this conception of the covenant, that it was maintained that the covenant of God with man; as far as its origin, beginning, and establishment is concerned, is solely of God, "monopleurisch." Nevertheless, in its essence it is presented as a contract and mutual agreement. This conception of the covenant is based, among other things, upon the so-called "counsel of peace" or "counsel of redemption," in which the Father and the Son are described as entering into such an agreement or contract, the Father requires obedience, etc., and promising eternal life to the Son, and the Son promising obedience and expecting eternal life of the Father. Another proof for this conception of the covenant is seen in the text which is regarded as a fundamental expression of this covenant relationship: "I will be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee, and ye shall be My people." God, therefore, promises to be our God: And we must respond and promise to be God's people. Besides this text, many other texts are quoted in which the obligations of the people of God (hope, faith, love, etc.) are mentioned in Holy. Writ.

Also to this conception of the covenant we object, Such a conception of the covenant is indeed possible among men. Among men a covenant must be regarded as a mutual agreement or contract. Men can stand over against one another on an equal footing. But this is surely impossible as far as the relationship between the living God and man is concerned. God is the living God. He is the infinite Creator of heaven and earth. The entire universe, not merely man therefore, is less than a drop of water on the bucket and a particle of dust on the balances. Hope, faith, obedience, the gifts of the grace of God, are not to be regarded as the conditions upon which God's covenant with us is realized, but as fruits of the Spirit of God in Christ Jesus. Hence, God's work is always unconditional, whereas our personal or covenant obligations are nothing else than what is required of us because of the nature of the grace of God. God's grace is such that it saves us as moral-rational creatures and therefore causes us to work and to will according to His good pleasure.

A third conception of the covenant is that which regards the covenant as a way of salvation. This view is closely related to the conception of the covenant as a contract or agreement. God, establishing His covenant with us, makes known unto us the way of salvation. This way of salvation is faith in Jesus Christ, our Lord. This, then, is the significance of God's covenant with man. To this we object that, if the covenant of grace be merely a way of salvation, it is necessarily only temporary and comes to an end as soon as the salvation has been attained. However, according to the Word of God, God's covenant is presented as an eternal covenant. This does not mean merely that it is unbreakable, that, according to Prof. Berkhof "God remains forever true to His covenant" and will therefore grant life in the way of faith. But the covenant itself is eternal, is never annulled, abrogated. God will dwell forever with man.

A fourth conception of the covenant to which we would finally call attention is that which regards the covenant of God with man as an alliance against a third party. This view of the covenant was advanced by the late Dr. A. Kuyper. In his "*Dictaten Dogmatiek*," *locus de Foedere*, pages 3-5 we read, and we translate:

"The idea of the concluding of a covenant signifies in the most pregnant sense an alliance between two or more persons, families, tribes, or empires, with the purpose to defend oneself with united strength against a third power, from whom danger does or can threaten. The concept "covenant" falls under the genus, "alliance," but it is a species of this genus, and its specific character lies in the uniting of self to ward off danger. . . . Whereas the concept "covenant" is applied to the relation between God and man, not only in the present day but also in times when the concluding of a covenant was generally understood as an alliance against a third and dangerous power, hence, in the Covenant of Grace as well as in the Covenant of Works, we may not lose out of sight this character of being: united against a third party. Also the concluding of a covenant of God with man presupposes, as background, the existence and operation of a third power, which threatens God in His honour as well as man in his position and future, and against which God and man unite. This third power is, concretely, Satan, and in general the ungodliness into which the godliness, which originally had been laid into the creature, could turn about."

In the last statement Dr. A. Kuyper refers to the possibility of our holiness and righteousness and godliness becoming corruption and unrighteousness and ungodliness. Hence, the meaning of this learned theologian is clear. Dr. Kuyper conceived of the covenant between God and man as an alliance against, Satan and sin. When later in the same book Dr. Kuyper discusses the Covenant of Works he again declares that Adam not only received from God the calling to exercise dominion, but also the mandate to protect and defend Paradise and the entire cosmos in behalf of God against the devil.

Also this conception of the Covenant we consider impossible. We reject this view mainly because fundamentally, it gives us a dualistic conception of the realization of God's covenant. Sin and Satan are presented in this view dualistically. God and Satan are presented here as standing over against each other, and the Lord and man conclude an alliance with the purpose of thwarting and frustrating the Evil One. Of course, Satan is the adversary of God. The very name "Satan," signifies "adversary." This, however, must not be understood in a dualistic sense of the word as if the devil can in any sense frustrate or oppose the work of the Lord. That the devil is the enemy of God must be understood spiritually. Spiritually he hates Jehovah. Spiritually he attempts throughout the ages to frustrate the realization of God's covenant and the coming of His Kingdom. However, in this Divine realization of His Covenant and Kingdom sin and the devil must not be viewed dualistically as if they are opposing the work of the Lord and that the Lord, in spite of all their evil efforts, manages to realize His counsel. Fact is, sin and Satan serve the Lord and the realization of His covenant. This is surely the testimony of Holy Writ. "I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things" Isaiah 45:7. And in I Cor. 3:21-23 we read : "Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours; Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." And therefore the church of the living God can take the cry of victory upon their lips of 2 Cor. 4:15; "For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God." Indeed, we must fight the good fight of faith. And, the Lord enables us by His grace to fight that good fight against sin, Satan; and all the powers of hell. Nevertheless, we are more than conquerors, and all things, also sin and Satan, work together for our eternal good and salvation.

Conclusion.

We conclude, therefore, that the covenant must not be, understood as a promise (and surely not in the arminian sense), or as a contract or agreement with mutual stipulations and obligations, or as a way of salvation inasmuch as the covenant according to the Word of God is an eternal covenant, or as an alliance against sin and Satan. Rather, God's covenant is the highest to which man can possibly attain. God will forever dwell with man. It constitutes the very essence of eternal life – "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom: thou has sent," John 17:3. God's covenant is the relationship of living friendship between God and His people in Christ Jesus, His Son and their Lord. To this we will call attention, the Lord willing, in subsequent articles.

H. Veldman

Chapter 2

The Scriptural Idea: A Relation Of Fellowship

The Conception of the Covenant

We concluded our previous article with the observation that God's covenant with His people constitutes the very essence of eternal life. We must not identify the idea of the covenant with a promise. God, then, establishes His covenant with man merely by bestowing upon him His promise of eternal life. And, according to the late Prof. Heyns, this promise must be understood as intended for all the children of the covenant, as given to all without distinction. This, of course, is the arminian conception of salvation. Neither must God's covenant with man be regarded as a contract, or mutual agreement, with mutual stipulations and obligations. This definition may apply to a covenant between men who stand on an equal footing toward one another. But we can hardly speak of an agreement or contract with respect to the covenant between the Lord and man. The Lord is the living God. Hope, faith, love, obedience, etc. are gifts of God's grace and therefore not conditions upon which God's covenant is realized. The work of the Lord is always unconditional. Our covenant obligations are nothing else than what is required of us because of the nature of God's grace, which is such that, it saves us as moral-rational beings and therefore causes us to work and to will according to His good pleasure.

Thirdly, God's covenant must not be identified with a way of salvation. Regarded from this point of view, the covenant is the Lord's unchangeable word or revelation to us that He will save us to the uttermost in the way of faith and obedience. To this conception of the, covenant we object that the covenant according to Scripture is not something temporary but eternal. Finally, God's covenant with His people must not be interpreted as an alliance of God, and His people against the power of sin and the wicked world round about us. Sin and Satan, we remarked, must not be viewed dualistically. Fact is, they serve the development of God's covenant throughout the ages. All things exist for the sake of the elect, and all things work together for good for those who love God and are the called according to His purpose. God's covenant with man is therefore life itself, the highest to which man can possibly attain, the blessed relationship of the living God with His own in and because of and through the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Word, "Covenant"

The word which is used in the Scriptures for "covenant" affords us little help in our attempt to determine the significance of this Scriptural concept; in the Old Testament the word for "covenant," used approximately three hundred times, is

always “berith.” According to some this word “berith” is derived from a word which means “to cut,” and it contains a reference to the ceremony described in Gen. 15:17. Abraham had been commanded by the Lord to take an heifer of three years old, a she-goat of three years old, a ram of three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon, to divide them in the midst, and lay each piece one against another. It was customary for parties who entered into a covenant-relationship with one another to follow this procedure, thereupon to pass between the halves of these slain animals; thereby declaring that, if either failed to live up to his obligations, to him would happen what had happened to these animals. God, we read in verse 17, passed between these pieces and thereby: availed Himself of this ceremony to conclude His covenant with Abraham. Some opine, therefore, that “berith” is derived from a word: which means “to cut” and that it refers to this ceremony in Gen. 15. Other’s declare, however, that the word used for “covenant” is derived from a word which means “to tie, bind.” They are of the opinion that the idea of “covenant” that of a bond.

In the New Testament we have the word “diatheke.” This word is generally translated “covenant.” In Hebrews 9: 15-17, however, this word is translated “testament” and this is undoubtedly the correct translation. The word “testament” emphasizes the thought that the idea of priority belongs to God. And this also receives emphasis in Luke 1:72-73, where we read of “...his holy covenant; The oath which he swore unto our father Abraham,” (covenant and oath are identified here). It remains a question, however, whether the meaning of this word in the New Testament emphasized the idea of “disposition, testament, disposal” or that of “covenant, agreement, contract.”

Hence, to determine the Scriptural significance of the concept “covenant” we must attend to the Scriptural passages which speak of God’s relation to His covenant people. The word itself affords us little help in the attempt to ascertain the significance of this concept.

The Idea of the Covenant

Basically and fundamentally, the Scriptural concept “covenant” is inseparably connected with the trinitarian existence of the living God. This thought is literally expressed in 2 Pet. 1:4 “Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.” That the Scriptural concept “covenant” should be inseparably connected with the trinitarian existence of the living God lies in the nature of the case. Also Prof. Berkhof declares in his “Systematic Theology,” and I quote: “The archetype (original pattern-H.V.) of all covenant life is found in the trinitarian being of God, and what is seen among men is but a faint copy (ectype) of this” page 363.

All revelation is necessarily Divine *Self*-revelation. That all revelation is *Self*-revelation must be understood in a two-fold sense of the word. This is true, first of all, in a subjective sense. God's revelation is, *Self*-revelation because He is the *Subject* of His own revelation. He does the revealing. Of course, only God can reveal Himself. God's revelation is also *Self*-revelation, however, because He is the *Object* of His revelation. If it be true, that only **God** can reveal Himself, it is equally true that God can only reveal **Himself**. He is the absolute Reality and the absolute Good. Of whom could He speak except of Himself? All revelation, therefore, is Divine *Self*-revelation. God does all things to reveal and to glorify Himself. Hence, to know that God is life eternal. This knowledge, we understand, is an experiential knowledge. To know about God is not life eternal. It is surely possible that one may know all about the Lord and, yet, that it were better that he had never been born. But to know God, to know Him experientially, to know Him with all the love of our heart and mind and to enjoy living fellowship with that Eternal and Alone Blessed Good that is life everlasting. Greater good than the living fellowship with the alone blessed God is inconceivable. And of this blessed fellowship between the living God and man, God's own Covenant life is the basis.

God is the Triune God and, therefore, in Himself a covenant God. God is Triune. This implies, as we saw in a previous article, that He is essentially one. One mind, one will, one desire, one seeking, one life characterizes the living God. He is never in conflict with Himself, is never divided. And He is personally three. Personally He is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. That God is personally three implies that each Person lives the entire Divine fulness in His own personal way. Hence, God is a covenant God. God's covenant is not something incidental, something external, something which was added to the Divine life. God's covenant is not a contract which the three Persons concluded among themselves, or an agreement between the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, a pact into which the Three Divine Persons voluntarily entered. God's covenant is the very essence of the life of the Triune God. He is a covenant God. The life of covenant-friendship constitutes the very essence of God's being. A life of friendship presupposes two conditions or requirements. To be friends we must, in the first place, be essentially one. This speaks for itself. There must, not be any conflict between us. The second requirement for friendship, however, is personal distinction. Although essentially one, we must personally have our personal function, duty, work to perform. Both requirements are fundamental for a life of true friendship. Notice how this applies to Scripture's revelation of the living God. He is essentially one and personally three. Hence, the relation of covenant-fellowship constitutes the very essence of the life of God. The Lord our God is a covenant God.

This also determines God's covenant relationship with His people. The Lord receives us, inducts us, takes us up into His own covenant life. He makes us partakers; according to 2 Pet. 1:4 of His own Divine nature. To be sure, the infinite distinction

between God and 'the' creature must be maintained. Prof. Schilder, during his recent visit among us, preferring to speak of parties rather than of parts when discussing the relationship between God and man or his people, emphasized this distinction between the Infinite Creator and the finite creature by the use of the capital "P" and the small "p." Of God then, he spoke with a capital "P," Party, and of man with a small "p" party. Upon this distinction he surely laid all the emphasis. And this distinction must indeed be maintained. God does not, cannot impart Himself unto man essentially. This lies in the nature of the case. He is infinite, we are finite; He is the Creator, we are creatures; He is the Eternal, we are temporal. He is the Absolute-Reality; we are relative, exist only through Him and in relation to Him. He is the self-sufficient God in Himself; owes His life to nothing outside of Himself. If heaven and earth were to fall away; He would remain standing. All creation, not only man therefore, but all creation, the entire universe together is less than a drop on the bucket and a particle of dust on the balance. This distinction, this distance between the living God and man must be emphasized, always borne in mind. How, then, can the covenant between God and man possibly be presented as a contract or an agreement, or even as an arminian promise? Shall this conception, of the covenant be attributed to the living God, of Whom we read in Isaiah 40: 11-15:

"He shall feed **His** flock as a shepherd: **He** shall gather the lambs with **His** arm, and carry them in **His** bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young. Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being His counselor hath taught Him. With whom took He counsel, and who instructed Him, and taught Him in the paths of judgment, and taught Him knowledge, and shewed to Him the way of understanding? Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, He taketh up the isles as a very little thing."

God is and must ever, remain the living God.

But, we become partakers of the Divine nature. This, we understand, does not mean that we become partakers of the divine nature in the essential sense of the word. God is and will forever remain the infinite Creator and man is and will forever remain the creature. But we become partakers of the Divine nature according to the measure of the creature. As creatures we share the Divine life. What God wills and seeks and loves and desires, as God, we will seek and love and desire, as creatures. The life of the Lord has been reflected in us. We know Him. As Lord seeks and loves Himself we have learned to seek and love the living God.

Hence, God's covenant with man is the fellowship, the communion of friendship between God and His people in Christ Jesus. This relationship is characterized, first

of all, by a communion, a friendship of love. God and His people love one another. But, this relationship between the Lord and man is a relationship between God and man. Indeed, they know one another in a bond of friendship. God and His people are friends. However, because God is the living God He is the Sovereign Friend. In this relationship of friendship the Lord loves us, blesses us, is the sovereign Lord Who must be worshipped and adored. He is and forever will remain the Source of all our blessings, the Fountain of life and all our peace, the God out of Whom and, through Whom and unto Whom are all things, even forever. And man, in his relationship toward the living God, is friend-servant. He is God's friend and loves the Lord with all his heart and mind and soul and strength. But, as man he is the Lord's servant. His calling it is to seek the Lord with all that he is and has, to inquire after and do the will of his God. And this is for that man eternal life. Is it possible to conceive of a greater calling, of a higher glory, of a grander ideal than to praise the glories of Jehovah and proclaim the greatness of Him Who hath called us out of darkness into His marvelous light? Surely, to be the servant of the living God with: all the love of one's heart and mind, to be privileged to proclaim His greatness and behold His beauties and sing of His glories, –this is eternal life, the highest to which man can possibly attain. And thus man has been inducted into God's life, loves and wills the Lord, according to the measure of the creature, even as God eternally loves Himself. And this covenant relationship, we understand, is, the essence of religion, the highest to which man can possibly attain.

Scriptural Proof for this Conception of the Covenant

This conception of the covenant we believe to be the teaching of the Word of God. We believe that the Holy: Scriptures speak this language throughout. In various ways this glorious truth is held before us. Sometimes the word "covenant" itself is used. Very often, however, other expressions appear in Holy Writ, such as: dwelling, abiding, tabernacle, temple, friend of God, etc. All these expressions refer, point us to the one cardinal truth of the Word of God, namely, that the Lord our God is a covenant God, in Himself, and also for and with His people, in and through and because of Jesus Christ, the Lord.

First, we would call attention to Paradise. Recently, the doctrine of a "covenant of works" has been advocated in connection with the calling and sin in Paradise. The history of the doctrine of the covenant of works is comparatively of recent date. Our Reformed Confessions do not speak of it. This is all the more remarkable in the light of the fact that the Westminster Confession, drawn up soon after the Synod of Dordrecht, does mention it. That our fathers did not incorporate this doctrine into our confessions is therefore not to be attributed to the fact that they had not heard of it. The later Dr. A. Kuyper, however, developed this theory, and of late this doctrine is generally accepted as sound, reformed doctrine.

This so-called “covenant of works” speaks of a promise, a threat, and a condition. To be sure, so it is said, man cannot merit anything before God. Yet, the covenant of works is presented as a gracious, special condescension of God whereby He agreed to give Adam eternal life in the way of obedience. The condition upon which this threat and the promise were contingent was Adam’s obedience of the prohibitive command of God which had forbidden him to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and of evil. His failure to obey this command of God was threatened with death. And if the first man refrained from eating of the forbidden fruit he would receive eternal life, the eternal and heavenly fellowship with God. That this promise refers to eternal life in the heavenly sense of the word lies in the nature of the case. Spiritual life could hardly be offered him inasmuch as he possessed it. What the Lord therefore promised our first father was the eternal fellowship, with God, the service of the living God minus the possibility of sin and death, and therefore eternal life.

This conception of Adam’s position and calling in Paradise we consider impossible. We reject it, in the first place, because of its utter lack of Scriptural proof. That the Scriptures do not speak literally of this doctrine is even admitted by its exponents. Nothing is said in Genesis 1-3 of any agreement between God and Adam. Besides, nothing is said in these three chapters of a promise of eternal life. One simply does not read of it. However, so the exponents of this doctrine reply, neither do we read of God’s coming to an agreement with Abraham or with Noah—should this latter fact not have warranted the conclusion from the defenders of a “covenant of works” that, therefore, also in connection with Abraham and Noah we must not speak of an agreement of the Lord with them. Moreover, so these exponents continue, the threat of death implies the promise of life. But, is this true? That a murderer will be electrocuted surely does not imply that he will receive special favors if he obey the law. Consequently, the attempt to prove the “covenant of works” by appealing to Rom. 5:12 collapses. To be sure, sin and death entered into the world by one man. Does this prove that also eternal life could have been merited for all by that one man? Secondly, we reject the theory of a “covenant of works” because man cannot merit anything before God. Scripture abundantly establishes this. And thirdly, the doctrine of a covenant of works is fundamentally a denial of the Christ. To teach that God offered Adam eternal life in the way of obedience implies that Adam could have attained unto it. But, the Scriptures teach us (Eph. 1:9-10): “Having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself: That in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him.”

In distinction from the mechanical theory of a covenant of works we maintain that Adam was created by God in covenant relationship with Jehovah. It was not Adam’s choice, whether or not he would serve God. Neither did the Lord enter with Adam into an agreement. Of such an agreement we read nothing in Holy Writ. Fact is,

Adam was created as God's friend-servant. He was simply created man, and in the image of God. He was therefore created the Lord's friend-servant. Adam's service of God was the spontaneous expression of his whole being and, therefore, his relation to the living God was an essential-relation, created in his very being.

To this must finally be added the striking word of Genesis 3:15: "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Adam violated God's covenant. He tramples it under foot. He refuses to be the friend-servant of God and would be the master of his own fate, the captain of his own soul. He turns his back upon the Lord and becomes the servant, slave of the devil. However, the Lord maintains His covenant. He maintains it in Christ. Sin after all, is but a means in the hand, of God to realize His covenant fellowship with His chosen people in the way of sin and grace unto the glory of His blessed Name. And notice that God maintains His covenant by establishing enmity between the seed of the woman and that of the devil, between His elect people and those reprobated unto eternal damnation. But enmity is essentially friendship. The enmity against the world is surely the friendship of God. We are enemies of sin and of the world exactly because we become the friends of God. Hence, the Lord maintains His covenant with Adam and His own elect by maintaining him and them in the relationship of friendship. Paradise is therefore proof for our conception of the covenant. And Gen. 3:15, let us never forget, is the key to all subsequent history. All of history is nothing else than the development of this spiritual struggle. God makes us His party and grants us the victory.

H. Veldman

Chapter 3

Scriptural Proof, God's Dwelling With His People

Scriptural proof for this Conception of the Covenant: Continued

We concluded our previous article with the beginning of our attempt to establish our conception of the Covenant in the light of Holy Writ. The covenant of God with man is the communion of friendship between the living God and His people in Christ Jesus. Adam, we noted, was created in that living relationship of friendship to the living God. We reject the theory of a "covenant of Works." Historically this theory is of recent origin. Today it is generally accepted as constituting a part of the reformed heritage. We reject it, firstly, because of its utter lack of Scriptural evidence, and secondly, because, fundamentally, it denies the Christ. And we considered it extremely significant that, when Adam tramples God's covenant under foot but the Lord maintains it, the Lord maintains His covenant by setting enmity between the

seed of the woman and that of the devil. Enmity against the world is, of course, the friendship of God. This does not mean that the Lord enlists the aid of His people and that together they withstand and oppose the wiles and attacks of the devil and of the kingdom of darkness. Fact is that all things are for our sakes and that also the kingdom of evil must work together for the good of God's people and the realization of His kingdom. Genesis. 3:15 does teach us, however, that the Lord maintains His covenant by calling His people into a living relationship of friendship with Himself and that He thereby makes them His people and party also in the midst of a world which lieth in darkness.

God's Covenant with His People is His Own Covenant and Eternal.

God's covenant, according to Holy Writ, is eternal. We read in Genesis 17:7: "And I will establish My covenant between Me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee." Notice that the essence of the covenant, according to this text, is expressed in the words: "to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee." He will be our God, love us and bless us. And this covenant is an everlasting covenant. This thought is repeated in verse 8, where Canaan, is mentioned as an everlasting possession. Notice that also unto Abraham the land of Canaan is promised as an everlasting possession, Yet, in Acts 7:5 we read: "And He gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on." That Abraham received the land of Canaan as an everlasting possession can only be understood if we bear in mind that he received it as such in its eternal, heavenly reality whereof the earthly Canaan was but a sign and symbol. The Scriptures, therefore, teach us that God's covenant signifies His eternal dwelling with His own in the heavenly Jerusalem.

That God's covenant is eternal is also emphasized in Ps. 89:1,4, 28 and Ps. 111:9, where we read: "I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever: with my mouth will I make known Thy faithfulness to all generations. ...Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up Thy throne to all generations. Selah. ... My mercy will I keep for him for ever more, and My covenant shall stand fast with him. . . . He sent redemption unto His people: He hath commanded His covenant *for ever*: holy and reverend is His name."

Notice also, according to Holy Writ, that God's covenant with His people is His own covenant. "And I, behold, I establish My covenant with you, and with your seed after you." –Gen. 9:9. "And I will establish My covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth." –Gen. 9:11. "And I will establish My covenant between Me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee." –Gen. 17:7. These texts are important not only because they emphasize the monopoleuric character of the covenant. Indeed, "I

will establish *My* covenant between Me and thee.” It is God, therefore, Who establishes the covenant. Hence, His “*Me*” appears in the text before “*thee*.” But to this we will call attention later in another connection. Of interest at this time is the fact that “And I, behold, I establish *My* covenant with you and with your seed after you.” It is His own covenant which He establishes with man. God Himself is a covenant God. And God’s own covenant is that blessed life of the Triune God whereby He eternally knows and loves and seeks Himself as the Triune God in the bond or sphere of eternal Divine perfection. It is that blessed life of the love and friendship of God, which eternally characterizes the living God, which He bestows upon His people so that He inducts them into His own covenant life and makes them partakers of His Divine nature according to the measure of the creature.

This also explains why circumcision, and later baptism in the New Dispensation, was the sign and seal of that covenant, even as we may read it in Gen. 17:10: “This is My covenant, which ye shall keep, between Me and Thee and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised.” To enter into the covenant of the Lord signified that we become partakers of His life, that we enter into a living relationship with Him, that we become holy even as the Lord Himself is holy, that we are dedicated unto Jehovah even as Jehovah is eternally dedicated unto Himself. Therefore the sign of that covenant is circumcision, the sign and seal which speaks of the cutting away of the old man of sin and the putting on of the new man of righteousness and holiness, a truly fitting sign of God’s covenant with His own.

Scripture Speaks of God’s Dwelling With Man.

The Scriptural conception of the covenant does not merely rest upon Scriptural, passages which speak literally of “covenant.” Words such as, “abide, dwell, tabernacle, temple” also express the covenant idea. Repeatedly Holy Writ speaks of a dwelling of God with man. Permit us to quote a few, of such passages. “Lord, who shall abide in Thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in Thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. –Ps. 15:1-2. “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.” –Ps. 23:6. “One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple.” –Ps. 27:4. “Blessed is the man whom Thou chooseth, and causeth to approach unto Thee, that he may dwell in Thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of Thy house, even of Thy holy temple.” –Ps. 65:4. “Thou hast ascended on high, Thou hast led captivity captive: Thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them.” –Ps. 68:18; “My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. ...Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house: they will be still praising Thee. Selah.” –Ps. 84:2, 4. “He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow

of the Almighty.” –Ps. 91:1. “He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within My house: he that telleth lies shall not tarry in My sight;” –Ps. 101:7. “If thy children will keep My covenant and My testimony that I shall teach them, their children shall also sit upon thy throne for ever more. For I the Lord hath chosen Zion; He hath desired it for His habitation: This is My rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it.” –Ps. 132:12-14. “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!” –Ps. 133:1. “Surely the righteous shall give thanks unto Thy name: the upright shall dwell in Thy presence.” –Ps. 140:13. “And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, And walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons, and daughters; saith the Lord Almighty.” 2 Cor. 6:16-18. It is well to note in this latter passage from 2 Corinthians that for God to be our God and for us to be His people is identified with the words: “As God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk; in them.” The idea of fellowship is surely beautifully expressed in this latter passage.

This idea of God’s dwelling with His people is further emphasized in the Scriptures by the tabernacle or temple of the Old Dispensation as God’s dwelling place with His people. “And let them make Me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them.” Exodus 25:8. The same thought is expressed in Ex. 29:44-46: “And I will sanctify the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar: I will sanctify also both Aaron and his sons, to minister to Me in the priest’s office. And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God. And they shall know that I am the Lord their God, that brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them: I am the Lord their God.”

We understand, I am sure, that these texts do not refer to an insignificant incidental or meaningless detail of the Old Testament. The temple of the Old Dispensation constituted the heart and core of the entire Old Dispensation. All of Israel’s life, its religious-ceremonial-civil life was expressed by it and inseparably connected with it. To refer to the temple of the old day, therefore, means to point to the entire Old Testament. All God’s dealings with His people throughout the Old Testament are described, symbolized by the temple that had been erected upon Mount Moriah. And, indeed, what a beautiful symbol it was! The tabernacle consisted of the Holy of Holies, the Holy Place, and the Outer Court. In the Holy of Holies, in distinction from all other holies of holies of the heathen which contained an idol of wood or stone or gold, we see the ark of the covenant. In that ark was the law of the ten commandments. Covering the ark was the mercy seat. And extending from the mercy seat were the two cherubims, facing each other, thereby giving the appearance of a throne. In the Holy Place we behold the seven-armed golden candlestick, the table of shewbread, and the altar of incense. This mighty symbol of the temple of the Old

Testament speaks a language which is clearly understood.

The temple speaks of a dwelling-place, where God rules over them and in them by writing His law into their hearts (the law in the ark of the covenant). Moreover, the Lord's fellowship with His own is further characterized by the mercy seat, that is, by the fact that our communion with Him and His reigning in our hearts by His Word is possible only in the way of atonement, for none shall again be received into favour with God except the justice of the law of the Lord be fully satisfied. All this is clearly expressed by the temple upon Mount Moriah. It was a mighty symbol of the fact that the Lord had established His communion in the midst of Israel; in Israel alone, and that He ruled over them not by force or coercion but by His Word and Spirit and that only in the way of atonement, the atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ.

What a beautiful but also mighty symbol of the covenant as the relationship of living fellowship between the Lord and His people in Christ Jesus. And if we now may call attention to the monopoleuric character of the covenant between God and man, that is, to the fact that this fellowship is of the Lord alone, we will be able to understand that also that mighty symbol of the Old Dispensation was wholly of Jehovah. Not a single detail of the temple was entrusted to Moses. Not a solitary detail was left to the ingenuity of man. Moses received the plan of the temple, even into minutest details, from the Lord. Even as our living fellowship and communion with the Lord is solely of the Lord, so also the temple of the Old Dispensation was exclusively from the mighty God of Jacob.

Enoch, Noah, Abraham Called Friends of God.

The idea of the covenant is not only expressed in the Scriptures by words such as "abide, dwell, temple, etc." The word "friend" or "friendship" also appears in Holy Writ. "And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him." –Gen. 5:24. "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God." –Gen. 6:8-9. "And the Lord said, Shall I hide, from Abraham that thing which I do; Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which He hath spoken of him." –Gen. 18:17-19. "And Jehoshaphat stood in the congregation of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the Lord, before the new court, And said, O Lord God of our fathers, art not Thou God in heaven? and rulest not Thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen? and in Thine hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand Thee? Art not Thou our God, Who didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before Thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham. Thy friend for ever? And they dwelt therein, and have built Thee a

sanctuary therein for Thy name, saying, If, when evil cometh upon us, as the sword, judgment, or pestilence or famine, we stand before this house, and in Thy presence, (for Thy Name is in this house). and cry unto Thee in our affliction, then Thou wilt hear and help.” –2 Chron. 20:5ff. These beautiful words were uttered by the king of Judah, Jehoshaphat, at the time when the king of Judah was being threatened by the children of Moab, of Ammon and others besides the Ammonites. And finally we read in James 2:23: “And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.”

Enoch, Noah, and Abraham walked with God and were, therefore, the friends of God. One who walks with God is surely a friend of the Lord. This walking of these heroes of faith with God did not consist of a certain mystical awareness of the presence of God, of God’s nearness, in the inner secrets or recesses of the heart. That they walked with the Lord does not refer to a deeply mysterious communion with Jehovah. This walking, however, refers to a clear, well-defined consciousness of the covenant, in which God and Enoch, as also Noah and Abraham, were friends, intimately associated with one another. They knew God, loved the Lord, served Him, walked in the way of His commandments, confessed His Name and did so in the midst of a godless world. Gen. 5:24 presupposes that the enemies of Enoch looked for Enoch but they could not find him. Of Noah we read that he was a preacher of righteousness and he surely testified against a wicked world that was rapidly ripening for judgment. And Abraham, upon arriving in the land of Canaan, alone served the Lord God and that in the very midst of idolatrous heathens. Indeed, they were servants of the Lord. And they talked with God and God with them, and Jehovah revealed unto them, confidentially, as a Friend to His friends, all the secrets of His heart. To Enoch the Lord revealed that He would come with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they had ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him (Jude 14-15). To Noah Jehovah revealed the judgment of the world which would presently sweep down upon that world in the form of the flood. And also to Noah the Lord revealed His plan of salvation, making known unto His servants the dimensions of the ark which would serve unto his saving and also unto the saving of his house. And repeatedly God also communes with Abraham. He reveals unto His friend, the father of believers, that He would give him a seed, an innumerable seed, that he and his seed would inherit the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession, but that their inheriting of the promised land must be preceded by a great oppression. And also to Abraham does God reveal the destruction of the cities of the plain, Sodom and Gomorrah. Hence, of Enoch and Noah and Abraham it is true that they enjoyed the most intimate communion and fellowship with the Lord. They were truly friends of God.

*God's Relationship With His people
Called in Scripture a Marriage Relationship.*

Repeatedly Holy Writ likens the relationship between the Lord and His people to a marriage relationship. "For thy Maker is thine husband; the Lord of hosts is His name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; the God of the whole earth shall He be called." –Is. 54:5. "Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord; for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion." –Jer. 3:14. In Matthew 22:1-14 Jesus likens the Kingdom of heaven unto a certain king who made a marriage for his son, and the reference is clear: the Lord is speaking of the marriage which the heavenly Father made for His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. In Matt. 25:1-13 we read of the parable of the Ten Virgins, five of whom were wise and five of whom were foolish. And of these virgins we are told that they took their lamps and went forth to meet the **bridegroom**. In Eph. 5:25-33 we have that beautiful portion of Holy Writ where the apostle speaks of the mystery concerning Christ and the church. Also in this latter passage the marriage idea stands strongly upon the foreground. And in Revelation 19:7 we read: "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready." The prophets, Isaiah and Hosea, speak repeatedly of the Lord as our Husband and married to us in the bond of faith. Indeed, the Scriptures repeatedly liken the relationship between the Lord and His people to the marriage state.

That the Scriptures speak of the relationship between God and us, is it, therefore, a reciprocal, mutual agreement or contract? This is true of the marriage of a man and his wife. They indeed bind themselves to mutual promises and obligations. But this cannot be applied to the relation between the Lord and His people. Fact is, according to Isaiah 54:5, the Lord is also our **Redeemer**. This certainly signifies that the living God made us and also that He redeemed and bought us out of the power of guilt and sin and darkness. And in Eph. 5:25-33 we read that Christ loved us, sought us, found us, saved us. We did not love Him, seek Him, find Him. He loved and sought and found and saved us. Hence, of mutual promises and obligations, of a mutual agreement and contract we cannot speak in connection with the marriage of the living God and His people in Christ Jesus. However, that God's relation to us is called a marriage relation is because the Scriptures emphasize the idea of **relationship**, of **friendship**, of **love**, in which relationship the Lord is our Husband and we are His children and servants. And, this relationship between the Lord and His own is such that it cannot be broken, that it is inviolable, not because of us but because of Him Who is our Maker and our Redeemer. He has united us unto Himself, in and through Christ Jesus, His Son and our Lord. Consequently, this marriage between the Lord and His people is eternal, an unchangeable covenant relationship of love and friendship, in which He is our God and we are His friend-servants now and forever.

H. Veldman

Chapter 4

Various Texts, An Intimate Spiritual Relation Of Friendship

In this article we would continue our discussion to confirm Scripturally our conception of the living God with man. God's covenant with His people is not a promise, or a contract, or an agreement, or an alliance, but the relationship of living friendship of the living God with His own in Christ Jesus. In support of this conception we have until now established, in the first place, that Adam was created in a living relationship of friendship with the alone blessed God. God's covenant with Adam was not something incidental, something merely added to him, but created in his very being. And when the Lord, upon Adam's violation of the covenant, maintains it in and because of Christ Jesus, He does so by setting enmity between the seed of the devil and the seed of the woman, the Church of God in Christ Jesus. In other words, He restored Adam into a living relationship of friendship with Himself –the enmity of and against the world is surely with God. Secondly, we established the Scriptural truth that God's covenant is eternal. It cannot, therefore, be merely a way of salvation or an agreement to save; it is salvation itself. Thirdly, we quoted from the Scriptures to show that God's covenant with us is His own covenant, His own covenant life which He bestows upon and reflects in His people. Fourthly, to establish the truth that God's covenant with us is essentially a relationship of living friendship we quoted passages which speak of the Lord's dwelling with man. This idea is expressed by many texts, and also stands upon the foreground in connection with the tabernacle or 'temple' of the Old Dispensation. In the fifth place, we read of Enoch, Noah, and Abraham that they are called "friends" of God. They walked with God, enjoyed intimate fellowship with the Lord, and to them Jehovah revealed the inmost secrets of His heart. And, finally, the relationship of the Lord with His people is called in the Scriptures a marriage relationship.

Various Texts.

Psalm 25:14: –The English translation of this text reads: "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; and He will shew them His covenant." The Holland translation reads: "*De verborgenheid des Heeren is voor degenen, die Hem vreezen; en Zijn verbond, om hun die bekend te maken.*" The difference between these translations is apparent. In the English translation "His covenant" is the object of

“He will shew”— what the Lord shows is His covenant. But in the Holland version the “secret of the Lord” is clearly the object of this verb. The word “*die*” in the expression, “*om die hun bekend te maken,*” clearly refers to the “secret of the Lord.” The original renders this passage as follows: “The secret (or familiar acquaintance with) of Jehovah is for those who fear Him; and His covenant for those whom He teaches or instructs.”

It is clear from the original Hebrew of the text that neither the English nor the Holland is an exact translation. And this applies especially to the English version. On the one hand, the covenant is not the object of “shewing” —we do not read literally: “And He will shew them His covenant.” On the other hand, the Holland translation, too, —is faulty: “De verborgenheid des Heeren is voor degenen, die Hem vreezen; en Zijn verbond, *om* hun die bekend te maken” or, translating this latter part of the Holland text into English: “and His covenant in order to reveal it unto them.” We read literally: “The secret of Jehovah is for them that fear Him; and His covenant *for* them He teaches or instructs.” And according to the well-known Hebrew parallelism, in which the one part of the text explains the other, it is evident that the “secret” and “covenant” are identical here, refer to the same thing.

Hence, what a beautiful passage we have here in Psalm 25! The secret of Jehovah is with or for them that fear Him. The word “secret” means originally “familiar conversation or acquaintance,” refers to an inner circle of friends intimately associated. This also enables us to understand the word “secret” as it appears in the English and Holland translation. Only friends divulge their secrets to one another. It is only to our friends that we “open up,” disclose the inmost secrets of our heart. Hence, that the “secret” of Jehovah is for them that fear Him evidently implies, therefore, that they enjoy the most intimate fellowship and acquaintance with Jehovah. Think of Enoch, Noah, and Abraham! God talked with them as a Friend with His friends. To Noah He revealed that He would destroy the old world with a flood and save him and his house by water in an ark. Abraham also enjoyed intimate fellowship with the Lord, is called “friend” of God. To him the Lord disclosed that He would make of him a mighty nation, that his seed would be as innumerable as the dust on the ground, the stars in the firmament, and the sand along the seashore. Yea, the secret of the Lord is for all who fear Him. To all His people He reveals and imparts the secrets of His own heart, His own life of love. The people of the Lord are taken up into Jehovah’s own intimate fellowship and communion.

And, according to the well-known Hebrew parallelism, the second part of the text explains the first. His covenant is, therefore, synonymous with the “secret” of Jehovah. And even as the secret of Jehovah is for them *that fear Him*, so also His covenant is for them *whom He instructs or teaches*. It is for them whom He teaches by His Word and Spirit. We may conclude, therefore, that Ps. 25: 14 confirms our

conception of the covenant.

Jeremiah 31:31-34 and Hebrews 8:3-12. – We read in Jeremiah 31:31-34 :

“Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which My covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know Me, from the least unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”

And in Hebrews 8:12 we read: “For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in My covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put My laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people: And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know Me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.”

We should notice in this text, in the first place, that Jeremiah speaks here of the era of the New Dispensation in distinction from the Old Dispensation. This appears from Jer. 31:31, 32 and also from the passage in Hebrews 8. Essentially, there is no distinction between the two dispensations. Also in the Old Testament, the Lord wrote His law into His people’s hearts. In the Old Testament, however, this work of the Lord was accompanied by the outer shell of the shadows and types which characterized the Old Dispensation. In the New Testament, however, this outer shell, the earthly house of shadows and types has disappeared and God’s covenant with His people consists exclusively of the writing of His law into their hearts; And we should also notice that the prophet in this passage defines the covenant. We read: “But *this shall be* the Covenant,...” And it shall consist in the writing by God of His law into the hearts of His people. Hence, God’s covenant is defined here as an *inner, spiritual*, eternal reality. And also here the oft-repeated words occur: “And I will be their God, and they shall be My people.” God will be our God. He will write

His law into our hearts, will love, bless, and save us unto the uttermost. And we will be His people. The latter is the fruit of the former. Because God is our God we are His people. Hence, we read: And they *shall* be My people. This is a certainty. We will be His people, His own people, to love and bless and praise and serve Him forevermore.

Ezekiel 36:22-28 and Hosea 2:18-, 23.

—In the former passage we read: “Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God; I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for Mine holy Name’s sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went. And I will sanctify My great Name, which was profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I am the Lord, saith the Lord God, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and ye shall keep My judgments, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.”

And in the passage of Hosea we read: “And in that day will I make a Covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground: and I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely. And I will betroth thee unto Me for ever; And I will sow her unto Me in the earth: and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not My people, Thou art My people; and they shall say, Thou are my God.”

Much need not be said concerning these passages. Ezekiel and Hosea touch upon the same thought expressed by Jeremiah. Notice, also in these passages; that it is the Lord Who will establish His covenant with us, sanctify His Name among us, betroth us unto Himself forever, give us a new heart. And also here we hear the oft-repeated refrain: “And I will be their God and they shall be My people.” If these latter words, “And I will be their God and they shall be My people” constitute the heart of the covenant (which is generally agreed), then surely the prophets, Ezekiel and Hosea, are speaking of the covenant in these passages. And also in these passages the covenant is held before us as an inner, spiritual reality.

2 Corinthians 6:16-18. —In this passage the apostle, Paul, declares:

“And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you. And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons, and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.”

Beautifully the idea of friendship and fellowship is expressed here. We should note the following; “Ye are the *temple* of the living God; as God hath said, I will *dwell* in them, and *walk* in them.” Also in this text we read the oft-repeated expression, “And I will be their God, and they shall be My people.” It must be self-evident that these latter words are expressive of text we read the oft-repeated expression, “And I will be a *Father* unto you, and ye shall be My *sons* and *daughters*, saith the Lord Almighty.” Is it possible to speak of the relationship between God and His people more intimately than to speak of God as *Father* and of them as His *sons* and *daughters*?

In the light of these passages, which we have quoted and which can easily be multiplied, we may therefore safely conclude that the covenant, according to the Word of God, refers to the intimate relationship of friendship and communion between the living God and His people in Christ Jesus the Lord.

*The Center of this Communion of Friendship
Between God and His People is the Incarnation.*

We all understand, I am sure, what is meant by the Incarnation (“*Vleeschwoording*” in Holland); Lord’s Day 14 of our Heidelberg Catechism, Articles 10, 18, 19 of our Confession of Faith, and Articles 2 and 4 of the Canons of Dordrecht, II, speak of this tremendous Mystery of godliness 1 Tim. 3:16. The Incarnation is the amazing mystery of Bethlehem whereby God’s eternal (Son, Who is and continueth true and eternal God, took upon Himself the very nature of man, of the flesh and blood of the Virgin Mary, by the operation of the Holy Ghost, that He might also be the true seed of David, like unto His brethren in all things, sin excepted Lord’s Day 14.

The Incarnation is surely *The Wonder of Grace*. It is certainly a wonder of grace. All signs in Scripture are not necessarily miracles, such as the signs of the temple, the candlestick, etc. But all miracles in the Word of God are signs. A miracle, according to Scripture, is a work of God in this accursed world, itself the fruit of the grace of God, which serves as a sign, portrays the work of the grace of God whereby He leads and saves this world through sin and death into the heavenly glory of His eternal kingdom and covenant. God calls the light out of the darkness, life out of death. Of this operation of the grace of God all miracles are signs. That the Incarnation is such

a miracle sign is evident. For Jesus was born of a *virgin*. It was not by the will of man but by the operation of the Holy Spirit that Christ was conceived and born.

However, the Incarnation is not merely a wonder of grace, but it is *the* wonder of grace. In the first place, the sign itself, that of a virgin conceiving, is unique. That a virgin conceived never happened before and will never happen again. For, if the sign as such is unique, the only one of its kind, so also the Incarnation, the appearance of the living God in the flesh, is the center of all God's fellowship with His people. Whatever we read in Jeremiah 31, Ezekiel 36, Hosea 2, and 2 Corinthians 6 surely centers in the Incarnate Word. That we can and do become the people of the living God is certainly due to the fact that the Eternal God assumed our flesh and blood, suffered and died and rose again. Notice also that God, in saving His people, assumes their flesh and blood. Hence, in the most literal sense of the word it is true that we have become the temple of the living God. In the most literal sense He comes into our midst to live and dwell with us forever. This, the Church of God has always confessed, constitutes the inviolable, unbreakable character of God's covenant-fellowship with us. In Christ God assumes our flesh and blood, takes upon Himself our mouth and ears; binds Himself to us, to our human nature, thus revealing Himself in our flesh and blood: Indeed, the Incarnation, itself the center of all God's dealings with us, the source of all His blessings upon us, speaks to us of the most intimate fellowship imaginable between the living God and His creature.

The End of All Things and God's Tabernacle With Man.

The Scriptures abound in passages which speak of the end of all things as God's eternal tabernacle with man. We read in Revelation 21:1-3, 10-12ff, 22-27:

“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the *tabernacle of God is with men*, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and, God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. . . . And He carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God. Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal, . . . And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at, all by day: for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and

honor of the nations into it. And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life."

Also well-known is the passage of John 14 :1-3 : "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

Notice, in connection with these passages, first of all, that eternity is described from the aspect of friendship and fellowship. John 14 and Rev. 21 speak of eternity as "Father's house" and "God's tabernacle with man." This, of course, as far as our conception of the covenant is concerned, is extremely important. If the Scriptures speak of eternity, as consisting of the Lord's eternal fellowship with His people then the idea of friendship and communion must indeed constitute the very heart and core of salvation. Secondly, of that eternal, heavenly tabernacle, the heavenly Jerusalem, the Old Testament temple was a mighty symbol. This is evident from Rev. 21 where we read of the "great and high mountain, the holy Jerusalem. This is also evident from Hebrews 12:22 where the holy writer declares of the Church of the living God that she is come unto Mount Zion and the heavenly Jerusalem. Why should the heavenly city and the earthly city have the same name if it were not for the fact that the one is a symbol of the other? This is also evident from the location of the temple in the Old Dispensation. It is for this reason that it was situated on a mountain; to direct the eye of God's people heavenward. Hence, the entire Old Testament pointed, as one mighty symbol, to God's eternal and heavenly Covenant in the eternal city which has foundations. Thirdly, the entire New Testament points to this heavenly culmination of God's fellowship with His people. Jesus speaks of it in John 14, declaring that He is going there and will prepare a place there for us. Hence, throughout the New Testament the Church looks forward to God's eternal and heavenly Tabernacle. We, therefore, conclude: All of Scripture emphasizes this idea, of the covenant: God's eternal relationship of friendship with us, in Christ Jesus, in heavenly perfection, now in principle, and soon in eternal glory.

H. Veldman

Chapter 5

God's Covenant With Man, Unilateral

God's Covenant with Man Unilateral

Basically and fundamentally but two conceptions of the covenant of God with man are possible. It is either to means to an end or it is the end itself. Viewed as the former, it can be regarded as a promise, or an agreement, contract, or a way of salvation, or an alliance against Satan and all the powers of sin and darkness. Viewed as the end itself it is the highest to which man can possibly attain. We are convinced that the latter conception is the Scriptural presentation. Thus far we have advanced considerable proof in support of this contention. We noted that the Word of God speaks of the covenant as an eternal covenant and that the Lord realizes it by writing His law into the hearts of His people. Moreover, it is clear from Holy Writ that Adam was created by God in covenant- relationship with Him and that therefore God's covenant with the first man could not possibly have been something incidental, something added after his creation. We also brought out that Adam, after violating the covenant, was restored into covenant-relationship with Jehovah and that the Lord did so by establishing enmity between the seed of the woman and that of the devil. Scripture, we saw, speaks of Enoch, Noah, and Abraham as the friends of God and Psalm 25:14 literally identifies the covenant with fellowship, intimate acquaintance with Jehovah. And finally the Word of God describes the eternal glory as God's tabernacle with man, and the Father's house with many mansions and this is surely the idea of friendship and communion.

God's Covenant with Man, Unilateral or Bilateral?

Is the covenant of the Lord with man unilateral or bilateral? This is a very pertinent question. Must God's covenant with His people be regarded as unilateral ("*monopleurisch*")? Does it proceed solely from God? Is it established by the Lord alone? Or must it be viewed as bilateral, "two-sided," ("*dupleurisch*")? Does it proceed from God and man, and is it established jointly by God and man? Besides, must the covenant, also as far as its development, its operation and manifestation, is concerned, be regarded as unilateral or bilateral? Is it correct to say that God's covenant with man is unilateral in origin but bilateral in its operation and manifestation?

In this connection the question might also be asked: Should we speak of parties or parts in the covenant? We are probably all aware of the fact that our Baptism Form speaks of "parts" rather than "parties." But Professor Schilder, during his recent visit among us, made it clear that he preferred the term "parties" to the term "parts." The question, "Is God's covenant with man unilateral or bilateral?", is therefore a pertinent question.

God's Covenant with Man is Unilateral in its Establishment –The Reformed View.

When we, in this connection; speak of the establishment of God's covenant, we refer to its origin to the moment when it is established rather than to its continuous operation and manifestation. The continuous operation of the covenant implies that it must be assumed and kept by man. To this continuous manifestation we do not refer at this time. To be sure, if the covenant is regarded as an agreement or an alliance, this would seem to indicate that two parties are necessary to establish such a covenant, inasmuch as at least two parties are required to make an agreement. Reformed thinking, however, has always emphasized the unilateral character of the establishment of God's covenant with His people.

First, our Reformed Confessions surely emphasize the unilateral character of the establishment of God's covenant in Christ Jesus. In answer to Question 74, "Are infants also to be baptized?", the Heidelberg Catechism answers that "they as well as the adult are included in the covenant and church of God." This answer is understandable only if the establishment of God's covenant be regarded as unilateral. Indeed, these children whereof the Catechism speaks in Lord's Day 27 did not enter the covenant of their own choice or agreement. The fact, therefore, that they as well as the adult are included in the covenant and the church of God emphasizes the unilateral character of this covenant. Also our Baptism Form stresses the unilateral character of the origin of God's covenant. We read in Part One:

"Second. Holy baptism witnesseth and sealet unto us the washing away of our sins through Jesus Christ. Therefore we are baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. For when we are baptized in the name of the Father, God the Father witnesseth and sealet unto us, that he doth make an eternal covenant of grace with us, and adopts us for his children and heirs, and therefore will provide us with every good thing, and avert all evil or turn it to our profit. And when we are baptized in the name of the Son, the Son sealet unto us, that he doth wash us in his blood from all our sins, incorporating us into the fellowship of his death and resurrection, so that we are freed from all our sins, and accounted righteous before God. In like manner, when we are baptized in the name of the Holy Ghost, the Holy Ghost assures us, by this holy sacrament, that he will dwell in us, and sanctify us to be members of Christ, applying unto us, that which we have in Christ, namely, the washing away of our sins, and the daily renewing of our lives, till we shall finally be presented without spot or wrinkle among the assembly of the elect in life eternal."

This language of our Baptism Form cannot be understood in a bilateral sense of the word. Mind you, all these things are declared of children who are baptized. We read, do we not: "*For when we are baptized. . . .*"

Reformed theologians of the past also have advocated this unilateral character of the Covenant. Prof. Bavinck writes in his *“Gereformeerde Dogmatiek,”* Volume III, page 194 (we translate):

“But also when God and man conclude a covenant, the unilateral character naturally appears repeatedly upon the foreground; we are not dealing with two equal parties, but God is the Sovereign, Who enjoins His ordinances upon the creatures. . . . For, indeed, the covenant of God also imposed obligations upon those with whom it was concluded; obligations, namely, not as conditions for our entrance into the covenant. . . . but as the way upon which he who had been taken up in the covenant out of grace henceforth must walk.”

Other theologians, too, have expressed themselves likewise.

The late Prof. W. Heyns also emphasized the unilateral character of the covenant. However, according to him the essence of the covenant lay in the promise, the promise that God will be our God in Jesus Christ, the Lord. And this promise he interpreted as an offer; as a promise which the Lord simply extended to all. Hence, Heyns’ unilateral conception of the covenant simply consisted herein that God, of His own sovereign will, extended this promise to everyone who received the sacrament of baptism. And, naturally, it depends upon us whether this covenant or promise will be realized in us. The Holy Spirit, then, wills to sanctify us. But we must will to be sanctified and accept this gracious promise of God.

God’s Covenant with Man Unilateral in its Establishment –Scriptural

That God’s covenant with man is unilateral is surely Scriptural. This is evident, first of all, from the very idea of the Covenant. We proceed now from the assumption that the covenant is essentially a relationship of friendship. Holy Writ surely teaches us through out that we are by nature children of wrath and also of disobedience. As children of wrath we lie under condemnation, are estranged from the fellowship of God, and worthy of eternal death and desolation. As children of disobedience we are characterized wholly by disobedience, are devoid of all spiritual light and truth, are darkness in all our thinking and willing. As such we are not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be Rom. 8:7. Hence, the relationship of friendship must surely be realized by God. We have no right to it. And we cannot merit the right to it. Besides, it is God alone Who can bring us into this relationship of friendship spiritually. We are enmity and darkness. We cannot love God. It is God alone Who can make us His friends and pour His love into our hearts and minds. The very idea of the covenant requires, therefore, that we maintain the principle that it is unilateral God alone must and God can realize it.

This appears, secondly, from Scripture’s account of the creation and existence of man

in Paradise. Man was created in this covenant relationship. Scripture does not speak of any agreement or contract between man and the living God. To this we have already called attention in previous articles.

Thirdly, that the establishment of the covenant must be regarded as unilateral also appears from God's dealings with man after the fall. The Lord sets enmity between His church and the seed of the devil. And enmity is, as we have already noted, the friendship of the Lord which renders the people of God His party over against the children of darkness. Notice also that God sets this enmity: "I will set enmity between thee and the woman, thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise its heel." And this, we understand, applies not only to Eve but to all her seed, to all the people of God throughout the ages. Hence, Gen. 3:15 teaches us that our fighting the good fight of faith, our being the party of the living God, is not the result of an agreement or contract but exclusively the fruit of the irresistible grace of the living God.

Fourthly, this truth is clearly substantiated by various Scriptural passages. Notice, please, the personal pronoun "I" in the following quotations.

"But with thee will *I* establish My covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives. . . . And *I*, behold, *I* establish My covenant with you, and with your seed after you; . . . And *I* will establish My covenant with you, neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth. And God said, This is the token of the covenant which *I* make between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: *I* do set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between Me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when *I* bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud: And *I* will remember My covenant, which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh. And the bow shall be in the cloud; and *I* will look upon it, that *I* may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, This is the token of the covenant, which *I* have established between Me and all flesh that is upon the earth." –Gen. 6:18; 9: 9; 9: 11-17.

"And *I* will make thee exceeding fruitful, and *I* will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee. And *I* will establish My covenant between Me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And *I* will give

unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and *I* will be their God.”
–Gen. 17:6-8.

“Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that *I* will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that *I* made with their fathers in the days that *I* took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which My covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord: But this shall be the covenant that *I* will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, *I* will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for *I* will forgive their iniquity and *I* will remember their sin no more.”
–Jeremiah 31:31-34.

“But now saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, *I* am He that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for *I* have redeemed thee, *I* have called thee by thy name; thou art Mine. . . . When thou passest through the waters, *I* will be With thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. . . . For *I* am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: *I* gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee. . . ; Since thou wast precious in My sight, thou hast been honourable, and *I* have loved thee: therefore will *I* give men for thee, and people for thy life. . . . Fear not: for *I* am with thee: *I* will bring thy seed from the east; and gather thee from the west; . . . I will say to the north, Give up ; and to the south, Keep not back: bring My sons from far, and My daughters from the ends of the earth; Even every one that is called by My name: for *I* have created him for My glory, *I* have formed him, yea, *I* have made him. . . . Ye are My witnesses, saith the Lord, and My servants whom *I* have chosen : that ye may know and believe Me, and understand that *I* am He: before Me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after Me. . . . *I*, even *I*, am the Lord; and beside Me there is no saviour. . . I have declared, and have saved, and *I* have shewed, when there was no strange god among you: therefore ye are *My* witnesses, saith the Lord, that *I* am God. . . . Yea, before the day was *I* am He, and there is none that can deliver out of My hand: *I* will work and who shall let it? *I* am the Lord, your Holy One, *the creator* of Israel, your King.” –Isaiah 43:1-7, 10-13, 15.

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus, unto good works, which God hath

before ordained that we should walk in them.” –Eph. 2:8-10.

Notice also how God receives all the glory in the following beautiful passage, Psalm 89:1-18:

“I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever: with my mouth, will I make known Thy faithfulness to all generations. For I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever: Thy faithfulness shalt Thou establish in the very heavens. I have made a covenant with My chosen, I have sworn unto David My servant, Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations. Selah. And the heavens shall praise Thy wonders, O Lord: Thy faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints. For who in the heaven can be compared unto the Lord? who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the Lord? God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about Him. O Lord God of hosts, who is a strong Lord like unto Thee? or Thy faithfulness round about Thee? Thou rulest the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof arise, Thou stillest them. Thou hast broken Rahab in pieces, as one that is slain; Thou hast scattered thine enemies with Thy strong arm. The heavens are Thine, the earth also in Thine: as for the world and the fulness thereof, Thou hast founded them. The north and the south Thou hast created them: Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice in Thy name. Thou hast a mighty arm: strong is Thy hand, and high is Thy right hand. Justice and judgment are the habitation of Thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before Thy face. Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of Thy countenance. In Thy Name shall they rejoice all the day: and in Thy righteousness shall they be exalted. For Thou art the glory of their strength: and in Thy favor our horn shall be exalted. For the Lord is our defense; and the Holy One of Israel is our King.”

And please note, finally how the unilateral aspect of salvation is emphasized in the first chapter of Paul’s epistle to the Ephesians, whereof we quote but a, few verses:

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world; that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, To the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved. In Whom we have the redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace; Wherein He hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; Having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself, etc. etc. verses 3-9.

Indeed, this latter passage of the Word leaves little doubt as to the sovereign character of our salvation and the establishment of the Lord's covenant with His people.

Fifthly, and finally, that the establishment of God's covenant is unilateral is beautifully emphasized in Abraham's vision as recorded in Genesis 15. According to verse 7 the Lord had renewed His promise to Abraham that He would give him the land of Canaan for an inheritance. Upon Abraham's question, "Lord God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?", the Lord had commanded him (verse 9) to take an heifer of three years old, and a she goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old and a turtle dove, and a young pigeon. These animals Abraham had taken, had divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another. The birds, however, he had not divided. After the sun had gone down, we read, a deep sleep fell upon Abraham. During that sleep the Lord appeared unto him, and told him that his seed would be a stranger in a strange land, but that He would cause his seed to return out of that strange land with a great substance. To symbolize this renewal of His covenant with Abraham we read in verse 17: "And it came to pass; that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking, furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces."

The symbolism referred to in this passage in Genesis 15 was a ceremony usually carried out by two or more parties who concluded a covenant with one another. As such the symbolism was plain. The parties declared by means of this ceremony that they pledged faithfulness to one another and agreed that, if one or the other would prove to be unfaithful, the same would happen to him that had happened to those animals which had been slain. When such a covenant was concluded between men both parties would pass between the divided parts of the animals. Hence, the symbolism is striking as it appears in Genesis 15. Abraham is in a deep sleep. It is God alone Who passes through the midst of the animals. And in connection with this symbolism verse 18 declares: "In the same day the Lord *made* a covenant with Abraham, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates." It is therefore, not God and Abraham who conclude a covenant with one another. It is not the Lord and Abraham who enter into an agreement or a covenant with one another. It is God alone Who passes through the midst of the animals. Hence, the covenant of God with Abraham is of the Lord alone. God will cause the seed of Abraham to become a stranger in the strange land of Egypt. And God alone will cause the people of Israel to return out of the land of bondage. And God alone will give the land of Canaan unto that people for an inheritance. The promise but also the fulfillment of that promise is of Jehovah. The covenant is His. He takes us up into His covenant fellowship. The establishment of the Lord's covenant-fellowship with His people is, therefore, strictly unilateral. To Him, to Him alone be all the glory.

H. Veldman

Chapter 6

God's Covenant, Unilateral and Unconditional.

God's Covenant, Unilateral and Unconditional.

In our previous article we emphasized the unilateral character of the establishment or origin of God's covenant with His people. We noted that this monopoleuric, unilateral character of the origin of God's covenant has been advocated by Reformed theologians in the past. We also quoted freely from the Scriptures in support of the contention that God's, covenant is of the Lord alone. We now purpose to continue where we left off.

God's Covenant with Man Unilateral Throughout

God's covenant with His people is not only unilateral in its establishment or origin, but it is unilateral throughout. Although Reformed theologians have usually maintained the establishment or origin of the covenant to be unilateral, they have also usually declared its operation and manifestation to be bilateral, two-sided. Upon this question Prof. H. Bavinck, in his "*Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*," writes as follows (III, 225):

"Actually, in the covenant of grace, that is, in the gospel, which is the proclamation of the covenant of grace, there are no demands and no conditions. For God gives what He demands; Christ has finished all and has merited regeneration, faith and conversion for us; and the Holy Spirit applies them. But the covenant of grace does assume the form of a demand and a condition, to acknowledge man in his rational and moral nature, also to deal with him, although fallen, as created after God's image, in order that also upon this highest plane, . . . he may be rendered responsible and inexcusable and enable him, consciously and freely, to enter into the covenant and break with sin. The covenant of grace is; therefore, surely unilateral, it proceeds from God; He has planned and established it. He maintains and realizes it; it is a work of God Triune and completed, finished among the three Persons mutually. But it is designed to: become bilateral, to be assumed and kept by man, consciously, and freewillingly, in the power of God. This is the will of God, which is revealed so clearly and beautifully in the covenant, that the work of grace may reflect itself in the human consciousness, and stimulate

the will of man unto greater activity. The covenant of grace does not slay man, and it does not deal with him as a stock and block; but it lifts him up in his entirety, with all his faculties and powers, according to soul and body; for time and eternity; it completely encircles him, does not destroy his strength but deprives him of his impotence, does not destroy his will but liberates it from sin; does not deaden his consciousness but delivers it from the darkness; it recreates the entire man and causes him, renewed by grace, to love God and dedicate himself unto Him, freely and independently (zelfstandiglijk), with all his soul and spirit and body. The covenant of grace declares that God's honour and praise is realized not at the cost of but unto the benefit of man, and that God's glory celebrates its triumph in the recreation of the entire man, in his enlightened consciousness and restored freedom."

This is beautiful language, indeed! If this be the implication of the "bilateral" aspect of the covenant, who can object? But, why then should we speak of the "unilateral" and the "bilateral" aspects of the covenant, when it is God Who not only establishes the covenant but also maintains it, unconditionally? It is evident that Prof. Bavinck identifies the bilateral character of God's covenant with man with man's moral-rational calling in the covenant and this calling of man is due to the nature of the operation of the grace of God.

Also Prof. Berkhof, in his "*Systematic Theology*," although maintaining the unilateral character of the covenant as far as its establishment is concerned, would maintain its bilateral; dipleuric character and asserts that a monopleuric covenant in the absolute sense of the word is really a contradiction (and this, I presume, is correct if we proceed from the idea that the covenant is essentially an agreement, between two or more parties).

Nevertheless, we would rather maintain that God's covenant is unilateral throughout and therefore wholly unconditional. Professor Berkhof declares the covenant to be both, conditional and unconditional, (pages 280-281 of his "*Systematic Theology*"). On the one hand, he maintains its unconditional character. We read on page 280:

"On the one hand the covenant is unconditional. There is in the covenant of grace no condition that can be considered as meritorious. The sinner is exhorted to repent and believe, but his faith and repentance do not in any way merit the blessings of the covenant. This must be maintained in opposition to both the Roman Catholic and the Arminian position. Neither is it conditional in the sense that man is expected to perform in his own strength what the covenant requires of him. In placing him before the demand of the covenant, we must always remind him of the fact that he can obtain the necessary strength for the performance of his duty only from God. In a sense it may be

said that God Himself fulfills the condition in the elect. That which may be regarded as a condition in the covenant, is for those who are chosen unto everlasting life also a promise, and therefore a gift of God. Finally, the covenant is not conditional in the sense that the reception of every separate blessing of the covenant is dependent on a condition. We may say that faith is the “*conditio sine qua non*” of justification, but the reception of faith itself in regeneration is not dependent on any condition, but only on the operation of the grace of God in Christ.”

However, if all this be true, why and how can one speak of the conditional aspect of the covenant? The professor declares in this paragraph, first of all, that nothing of man is meritorious. Never does man merit anything. Secondly, We are told that man can never perform anything in his own strength. Hence, of himself man cannot merit and he cannot perform anything. Thirdly, we are told that “in a sense it may be said that God Himself fulfills the condition in the elect.” And, finally, to make the cycle complete, the professor declares that the reception of not a single blessing is dependent on a condition. Does it not, therefore, become rather difficult to understand how such a covenant relationship between the Lord and His own can also be conditional?

On the other hand, however, Prof. Berkhof would also maintain that the covenant is conditional We read:

“On the other hand the covenant may be called conditional. There is a sense in which the covenant is conditional. If we consider the basis of the covenant, it is clearly conditional on the suretyship of Jesus Christ. In order to introduce the covenant of grace, Christ had to, and actually did, meet the conditions originally laid down in the covenant of works, by His active and passive obedience. Again, it may be said that the covenant is conditional as far as the first entrance into the covenant as a real communion of life is concerned. This entrance is contingent on faith, a faith, however, which is itself a gift of God. When we speak of faith as a condition here, we naturally refer to faith as a spiritual activity of the mind. It is only through faith that we can obtain a conscious enjoyment of the blessings of the covenant. Our experimental knowledge of the covenant life is entirely dependent on the exercise of faith. He who does not live a life of faith is, as far as his consciousness is concerned, practically outside of the covenant. If in our purview we include not only the beginning, but also the gradual unfolding and completion of the covenant life, we may regard sanctification as a condition in addition to faith. Both are conditions, however, within the covenant.”

This none can dispute. It is surely true that the suretyship of Jesus Christ is basis for God’s fellowship with us, that the justice of the Lord must be satisfied before we

can again be received into Divine favour (Lord's Day 5). And it is actually true that to enjoy experimentally, experientially, consciously, the blessings of the covenant we must consciously enter into the covenant of faith. But does this give us the right to speak of the covenant in a conditional sense? Faith itself is a gift of God. And we surely agree with the last sentence of the above quotation: "Both are conditions, however, *within the covenant*." How can something, which belongs to the covenant, and constitutes essentially a part of that covenant, be a condition of that covenant? It must be plain, also from this paragraph, that God's covenant with man is not conditional. Man cannot merit anything. Man cannot do anything. Faith itself is a gift of God: Where, then, is the condition of the covenant ?

We would therefore maintain the unilateral and unconditional character of the covenant throughout. We can surely subscribe to what Prof. Berkhof writes in the first paragraph on page 281:

"Reformed Churches have often objected to the use of the word "condition" in connection with the covenant of grace. This was largely due to a reaction against Arminianism, which employed the word "condition" in an un-Scriptural sense, and therefore to a failure to discriminate properly."

The undersigned frankly declares that he, too, is afraid of the word "condition" and wonders whether Prof. Berkhof discriminates properly inasmuch as he also believes in the Arminian "Three Points" of 1924 which teach us, e.g., that the gospel of salvation is offered to all the hearers of the gospel, that the "goodness of God would lead all men to repentance." It is well that we speak, clearly. Terms, and the use of them are very important. Wrong terms and ambiguous terms are exceedingly dangerous. We will have opportunity to call attention to this in a subsequent article. To be sure, we may speak of the covenant promises and of covenant obligations. These obligations, however, must not be understood in the sense that we must fulfill them before we can enter into the covenant relationship with the living God, but as the fruit of the grace of God in our hearts. Indeed, we must love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our mind, with all our strength, and with all our soul. We must believe in and on the Lord Jesus Christ unto salvation. We must hope unto the end. We must fight the good fight of faith that no man take our crown. Such is also the language of our Baptism Form:

"Thirdly. Whereas in all covenants there are contained two parts: therefore are we by God through baptism, admonished of, and obliged unto new obedience, namely, that we cleave to this one God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; that we trust in Him, and love Him with all our hearts, with all our souls, with all our mind, and with all our strength; that we forsake the world, crucify our old nature, and walk in a new and holy life."

That such is our calling is not because our entrance into the covenant is dependent upon our action, but only because God makes us His covenant people, saves us as moral-rational beings, does not destroy but saves us; causes us to will and to do in behalf of His good pleasure. Phil. 2:12-13.

*God Establishes His Covenant and Maintains It
Only Upon the Basis of Christ's Merits and
Through the Grace of the Holy Spirit.*

That the covenant of God with man is unilateral throughout receives further emphasis when we view the development of the covenant in the light of Christ's merits and the work of the Holy Spirit. We may now ask ourselves the question: What is Christ's position in the covenant? This is an interesting question. Is Christ the Mediator or Surety or Head of the covenant? The words "Mediator" and "Head" occur frequently in Holy Writ. The word "Mediator" occurs in the following passages:

"Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made: and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one." –Gal. 3:19-20; "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus;" –1 Tim. 2:5 ; "But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises." –Heb. 8:6; "And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death; for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance." –Heb, 9:15; "And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." –Heb. 12:24.

And the word "Head" occurs in passages as the following:

"And hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the Head over all things to the church, Which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." –Eph. 1:22-23 ; "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the Head of the Church ; and He is the saviour of the body." –Eph. 5:23 ; "And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God." –Col. 2:19.

The word Surety" occurs but once in Holy Writ, in Heb. 7:22 : "By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament." The idea of the word "Surety" (*Borg* in the Holland) is plain. Christ is our Surety because He assumes our responsibilities to

the law, is our guarantee before the Lord that our guilt is paid and that we are entitled to life everlasting. We need not at this time discuss the question whether, Jesus is our Surety conditionally or unconditionally. This question, too, has been discussed in the past. If Christ be our Surety in the conditional sense, the idea would be that He undertakes to pay our guilt but the burden of our guilt remains upon us until it have been paid. If Christ be our Surety in the unconditional sense of the word, the burden of our guilt is removed from us regardless whether or not He pays our debt, We understand; of course, that Jesus is our Surety in the unconditional sense of, the word. Although the word Surety occurs but once in Holy Writ. its idea appears frequently in the Scriptures. That Christ alone is our guarantee before God and that He alone constitutes the basis of our assurance to draw nigh unto the throne of God's grace is taught everywhere in the Bible, as in Heb. 10:14-22:

“For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that He had said before, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; And their sins and iniquities will I remember, no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin. Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; And having an high priest over the house of God; Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.”

We understand, of course; that those who speak of the covenant as an agreement or a contract, emphasize the use of the words “Mediator,” and “Surety” and do not favor the use of the word “Head.” According to their view the covenant is an agreement or a contract between the Lord and His people. Christ, then, stands outside of the covenant. He is the Mediator of the covenant, represents His people, intervenes between them and the Lord. Or, He is their Surety, the guarantee or basis of their assurance to draw nigh unto the Lord. But Jesus is not the Head of the covenant. To be the Head of the covenant would imply that He Himself belonged to that covenant, that He, therefore, Himself would be in need of salvation. Hence; with Christ the covenant is not established. Surely, He did or does not need salvation.

However; in the first place, Christ is surely our Surety. This is abundant evident throughout Holy Writ. He alone constitutes the basis of our assurance to draw nigh unto the throne of God's grace. It is only because of Him that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus: Apart from Him we are yet in our sins. Because of Him; and of Him alone, our sins are forgiven, our guilt is paid, and we have the right to everlasting life. To quote the Word of God in support of this truth is surely not necessary.

Secondly, Jesus Christ is surely our Head. Our Head He is, first of all, in the organic sense of the Word. He is our life and we live only in and through Him.

“And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone: (the idea of corner stone, here is surely the same as Head-H.V.); In Whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord; In Whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the, Spirit.” –Eph. 2:29-22. “Which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.” –Eph. 1:23. “And He is the Head of the body, the church: Who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell.” –Col. 1:17-18

But Jesus is also our Head in the judicial, representative sense of the word. Christ dies because *He* must suffer and die. In Isaiah 53:4-6, where the thought is emphasized that God, bruised and crushed Him because our sins were upon Him. This was a punitive act of God. And in Luke 12:50 we hear Him exclaim: “But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straightened till it be accomplished!” And in the baptism of Jesus by the Baptist in the river Jordan, Christ assumes the cross and sets His face toward Jerusalem. The modernist proclaims a Christ who lives and is dead; the Scriptures proclaims a Christ who dies and lives forevermore. Fact is, Jesus is appointed the Head, of the Covenant by the Triune God. And because of this Headship He assumes our guilt, our relation to the law, is therefore guilty Himself, must suffer and die. For Him the way into life and glory lay only through death and hell.

Thirdly, Christ is also our Mediator. This, we understand, does not mean that He appeases an avenging God. That Christ is our Mediator, cannot mean that He stands between God and us that He changes a God of hate into a God of love, and that in that sense He brings God and man together. Christ, we must remember, is the living God Himself. In Christ the living God is our Mediator. Besides in Christ God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him might not perish but have everlasting life.” –John 3: 16. Christ, therefore, did not change a God of hate into a God of love, but, to the contrary, in Christ the unchangeable Jehovah reveals His eternal love to His people. Even so, and understood in that sense of the word Christ is our Mediator. He surely represents us before the Lord. He is the eternal High Priest, Who enters for us into the Holy of holies, prays and makes continuous intercession for us. And we approach unto God through Him, have fellowship with the alone blessed Lord only through our Lord Jesus Christ, Who of God is made wisdom for us; righteousness and sanctification and redemption.

Hence, our covenant fellowship with God is established by Christ and in Christ. It is possible only through Christ. And it therefore lies in the very nature of the case that also for this reason God's covenant with His people must be regarded as monopleuric, unilateral. To this we will call attention, the Lord willing, in our following article.

H. Veldman.

Chapter 7

God's Covenant Realized With Us By The Holy Spirit, Efficaciously

God's Covenant, Unconditional.

We concluded our preceding article with the observation that the unilateral character of the covenant of God with man is emphasized by the position which our Lord Jesus Christ occupies within the covenant. Our fellowship with the Lord rests exclusively upon Christ's merits. Devastating in this connection is the answer of our Heidelberg Catechism to question 12 in Lord's Day 5. In answer to the question, "Since then, by the righteous judgment of God, we deserve temporal punishment, is there no way by which we may escape that punishment, and be again received into favor?" we read: "God will have His justice satisfied and therefore we must make this full satisfaction, either by ourselves, or by another." How impossible in the light of this answer is an offer of salvation to all (the First Point)! There is no possibility of salvation for anyone except upon the basis of the satisfaction of the justice of God. Our debt and guilt must be fully paid before our return into the favour of God will be possible. For God, therefore, to offer His salvation to all men would be a violation of this principle unless we accept the proposition that Christ died for all. But a Christ that died for all is a Christ that did not die atoningly. A universal Christ also died for those who perish. And that He also died for those who perish indicates that His death was not atoning otherwise they would be saved. Christ, however, died for our sins. He merited salvation for us. Our entrance into the fellowship of the Lord rests exclusively upon His meritorious suffering and death. This fellowship of God's people with the Lord, as far as its relation to the passion of Christ is concerned, is surely unconditional. The value of the cross is not dependent upon our faith; to the contrary, we believe because Christ died for us.

This conception of the cross of Christ and its all-important relation to our covenant-fellowship with the Lord is further emphasized in a passage such as Heb. 9:16-17. We read in this passage: "For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all, while the testator liveth." The word, translated "testament"

in this word of God is in the original the word “diatheekē,” the word for covenant in the New Testament. The idea of a testament, we understand, is wholly unconditional. A testament is an absolute declaration, knows of no conditions, is simply willed to us, sovereignly bestowed upon according to right. This is the accepted definition of a testament, something willed to us. This word is used in the translation of this text in Heb. 9, although the original word is the word for covenant. It is clear from the context that the translation is correct, for we read of the death of the testator. To enter into a detailed discussion of this passage now is not necessary. One thing is clear: God’s covenant with man is a testament, sovereignly willed to us by the Lord, and based upon the death of Christ, the Son of God.

God Realizes His Covenant Within Us Through The Holy Spirit.

That our spiritual entrance into the fellowship of God is possible only through the Holy Spirit should be and is a self-evident fact. Of ourselves we cannot enter into a living relationship of friendship with Jehovah. We are darkness. We are dead. We are not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be, And, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God –John 3:3. God only can call us out of that darkness into His marvelous light and He alone can induct us into the blessed relationship of friendship with the alone blessed God. And this, too, is, unconditional, as we shall clearly see in the rest of this article.

Scripture Speaks.

Romans 9:15-18.

We read in this passage:

“For He saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. For the Scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew My power in Thee, and that My name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath He mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth.”

An elaborate explanation of this passage is unnecessary. It speaks for itself; These are significant words, especially in support of the contention that the covenant relationship between the Lord and His own is unconditional. Firstly, we are told that salvation is not of man. We read, do we not, that “it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth.” Secondly, we are informed that this salvation is solely of God. We read: “But of God that sheweth mercy.” Moreover, the Lord hath mercy on whom He would have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth. In support of this

thought the apostle refers to the example of Pharaoh of the Old Dispensation. Pharaoh, we read, this is, the wicked Pharaoh, was raised up by God that in him the Lord might shew His power and that His name might be declared throughout all the earth. It is clear from this particular Word of God that salvation is wholly unconditional. We must notice that not our will is first. God's mercy does not follow upon what we may do. It is, therefore, not conditioned by anything in or of ourselves. Salvation is of God that sheweth mercy and He hath mercy on Whom He will have mercy. The Lord is first and His work is therefore unconditional.

John 14:17

We read: "Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: but ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." The world, we read, cannot receive Him, the Spirit of truth. The viewpoint of this text is that of the world's receptivity. And notice that the world cannot (not: will not, although also this is true) receive the Spirit. The world, the wicked world, and therefore man as he is by nature, cannot receive Him; cannot go out to Him, cannot pray for Him, cannot desire Him, can impossibly receive Him, acknowledge Him as the Spirit of truth. And the reason why this world cannot receive this Spirit is expressed in the text: "Because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him." The world does not see Him, does not have a spiritual eye for Him, has no desire for Him, no interest in Him. And this is rooted in that fact that she does not know Him. She does not experience Him, does not know in her heart the operation of this Spirit. The world is estranged from the Spirit of truth and of Christ Jesus. Hence, the world cannot receive Him. But the children of God can receive Him. Why? Because they opened their heart to Him, because they believed in Him and accepted Him and agreed to permit His entrance into their hearts? We know better. They can receive Him because, as we read: "But ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." They knew Him, experienced Him, had fellowship with Him. Notice, please, that they did not know Him because they had received Him. Fact is, no man can of himself receive this Holy Spirit of truth. But we read that "they can receive Him, for they knew Him. In other words our receiving of the Spirit follows upon His dwelling in our hearts. And this establishes our contention, namely, that our covenant fellowship with Jehovah is unconditional, does not rest upon anything we may do.

John 10: 24-30

We quote:

"Then came the Jews round about Him, and said unto Him, How long dost Thou make us to doubt? If Thou be the Christ, tell us plainly. Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do, in My Father's name,

they bear witness of Me. But ye believe not, because ye are not of My sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father, Which gave them to Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand. I and My Father are one."

The wicked Jews, who did not believe on the Christ, would blame Jesus for their unbelief. They accused Him of not speaking plainly, of not telling them that He was the Christ. This, they implied, was the reason for their refusal to acknowledge Him as the Christ, as the Messiah. Jesus, however, now proceeds to show them the real, the true reason for their hostility and unbelief. And what is this reason? "But ye believe not, because ye are not of My sheep, as I said unto you." This particular word of God must not be corrupted. Jesus does not say that they are not of His sheep because they believe not. Thus the Arminians would have us interpret the Scriptures. But, we read, they do not believe because they are not of His sheep. And in the subsequent verses the, Saviour very clearly identifies these sheep. They are the elect which have been given Him of the Father. Notice also in this passage the unconditional character of our salvation. We are or become Christ's sheep not because we believe or hear His voice, but we believe and hear His voice because we are His sheep. Election is therefore the cause of our faith and our believing is not the condition of our salvation; likewise, reprobation is the cause of unbelief and unbelief is not the cause of reprobation.

John 12:37-40.

We quote:

"But though He had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on Him: That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again. He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them."

Also in this passage the fundamental cause of the unbelief of the ungodly Jews is revealed unto us. We read that they could not believe because Isaiah, the prophet, had prophesied. concerning them, Hence, it was impossible for them to believe. And the prophet had prophesied concerning their unbelief because the Lord had revealed unto him that He would blind their eyes and harden their hearts. Notice also in this passage that the work of the Lord is presented as preceding the unbelief of the wicked, that this work of the Lord is the cause of their unbelief, and that therefore it

was impossible for them to believe. Of course, we must maintain the responsibility of the sinner and the fact that he is a moral-rational agent. But this must never conflict with the sovereignty of Jehovah. And the language of the Christ in John 12:37-41 is clear as crystal. The work of God is surely unconditional.

Acts 13:48.

We read: “And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.”

Also this passage speaks for itself. The Gentiles were glad, believed, and glorified the word of the Lord. Why? Because they had been ordained to eternal life. They were not elect because they believed. But they believed because they had been elected. Salvation does not rest upon a human condition, but it is rooted in the eternal election of the Lord.

The Law-Giving. Deut. 5:1-21.

The ten commandments are preceded by this statement: “I am the Lord thy God, Which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.” The implication of these words is plain. The ten commandments, therefore, have been given to a delivered people. It is for this reason that the explanation of the ten commandments in our Heidelberg Catechism appears in the third part of the Catechism, after the discussion of our misery and redemption. Our being the people of God is not the condition of God’s gracious dealings with us; to the contrary, we have been delivered and therefore it is our calling to conduct ourselves as a people called out of darkness into the Lord’s marvelous light.

Ephesians. 4:16-24

We quote :

“From Whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love. This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord; that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart. Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But ye have not so learned Christ; If so be that ye have heard Him, and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to

the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”

A detailed discussion of this rich passage is not necessary in this series of articles. I would call attention to the following. In this passage we are exhorted to walk not as other Gentiles but to put off the old man and to put on the new man. Why? Because we have learned Christ, have heard Him and have been taught by Him. Hence, our calling to conduct ourselves as covenant children is not the condition of God’s fellowship with us, but it is the fruit of His saving grace in our hearts, of the fact that we have learned Christ, have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus. These passages can easily be multiplied. The same thought occurs in Eph. 4:25-32; 5:1-8; Col. 3:1, 12, 13. In the epistles of the New Testament the church of God is addressed by the inspired writers as “saints in Christ Jesus, beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ, elect according to the foreknowledge of God, etc.” With respect to Israel of the Old Dispensation the thought occurs repeatedly that they are a separate people unto the Lord because of the Lord’s sovereign and elective love and mercy. Read the following passages: Rom. 9:13; Deut. 32:8-10; Deut. 4:37-40; Deut. 7:7-8, etc.

Finally, I would call attention to one more Scripture truth. We are aware of the abundance of miracles in the gospels. Were we ever struck by the character of these various diseases? We do not read of headaches, toothaches etc. Christ always heals the blind, the deaf, the dumb, the demon-possessed, the leprous, and He calls the dead to life. In other words, His miracles are performed upon people who cannot see, cannot hear, cannot speak, are dead. Is not this remarkable? Miracles are signs. But these diseases, too, are signs. They symbolize the power of sin. Man as he is by nature cannot see or hear the things of the Kingdom of God. He is darkness and has no light in him, is dead and devoid of all life, is spiritually dumb and cannot speak of or unto the glory of God. He is leprous, wholly covered by and in the power of corruption and an outcast from the fellowship of the Lord. Hence, how could the covenant relationship of friendship ever become a reality in the life of the Christian if it were, in any sense of the word, dependent upon anything he would be required to do. God’s covenant with man is monopoleuric and unilateral throughout, from the beginning even unto the end.

Consequently, Our Calling unto Faith and Holiness is not the Condition but the Fruit of God’s Establishment of His Covenant With us.

Such is the presentation of our Baptism Form. We read:

“**Thirdly.** Whereas in all covenants there are contained two parts: therefore are we by God through baptism, admonished of, and obliged unto new

obedience, namely, that we cleave to this one God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; that we trust in Him, and love Him with all our hearts, with all our souls, with all our mind, and with all our strength; that we forsake the world, crucify our old nature, and walk in a new and holy life.”

That this is presented here as the fruit of the work of God is evident from the second part of the Baptism Form. There we are told of the work of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Because the Father hath made an eternal covenant of grace with us, and the Son hath washed us in His blood, and the Holy Spirit sanctifies us, we must walk in newness of life.

To be sure, we may speak of covenant obligations. We are called unto faith and hope and love. We must fight the good fight of faith, etc. However, these are not conditions upon which God’s covenant with us depends. A condition is a prerequisite, a set of terms presented as, the ground for something else (Webster). Conditions of the covenant must necessarily be regarded as outside the covenant; Faith, hope, love, etc., cannot be viewed as outside the covenant, but they themselves belong to the covenant, constitute the essence of the covenant; are, therefore, as also Prof. Berkhof declares, within the covenant. Our calling, therefore, unto a new and holy life is not the condition of the covenant, but the fruit of the operation of God within our hearts and therefore the fruit of the covenant of the Lord with us.

Conclusion.

The use of terms is highly significant. The primary question is not: How do we interpret various terms? A question of greater importance is: How *can* they be interpreted? Vague, indefinite, ambiguous terms are exceedingly dangerous. The reason is apparent. The Church of God must fight to preserve the truth once delivered to the saints. The history of the Church of God throughout the ages testifies to this fact. The forces of heresy and the lie are always ready to creep into the Church and work havoc with the Cause of the Lord. Hence, the people of the living God must ever be on the alert against these destructive forces, as they operate within and without. Never must the Church of God surrender one square inch of territory, give the enemy a single opportunity to make an inroad into the Church of God. For this reason the use of terms is highly significant. If we use a term which is ambiguous and permits more than one interpretation the result will invariably be that the wrong interpretation will be adopted in the course of time.

Hence, let us be clear, concise, definite, succinct in our speaking. Let us leave no doubt as to our conception of the truth of the Holy Scriptures. If we mean with the use of the word “condition” that man is a moral-rational being and that he must be active in the things of God’s covenant because it is God Who works in him both to will and to do, let us express ourselves in that manner. Let us discard the use of the

word “conditional.” And let us speak of God’s unconditional covenant and our calling within that covenant, not as a condition upon which God’s fellowship may possibly rest, but as the fruit of the irresistible operation, of the Spirit of God in Christ Jesus within our hearts and lives.

H. Veldman.

Chapter 8

God’s Covenant And The Promise, Inseparably Connected

God’s Covenant and The Promise.

God’s covenant with man, we have maintained thus far, is wholly unconditional. To be sure, our calling and covenant obligation must be maintained. We must believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and hope unto the end. We must fight the good fight of faith that no man may take our crown. We must put off the old man with all his evil works and lusts and put on the new man which is created after God in true righteousness and holiness. We must repent and turn from evil unto the Lord and love Him with all our heart and soul and mind and strength. Moreover, we also have a word to address those, in the name of the Lord, who walk not in the way of His precepts. Of course, not a word of peace and life and comfort. Not even an Arminian can address a word of comfort and life to those who continue to walk in the ways of sin. To them we declare that they are responsible for their iniquity, that the wages of sin is death, that the Lord requires of them their repentance and will hold them accountable, yea, that they who have known the way of truth but have not walked therein will be beaten with double stripes. Indeed, our churches maintain the responsibility of man.

But, this does not annul or weaken in any sense of the word the unconditional character of the covenant of the Lord with man. God’s covenant is wholly unconditional. This, we noted in our preceding article, is taught throughout the Scriptures. Such is also the clear teaching of our Baptism Form, to which we also called attention. Let us therefore emphasize the unconditional character of God’s covenant and our calling. Our calling, our obligation to walk in all the precepts of the Lord, is not the condition but the fruit of Jehovah’s covenant with us. This, we noted, does not excuse man when he tramples the precepts of the Lord under foot. However, man’s responsibility and duty to serve the Lord must never be presented as contradictory to the unconditional character of the grace of the Lord our God.

God's Covenant and the Promise Inseparably Connected.

That God's covenant with man and the promise are inseparably connected is evident from many things. This is evident, first of all, from the struggle which is being waged in the present day in the Netherlands in regard to the issue of the Covenant. Dr. H. Ridderbos, professor at the theological school of the Reformed or "Synodical" Churches in the Netherlands, wrote a pamphlet entitled "*The Promise of the Covenant of Grace.*" He evidently associates, as is evident from this title, the two concepts "covenant" and "promise." According to the Liberated Churches all are in the covenant and the promise is for all. Such is the presentation of the views of these churches as appearing in this pamphlet of Dr. Ridderbos; page 6, and we have no reason, it seems to me, to doubt the truthfulness of this observation of Dr. Ridderbos. This quotation from the pamphlet, "The Promise of the Covenant of Grace," reads as follows:

"If one asks, what prompts the grieved or departed brethren (did these brethren simply withdraw from the Reformed Churches or were they cast out? –the Christian Reformed Churches of our land also prefer to speak of us as having withdrawn, whereas it is a fact that we were cast out– H.V.) to lay thereupon such great emphasis and even to disrupt the church for that reason, rather than submit to the confession of the church, then one must refer to the collectivist point of procedure of their conception. According to them all children of the believers are comprehended in the Covenant in the same sense, they all receive in the same sense the whole Baptism and the entire promise. That is the great; all-controlling thought of their entire conception, because otherwise, so they believe, one should fall short of the certainty of the Covenant and the certainty of faith within the Covenant." (The translation is of the undersigned).

The meaning of this passage is clear: if we merely preach that the promise is only for the elect, then the sacrament of baptism cannot bestow certainty and assurance because one must know first whether he is in the covenant and any assurance, therefore, must be based on an assumption we must assume of our children that they are elect. The Liberated Churches of the Netherlands declared that they demand certainty and will therefore have nothing to do with an assumption.

And as far as the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands are concerned in this present controversy, although they would maintain that the promise is only for the elect, yet they, too, wish to say something of or for *all* the children of the believers. They proceed from the principle of presumptive regeneration and teach that we must assume the regeneration of all the children who receive the sacrament of baptism. However, it is evident from this conflict in the Netherlands, that a discussion of the Covenant must revolve about and include a discussion of the promise.

That God's covenant with man and the promise are inseparably connected is evident also from the writings of Reformed theologians of the past. We have already quoted from Dr. Ridderbos of the Netherlands. We could also quote from men as Kuyper and Bavinck in support of this contention. Professor Berkhof, in his "*Systematic Theology*" surely associates the covenant and the promise. On pages 265-271, when discussing the so-called "Covenant of Redemption" or "Counsel of Peace" between the Father and the Son, the professor speaks of Requirements and Promises. And speaking of the contents of the Covenant of Grace (page 277) he speaks of the Promises of God and the Response of Man. It is evident, therefore, that Professor Berkhof surely associates the Covenant of Grace and the Promise.

And the same is also true, we know, of the late Prof. W. Heyns. He sought the essence of the covenant in the promise. And the promise, we know, he explained in the Arminian sense: That God established His covenant with us and with our children simply meant, according to the late professor: that God promised or offered His salvation to all. The sacrament of baptism he explained as a seal of God whereby the Lord confirmed the salvation of all, gave to all without distinction the assurance that He would bestow upon them eternal life and glory. Be this as it may, it is a fact, therefore, that also the late Professor Heyns associated the covenant and the promise.

Thirdly, this connection between the covenant and the promise is also evident from the sacrament, the sign and seal of the covenant. Circumcision was the sign of the Covenant in the Old Dispensation. This sign, administered to all the male children of believers, consisted in the cutting away of the foreskin. Is it not evident therefore, that this sign was a picture of God's realization of His promise in and through Jesus Christ, His Son, our Lord? It was a symbol, was it not, of the realization of our redemption through the blood of Christ the sign itself was bloody. And, besides, it also directed the attention of the believing Israelite to the fact that the Christ would come into, our flesh and blood in the organical life of the covenant.

And Baptism is the sign of the covenant in the New Dispensation. In our Baptism Form we read, in paragraph 2 of Part One:

"In like manner, when we are baptized in the name of the Holy Ghost, the Holy Ghost, assures us, by this holy sacrament, that He will dwell in us, and sanctify us to be members of Christ, applying unto us, that which we have in Christ, namely, the washing away of our sins, and the daily renewing of our Lives, till we shall finally be presented without spot or wrinkle among the assembly of the elect in life eternal."

In other words, the Lord assures us in the holy sacrament of Baptism that He will

realize and fulfill His promise of salvation in us even unto the uttermost. It is evident, therefore, also from our Baptism Form that the sacrament of the covenant and the promise of God are inseparably connected.

That the covenant of God with man and the promise are inseparably connected lies in the very nature of the case. Fact is, they are inseparable. We would not merely affirm that the heart of the covenant is the promise, understanding the promise now in the Reformed sense of the word. This would imply that the establishment of God's covenant with us consists in His bestowing upon us of His promise of salvation. But we would affirm that the heart of the promise is surely the covenant and its realization.

This is surely true of Genesis 3:15, where we read: "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." What does the Lord promise here, at the very dawn of history, in this key-text which discloses to us, fully and completely, all of history? Merely that He will grant His Church, in Christ, the victory over all her enemies? This, to be sure, is implied in this text of Holy Writ. But notice, God will put enmity between His people and the party of the world and of darkness. And enmity is nothing else than the love and friendship of Jehovah. Hence, God promises here that He will put His love into our hearts, and grant us the eternal victory, the victory of His eternal and heavenly tabernacle.

And this is also taught in Gen. 17:7-8: "And I will establish My covenant between Me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God." Notice how the covenant and the promise are identified here. God is promising Abraham something here –what? He promises His friend in this passage that He will establish His covenant with him and with his seed for an everlasting covenant. And what will the Lord establish with Abraham and his seed when He establishes with them His covenant? The Lord declares that He will be a God unto him and to his seed after him (see 2 Cor. 6:16-18 and our reference to this passage in a previous article, Feb. 1 issue -- Chapter 4, Editor). And all this, we read, will be realized in the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession.

As Reformed people we are aware of the fact, of course, that the land of Canaan in the Old Dispensation was a type and symbol of the heavenly Canaan. Fact is, Abraham himself, we read in Acts 7:5, never received any inheritance in that earthly land of the Old Testament. Hence, in Gen. 17:7-8 the Lord promises to Abraham that He will cause him and his seed to be His people forever in the heavenly renewal of all things in glory. And this promise is identified with His covenant in this

passage of Holy Writ. Christ, Who is centrally our salvation, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit by Whom we receive Christ and His salvation, the new heavens and the new earth (and all this surely constitutes the establishment of God's covenant, communion and friendship, with us) are surely held before us in Holy Writ as the content of the blessed promise of the Lord. Consequently, that the promise and the covenant should be inseparably connected and that our conception of the one must also determine our conception of the other, lies in the very nature of the case, It is clear, therefore, why a discussion of the covenant must also include a discussion of the promise.

The Idea of The Promise.

God's promise must not be confused with an offer. There is, of course, a fundamental difference between a promise and an offer. An offer always presupposes three things. It presupposes, in the first place, a willingness on the part of him who makes the offer to bestow something. God, then, declares His willingness to bestow salvation upon all. It presupposes, in the second place, that the Lord actually offers this salvation to all. Mind you, this does not mean that He announces or proclaims to all His salvation. We also believe that the Lord proclaims His salvation to others besides the elect. But an offer implies that the Lord declares it to be His Divine desire and intention that all may accept the proffered salvation. And, an offer presupposes, in the third place, that man, the recipient of this offer of salvation, is also able of himself to accept this invitation. God offers salvation; man must accept it.

Let us now attempt to read the word "offer" instead of "promise" into the following passages. We read in Gen. 3:15 the oft-repeated words: "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Need anything be said here? Does the Lord offer His love to the seed of the woman? If so, who, then, would ever fight the battle of the Lord? The *Lord* will put enmity, etc. He does not offer something here. He promises to do something. In Gen. 12:2-3 we read: "And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." Doesn't the text sound absurd if you insert the word "offer" into this passage? Besides, does not Holy Writ inform us that both, Abraham and Sarah, had died as far as the bringing forth of children was concerned?

In Deut. 9:26-29 we read: "I prayed therefore unto the Lord, and said, O Lord God, destroy not Thy people and Thy inheritance, which Thou hast redeemed through Thy greatness, which Thou hast brought forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand. Remember Thy servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; look not unto the stubbornness of this people, nor to their wickedness; nor to their sin: Lest the land

whence Thou broughtest us out say, Because the Lord was not able to bring them into the land which He promised them, and because He hated them, He hath brought them out to slay them in the wilderness. Yet they are Thy people and Thine inheritance, which Thou broughtest out by Thy mighty power and by Thy stretched out arm.” Does Israel’s entrance into Canaan, in this passage, depend upon the people? Fact is, they had sinned, were utterly unworthy. And fact is also that Moses here appeals to the faithfulness of the Lord. The Lord had promised Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Moses here pleads upon the promise of the unchangeable Jehovah.

In Ps. 105:42 we read: “For He remembered His holy promise, and Abraham His servant.” Why, according to the context of these words, did the Lord open the rock that the waters gushed out, and why did Jehovah satisfy them with quails and with bread from heaven? Did He offer these to His people? He did so only because He remembered His promise to Abraham. It would be absurd, would it not, to read “offer” here instead of promise?

In the following passages from Isaiah, chapter 9, verse 6 and chapter 59; verses 16 and 21, we have the Lord’s promise of salvation to His people in Christ, and how ridiculous they would sound if that salvation were actually an offer instead of a promise of the Lord: “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. . . . And He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore His arm brought salvation (did He offer it -H.V.?) unto Him; and His righteousness, it sustained Him. . . . As for Me, this is My covenant with them, saith the Lord; My Spirit that is upon thee, and My words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed nor out of the mouth of thy seed’s seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever.” How could the word of God express this absolute and positive and certain language if the matter of our salvation were to be regarded as an offer?

And so we could continue. We’ could refer you to Rom. 9:24-26, Heb. 11, Acts 13:23, and a host of other passages. The promise of the Lord, whereof we read over and over again in the Scriptures; is never to be confused with an offer. To the contrary, it is God’s announcement, not of what He universally offers and we must accept, but of that which He, and He alone, will perform faithfully and irresistibly.

The Content of the Promise

We need not dwell at length on this point, because of the nature of these articles. We can be brief. Sometimes the word “promise” emphasizes the idea of “*God- delijke toezegging*,” the Divine pledge, God’s announcement although even then one can never separate the pledge from its content, that which is pledged the word probably used

in this sense in Acts 13:23, In Hebrews 11:39, on the other hand, the emphasis falls upon the content of the promise. We read there: "And these all having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise." It is a fact, we know, that these did receive the promise as far as the announcement is concerned. But the promise from the viewpoint of its content they had, as yet not received. And to this the apostle makes reference in the following verse, vs. 10. Sometimes we read of promise in the singular as in Hebrews 11:39 and then again of promises as in 2 Cor. 1:20. The distinction is clear. When Scripture speaks of the promise in the singular it refers to the one, great, promise of salvation in Christ Jesus, our Lord. The plural "promises" refers to that promise of the Lord from the aspect of its many variations.

Finally, the content of the promise of God is viewed from several points of view. At times the content of the promise is identified with the Christ, as in: Gen. 3:15; 2 Cor. 1:20; Is. 9:6; Deut. 18:15; Num. 24:17. In Acts 2 :33 and in Eph. 1:13 the Holy Spirit is identified with the promise. In the former passage He is called the "promise of the Spirit" and in the latter passage we read of Him as the "Spirit of promise." Acts 2:33 emphasizes the truth, not only that He is the promised Spirit, but that the Spirit Himself is the promise, because in Him the actual realization of God's promise of eternal life occurs. In 2 Tim. 1:1 and 1 John 2:25 we read of the "promise of life." In 2 Pet. 3:4 the apostle Peter, speaks of the "promise of His future." And in Rom. 4:13 the promise which the Lord gave to Abraham assured that man of God that he would become the "heir of the world." All these various passages speak, essentially, of the same promise of the God of our salvation, but merely from slightly different viewpoints.

In the light of all this, we would define the promise as the announcement of the eternal Jehovah, that He, and He alone, in and because of and through Christ Jesus, our Lord, and by His Spirit, the Spirit of the risen and highly exalted Lord, will bestow upon His people, whom He sovereignly elected, and who by nature are conceived and born dead in sins and trespasses, the life of His blessed covenant fellowship in eternal and heavenly perfection, and that in connection with the glorious renewal of all things, and using all things unto the realization thereof as means.

It is this promise of salvation in Christ Jesus which enabled the child of God throughout the Old Dispensation to endure all the sufferings of this present time, only because this promise was the pledge of the eternally faithful God. The unspeakable glory of this promise but also the certainty of it sustained the child of God in the midst of all his trials and afflictions. And now we purpose to show in subsequent articles the particular wholly unconditional character of this promise or these promises of the alone blessed God, the God of our salvation.

H. Veldman

Chapter 9

The Promise And Romans 9, “Not as thought the Word of God hath taken none effect...”

God's Covenant and The Promise. (Rom. 9)

We concluded our previous article with the statement “And now we purpose to show in subsequent articles the particular and wholly unconditional character of this promise or these promises of the alone blessed God, the God of our salvation.” In that article we called attention to the fact that any discussion of the Covenant must include a discussion of the promise. The two are inseparable. This, we observed, is evident from many things. Fact is, the covenant and its realization may surely be regarded as the very heart and core of the promise – a person's conception of the promise will determine – his conception of the covenant.

As Protestant Reformed Churches we believe the promise of God to be, not an offer which He graciously extends to all men who hear the gospel (the doctrine of the Christian Reformed Church), but the Divine pledge of eternal salvation in Christ Jesus, a pledge which God Himself and which God alone fulfills, and which is therefore particular and wholly unconditional. This idea of the promise is the Scriptural presentation throughout the Word of God. We purpose to call attention to this in a few subsequent articles. Let us, particularly as Protestant Reformed young people, become more fully acquainted also with this particular part of our rich heritage of the truth in the light of the Word of God. These truths are surely of the greatest significance. What can possibly be more comforting and assuring to us than to know that the work of salvation is exclusively Divine, from the beginning even unto the end, that His promises never fail, that they never fail only because of Him Who is not a man that He should lie or the son of man that He should repent but the almighty and ever faithful Jehovah Whose will none can resist and Whose promise must be fulfilled?

The Importance of Romans 9.

There is, as we all undoubtedly surmise, considerable aversion to this particular portion of Holy Writ. This is understandable in the light of the content of this chapter. One need but read this chapter hastily and superficially and very soon he will experience within his own heart and mind a definite reaction against the truth revealed in this Scripture of God. This is evident from the chapter itself. Twice the apostle Paul intercepts a question which is directed, by the natural man against the truth that God is God alone (verses 14 and 19). Why, it is asked, should so much

significance be attached to one particular portion of the Word of God? We must have all of Scripture, not merely a part of it. The entire Word of God must speak to us, not merely an isolated text here and there.

This reasoning should not concern us too much. Firstly, if it be said that we must have all of Scripture and not merely a part of it, I agree but hasten to add that we must also have Romans 9. Did you ever hear of a person, who objects to undue emphasis upon Romans 9, also object to other portions of Holy Writ, such as the Sermon on the Mount, which he considers more in harmony with the tone of the gospel and is probably quoted oftener by him than Romans 9 is quoted by those who have learned to bow the knee before the sovereignty of Him Who alone is the God of heaven and earth.

Secondly, Scripture is not in conflict with itself. Romans 9 is therefore important. In this chapter the apostle is revealing unto us the entire truth of the Word of God but as applied to Israel and the promise of Jehovah. The apostle places himself in this particular Word of God before the problem of Israel and their rejection in the light of the promise of the Lord. And what are his findings? Led by the infallible Spirit of God he is enabled to regard this vexing question, this heart-rending problem in the light of the truth that God is God alone. And this truth is, we know, the teaching of Holy Writ throughout.

In the third place, in our present effort to establish Scripturally that God's promise is particular and unconditional, we will not limit ourselves to Romans 9. Indeed, we will permit the Scriptures to speak.

Fourthly, Romans 9 is extremely significant also for another reason which we have as yet not mentioned. Let us please bear in mind that the apostle is not treating an isolated case here. Paul is not discussing a "little" thing here, some "pet" incident which he experienced in his own life. He is, if you please, throwing the "spotlight" upon the history of the development of God's covenant throughout the ages. That, and nothing less than that, is the issue in this Scripture of the Lord. He is speaking, mind you, of the promise to Abraham, the father of all the believers, of whom we also read in Romans 4 and the epistle to the Galatians. He calls attention to the rejection of the Jews, the salvation of the Gentiles, and therefore the development of God's covenant throughout the ages. He does this in chapters 9-11 of this epistle. The apostle, therefore, throws light upon the entire Old Dispensation, and on the New Dispensation, and that in the light of the promise of Jehovah. It is clear, is it not, that Romans 9, and the two subsequent chapters call attention to the realization of God's promise of salvation. The significance of this particular part of the Word of God ought, therefore, to be well established.

Romans 9.

Verses 6-8. In these verses we read:

“Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel; Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, in Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are the the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.”

We should note in the first place that the apostle, Paul, is struggling here with a tremendous problem. There is, first of all, the word or promise of God. We need not doubt the identity of this word or promise of God. The words of verses 7-8 surely reminds us of the word of the Lord as it came to the father of believers according to chapter 17 of Genesis. The Lord had promised Abraham that He would establish His covenant with him and with his seed for an everlasting covenant, that He would make him the father of many nations, and that he and his seed would inherit the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession. Briefly expressed, God’s promise to Abraham had been that he and his seed would partake of the salvation of Lord forever. And, secondly, the apostle is confronted with the rejection of Israel. As a nation the Old Testament people of God had been cast out, and Christ’s blood had indeed come upon them and upon their children.

This rejection, however, also applied to thousands of individual Israelites already in the Old Dispensation. Thousands, we know, perished in that fearful wilderness journey of forty years, and of them the Scriptures tell us that the Lord had no pleasure in them. They had perished, also everlastingly. Moreover, it should be noted that this constitutes a problem for the apostle, a personal problem. O, he does not glory in the eternal damnation of these Israelites. He does not glory in reprobation as such. To the contrary, the truth is most painful to him. In verses 1-5 he declares of himself that there is great heaviness and continual sorrow in his heart, and also that he could wish himself accursed from Christ for the sake of his brethren, his kinsmen according to the flesh.

This must also characterize us. God forbid that we should glory in reprobation as such, that the doctrine of the Lord’s sovereign reprobation should afford us special delight and satisfaction. How could this be? Is it a matter of personal indifference or personal satisfaction for us when our children begin to reveal themselves as opposed to the things of the Lord and of His covenant? Does and should it not fill our heart with great heaviness and sorrow when they refuse to heed the commands of God and walk in the precepts of Jehovah? Yet, however true this may be, the truth must be proclaimed. The fact of Israel’s rejection is indeed a fact of tremendous sorrow for the apostle. Nevertheless, only then can he have comfort and only then can we have comfort if we regard this fact in the light of the sovereignty of God. The fact itself we

cannot change or alter. Let the Lord explain His own work. He, and He alone, can fill our hearts and minds and souls with rest and peace.

We are aware, I am sure, how some would explain the phenomenon of God's promise and this rejection of Israel according to the flesh. They would have us believe that the promise of salvation is given to all, in the sense that the Lord would bestow upon all salvation, but that the actual fulfillment of this promise is dependent upon man. The question, we understand, is not whether the promise as such comes to all, whether it is announced or proclaimed to all. A general proclamation of a particular gospel is not the same, we understand, as the proclamation of a general gospel. The gospel must surely be preached to others besides the elect.

The question, however, is whether the promise comes to all in the sense that whoever is born within the covenant is entitled to, has a right to all the blessedness of life eternal. God, then, has simply prescribed, willed salvation for all. Our actual receiving of this salvation is contingent upon our acceptance of it. God promises it to all, that is, He declares that He would have all men be saved, that He is ready and eager to, bestow salvation upon all if only they will accept this proffered salvation.

This view, we understand, is arminianism. Arminianism is humanism, man-ism. Arminianism is the humanizing of salvation. Arminianism finds in man the beginning, the continuance, the end and purpose of salvation. In the arminianistic scheme of things all things revolve about man. He preaches a predestination upon foreseen faith –hence, the Lord's election of the sinner has been preceded by an act of that sinner, his faith in Christ. He preaches a Christ Who is primarily concerned, not with the glory of the everlasting Father and His righteousness, but with the salvation of men –hence, this Christ of the arminians dies for all men. And he also preaches a gospel in which man is the center figure. The success of his gospel preaching is determined by the amount of souls won for Jesus. In his preaching of the gospel he therefore offers salvation to all. This view is also Heynsianism. According to this view, the sacrament of Baptism. is an undoubted seal and testimony of God to every child that is baptized that the Lord would bestow salvation upon him, but that the Lord's will to save him is contingent upon his acceptance of the proffered salvation. And this is also the official doctrine of the Christian Reformed Church as expressed in the First of the now famous Three Points, although of late that church has "repudiated" Heyns because she would court or woo favor of the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands.

However, if this be true, then, according to the apostle in these verses, the word of God had taken none effect, that is, the word or promise of the Lord has failed. We must notice the argumentation of the apostle here. Paul is distinguishing in these verses between a universal and a particular view of the promise of God. He writes for example: "Not all are Israel which are of Israel ; not *all* are children although they

are the seed of Abraham according to the flesh; *not all* are the children of God; *not all* are counted for the seed. The reasoning of the apostle is clear. If the promise were Divinely intended for all, then that promise did not take effect; the word of the Lord failed.

True, if the promise be regarded merely as an offer, one could hardly say that it failed simply because many had not accepted it. The fact that man does not accept salvation offered him does not annul the fact that God had earnestly desired his salvation. If the promise of Jehovah be merely an offer, that offer stands and is well-meant regardless whether I accept or reject it. Besides, if this word of God whereof the apostle speaks in verse 6 be merely an offer the words that follow, "hath taken none effect" would have no sense. One cannot say of an offer that it hath or hath not taken effect. An offer is simply impotent. No power proceeds from an offer. To offer salvation implies that our receiving of it depends not upon the one who makes the offer but upon him to whom the salvation is offered.

How difficult becomes the picture in Romans 9 if we bear in mind that the apostle is speaking of the promise of God! If it be true that the promise of Jehovah to Abraham that he and his seed would partake of the salvation of Jehovah was Divinely meant for all, than it must follow that the word of God has failed. Why? Please bear in mind that we are all by nature children of the devil, objects of wrath and children of disobedience. That some in the Old Dispensation were saved and believed is surely not to be ascribed to the fact that they accepted an offered salvation of God. This they could never do of themselves. That they believed and were saved is only because the promise of God had taken effect in them, that is, God had fulfilled in them His Word of salvation by His grace and Spirit. If, on the other hand, others were not saved (and we know that many thousands perished in the wilderness), and the Lord had given them also His promise, then their destruction can only be attributed to the fact that the Lord had failed to do what He had promised. The Lord God, then, had failed to carry out His Word. His promise had become void, worthless. Then Jehovah had ceased to be the dependable, unchangeable, everlastingly faithful God of His covenant. This is the thought implied by the apostle in the first part of vs. 6.

Now notice, if you will, that the apostle immediately declares in verse 6 that this cannot be. We read, do we not: "Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect." This, if you please, is the apostle's first statement when he begins to treat his difficult problem in this epistle to the Romans. He does not begin to reason and finally arrive at the conclusion that the word of the Lord hath taken none effect. He declares this at the very outset. He first makes this positive assertion and then proceeds to confirm it. "Not," he writes, "as though the word of God hath taken none effect." Whatever may be the solution of this problem one thing is sure: it cannot be true that the word of God hath taken none effect. Why? For the simple reason that it is the word, the promise of God. And for a word *of God* not to take effect is simply

impossible. The promises of the Lord are Yea and Amen. They never fail. They cannot fail. God never “lets His people down.”

But, how must we account for, the fact that thousands of Israelites perished in the wilderness; yea, that the nation itself was rejected because of their rejection of the Stone which was made the head of the corner? Why is it true that the promise of God has not failed? And the answer is simply this: the promise of God was never given to all. Let us ask the question honestly and in all simplicity. Are all Israel because they are of Israel? Are all children merely because they are the natural seed of Abraham? Are all the children of the flesh also children of God and must all be counted for the seed? What must we say to our children when they come to years of discretion? The Liberated Churches of the Netherlands declare that we must have something positive to say unto them. What must we tell them? Must we say to them that the promise of salvation is also Divinely intended for them? That is what the late Prof. Heyns would have us say to all our children.

The answer of the apostle to this question is clear. In the first. place, we read that in Isaac shall Abraham’s seed be called. The idea of the apostle is that Isaac only shall be called the seed, accounted for the seed. Abraham, we know, had many children. He was the father of Ishmael, born to him of Hagar. After, the death of Sarah he married Keturah and several children were born to him of Keturah. The Lord had declared to the father of believers that He would establish with him and with his seed His covenant for an everlasting covenant and that He would cause him and his seed to inherit the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession. Did this promise of God pertain to all the seed of Abraham according to the flesh? Would all the children of Abraham, because they are the natural seed of Abraham, also be accounted as the seed whereof we read in Genesis 17:7-8? And the answer is that only Isaac would be accounted as the seed; he and *not* the others. In other words, the promise of the Lord did not apply to all the natural descendants of Abraham, but only to Isaac, the child of the promise.

And this leads us to another element in the answer of the apostle. We read, do we not, that “the children of the promise are counted for the seed.” The expression, “children of the promise” is a beautiful expression. The children of the promise are not merely promised children, children that had been promised, or children to whom the promise pertains. The reason is self-evident. The apostle is treating exactly the question to whom the promise of God applied when He appeared to Abraham according to Genesis 17. What sense would it give to say that the promise of God applied to the children of the promise, that is, to those children to whom the promise applied. Wouldn’t this be “begging the question”? The children of the promise are the children born of the promise. They are the children born through the power of the promise. Only to them does the promise of God apply. Hence, how can the word of God fail to take effect when the Lord Himself fulfills it, brings forth His people

according to election and by irresistible grace?

This truth is now illustrated by Paul in the history of Isaac. Isaac, we read, in distinction from the other children of Abraham, is counted for the seed. Besides, he is the child of the promise, brought forth by the power of the promise. He was the child of parents who had died as far as the bringing forth of children was concerned. To these “dead” parents had come the word of the Lord that “according to the time of life Sarah would have a son.” And Abraham. and Sarah had believed. And through their faith the mighty power of God as He alone fulfills His promise had operated; Sarah had conceived and had brought forth a son; Isaac was indeed the child of the promise, brought forth by God Himself through the faith Abraham and Sarah. Their faith, we understand, was exactly this, not that they could bring forth this son, but that God could and would fulfill His own word. And thus this Isaac is a type and shadow of all the spiritual people of God throughout the ages. We cannot bring forth children of God. We can only bring forth children like unto ourselves, children of wrath and of disobedience. We can only bring forth children unto death and themselves characterized by death. It is God alone Who can bring forth children of the light and that by the irresistible grace of His promise.

The conclusion is clear. God’s promise never fails, but always takes effect. Why? Firstly, because it pertains only to the children of the promise, not to all the natural seed. God’s promises simply are not given to, intended for all. And, secondly, God Himself realizes His own Word. He is Jehovah, the unchangeable faithful Covenant God. He will faithfully do what He promises to do. Hence, the promise of God, according to Romans 9:6-8, is particular and wholly unconditional.

H. Veldman.

Chapter 10

The Promise And Romans 9,

“I will have mercy upon whom I will have mercy...”

God’s Covenant and the promise
(Romans 9 continued)

We concluded our previous article with the remark that the promise of God, according to Romans 9:6-8, is particular and wholly unconditional. It cannot be true, writes the apostle, that the word of God has taken none effect. God’s promise never fails. This, applied to the phenomenon of Israel’s rejection, can only be understood if we bear in mind, in the first place, that “in Isaac shall thy seed be called.” The children of the flesh are not the children of God; the natural seed of Abraham are not all children; only the children of the promise are counted for the seed. Hence, the promise of God never fails inasmuch as that promise was never intended for all.

And, in the second place, the promise of God is only intended for the children of the promise. And the children of the promise are the children born of the promise, by the power of the promise. Hence, the promise of God never fails for it is God Himself Who fulfills His own promise in the people of His eternal good pleasure.

Verses 10-13. – We quote:

“And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; (for the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calleth;) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.”

Let us note the following facts here. In the first place, verse 13 of, this passage of the Word of God must retain its full significance. Attempts have been made to weaken this text, to read here: Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I loved less. Also Hodge would ascribe this interpretation to verse 13 of this chapter. This interpretation, however, is impossible. And this is abundantly evident from Malachi 1:1-4, where we read:

“The burden of the word of the Lord to Israel by Malachi. I have loved you, saith the Lord. Yet ye say, Wherein hast Thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob’s brother? saith the Lord: yet I loved Jacob, And I hated Esau and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness. Whereas Edom saith, We are, impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places; thus saith the Lord of hosts, They shall build, but I will throw down; and they shall call them, The border of wickedness, and, The people against whom the Lord hath indignation for ever.”

The meaning of these words is clear. The hatred of the Lord toward Esau, according to this passage, does not merely imply that Jehovah loved Esau less than Jacob, but it is hatred which will lay Edom desolate; yea, they are a people against whom the Lord hath indignation even for ever.

Secondly, this election and reprobation of Jacob and Esau must be applied to them, personally. The attempt is made to nationalize their election and reprobation. God, it is said, would not hate individuals, such as Jacob or Esau. The words of the apostle must be understood in a national sense. Jacob and Esau are meant here as nations. And even as God’s love of Israel as a nation does not imply that all the Israelites were true children of the Lord, so also God’s hatred of the descendants of Esau, Edom, does not necessarily imply that all the Edomites were therefore children of wrath and of disobedience. In support of this view attention is called, first, to the fact that Malachi speaks of Edom, and, secondly, that the Lord Himself

declares to Rebecca (Gen. 25:23) that two nations or peoples would be born of her. To this we answer, in the first place, that any interpretation of this passage which would nationalize the expression of verse 13 must necessarily include the two persons, Jacob and Esau. We do not deny that Malachi speaks of Edom and that the Lord declares to Rebecca that two peoples would be born of her. However, to these peoples surely belong the twin brothers, Jacob and Esau. But, in the second place, the passage in Romans 9 is surely and undeniably personal. We read of Rebecca and Isaac and of their twin sons, Jacob and Esau, and that the elder would serve the younger. In the book of Genesis we are told that Rebecca inquired of the Lord before the birth of her two sons. We are familiar with the answer of the Lord. Surely, whatever the Lord told her was literally fulfilled also in the lives of her two sons. Besides, Rebecca inquired of the Lord, did she not, concerning the two sons that were in her bosom and it is with respect to them that Jehovah answers her. And, finally, the apostle, Paul, is speaking in this context in Romans 9 of the children of Abraham. He is not speaking here of peoples, of nations, but of the natural children of Abraham. And having spoken in verses 6-8 of Isaac, he continues in verses 10-13 and calls attention to the individual children of Isaac and Rebecca. Verses 10-13, therefore, call our attention to the twin sons of Rebecca.

Thirdly, Jacob's election and Esau's reprobation are an election and reprobation unto salvation. Also this has been disputed. What we read here, it is said, is merely temporary and temporal. Esau, and his descendants, too, was merely rejected in the sense that he was cut off from the historical, temporal blessings of the Old Dispensation. This we grant. Esau and his descendants were indeed cut off from the covenant of God in the historical, Old Dispensational sense of the word. But, to be cut off in the Old Testament from these historical blessings implied nothing less than the separation from God's eternal covenant. There was no salvation in the Old Dispensation apart from Israel. Hence, the election of Jacob and the rejection of Esau must indeed be regarded as an election and reprobation unto eternity. Need we prove that this is the idea of the apostle according to the context? Does he not write that he could wish himself accursed from Christ for the sake of his brethren according to the flesh? Does he not speak of the great heaviness and continual sorrow of his heart exactly because Israel, as according to the flesh, does not share the promise of the Lord, a promise which saves even unto the uttermost? Besides, verse 13 speaks of the *love* of the Lord toward Jacob and the *hatred* of Jehovah upon Esau. And does not verse 11 declare of the purpose of God that it according to election must stand?

What does this passage then teach us with respect to our present subject, the particular and unconditional character of God's promise? Paul is discussing in Romans 9 the Word of promise of God and asserts that, that promise did not fail, even though many Jews perished in the wilderness and the nation later was rejected because of its rejection of the Christ. In verses 4-6 he establishes the truth that the

promise of Jehovah never fails because it is particular and is realized by the Lord Himself. And in the verses 10-13 the apostle continues to confirm this truth in the example of Jacob and Esau. Notice, please, the similarity of Jacob and Esau. They have the same parents. This could not be said of Isaac and Ishmael. They are twin brothers and are therefore of the same age. In fact, Esau is the older of the two. They have been born and raised in the same covenant sphere. From a natural point of view they have, therefore, everything in common. Why, then, according to the text, did Esau not receive the promise? Was the promise meant for him as well as for Jacob? Was it a covenant privilege or blessing for Esau that he was born in the sphere of the covenant? Is it true that he did not receive the promise because he rejected it? Indeed, he rejected the covenant of the Lord, trampled it under foot, and became in that sense a covenant breaker. To be sure, he revealed in all his actions that he desired no part of the covenant-fellowship of the Lord, that he was carnal and therefore loved the things below rather than the things above. But, does this imply that the promise of the Lord *therefore* failed in him? Was the promise of eternal life also meant for him and did the Lord reject him because he rejected the Lord? How clear and beyond the shadow of every doubt is the answer of the apostle! Paul declares that the Lord hated him *before he ever did* evil. For, we read, the purpose of God according to election must stand, that is, God fulfills His purpose *as He has eternally* willed it. Hence, Jacob and Esau illustrate the sovereignty of God. The promise of Jehovah did not, fail in this instance because it, was Divinely intended only for Jacob. The promise of the Lord is particular and unconditional.

Verses 14-18. We quote:

“What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For He saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew My power in thee, and that My name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath He mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth.”

In the verses 14-16 the apostle maintains the sovereign mercy of God and the fact that He is righteous because He is God. The question which is asked in verse 14, “Is there unrighteousness with God?”, knows but one answer. And that answer reads: God forbid. Is God unrighteous? That is an impossible question. That question arises within the heart of the natural man. God is God! He does not merely act righteously. *He* is righteousness. And all His acts are verity and judgment. In verses 15 and 16 the sovereign mercy of God is clearly set forth. This mercy, we read, is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but alone of God that sheweth mercy. And emphatically we read: “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will

have compassion on whom. I will have compassion.

Moses, too, was compelled to learn this lesson in the wilderness. To him also the Lord revealed that His mercy and His favor did not rest upon the entire people that had been delivered out of the land of Egypt, but that He would have mercy upon whom He would have mercy, and that He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion. Hence, the teaching of these verses, as far as the particular and unconditional character of God's promise is concerned, is clear. Does the mercy of the Lord depend upon us? Must we first will that mercy and compassion of Jehovah? Does it ever depend upon our willingness and readiness to accept or receive it? And, must we also run to the end? This is the Arminian presentation, is it not? We must not only will the mercy of God as far as our initial receiving of it is concerned, but we must also continue to will it unto the end. We must not only be willing to begin the race; but we must also run that race to its very end. The Arminian declares, therefore, that it is of him that willeth and of him that runneth. But, what saith the Scriptures? The Word of the Lord declares unto us that God's mercy is upon him to whom *He* wills to be merciful, and His compassion is upon him to whom *He* wills to shew compassion. God, therefore, in the bestowal of His mercy and compassion is not prompted by the will of man but by His own sovereign will. Notice, the promise is particular and unconditional. The promise of salvation is Divinely realized in those to whom the *Lord* wills to be merciful, upon whom *He wills* to bestow it.

In verses 17-18 the apostle calls our attention to the example of Pharaoh. That the Lord raised up Pharaoh does not merely mean that He elevated the Egyptian monarch to the throne. This would hardly exhaust the meaning of the apostle as far as the immediate context is concerned. In verse 17 we read that the Lord raised him up in order to shew His power in him and that His name might be declared throughout all the earth. And the following verse declares that "whom He will He hardeneth." All this, we say, hardly exhausts the meaning of the apostle when he declares that the Lord raised up Pharaoh in the sense that He elevated him to the Egyptian throne.

We must bear in mind that the Lord raised up *Pharaoh*. Pharaoh, according to the position which he occupies in Holy Writ, is the vain, utterly foolish, and wicked Egyptian monarch, who conceived of the monstrous absurdity to question and oppose Jehovah's sovereignty. As that wicked, monstrously godless, and foolish king he was raised up by the Lord. Step by step the Lord hardened him, so that he would increase in his wicked and inconceivable foolishness. It is true that we also read in the Scriptures that he hardened his own heart. Fact is, the Lord always operates, not apart from or contrary to the will and inclinations of man, but in harmony with the evil heart of man, so that the Lord's operation and the lusts and inclinations of any individual man are always in complete harmony with each other. Pharaoh, therefore, step by step increased in his abominable wickedness and, foolishness.

But we must remember that the Lord is sovereign and that He hardened that monarch's heart, so that Pharaoh, in all his foolishness and wickedness, was willed as such and raised up by the living God. Do we not read that the Scripture said this before time to Pharaoh? Did not Moses, in the name of the Lord, tell the Egyptian monarch before time what the Lord would do unto him (Exodus 9:13-16)? The hardened Pharaoh, therefore, is the fruit of the sovereign operation of the Lord. This is in harmony, not only with the Scriptural account in the book of Exodus, but also with the context of these words in Romans 9. Only then can we understand the apostle when he declares in verse 18 that "whom He will He *hardeneth*." And only then do we understand the Word of God when we read in the verses 19-21 of the Potter and the clay.

Upon the word of God concerning the Divine raising up of Pharaoh follow the well-known words of verse 18: "Therefore hath He mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He *hardeneth*." From a certain point of view these words are a repetition of what we read in verses 15-16. Both passages speak of the sovereign mercy of the Lord. The difference between these passages, however, is worthy of note. In verse 18 the apostle adds: "and whom He will He *hardeneth*." This latter thought; we readily understand, receives all the emphasis in connection with what we read in the Scriptures concerning Pharaoh. We probably might not be too hesitant to subscribe to the first part of verse 18. If asked whether the mercy of the Lord is sovereign we probably would not hesitate to give an affirmative answer. However, we might be hesitant to subscribe to the second part of this particular text. To say that the sovereign will of God is the cause of our salvation is not difficult. But, we shrink back from the declaration that the will of the Lord, is also the sovereign cause of the unbelief and wickedness of the sinner. The Arminian certainly refuses to endorse this statement of the apostle in verse 18. And the reformed man of infralapsarian persuasion is equally timid and hesitant as far as the endorsement of this declaration of the apostle is concerned. He does not hesitate to assert that we are saved only of Divine, sovereign mercy. But, when discussing the reprobate sinner and his eternal desolation, he would rather say that the Lord leaves him in his misery, or to quote the apostle now in the infralapsarian sense, I would read verse 18 as follows: "Therefore hath He mercy on whom He will have mercy, and He refuses mercy to whom He wills to refuse mercy."

Yet, we must not hesitate to endorse also this statement of the apostle. The Scriptures, then; not only, teach that the Lord sovereignly bestows mercy and salvation. But they are equally clear and lucid in their presentation of the truth that He sovereignly hardens. Unto the one He gives salvation and mercy, sovereignly; the other He hardens, also sovereignly. The Lord is responsible not only for the light but also for the darkness, not only for the children of the light but also for the children of darkness.

Indeed, also this text establishes the particular and unconditional character of the promise of God. That promise of God is surely not for all. Fact is, the Lord is merciful but He also hardeneth; He not only gives life but He also killeth! And then people continue to prate of an offer of salvation, of a desire of the Lord to save all who hear the gospel, when, according to the Scriptures it is God Who, during the preaching of the gospel of God, softens the hearts of some but hardens the others whom He hates from before the foundation of the world. We may surely conclude, that the Lord realizes His promise sovereignly only in the elect.

Verses 19-21. We read: "Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth He yet find fault? For who hath resisted His will? Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed Say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?"

Let us note the following. The question of verse 19, asked by the natural man to refute the truth of the Lord's absolute sovereignty, is a wicked question and devilishly untrue. The wicked sinner here, if you please, presents the truth as if he would serve the Lord but cannot because he cannot resist God's will, as if God ever works contrary to the will of man as a moral-rational agent. This is surely the wicked import of the question asked in this text. It is a fact, however, that there is never any conflict between God and man. The Lord always works sovereignly but also always through man as a moral agent. Never does an ungodly man complain because of his wickedness. The vessel of dishonor is perfectly or completely in harmony with the sin and darkness of his evil being. The question of verse 19 is, therefore, obviously wicked and devilishly untrue.

God, we read, is the Potter and man is the clay. The clay whereof the apostle speaks, that which the Lord makes according to the text, is not merely man as far as his natural, earthy existence is concerned. To teach merely that God makes men would certainly not provoke any adverse comment from the natural man. The Lord, we read, makes vessels unto dishonor. These vessels of dishonor are evidently the reprobates: Them, we read, the Lord makes. Indeed, we must maintain man's responsibility. It is surely true that the Lord never operates contrary to the will and desire of men. The Lord, indeed, works through the will of man. But it is equally true that, although the Lord works through the will of man, He works sovereignly. The responsibility of man is, therefore, not to be regarded as a truth which runs parallel to the truth of God's sovereignty, or even contrary to it, but it must be viewed as included in it, as subject to the truth that the Lord works all His good pleasure.

And the truth is indeed that God has the power, the sovereign right and authority to do as He pleases, to glorify His Name as He would, to make of the one lump vessels

unto honor in whom His soul delighteth and to make of the other lump vessels unto dishonor whom His soul hateth. And both are formed by the Lord, according to His sovereign good pleasure.

We, therefore, conclude that it is not man who determines God, but it is the Lord Who determines man. Hence, the promises of the Lord are never, according to this portion of the Word of God, contingent upon man. Romans 9 clearly sets forth the particular and wholly unconditional character of the promise of the God of our salvation.

H. Veldman.

Chapter 11
The Unconditional Promise
Confirmed With An Oath,
Hebrews 6:16-18

Hebrews 6:16-18

Romans 9, we have seen, surely establishes the particular and wholly unconditional character of the promise or promises of God. To this we called attention in the two previous numbers of our paper. The apostle Paul; we noted, was struggling with a great problem. He was confronted, on the one hand, with the word or promise of Jehovah that the Lord would bestow the salvation of His eternal covenant upon Abraham and his seed. And, on the other hand, he was troubled because of the rejection of Israel. We do well to bear in mind that this, constituted for the apostle a great problem, that it caused him great heaviness and sorrow of heart. The perishing of many Israelites according to the flesh was painful and distressing to Paul. And the same heaviness and sorrow of heart must characterize the people of God throughout the ages. Reprobation is not a doctrine which can accord anyone personal and carnal satisfaction.

Nevertheless, the truth of God must be proclaimed. Whatever our personal wishes and desires may be, never may we detract one iota from the sovereignty of God. Hence, according to the apostle, one thing is sure: it is not true that the word of God has taken none effect. Such would be impossible. God cannot lie. If, therefore, the promise of the Lord was not realized, in many Israelites according to the flesh, this is due only to the fact that this promise of Jehovah is particular, was never intended for all, and is realized by the alone sovereign Lord in those whom He has loved from before the foundation of the world.

To substantiate this truth the apostle directs us, successively, to the examples of Isaac, Jacob and Esau, the many Israelites who perished in the wilderness, Pharaoh, the figure of the potter and the clay. And it is especially the example of Pharaoh, as well as the figure of

the potter and the clay, which illustrates the truth, not only that the Lord is merciful to whom He will be merciful, but also that whom He will He hardeneth. The Lord, therefore, not only grants life; He also inflicts death. He not only makes alive; He also killeth. He not only calleth some unto eternal salvation through the preaching of the gospel; He also causes that same gospel to be a savour of death unto death. He not only wills the salvation of some; He also, according to His eternal good pleasure and unto the greatest manifestation of the glory of His name, wills the damnation of others. The Lord not only performs all His good pleasure in those who are saved; He is equally sovereign and irresistible with respect to the others who never know the way and the precepts of Jehovah. This is the pure and unadulterated truth which the holy writer holds before us in the ninth chapter of his epistle to the Romans. And now we will turn to other passages of the Word of God.

The passage which will engage our attention in this article, Hebrews 6 :16-18, reads as follows:

“For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of the promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath: That, by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation; who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.”

The Context.

A key-word in this chapter of Hebrews, especially in the verses 11-20 is the word “promise.” Another word of great significance in this passage, closely related to “promise,” is the word “hope.” This must be obvious to anyone who reads the latter half of Hebrews 6. Hope and promise, in this part of Holy Writ, we quickly surmise, are intimately related. Both refer to the same thing: our eternal salvation. The one views this salvation from the viewpoint of God, Who has promised it. The other regards this eternal glory from the viewpoint of the Christian as he hopes for it. And the question is of supreme importance, “How can we with certainty hope for that eternal salvation?” Is the promise conditional or unconditional? This question is of the greatest significance.

In verses 1-3 the apostle exhorts the church of God “to go on unto perfection.” We must not remain with the principles, the beginnings of the doctrine of Christ. We cannot remain young catechumens and continue satisfied with “Borstius Primer.” We must advance beyond the foundation stage. When engaged in the erection of a building we are not satisfied merely with the foundation; we continue our labors until the entire structure has been completed. We, too, as Christians, must go on to perfection; we must advance and grow, intellectually and spiritually. This we Will do, we read in verse 3, if God permit. Our growth depends upon the Lord. Fact is, all do not advance, and this, too, is dependent upon God.

Fact remains, according to verses 4-8, some who were once enlightened fall away. We need not at this time quote these verses, 4-8. Of these people we read that it is impossible that they be renewed unto repentance. It is definitely the thought of the holy writer here that it is impossible for God to renew them unto repentance. Only God can renew unto repentance. If, then, we read that it is impossible that they be renewed unto repentance, the implication of the expression is surely that such is Divinely impossible. Hence, their spiritual renewal and advance the Lord does not permit. However, according to verse. 9, the apostle is persuaded better things of the Hebrews, things that accompany salvation.

Hereupon the apostle proceeds to exhort the church of God once more unto spiritual diligence. He admonishes them in verses 11-12, that they be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises. Notice, "as in all covenants there are contained two parts" this is our part, namely, that we be not slothful but followers of them who inherit the promises. Upon this calling and obligation of the people of God, that they must fight the good fight of faith and. conduct themselves as the party of the living God, Scripture surely lays abundant emphasis. And now, to comfort this struggling church of God, to assure her of the certainty of her victory, the holy writer concludes this chapter by directing her to the living God, Who, to show unto the heirs of the promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed that promise with an oath.

Heirs Of The Promise.

Evidently, the promise in this passage must not be understood in the subjective sense of the word. Emphasis does not fall upon the promise as the solemn declaration of the living God, promising them eternal glory and salvation. The promise here must be regarded objectively, that which has been promised. The apostle is referring us to the promise of everlasting life. Notice also that the holy writer speaks of the heirs of the promise, not heir of the promise. Hence, it is evident that he does not merely refer to Abraham but to all the people of the Lord throughout the ages, also to the people of God of the New Dispensation. This fact surely establishes the heavenly character of the promises of God, also of the promise given to Abraham. Abraham, therefore, is but one of the heirs of the promise and shares it with all the people of God of all the ages. We all are heirs of the same promise. Hence, the promise given to the father of believers was not earthy, as the Chiliasts would have us believe. That promise was heavenly. The one God proclaims only one promise. We all are heir's of the promise of the Lord unto eternal and heavenly salvation and glory.

And we are *heirs* of the promise. The apostle does not say that we are children of the promise. That expression, we know, occurs in the ninth chapter, of Romans. Children of the promise are the people of God because they are brought forth through the irresistible and almighty power of the promise, the power of God whereby He realizes His promise in the hearts of His own. We, according to this passage in Heb. 6, are heirs of the promise, as we also read in Romans 8. We are all, more or less, acquainted with the idea of an heir. An

heir is one who has obtained a legal right to a certain possession. To be an heir does not necessarily imply actual possession. One can be an heir and be as poor as a church mouse. An inheritance is a legal possession. And an heir is he who has obtained legal rights to such a possession. God's people are heirs of the promise of everlasting life. They are entitled to have a right to that eternal glory. They are heirs of that glory because Christ redeemed them out of the power of the devil and merited for them eternal happiness and glory. Hence, we are co-heirs with Christ, heirs together with Christ. He is *the* Heir of eternal life. He merited it, surely also for Himself. And we are co-heirs with Him, in fellowship with Him, and because he merited it for us.

God's Confirmation of the Promise With an Oath.

We should note the connection between verses 16 and 17. To quote these verses again: "For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. *Wherein* God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of the promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath." Verse 17 is introduced by the word, "wherein" *we* read: "*Wherein* God, willing more abundantly. . ." The expression, translated "wherein," may also be translated "wherefore" God, then confirmed His promise with an oath. Why? What prompted the Lord to do this? To this question we have an answer in the verses 16 and 17. On the one hand, the Lord, in behalf of His people, desired to shew them more abundantly the immutability of His counsel, the counsel of His salvation; We read "more abundantly" because the Lord had already given them the promise. And the promise is in itself an abundant proof of the unchangeable character of that counsel of His salvation. But now, to shew this immutability the more abundantly, He adds the oath to the promise.

Fact is, according to verse 16,. the oath is the end of all strife, of all disputing and opposition. An oath always implies three things. Firstly; in the oath the Name of God is used to witness to the truth of what is said or testified. Secondly, when a person is placed under oath such a person is called into the conscious presence of the Lord. Of course, we are always in the presence of God. In the Lord we move and live and have our being. And it lies in the very nature of the case that no man can remove himself out of the presence of the Lord. God always beholds all the children of men. Besides, man is always obliged to speak the truth whether or not he is placed under oath. This, however, does not necessarily imply that every man, although really always in the presence of the Lord, is therefore also *consciously* in that Divine presence. The contrary is true. Hence, an oath places a person, at that very moment, consciously and sharply before the very face of God, directly in the presence of the deity preceding, the oath implies that God is called in Lord. And thirdly, in close connection with the immediate preceding, the oath implies that God is called in as a witness; the Lord of heaven, Who knoweth man's heart, will Himself reveal the truthfulness of his testimony.

Now we can more readily understand verse 16 that "an oath for confirmation is to them an

end of all strife.” Fact is, when an oath is sworn, man verily swears by the greater, by the living God, and declares that He is Witness of what is said or testified and will confirm the testimony. It is for this reason that, when an oath is sworn, not only man’s but also God’s truthfulness and veracity is involved. The oath is God’s institution; He instituted it. Hence, the God of truth must condemn him who lies under oath because He must maintain His own unchangeable holiness and truthfulness. The use of the oath was the end of all strife and dispute. The matter was simply given into the hand of the Lord. God, now, to shew more abundantly the immutability, unchangeableness of His counsel, His eternal decree to save, and also to establish His people in the faith, also made use of the oath; and, inasmuch as His is God and there is therefore none greater than He, He swore by Himself: “As truly as I live saith the Lord. . . .”

Notice, this Divine, oath shews more abundantly the immutability of His counsel. We do not read here of the Lord’s “immutable counsel” but of “immutability of His counsel.” The reason is evident. All emphasis is laid upon the unchangeableness of the Lord’s decree. His counsel is immutable, cannot be, revoked or changed. According to our Confessions, and specifically our Canons of Dordrecht in their rejection of errors, the Arminians taught exactly such a changeableness in the counsel of God. They taught a Divine decree which adapted itself to conditions among men, so that God’s counsel to save in the Old Dispensation differed from His decree to save as in the New Dispensation. Be this as it may, the counsel of salvation is immutable, can never be revoked or changed.

And this immutable character of the counsel; we read, is evident from the Divine oath. God’s counsel, we remarked, is His eternal decree to save His people even to the uttermost. God’s oath is the word of the Lord whereby He swears by Himself to fulfill His promise. The Lord, the holy writer continues in verse 18, cannot lie. We do not merely read that He does not lie. The Lord cannot lie. It is impossible for God to lie. He is God. As God He is the Absolute Good, the Eternal, and Self-Sufficient, and Self-Existent Fount of purest life and perfection. He is a light and in Him is no darkness whatever. He *is* pure holiness and righteousness He is such a light. Holiness and righteousness and truth constitute His very being. As, in a faint and creaturely sense of the word, it is impossible for fire not to throw heat, for water not to moisten, for the sun not to give light, so, in an absolute sense of the word, it is impossible for the Lord to lie. To lie would constitute a violation, a denial by the Lord Himself. And as the eternal and overflowing Fount of all good God cannot deny Himself. When He speaks He always speaks of Himself, as the infinitely good and perfect God, in Whom is no darkness but infinite and perfect light. The very fact that the unchangeable God swears by Himself, “backs up,” guarantees. His own promise by appealing to Himself, is evidence that, His decree to save is as unchangeable as He Himself is unchangeable. The Lord, therefore, to shew unto us the immutability of His counsel, did not hesitate to support His promise with His infinite Self, as a guarantee of the unchangeableness of His decree, His counsel to save His own even unto the end.

A Powerful Consolation.

What a strong, mighty consolation, that a powerful comfort this particular Scripture presents unto the fighting and struggling people of God! This mighty consolation of the people of God constitutes the purpose of this Divine pledge. We read in verse 18 “*That* by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.” The word “that” or “in order that,” *hina*’ in the original, signifies purpose and result. That we might have a mighty consolation is, therefore, the purpose of the Divine oath but also the result. Result and purpose are always one, identical in all to the works of the Lord. We do not always attain unto our purpose. The Lord’s purposes, however, never fail: It is well that we always bear this in mind. When, therefore, some are hardened through the preaching of the gospel the Lord, also with respect to them, attains unto His purpose. God, then, confirmed His promise with an oath in order that we might have a strong comfort in the midst of our struggle in the world.

No wonder this is a mighty consolation! We have, so we read, two immutable things here of a God Who cannot lie. The one immutable thing is the Divine promise. That word of the Lord is itself unchangeable. God cannot lie. Hence, His word or pledge to save His own is unchangeable. And in addition to His promise He gave us the oath. He did this because of our weaknesses. The word of the promise should have been sufficient. If, however, we should at times experience the feeling of despair, and complain that the Lord has forgotten His promise to save, we may remember the solemn oath of the Lord whereby He swore by Himself to fulfill unto His people His pledge to save.

Hence, what a mighty consolation we have! The apostle declares that we have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us. We have fled for refuge from the wrath to come! The love of God He has poured out into our hearts! We earnestly seek His face and long for the blessedness of His fellowship which is everlasting life. Hence, we have fled for refuge from the wrath to come, have sought safety and everlasting peace. And we have fled for refuge and safety unto the living God in Christ Jesus our Lord: We have sought peace in the blood of the cross and have tasted that the love of God in Christ has fully blotted out all our sin and merited life and eternal glory for us. And having fled for refuge from the wrath to come we now lay hold upon the hope set before us.

Hope in this text must not be understood in the subjective sense of the word, as an activity within us (our hoping), but in the objective sense. The object of our hoping, of our longing and expectation is meant here. That hope is set before us, is always before us. It does not consist of the things of this world, is not earthy. Hence, it is always before us. We never obtain it in this life. It belongs to the world to come, is heavenly and, therefore, other-worldly, and will not become ours until the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. And we lay hold upon it by faith. It is the object of all our longing and expectation. It sustains us in all our suffering and afflictions. It enables the child of God to endure all the afflictions of this present evil world; gives him strength and courage to suffer for Christ’s sake, and to run

with patience and faith even unto the end.

In this we have a powerful consolation, a mighty force which supports namely, the promise of eternal life. And this promise has been further confirmed by the Divine oath. This promise of God can truly comfort and strengthen us. Because it is contingent, dependent upon us, and therefore conditional? God forbid! Please notice that we are *heirs* of the promise. As heirs we have a right to eternal life, are entitled to it, through and because of the blood of Jesus Christ, our Lord. And, as heirs of everlasting life, we will surely obtain it. Fact is, that promise is anchored in the immutable counsel of the Lord. And it has been promised unto us by the unchangeable God. It is not what we do or must do which comforts and strengthens us in the battle; it is not our willing and running, although it is true that we must will and run even unto the end; it is never of him that runneth or of him that willeth; it is God, God alone, and what He will do which strengthens us in the fight.

Let us therefore take hold of the promises of the Lord, fight the good fight of faith unto the end, and cling unto Him Who cannot lie. Then, then only will we be assured of the eternal crown of glory. Such is the glorious teaching of the Word of God in Hebrews 6:16-17 It proclaims unto us the particular and unconditional character of the promises of Jehovah. Nothing less can comfort us. God's faithfulness can fully strengthen us. May we, too, be followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

H. Veldman.

Chapter 12

All the promises of God "Yea" In Christ Jesus, II Corinthians 1: 12-20

2 Corinthians 1:12-20.

Another passage of Holy Writ which throws light on the certainty: and wholly particular and unconditional character of the promises of God is the word of the apostle Paul in 2 Cor. 1, verses 12-20. We quote:

“For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward. For we write none other things unto you, than what ye read or acknowledge; and I trust ye shall acknowledge even to the end; As also ye have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing, even as ye also are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus. And in this confidence I was minded to come unto you before, that ye might have a second benefit; And to pass by you into Macedonia, and to come again out of Macedonia

unto you, and of you to be brought on my way toward Judea. When I therefore was thus minded did, I use lightness? or the things that I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, that with me there should be yea, yea, and nay, nay? But as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay. For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, Who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in him was yea. For, all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.”

These words culminate in verse 20 and it is this text which is now of primary interest to us.

The Context.

In verses 12-16 the apostle affirms unto the church at Corinth that he, by the grace of God, had conducted himself in simplicity and godly sincerity, not only in the midst of the world, but more abundantly toward them: Fleshly wisdom had not motivated the apostle to the heathen. He had written none other things unto them that what they read or acknowledge; that is, he had written what he meant and had meant what he had written; he had written, not vaguely or indefinitely or ambiguously, but clearly and honestly and sincerely. And in the confidence that he was their rejoicing as truly as they were his, even until and in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ, he had proposed to come unto them before in order that they might have a second benefit, even as they always were benefited spiritually when he visited among them. Unto that end he had intended to pass by them into Macedonia, and to come again out of Macedonia unto them, and to be brought of them on his way toward Judea. This intention, however, he had not carried out.

In the verses 17-19 Paul rises unto the defense of his apostolic preaching. It is evident that the word of the apostle, whereof we read in verse 18, “But as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay,” refers to his preaching, Paul evidently does not refer to his desire to come unto them, which he had expressed to them, and which he had been unable to fulfill. Verse 19 renders it beyond all doubt that the apostle in verse 18 refers to his apostolic preaching. In that verse Paul speaks of the Son of God, Jesus Christ, Who was preached among them by himself and also by Silvanus and Timotheus. We must bear in mind that the apostle Paul was under attack by his enemies at Corinth. We read in verse 17: “When I therefore was thus minded, did I use lightness? or the things that I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, that with me there should be yea, yea, and nay, nay?”

A double accusation the apostle’s enemies hurl at Paul because of his failure to come to Corinth as he had desired. He either used lightness or had purposed according to the flesh. To be guilty of lightness implied that he was guilty of worthless levity; he was a man who made rash promises, did not think before he spoke. And to be guilty of purposing according to the flesh was worse; it implied that he was governed by worldly or selfish interests and considerations. In either case, he was a Yes and No man. And his enemies used this occasion to attack the apostle in his apostolic capacity. Paul, they said, was not dependable,

and this also applied to his apostolic labors; with him there was yea, yea, and nay, nay; he said one thing today and another thing tomorrow; he was contradictory, confusing, untrustworthy, fickle, undependable.

Notice now the answer of the apostle to this evil, charge in the verses 18-29. What a truly noble answer it is! As far as his failure to come to Corinth is concerned, he answers that charge in verse 23. That can wait for the present. The apostle is not primarily concerned with himself; he cares little what his enemies may say of him personally. But, it does concern him that they attack his preaching, his gospel; the apostle is so much more concerned about his preaching, the gospel of the living God, than about himself. "But as God is true,"—we read in verse 18, "our word toward you was not yea and nay." Literally this text reads: "But God is faithful that my word towards you was not yea and nay."

Different interpretations are given of this particular passage. According to some we should understand this Word of God as follows: "But God is faithful that my word towards you was not yea and nay; I may be unfaithful and undependable, but God is faithful. And because He is faithful, my word, which is His word, is firm and true." Others regard this passage as an asseveration (a solemn pledge or statement) or an oath. As true as God is faithful, so true it is that my word is not yea and nay. And, because He is faithful and true He will vindicate my word that it is not yea and nay. We, then, may insert the word "know" and read this passage as follows: "But God is faithful and knows that my word is not yea and nay." Paul, then, appeals to God and asserts here that his word is not yea and nay, and, that his word is not yea and nay is as true as God is faithful. Whatever interpretation one may adopt, Paul in this text affirms that his preaching is not yea and nay, this today and something else tomorrow, yea today and nay tomorrow, but always yea and true.

In verse 19 the apostle gives us the ground for his assertion to the effect that his word or preaching was not yea and nay. My preaching is true, Paul means to say, because Christ is true. And how could this be any different? Christ is the Son of God, is He not? Jesus Christ is not yea and nay, changeable, inconsistent, contradictory. The apostle, speaking of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, in verse 19, is not speaking of the gospel of Christ but of Christ Himself. He does not intend to declare in this text that there was perfect consistency between, his own preaching and that of Silvanus (Silas) and Timotheus, that his preaching of the Christ did not differ from their preaching of Him. He does not emphasize here their preaching of the Christ, but the Christ of their preaching. He is speaking of Christ Himself.

We should also notice that he declares here that this Christ was preached unto them, by himself and also by Silvanus and Timotheus. The force of the apostle's words is surely that he is appealing here to the spiritual experience of the church at Corinth. Through my preaching, the apostle means to say, and that of Silas and Timotheus, you, believers at Corinth; learned to know spiritually Christ Jesus. And they learned to know Him as the perfect Yea, the full and simple and complete Truth. In Him is no contradiction, no inconsistency, no Yea; today and Nay tomorrow, but always the full and complete

satisfying of all our needs. He is always the same. He is always ready and able to forgive us all our sins and iniquities and give us the assurance of being righteous before God. He is always ready and able to fill our hearts with peace and rest in the midst of all the vicissitudes and trials of life. He is always faithful and powerful to save and give us grace to resist the forces of evil and bear all shame and reproach in the conviction and blessed assurance that we are more than conquerors and that all things work together for good. In Him is a fulness of salvation and a complete satisfying of all our needs. And He is the unchangeable, never varying Christ. It is not true that whereas He might be inclined to hear us in favor today, He may be ill-disposed toward us tomorrow. He is true and ever the same, even as God is true; fact is, He is the Son of God and the Personal revelation of God as the God of our salvation. This Christ the Corinthians learned to know; Him the apostle Paul preached; hence, his word is true for that Christ is true.

Verse 20 is the confirmation of all; that precedes. That Christ is the perfect Yea and that ye learned to know Him as such is because: For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.

Which Translation of Verse 20.

Anyone attempting an interpretation of verse 20 of this chapter is confronted with the choice between two possible translations. The one translation is that which appears in our King James version: "For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us" or literally: "For whatever promises there are of God, in Him is the yea, and in Him is the Amen, unto to glory of God by us." Another reading of the text (I believe this translation appears in the Revised Version) is as follows: "For whatever promises there are of God, in Him is the yea, and through Him is the Amen, unto the glory of God by us." The difference between these translations is apparent. The King James version reads: "In Him is the yea and in Him the Amen." The other translation reads: "In Him is the yea and through Him the Amen." The latter translation views the Amen as the subjective reaction of the Church to the promises of God in Christ; the Church answers "Amen"; or, as one writer expresses it: this text speaks of God's Yea and man's or the Church's Amen.

We choose the second reading or translation, and would, therefore, read the text as follows: "For what ever promises there are of God, in Him is the yea, and through Him is the Amen, unto the glory of God by us." Firstly, this reading is generally acknowledged to be the correct reading of the text. Secondly, it gives a richer meaning and a more complete explanation in harmony with the context. It is true that the present King James translation gives good sense and furnishes us with an idea which is surely Scriptural. Yea and Amen, we should understand, are particles of affirmation the one is Greek and the other is Hebrew. This repetition would emphasize the truth that in Christ is the fulfillment of the promises of God. Just as "verily, verily" emphasizes the truthfulness of a certain statement (and Christ often used this expression), so also the repetition of the particle of

affirmation in this text merely serves to emphasize the fact that all the promises of God are sure in Jesus Christ, our Lord. Yet, we believe the second reading to be the correct translation of the text. It should not escape our attention that the word “Amen” does not occur at the end of verse 19, and we might have expected it to appear there. Verse 19 reads: “For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, Who. . . was not yea and nay, but in Him was yea.” The very fact that this word is added in verse 20 suggests the thought that it is a new thought, not synonymous with the “Yea” of verse 19. And this receives added significance if we adopt what is generally considered the proper reading: “For all the promises of God are yea in Him and Amen through Him.” This “Amen,” then, denotes the response of the Church by faith to the fulfillment of the promise? of God in Christ Jesus.

And finally, if we adopt this particular reading of the text, we will also better understand the concluding words of this text: “Unto the glory of God by us.” The “us” of verse 20 refers to Paul and the rest of the preachers, of the gospel. This appears from the entire context. These preachers of the gospel are the media through whom God is glorified by the church. Through or by them the gospel of God is proclaimed unto the people of the living God and this gospel speaks of nothing else but the promises of God in Christ Jesus. We conclude, therefore, that the Amen in verse 20 is the spiritual and subjective response of the Church of God to the sure and fulfilled promise of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

All the Promises of God Yea In Christ Jesus.

All the promises of God, we read, are Yea in Christ Jesus. The text speaks emphatically of “whatever promises of God.” This expression refers, we understand, to all and every one of the promises of the Lord. Of these promises we read that the Yea is in Christ. The word “Yea” refers to their affirmation, establishment, fulfillment. “Nay” cannot be said of any of these promises. Of all the promises of God not a single denial, lack or failure of fulfillment characterizes a single one of them. They have all been fulfilled in Christ. The word “promises,” we understand, refers to all the promises of God throughout the ages. To discuss them in detail is not necessary at this time. The promise of God, in this text, refers indeed to the Lord’s solemn declaration that He would grant deliverance unto His people, who by nature are objects of Divine wrath and children of disobedience, and lead them into the glory of His eternal and heavenly covenant. The plural “promises” emphasizes every aspect and detail of that promise of Jehovah. The promise of the Lord to forgive us every sin, to lead us every step of the way, to cause all things to work together for our good, to bestow upon us the glory of His eternal and heavenly tabernacle in all its unspeakable glory and beauty has been fulfilled in Christ Jesus. Not a single aspect or detail of this amazing promise of Jehovah has remained unfulfilled.

These promises of God, we read, have been fulfilled in Christ. They have been realized by Him and in Him they have become a fact. It is because they have been fulfilled in Christ and have therefore become reality in Him that the holy writer declares in this text that the promises are Yea in Christ. Our Lord Jesus Christ has indeed realized them through His

blood upon Calvary and has indeed obtained them at His glorification at the Father's right hand. In Him they have been realized, have become a fact, upon the cross, according to the righteousness of God. He has secured the forgiveness of all our sins, has accomplished the condemnation of the world, has sealed with His suffering and death the salvation or redemption of Zion and the eternal condemnation and destruction of the world, has merited eternal life for Himself and the children whom God has given Him, and obtained for Himself the right to lead that people out of their present sin and darkness and death into the glory of God's eternal tabernacle. And in Christ these promises have been realized also at His exaltation, For unto Him has been given all power and wisdom, glory and honor. He has received the Spirit beyond measure. He has Himself received the glory of God's eternal tabernacle and also the power and wisdom to lead His chosen into the glory which He Himself has received from the Father. Indeed, in Christ Jesus all the promises of God are Yea, realized and fulfilled.

Let us understand: all the promises of God are Yea in Christ. They do not depend for their fulfillment upon us. They have been realized and fulfilled, unconditionally. Our sins are pardoned, unconditionally. Eternal life has been merited for us, unconditionally. We have been redeemed, purchased by the precious blood of the Christ out of the power of sin and death and we have become heirs of life and glory everlasting, unconditionally. This is the repeated language of Holy Writ. Hence, these promises of God are wholly particular, intended only for the elect, bestowed only upon the elect, and that unconditionally.

Through Christ Is The Amen.

Indeed, such is the implication of the apostle in this text, *therefore* our Amen is through Christ. Our Amen follows upon the fulfillment of the promises of God in Christ. Our Amen is caused by this realization of the Divine promises. The former is not the cause but the fruit of the latter. How could the people of God ever express their affirmation of the promises of God except for the fact that they have been realized in our Lord Jesus Christ?!

Notice also that our Amen is *through* Christ. To be sure, by Him they have been realized. But *through* Him is our Amen. He is the, medium, the channel through Whom the Church exclaims "Amen." Of God through the Lord Jesus Christ we receive all the blessings of salvation. With Him we must be united by faith, become one plant with Him. Through Him we have access unto the living God and taste the blessed fellowship with that alone blessed God. And through Christ is the Amen, the conscious, subjective affirmation by the Church of all the promises of God in Christ Jesus. Through Him the people of the Lord confirm the fact of the establishment of these Divine promises. Through Him the Church acknowledges that what she possesses she possesses in Christ alone, alone for Christ's sake. Through Christ we declare that nothing is of us, that all is of and through Him. In Christ are the promises. All we ever do is say "Amen."

Hence: Unto the Glory of God.

“For all the promises of God are yea in Him, and through Him Amen, *unto the glory of God* by us. This lies in the nature of the case. For, and let us understand this fully, the text speaks of the promises of God. *God is God*. All the universe, together with all the children of men that shall have lived from the beginning of time until the end, the sum-total of all things, is less than a drop of water. on the bucket and a particle of dust on the balances in comparison with that living God. These are God’s promises. And God is not a man. His promises are never to be confused with a mere offer, contingent and dependent upon him to whom the promises are made. All glory must be unto God. Fact is, that these promises are Yea in Christ is only because it is God Who fulfilled them in Christ, His Son and our Lord. It is God Who sent His Son into the likeness of sinful flesh and that for sin in order that sin might be condemned in the flesh. It is God Who sustained His Servant throughout His amazing passion, suffering and death. It is God Who enabled the Christ through the everlasting Spirit to suffer the burden of God’s eternal and infinite wrath so as to deliver others from it. It is God Who, having sent His Son into death, the shameful and bitter death of the cross, also raised Him from the dead, and exalted Him into the highest glory, even at the right hand of the Father. It is God Who gave Him a Name above every name, Who clothed Him with all power, glory, might, and honor, and gave Him the Spirit beyond measure. It is the living God Who fulfilled all His promises of salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ, Immanuel, God with us.

Hence, all glory must be ascribed unto God. To be sure, we must fight the good fight of faith. We must put off the old man and put on the new. We must believe on and in the Lord Jesus Christ and run the race even unto the end. We must love and believe and hope that no one may take our crown. But it is all given us of grace. The promises of God are yea in Christ. In Him they have been realized and fulfilled . In Him our salvation is sure. And through Christ, the Author and Finisher of our Faith, the Captain of our salvation, the Bishop of our souls, the Shepherd of His sheep, we say “Amen,” express our joyful assurance that in Him all has been completed, and through Him give thanks and glory and praise unto God, for alone of Him and through Him and unto Him are all things. We conclude, therefore, that also 2 Cor. 1:20 establishes the unconditional and wholly particular character of the promises of God.

H. Veldman.

Chapter 13

The Unconditional Promise In Christ By Faith Without Works, Galatians 3

Galatians 3

The epistle of Paul to the Galatians is surely of interest to anyone who is concerned with the question whether the promises of the covenant are conditional or unconditional. In the early part of this epistle the apostle had defended his apostleship. There were false teachers, also in the congregation of the Galatians, who had disputed his apostolic authority. He refutes them and proves himself commissioned of God to preach to the Gentiles. In chapter 2 Paul had stated that, after years of experience and preaching and preparation, he had also preached his gospel before the church at Jerusalem, and there all had given him the handshake of perfect agreement (verses 1-9). And, according to verses 11-21 of the second chapter, the apostle had even attacked and withstood the apostle Peter to the face, and this, too, for the purpose of defending his apostleship.

In chapter 3 of this epistle the apostle Paul really begins to discuss his subject, namely, that we are saved by faith and not by the law, the result of which is the Christian liberty of the New Dispensation. The epistle to the Galatians emphasizes the truth that salvation is given unto us by faith; it is given us of Divinely sovereign mercy, for faith does not emphasize what we can do or must do but what we *cannot* do and need not do; faith is not that which proceeds from us toward God but it proceeds from God toward us; faith, for this reason, does not nullify the promise – the law does nullify the promise. Let us look at these things a little more closely as held before us in this third chapter of Paul's epistle to the Galatians.

The Foolishness of the Galatians

We read in verses 1-5 the following:

“O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain. He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?”

The fundamental significance of these words is clear. The apostle addresses them as “foolish Galatians;” literally we read that he, speaks to them as ignorant Galatians, lacking in understanding. And their foolishness consisted in their attempt (verse 3) to be made perfect by the flesh whereas they had begun in the Spirit. We must bear in mind that Paul is addressing the church of God at Galatia; he is not speaking to individuals, but to the church as she was revealed at that place we must remember that if to fall away from the truth is impossible for the individual Christian this is possible for any locally organized and instituted church. Before their eyes, we read, Jesus Christ had been evidently set forth, crucified among them. Clearly He had been set forth before them, and that as the crucified Christ. Mind you, He is the end of the law. In Him the law of the Old Dispensation is fulfilled and has come to an end. And they had believed in Him, had tasted the fulness of

His salvation.

But now, having begun thus in the Spirit, they sought to be made perfect, to finish the work by the flesh, that is, by the works of the law, their own works or activity. The apostle asks the Galatians: Who hath bewitched you? This question contains, in the first place, the element of astonishment. Paul is astonished that they, having tasted the blessedness of the Lord Jesus Christ, could return to the law of the Old Dispensation. Someone must have bewitched, hypnotized them that they could be guilty of such an unbelievable foolishness. The question, however, also suggests an evil power who must have gained the ascendancy over them. They had been bewitched. Hence, some fatal spell had been cast over them; an evil mind must have paralyzed them. We know to whom the apostle Paul refers. False teachers, corrupt Judaizers, evil minds had led them away from the truth, the truth of God in Christ Jesus, had subjected them once more to the bondage of the law of the Old Dispensation, had caused them in that sense to “suffer many things” (verse 4). Once more they had groaned underneath the rule upon rule, precept upon precept, line upon line. And the apostle is afraid that their suffering will not be in *vain* (verse 4). If only it were in vain! If only these evil teachers would fail in their attempt to subjugate the church of God anew! But Paul fears that it will or may be permanent.

Paul's Appeal To Their Experience.

This appeal is expressed in the verses 2 and 5. We read in these verses: “This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?” This appeal to the spiritual experience of the people of God is always a powerful argument.

This also applies as far as our approach is concerned in connection with the doctrinal differences between our churches and the Christian Reformed Churches. Points One and Three of the famous Three Points speak of the love of God to all men which He manifests to them in the preaching of the gospel and also of the good which man can perform before the living God without the regenerating operation of the Holy Spirit. Is it true, we might ask of the Christian Reformed brethren, that we “accepted” Christ Jesus, or did we experience that we were apprehended of Christ Jesus? Did we love God or did the living God love us? Did He save us because we believed on Him or did we believe on Him because He saved us? Did our love of God precede His love or did His love precede our love? And, is it our spiritual experience that we can of ourselves please and serve the living God, or did we experience the truth of Holy Writ that the carnal mind is enmity against God, is not and cannot be subject unto the law of God? Are we by nature sinners who are wholly corrupt or are we corrupt but in part?

Paul, too, in this third chapter of his epistle to the Galatians, appeals to the spiritual experience of the Galatians. Did they receive this Spirit, that is, did they receive

consciously and thus experience the Spirit of regeneration, love, hope, etc., by the works of the law? Did they, by fulfilling the law, experience the blessedness of salvation? Of course, their answer must, be an emphatic No. Or did they receive this Spirit by the hearing of faith? These false teachers preached a justification to them which was of the law, a justification by the law whereby the Galatians rendered themselves just and righteous before the living God by means of their own works of the law. But the apostle had preached a justification unto them which was not of the law but only of faith, a justification which they had experienced only then when they had acknowledged their own iniquity and unworthiness and hopelessness and had taken refuge to the Christ of Calvary. And when they had heard this preaching of the, apostle that we are justified only by faith and in the way of faith, and had embraced this preaching, they had received the Spirit. Such, had been the spiritual experience of these Galatians; this they could never deny. And the same appeal is addressed by the apostle to these Galatians in verse 5.

Paul's Reference To Abraham.

This reference to Abraham is expressed in the verses 6-9. We quote:

“Even as Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.”

Firstly, why does the apostle Paul refer the Galatians to the example of Abraham? Galatians 3:6 is a quotation of Gen. 15:6. Does Paul refer to, Abraham merely because he considers Gen. 15:6 a striking proof in support of his contention that salvation is not by the works of the law but through faith and, therefore, of Divinely sovereign grace and mercy? Is it because Abraham merely furnishes him with a telling illustration? This can hardly be the reason why the apostle at this point of his epistle to the Galatians calls attention to the “father of believers.” Other reasons prompt the apostle in this selection. Is it not true that the false teachers who would subject the Galatians anew unto the bondage of the law appeal exactly to a man as Abraham? Did not the Jews, who would maintain the law of the Old Dispensation, not pride themselves in the fact or contention that they were children of Abraham and that he was their father? Did not the rite of circumcision begin with Abraham and did it therefore not seem undeniable that circumcision and to be of the seed of Abraham were inseparably connected and invaluable? And did not God establish His covenant with Abraham and his seed? Hence, what right does Paul have to preach *his* gospel, namely, that the works of the law are wholly worthless and the rite of circumcision without value? This, I believe, explains the apostle’s motive when he calls attention to the “father of believers.” As far as the charge is concerned that Paul proclaims *his* gospel, a gospel of his own invention, this was overwhelmingly refuted by the apostle in chapters 1

and 2. And as far as Abraham is concerned, with whom the covenant of God had its historical beginning as far as the Old Dispensational aspect of that covenant is concerned, the apostle will let that father of believers speak.

And what do the Scriptures teach us with respect to Abraham? In the first place, we read concerning him that he *believed* God and it (his believing) was accounted to him for righteousness (verse 6). This text is often quoted by those who maintain that the act of faith is for us the work that saves us and makes us righteous. We can never satisfy the justice of God for all our sins and trespasses. The Lord, then, is satisfied if we merely believe in Christ, confess that we could never satisfy the Divine demand and acknowledge His love and mercy toward us. This explanation, however, is obviously impossible. It is impossible, first of all, because the apostle declares that Abraham's faith was reckoned unto him for righteousness. Anything that is reckoned for, accounted as righteousness is obviously not that righteousness itself. Faith is never regarded by the Lord as merely a substitute for the satisfying of His justice and righteousness. Secondly, all of Scripture establishes the truth that our righteousness before God is possible only in and through Jesus Christ, our Lord – we are just before God, our sins are forgiven and we are heirs of everlasting life; not on the basis of what we do or have done but only of the work and merits of the Lord Jesus Christ .

That Abraham's faith was accounted unto him for righteousness is only because his faith was the working of the spiritual bond which united him with the Lord Jesus Christ. It is true that the reckoning of his faith for righteousness implied that this faith was not the righteousness itself. On the other hand, however, it is equally true that this Divine reckoning must rest upon the basis of Divine justice. Faith never replaces the satisfying of God's justice. That justice of the Lord must be satisfied. Hence, our unity with Christ, the fact that we are in Him and, therefore, one plant with Him, is the reason why God reckoned Abraham's faith unto him for righteousness. Our oneness with Christ is our righteousness. Because we are His body His atonement is our atonement, and, through faith in Him, His righteousness is also actually bestowed upon us. Abraham's faith was indeed the working, the operation of this spiritual bond which united him with God through Christ.

Let us, however, understand: Abraham *believed* and, *believing*, he experienced the blessedness of justification. He did not become righteous, by the works of the law. He did not present unto the Lord anything he had done. He did not attach any meritorious value to his act of faith. Besides, to believe means exactly that we trust not in ourselves but in the living God. The very act of faith, therefore, rejects the thought that man can of himself present anything unto the Lord. Abraham believed, that is, he trusted by the grace of God not in himself or his own work, but solely in God and in the fulfillment of Jehovah's promises. And the promise of the Lord had been that He would establish His covenant with him and with his seed for an everlasting covenant and would give, therefore, unto him and Sarah a son. The fulfillment of this promise, however, was humanly impossible, for both,

Abraham and Sarah, as far as the bringing forth of children was concerned, had died (Hebrews 11:12). But Abraham had believed, had trusted that the faithful Jehovah would call life out of death, had cleaved unto that which was humanly impossible and therefore invisible, had placed his trust solely in the faithful and irresistible God. And in the way of this faith the father of believers had attained unto the unspeakably glorious assurance that he was just and righteous before the Lord. This faith of Abraham, and its accompanying justification is, we understand, a direct refutation of the presentation of the false teachers who would subject the Galatians once again to the bondage of the law and teach that our works have meritorious value before the living God.

And who are Abraham's children? Notice: "In thee shall *all nations* be blessed." This statement of the apostle is a stunning blow, launched with studied effect full in the face of Jewish privilege. Paul, too, we understand, believed that the promise belongs to the children of Abraham. However, these children of Abraham, to whom the promise belongs and whom the promise concerns and in whom the promise will be realized, are not natural Jews but those who believe even as Abraham believed. Why the believers are heirs of the promise we shall see later the verses 16, 26, and 29 explain this: believers are heirs because Christ is *the* Heir, and faith is God's gift uniting us with that Christ. But, the point is now that in Abraham shall all nations be blessed. God establishes His covenant not merely with the Jews, not merely with the circumcised, not merely with those who cleave to the Old Dispensational rites and circumcision but all nations shall be blessed, and therefore also the heathen; salvation is not by the law but by faith; and faith must be understood here, not as a substitute for the law, as something which the Lord will accept in its place, but as the very opposite of the works of the law. If righteousness is of the law; we earn it. If it is by faith, we are given it. Hence, we do not merit the promise. God gives us the promise, and, therefore, the promises of the Lord are wholly unconditional.

The Needless Folly Of Seeking Salvation By Works.

We read in the, verses 10-14:

"For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, the just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."

On the one hand, the apostle teaches us in these verses that as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse. To be sure, the man who doeth them shall live by them. None has ever failed to experience that the words and commandments of the Lord are

words of life and peace and joy. To do the commandments of Jehovah constitutes the very essence of eternal life, for life is fellowship with and service of the living God. However, this implies that we actually do them. We must love the Lord our God with all our heart and mind and soul and strength; and, if in anything we have violated the precepts of Jehovah, we must also in that case do the law of the Lord perfectly: love the Lord our God even underneath the eternal and infinite wrath: and indignation of the Most High. But, who is able unto these things? What flesh is there that can obey the law of the Lord and satisfy all the justice of Jehovah? Hence, as many as are under the works of, the law are under the curse. To be under the works of the law means that we take our refuge to these works of the law and that the Lord will judge us according to the things we do and have done. The law, we read in verse 12, is not of faith. It is either or: we are under the law or under faith. To be of the law implies that we are not of faith such an one does not live out of faith but out of the works of the law. And to be under the law means that we are under the curse, for: "Cursed Is every one, that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." The law of God, it is plain, must curse every one who attempts to justify himself in the way of works, for none can satisfy the demands of the Lord.

On the other hand, however, God hath redeemed us from the curse of the law. He became a curse for *us*. He *became* a curse. He was not accursed of Himself but he became a curse. He took upon Himself the sins of others, entered into the guilt and condemnation of others, and therefore became a curse. Hence, He became a curse *for us*. Of course! To become a curse, to assume the guilt of others surely implies that He took upon Himself the guilt and debt of others, of a definite people, the elect. He became a curse *for us*. Hence, He removed the necessity of fulfilling the law by fulfilling the law for us. And this He did, "That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." The blessing of Abraham is expressed in verses 6 and 8: our righteousness before the Lord. Were salvation of the law, it would be limited, of course, to those who are under the law, the Jews. Then the Gentiles would necessarily be excluded. But Christ redeemed us from the law by fulfilling the law; hence, the law is no longer necessary; salvation is now possible also for those who are not under the law, the Gentiles. Of course, this blessing comes upon us through Jesus Christ, our Lord. And notice, that Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law in order that we might receive the promise of the Spirit *through faith*. All emphasis must be laid upon the words: through faith. Not by the works of the law! But by faith in Christ, as a gift of sovereign grace! And this is possible because Christ redeemed us, having become a curse for us.

Now we also understand the folly of the Galatians. They would maintain both: law and faith. Having begun in the Spirit they would now be made perfect by the flesh. However, the law cannot, save because it Curses whosoever continueth not in all things that are written in the law to do them. But, the law need not save. We need not take recourse to the law of the Lord to merit our righteousness before God. We need not fulfill that law

because Christ fulfilled that law for us. How foolish, therefore, the Galatians were! But also how wicked! Their efforts to establish their own righteousness by their own works of the law were surely a denial of the cross of Christ. Salvation is given us, by faith and out of sovereign mercy and grace. God's promise of everlasting life is given by the Lord unto His people, unconditionally. Galatians 3 surely establishes this unconditional character of the promises of God.

H. Veldman.

Chapter 14

The Unconditional Promise In Christ, Inviolable, Galatians 3 Continued

Galatians 3 Continued

We must bear in mind the line of the apostle's reasoning in this third chapter of the epistle to the Galatians. He contends that we must be justified either out of the law or through faith. Both are impossible. The Galatians had begun with the Spirit. They now attempted to be made perfect through the works of the law. False teachers had bewitched these Galatians and had seduced them so that they once more were in bondage to the law as in the Old Dispensation.

In the first, half of this chapter, to which we called attention in our previous article on this portion of the Word of God, the apostle had clearly demonstrated to the Galatians the fallacy of their position. Abraham, whose children the Jews boasted to be, was justified, not by the law, but by faith. In Abraham not the natural Jews but the believers would be counted for the seed and be blessed. As many as are under the law are under the curse – hence, to fulfill the law is, therefore, a hopeless task. Neither is this fulfillment of the law necessary because Christ has redeemed us from the law, having become a curse for us. And Christ redeemed us in order that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ, and that we might receive the promise of the Spirit *through faith*.

In the verses 15-24 the apostle continues along this line of reasoning and sets forth the certainty and unconditional character of the promises of God. Sure and unconditional is the promise of the Lord because it is not dependent upon or in any way affected by the law. These verses, 15-24, read as follows:

“Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto. Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. And this I say; that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years

after, cannot disannul, that it, should make the promise of none effect. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise. Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom then promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one. Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.”

The Promise Made To Christ, The Seed Of Abraham. - verse 16.

Verse 16 reads: “Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds; as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which, is Christ.” We must, of course, maintain the literal interpretation of this text. Many accuse the apostle of rabbinical hairsplitting here, because he would base, his argument upon a single letter; the singular ‘seed’ instead of the plural ‘seeds’. This, however, is surely conceit. Paul speaks in this text by inspiration, and it is none other than the Spirit of the Living God Who inspires him to write as he does. We must, therefore; maintain this particular word of Scripture that the promise was given to Abraham and to his seed, and this seed is Christ.

There is fundamentally no difference between the promise of verse 16. and the blessing of Abraham elsewhere mentioned in this chapter. God’s promise to Abraham had been that He would bestow upon Abraham and his seed His blessing, the inheritance (verse. 18), the assurance of justification and everlasting life. Stated briefly, the Lord had promised unto Abraham and his seed the promise of His heavenly and eternal fellowship and communion. And this promise, we read, was, given centrally to Christ: He, to be sure, is *the* Heir of everlasting life “And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs. with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together,” –Romans 8:17.

Christ, of course, merits all the blessings and promises of the God of our eternal salvation. And because Christ is the Heir, we are heirs, according to the promise, only if we be Christ’s, through faith in Him. That we receive the promise of the Spirit and of everlasting life through faith is not, we understand, because our faith is in any sense of the word meritorious or conditional. This is impossible. Christ is the Heir exclusively. To Him the promise of eternal life has been given. He, and He alone, blots out all our sins, satisfies all the justice of God, merits for us the blessedness and glory of everlasting life. We receive the promise through faith, and are joint heirs with Christ through faith, only because all salvation is in Christ Jesus and the Lord, imparts that salvation unto us through faith in Christ. The Heir of the promise, therefore, He in Whom and with Whom God’s covenant of

friendship and fellowship is established, is, of course, Christ Jesus. He merits it; to Him the Lord promises and bestows salvation; from Him, and Him alone, we receive it through faith, the faith of God's sovereign mercy and grace. Paul postulates this truth because he would refute, with all the power at his command, the error that our work is in any sense necessary toward our salvation. All the promises of God are Yea in Christ Jesus.

God's Promise, Sure And Inviolable.

The promise of the Lord is sure and inviolable. Even a man's covenant, writes the apostle in verse 15, is sure and inviolable. We read in that text: "Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto." Hence, even a covenant among men, once confirmed, is not disannulled or changed. If a covenant among men, once confirmed, is not annulled or changed, such is the reasoning of the apostle, this surely applies to the covenant of the eternal and unchangeable God. Notice how the apostle proceeds to establish the sure and unchangeable and irrevocable character of the promise of God. He speaks of blessing, promise, covenant, and inheritance in this third chapter, and it is clear that these four words are synonymous. They all refer to the same thing. The idea of the word 'covenant' in verse 17 is clear. In that verse the apostle declares: "And this I say; that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect." The word 'covenant' here is clearly synonymous with promise of this text and inheritance of the following verse. It refers to the Old Testament incident when God revealed Himself to Abraham, talked with him, as a Friend with His friend, and assured him that He would establish with him and with his seed His everlasting and heavenly covenant kingdom. The Lord promised to bless Abraham and bestow upon him the eternal inheritance.

This covenant or promise was confirmed, ratified by God. It was confirmed by the symbolism of Genesis 15, when the Lord alone passed between the halves of the sacrificial animals which had been divided in the midst. Abraham was asleep and Jehovah alone passed between these pieces, in confirmation of the fact that He, and He alone, would establish His covenant and fulfill His promise. To this incident of Gen. 15 we have already called attention in a previous article. Besides, the Lord had also confirmed His promise to Abraham with an oath, even as we read in Heb. 6:17-18: "Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us."

Notice also; according to verse 17, that this covenant or promise of God was "confirmed before of God in Christ". We would read this particular expression, according to the original text as follows: "was confirmed: before of God *for* or *with* a view *to* Christ". We have already called attention to the, fact that Christ is *the* Heir, *the* Object of the promise of God.

Now we read that God before confirmed the covenant with a view to Christ. God, therefore, ratified His promise to Abraham and Christ was the primary object of that promise. With a view to Christ, because of the work of Christ, because of His own work in our flesh and blood, God, before time, at the time of Abraham, gave the father of believers His promise and ratified it with an oath, swearing by Himself, even as He, all by Himself, would ultimately fulfill His own promise in Christ Jesus, His Son and our Lord.

Now we also understand why the law, which came four hundred and thirty years after the promise, could not disannul that covenant or promise of God. Such was indeed the opinion of the false Jewish teachers. They advocated the theory that the law, which came after the promise, had disannulled that promise, made it of none effect, had taken its place. They would impose the burden of the law upon the Galatians as the way unto salvation. This teaching of these false teachers, however, was surely impossible. Even men do not disannul or change a covenant once confirmed. And the Lord surely would not do such a thing. And the reason which the apostle advances in support of this contention that the law, which came four hundred and thirty years after the promise, could not disannul that promise, is exactly that the covenant was *before confirmed of God in or with a view to Christ*. Hence, if the promise was confirmed by God with a view to Christ, the promise would surely be in effect until the coming of that Christ. The period of the promise, therefore, did not exclude the law but it included the law. And inasmuch as the promise was given primarily to Christ and for Christ's sake, the law, which came long before the Christ, could never disannul the promise which was given with a view to Christ and would be fulfilled in Christ.

Besides, the apostle continues in verse 18: "For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise but God gave it to Abraham by promise." If the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise. The meaning or implication of these words speaks for itself. If the inheritance, eternal life, be of the law, we must earn and procure it then it is not a matter of God's promise but of our meriting it. However, if the inheritance be of the law and, therefore; not of the promise, the word of God to Abraham is no longer in effect. Fact is, God gave it to Abraham, not as something which he must earn, but as an inheritance which the Lord promised to bestow upon him. A Divine decision to impose upon His people the works of the law as the means or way of salvation would not merely imply a change in policy on the part of the Most High. It would imply a failure on the part of the Lord to fulfill His word or promise, an annulling of His solemn pledge. The law and the promise stand over against each other. The first implies that man shall earn or procure by his own works his salvation. And the promise implied that the Lord would *bestow* the inheritance of eternal life upon His people. For the Lord to change from the promise to the law would imply, therefore, a failure on the Lord's part to do as He had promised to do. It is in this light that the words of Paul in verse 18 must be understood: "But God gave it to Abraham by promise." Jehovah solemnly declared to the father of believers that He would give it to him; He certainly would not *break* that promise and now insist that man must merit it himself.

Incidentally, verse 17 establishes beyond every doubt that the period of the promise to Abraham until the giving of the law at Sinai was a period of four hundred and thirty years. I believe I may say without fear of contradiction that it is generally supposed that Israel was in the land of Egypt 430 years. To enter into a detailed discussion of this part of verse 17 is unnecessary at this time. The theory that Israel sojourned in Egypt 430 years is supported by texts such as: Gen. 15:13, Ex. 12:40, Acts 7:6. Also Numbers 26:29 and 1 Chron. 7:20 are quoted in support of this view. It is contended that 1 Chron. 7:20 refers us to nine or ten generations from Joseph to Joshua, and that this would be impossible if Israel sojourned in the land of Egypt only 210 to 215 years. The supporters of this view, however, are somewhat embarrassed by the word of Paul in Gal. 3:17. They “solve” the difficulty, however, by asserting that the apostle is quoting in this text a translation of the Septuagint (the Hebrew Old Testament was translated into Greek by seventy Jewish Bible translators at Alexandria). This translation of the Septuagint, they say, is in error, but the apostle Paul quotes their version because he is not interested in the time element. It is no concern of the apostle whether the children of Israel sojourned in the land of Egypt 430 or 215 years. However, I do not see but that it is imperative for us to accept the apostle’s presentation in Gal. 3:17. In the first place, the texts quoted in the Old’ Testament in support of the contention that Israel was 430 years in Egypt can be interpreted in such a way that this sojourn of Israel is limited to 215 years. Secondly, it is strange, is it not, that the apostle Paul, guided infallibly by the Holy Spirit, should quote an erroneous translation of the septuagint. We must, therefore, conclude that the word of God in this third chapter of Galatians permits no other explanation than that the sojourn of the children of Israel in the land of Egypt was approximately 210 to 215 years, and that the entire period from the giving of the promise to Abraham to the giving of the law at Sinai was four hundred and thirty years. This also explains why the Egyptian monarch was so sorely alarmed because of Israel’s growth – it was the Lord Who caused the children of Israel to wax mighty in the house of bondage.

Why The Promise Is Inviolable. – Verse 20.

We read in verse 20: “Now the mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one.” Some 400 interpretations have been given of this particular passage. To understand this word of God we must bear in mind that? the apostle would emphasize the temporary character of the law and its powerlessness to bring righteousness. Fact is, we read that a mediator is not of one. A mediator is one who stands between, presupposes two parties, God and man. The law, we read in verse 19, was given into the hand of a mediator, Moses, by angels. Whereas the law was given of God to man through Moses, this also presupposes that man must keep this law of God, must live up to the agreement. And this; we understand, is impossible. If now the promise, too, were a matter between the Lord and man, given by God but contingent, dependent upon man for its fulfillment, it would fail. But such is not the case. God, we read, is one. The Lord appeared directly to Abraham, without a mediator. God is one; He does all the work; He is the only factor. He is the one and only Party. This

also implies that the Lord is unchangeable, determined by nothing outside of Himself. It is, therefore, impossible that He would first give the promise to Abraham and later change His policy as at the time of Moses. The Lord never changes; He, and He alone, establishes His covenant, fulfills His promise, and realizes the fellowship of friendship with the people of His everlasting love;

This surely emphasizes the unconditional and therefore inviolable character of the promise of the Lord. That promise is never conditional, dependent upon man; it is as sure of fulfillment as is the prophecy of the Lord which the Lord also alone fulfills. The promises of Jehovah are as unchangeable as the Lord God Himself.

The Purpose Of The Law.

The purpose, of the law, which was given of the Lord by Moses unto the children of Israel from Mt. Sinai, is surely not to annul, abrogate the promise of God. The apostle Paul has expressed himself very clearly on this point. Besides, to teach that the law annulled the promise and constituted a change in the policy of Jehovah also “smacks” of Arminianism. The arminians also spoke of various decrees of the Lord, of various methods pursued by Jehovah in His dealings with the children of men. Our fathers, at the Synod of Dordrecht, repudiated this conception and emphasized the truth that God is one and therefore also His decree, of salvation is one. God cannot deny Himself or be in conflict with himself hence, it could not be the purpose of the law to annul the promise.

The purpose of the law, according to the presentation of the apostle in Galatians 3, is twofold. In the first place, the law was added because of the transgression. Thus we read in verse 19: “Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and. it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.” The law, we read, was added *because of transgressions*. It must serve the transgressions, was given for the sake of transgressions, in order that the transgressions might occur. That the transgressions were the result of the lawgiving is an undeniable fact. Israel erected their golden calf soon after the Lord had thundered the law of the ten commandments into their ears from the top of the mountain. And this is always the result of the law. Man is like unto a snake; that snake will reveal its true nature as soon as one holds out a stick unto it; man, too, will always reveal his true nature when he stands before the holy and good law of the Lord. However, these transgressions, always the result of the law, are also the purpose of the law. The law was added, we read, because of transgressions; God, therefore, added the law for the sake of transgressions in order that they might abound. And this is also literally taught in Romans 5 :20: “Moreover the law entered, *that* the offence might abound.”

Secondly, the law also served as a schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ. This we read in verse 24. On the one hand, the law serves the transgressions, purposes to reveal our sin, corruption, and hopelessness. The law must reveal that salvation can impossibly be of man.

For the law must be a schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, in order that we might be justified, not by the works of the law, but by faith.

We may therefore conclude that the law was not given to annul the promise of the Lord. But it was given that it might serve that promise, establish the fact that our hope lies only in that promise, that salvation can come alone from the living God. In His promise the Lord declares that *He*, and *He* alone, will save unto the uttermost. And He adds His law in order that it may become perfectly plain that He alone can save and that He alone therefore must save. And it is also for this reason that salvation is bestowed only upon those who *believe*. For faith, let us understand, is not our work, does not represent what we must do in the work of salvation; God is one, the Lord is the only Party, and He alone is the Worker of our salvation in Christ Jesus, our Lord. But we are saved and justified through faith, because faith is God's gift to us, and, through our believing, we experience the fulness of the salvation of the Lord exactly because, believing, we, by the grace of the living God, look away from ourselves and unto Christ as the revelation of God as the God of our salvation. The promise of the Lord is unconditionally fulfilled by Jehovah and bestowed upon us by Him through faith, according to Galatians 3.

H. Veldman.

Chapter 15

The Relation Between God's Promises And Faith, Hebrews 11

Hebrews. 11

We would conclude our short series of articles on the unconditional character of the promises of the Lord, in connection with the Lord's covenant with His people, by calling attention to Hebrews 11.

We could refer to other portions of the Scriptures such as the apostle's epistle to the Romans. In this epistle the apostle Paul develops the truth of the righteousness of God and emphasizes that it is indeed the righteousness of *God*. In Rom. 1-3:20 the holy writer lays the groundwork for his inspired revelation by establishing the utter and complete condemnation of the world, the whole world, Jew and Gentile, concluding this part of the epistle with the well-known words: "by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin." Thereupon Paul reveals that our righteousness, our justification before God, humanly impossible, was effected by God Himself in our Lord Jesus Christ. Hence, this righteousness is a righteousness of God because God Himself realized it in His Son, our Lord. In the chapters 4 and 5 the apostle develops the truth that this righteousness, realized by God, is also God's righteousness in

the sense that He bestows it upon us by faith; and this, let us understand, is presented by the writer as the reward, not of works, but of grace (Rom. 4:4-5). In the chapters 6 and 7 the spiritual calling and struggle of the Christian is vividly described. Fact is, the faith through which the righteousness of God is bestowed upon us is a living faith. Having died to sin we must also conduct ourselves as having risen with Christ unto a new and godly life. And in the seventh chapter we have that stirring description of the inner struggle of the child of God, culminating, however, in that exclamation of triumph that we have the victory through Jesus Christ, our Lord. And in the eighth chapter of this beautiful epistle the apostle rejoices in the fact that the eternal salvation of the Church of God is sure, only because nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord. However, we will conclude this short series by calling attention to Hebrews 11, the well-known. Scriptural passage dealing with the Old Dispensational heroes of faith.

*The Relation Between God's Promises
And Faith An Important Question.*

The importance of this question is immediately apparent when we notice the Scriptural emphasis which is laid upon both: the unchangeable promises of the Lord and the activity of faith by the Church and child of God. That the Word of God emphasizes the sovereignty of God is surely well-known to all the readers of this paper. All of Scripture speaks of this sovereignty of the Lord. We need not emphasize this now. Attention has been called in detail to the fact that the covenant of the Lord with His people is unilateral throughout, from the beginning to the end. Scripture also, however emphasizes the activity of faith. That we must believe is also taught everywhere in the Word of God. Such, indeed, is the keynote of the gospel: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." In the, third chapter of Paul's epistle to the Galatians the apostle speaks repeatedly of faith, as in the verses 11, 14, 22, 24, 26: "But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live *by faith*. . . . That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit *through faith*. . . . But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise *by faith* of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. . . . Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified *by faith*. . . . For ye are all the children of God *by faith* in Christ Jesus." Well-known is the emphasis laid upon the activity of faith in the epistle of James, as in chapter 2:17-18: "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works; and will shew thee my faith by my works." In the eleventh chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews the holy writer has recorded the activities of faith of the saints of God in the Old Dispensation. Yea, all of Scripture lays continuous emphasis upon the activity and necessity of faith.

The importance of the question, therefore, relative relation between the unconditional promises of God and the activity of faith, is self-evident. Must we understand these conceptions as running parallel to each other? Is it true that both must be maintained, however contradictory they may seem and appear, and that they must be embraced as two

apparently contradictory truths? In the same vein present day thought would explain the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man. These conceptions are also presented as contradictory. Why does the Lord save us through faith? Is this optional on the part of God? Could He save us some other way? Does the fact that the Lord saves us by faith, as the alone sovereign God, not imply that faith is the Lord's only possible way of salvation?

Faith, then, does not contradict the sovereignty of the Lord, but it represents the only way, in which that wholly sovereign God can save us. Or, is the matter of our salvation conditional after all? Is it, true that the work of salvation is after all, in some form or another, dependent upon an activity of man? But, how is this possible. Faith itself is a gift of the Lord. Can or should we speak of conditions in the application of salvation when it is God Himself Who alone fulfills these conditions? Is it not true, when we speak of something as being conditional, that we imply that it is dependent upon something 'outside' –of ourselves? Conditional salvation: implies that it is dependent, upon man.

The Importance of Hebrews 11.

Hebrews 11 is important, as far as our present discussion is concerned, because, firstly, it does not treat an isolated case. This chapter covers the entire Old Dispensation. It is by faith that the Church of God, throughout the Old Testament, received the salvation of the Lord. Secondly, this chapter is significant because all the examples quoted here have one thing in common, and this one thing, as we shall see later, is expressed in the very first verse of this chapter. We need not enter at this time into a detailed exposition of verse 1: "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Some would have us believe that this text presents us with a complete definition of faith, –tells us exactly what faith is. This, however, is hardly true. On the one hand, the Bible is no dictionary which gives us in various passages the exact definitions of various, and several concepts. Besides, faith is defined in this first verse as the power of God from the viewpoint of its enabling the child of God to bear all suffering and pain, and gain the promise of everlasting life. And all the examples of this chapter establish this truth of verse 1.

Thirdly, and this is certainly important, Hebrews 11 is significant exactly because it defines the relation between faith and the promise. This, let us bear in mind, is exactly what we are discussing in these articles. Hebrews 10:36-39 reads as follows:

"For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might deceive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul."

Please notice that the holy writer mentions the promise in verse 36, in the words: "Ye might receive the promise." The idea of the promise in this passage, speaks for itself. The promise refers to that which we shall receive after we have done the will of God and after He, who will not tarry, shall have come. The promise here refers to our eternal salvation

which we shall receive as an inheritance in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ when all things shall be made new. And, incidentally, this is the content of the promise of God throughout the Holy Scriptures, the solemn and unchangeable pledge of Jehovah to bestow upon them, for the sake of Christ, His eternal glory and salvation. Why, now, do we receive this promise through faith? Why is it that the just shall live by faith according to verse 38 of the preceding chapter? Is faith our condition upon which the Divine fulfillment of the promise depends? Hebrews 11 gives us a beautiful answer to this question.

The Many Examples of Hebrews 11.

Through faith, we read in verse 3, we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear. Of Abel we are told that he by faith offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts. Enoch was translated by faith that he should not see death; and he was not found, because God had translated him. Noah, being warned of God of things, not seen as yet, and moved with fear, prepared by faith an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.

Concerning Abraham we are told that he, by faith, when he was called to go out into a place, which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. And by faith he sojourned in; the land of promise, as in a strange country; dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise, for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. By faith Abraham and Sarah embraced the promise and Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged Him faithful Who had promised. And by faith, Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said that in him his seed would be called; for he accounted that God was able to raise him up even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure. Isaac, we read; blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come Jacob, when he was a dying, by faith blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff. By faith, Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones.

It was through the power of faith that Moses parents hid him when; he was born because they saw that he was a proper (beautiful) child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment. By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward. It was by faith that he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured as seeing him who is invisible. By faith the children of Israel passed through the Red Sea as by dry

land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned. By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed seven days. And by faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.

This is the Divine record. Lack of time, we read in verse 32, forbids the holy writer to tell of Gideon, of Barak, of Samson, of Jephthah, of David, of Samuel, and of the prophets. By faith these children of God of the Old Dispensation subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens, received their dead raised to life again, were tortured not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, of bonds and imprisonment, were stoned, sawn asunder, tempted, slain with the sword, wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented (of whom the world was not worthy), wandered in deserts and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

What All These Examples Have In Common.

We read in verse 1: "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Hence, all these examples speak of the power of faith, whereby the people of God received the things invisible and that which was humanly impossible. This characterizes Hebrews 11 throughout. By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things *which do appear*. Enoch, mind you, was translated by faith that he should not see death. He and Elijah are the only children of God who were translated into glory without passing through death. Noah built an ark through the power of faith, when as yet it had never rained, and he *believed* that he would be saved through the destruction of the world. Abraham surely walked by faith, the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen. He left his native land and journeyed, to a strange country, not knowing, we read, whither he went. He looked for a city which had foundations; the heavenly city, surely invisible. He believed that God would raise up of him and Sarah a seed as many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable. And this was surely a faith in the invisible because he and Sarah, as far as the bringing forth of children was concerned, had both died. By faith he offered up Isaac, believing, mind you, that God would raise up Isaac from the dead. Abraham, therefore, believed the invisible, namely, that life would come out of death. Moses believed that the Lord would bestow upon him the recompense of the reward and that at a time when the appearance of things made the realization of that recompense seem utterly impossible. By faith Moses believed the humanly, impossible and invisible, namely, that the Lord would cut a path through the Red Sea and grant His people the victory. By the same faith the Lord made the waters of the Jordan part before them and caused the walls of Jericho to fall down. And the same trusting in the invisible God and invisible things characterized the saints of the Lord throughout the Old Dispensation. Thus it is ever throughout the history of the

development of God's covenant throughout the ages. The Divine promise of everlasting life, the heavenly city which has foundations, is indeed something which human eye cannot see, human ear cannot hear, human heart cannot conceive of. To obtain that promise by faith means exactly, therefore, that we look forward to the realization of that which is humanly impossible and only Divinely possible.

Why God Saves Only Through Faith.

The phrase "by faith" occurs repeatedly in this eleventh chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews. The idea of this expression is that faith is the means by which these saints obtained the symbolical realization of the promise (I say "symbolic" because the promise of the Lord was granted His people in the Old Testament symbolically). A means we would define as something we use or do, adapted to the obtaining of that which we seek. In this sense, e.g., bread and water are means which we use unto the sustaining of our earthly life. They are adapted unto the sustaining of our earthly existence. Faith, now, is the means wondrously adapted unto the obtaining of our eternal salvation. It is the means which we use and wherein we stand, which the Lord bestows, and through which God operates and realizes in us His salvation.

Let us notice how this applies to Hebrews 11. Faith in this chapter does not emphasize what we *can* and therefore must do. How could Abraham and Sarah of themselves produce Isaac, inasmuch as both had died as far as the bringing forth of children was concerned? How could Enoch effect his translation into glory without seeing death? How could Abraham effect Isaac's resurrection from the dead after sacrificing him according to the Lord's commandment? How could the children of Israel of themselves make a path through the Red Sea and later through the Jordan? How could that faith of the Israelites, if faith be regarded as a human means, effect the destruction of the walls of Jericho? We understand immediately that faith cannot be interpreted merely as a human means in this eleventh chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews.

Faith, in this chapter, however, is God's means unto the realization of this salvation. God alone does the things, also in Hebrews 11. He brings forth Isaac, makes a path through the Red Sea and the Jordan, causes the walls of Jericho to fall down, etc. Our conscious believing is that spiritual activity whereby we, united with the living God in and through Jesus Christ, put all our confidence and trust in God. Hence, the Lord bestows faith and works through faith exactly because faith looks to the Lord and He is therefore glorified through it

This also applies to the people of God throughout the ages. God alone is the Worker of our salvation from the beginning to the end. Faith is *His* means of salvation and it is the only Divinely possible means of salvation. Another Divine way of salvation is inconceivable. When the Lord *saves us* He *must save us* as the only sovereign Lord, as the God of our salvation Who alone is our Saviour. Therefore He saves us and grants us His eternal

inheritance through faith. For faith emphasizes, not what we can do but what we ourselves cannot do. When the Lord grants us faith He causes us to be united with Himself, enables us to look away from ourselves and to look exclusively unto Him. When the Lord saves us, of course, saves us all by Himself, and, therefore, through .faith. In that faith we recognize the Lord as our only Redeemer and Jehovah is therefore glorified.

Connection Between Faith And Promise.

This also enables us to understand the connection between our faith and the promises of God. They must not be understood as running parallel to one another. It is not true, then, that the Lord is willing to fulfill in us His promise *but* that we must believe. The connection between them is never such that the fulfillment of God's promise is dependent, contingent upon our act of faith: This, we understand, is quite impossible.

Nevertheless, faith and the promise of the Lord are inseparable. The promise of Jehovah is His solemn announcement to the effect that He will bestow upon us the eternal salvation which He has laid away for us from before the beginning of the world, Faith is that operation of the grace of the living God in our hearts whereby we place our implicit trust and confidence in that God of our salvation. Hence, the promise is realized in us exactly through faith because our salvation is a matter of the promise of God alone. Faith, does not stand over against the promise of God; it embraces that promise. Faith does not emphasize what we must or can do; it recognizes the fact that the Lord alone is the Author and Worker of our salvation. Of course, we must fight the good fight of faith; we must hope and pray even unto the end; we must put off the old man and put on the new; we must put on the whole armour of God and resist the power of the devil and all his evil host. This, however, we must do, not because this our calling constitutes the condition of our believing or of God's salvation, but only because faith, the gift of the Lord unto salvation, is a living faith, unites us spiritually with the living Christ, and has therefore *as its fruit* that we walk and conduct ourselves as the party of the living God. Faith and promise the latter demands the former and the former recognizes the latter.

H. Veldman.

Chapter 16

The Covenant Follows The Line Of Continued Generations

*The Dispensation of the Covenant
Follows the Line of the Generations of the Believers.*

In our series of articles on the Covenant thus far, we have discussed several aspects of this thoroughly Scriptural concept. We began by calling attention to the idea of the covenant.

God's covenant with man, e.g., is not a promise. That the Lord establishes His covenant with men does not merely imply that He promises them eternal life. This, we noted, can be interpreted in a Reformed sense. However, it also lends itself aptly to Arminianism. The promise, then, is confused with a general offer of salvation. The Lord offers to all His salvation. And in that general offer of salvation the essence of God's covenant of grace must be sought. This is the interpretation of the covenant as taught by the late Professor W. Heyns in the Christian Reformed Churches for some thirty years.

Neither must the covenant be explained as an agreement or a contract, with mutual obligations and stipulations. God, then, agrees to save us upon the condition of our faith and fighting of the good fight of faith. It is true that we must believe and fight the good fight of faith. This is required of us, not as a condition of the covenant, however, but as fruit of the operation of the grace of God in our hearts. Because the Lord makes us His covenant people and enables us by His spirit to believe and fight the good fight of faith we are obliged, as the people and party of the living God, to lay aside our old nature and walk in all the precepts of Jehovah.

Others would explain the covenant as a way of salvation. The Lord establishes His covenant with us, makes known unto us the way of salvation. This way of salvation is faith in Jesus Christ our Lord. This, then, is the significance of the covenant of God with man. We objected, however, that, if the covenant of God with man be merely an agreement to save or a way of salvation, it is merely temporary, has been concluded as soon as its goal, the salvation of the sinner, has been reached. But, the Scriptures tell us that God establishes with us and our children an *everlasting* covenant of grace.

Neither must the essence of the covenant be sought in an alliance between the Lord and man against the devil and his hosts. Such is the interpretation of the late Dr. A. Kuyper. In the first place, the Lord does not enter into covenant fellowship with man in general. And, secondly, that the covenant of God with man in such an alliance smacks of dualism. All things are ours. The Lord causes all things to work together for our good. The devil, too, and all his host are instruments in His hand and must serve the realization of His eternal covenant and Kingdom in heavenly glory and perfection.

We also called attention to the unilateral character of this covenant of God with man. God's covenant is not bilateral or dipleuric (two-sided), but unilateral or monopleuric (one-sided). And, the realization of God's covenant is unilateral throughout, from the beginning even unto the end. That we must live a new and a godly life is not because the realization of God's covenant is in any sense dependent upon our action, but only because the nature of the operation of the grace of God is such that it calls us out of darkness into His marvelous light. This is the repeated teaching of the Word of God.

And, finally, in several articles we have attempted to establish the Scriptural truth of the particular character of the promise or promises of God. Passages such as Rom. 9, Heb.

6:17-18, 2 Cor. 1:20, Gal. 3, and Hebrews 11 speak for themselves.

A Pertinent Question.

The question finally confronts us with respect to the dispensation of the Covenant as it follows the line of the generations of the believers. This is a pertinent question. Who are in the Covenant of God? What does it mean to be a Covenant Child? Is the covenant established only with the elect? And if the covenant is established only with the elect why are all the children of the believers baptized? Why, then, should all receive the sign of a covenant which is established only with the elect? How, then, could Esau be a covenant-breaker? How can anyone be “cut off” if he were never “in” the covenant? Do not Romans 11:17 (the olive-tree) and John 15:1-2 (the vine) speak of the cutting off of these branches? In what sense are all in the covenant and why, in the dispensation of the covenant, do the blessings of the Covenant (sacraments, preaching, catechetical instruction) come to all without distinction? Are all the children (including the reprobate children) baptized and do they all receive the preaching of the gospel because the Lord, after all, would save all and therefore have all come to the knowledge of the truth? This is a fundamental question. It reveals to what extent we are reformed. That which reveals our reformed identity is not so much the question with respect to the baptism of the elect. That the Lord loves him and would save and actually does save him everybody understands. But why are the others baptized and must they be brought up in the sphere of the covenant? To these questions we will attempt to give an answer as we conclude our series of articles on “The Covenant”.

*It is surely Scriptural that the Covenant
Follows the Line of the Generations of the Believers.*

This truth stands as a rock, first of all historically. It is simply an historical fact that the development of God’s covenant occurs in the line of continued generations. In the Old Dispensation this development runs *in* the line of: Adam-Seth-Noah-Shem-Terah-Abraham- Isaac-Jacob-Israel, and it is confined to the Old Testament nation of the Jews. In the New Testament one can trace the progress of the church or the covenant with one’s finger on the world’s map: Jerusalem- Antioch-Macedonia-Greece-Rome And this development of God’s covenant takes place according to the Lord’s sovereign good-pleasure. When the apostle, Paul, would travel eastward to proclaim the gospel he is prevented from doing so when having come to Troas, and, receiving an urgent appeal from a man in Macedonia in a vision, proceeds to Macedonia. The Lord determines the course of His gospel.

Also textually the truth is everywhere taught in the Word of God that the development of the Lord’s covenant with His people occurs in the line of the generations of the believers. This is true, first of all, of the Old Testament. Notice how the Scriptures speak continually of the parents with their children. In Ps. 127:3 the children are called an heritage of the Lord “Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is His reward.”

They are always reckoned with the parents, and it goes well with both, parents and children, as in the following passages: –Ex. 20:6: “And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love Me, and keep My commandments;” – Deut. 1:36, 39: “Save Caleb the son of Jephunneh; he shall see it, and to him will I give the land that he hath trodden upon, and to his children, because he hath wholly followed the Lord; . . . Moreover your little ones, which we said should be a prey, and your children, which in that day had no knowledge between good and evil, they shall go in thither, and unto them will I give it, and they shall possess it;” –Deut. 4:40: “Thou shalt keep therefore His statutes, and His commandments, which I command thee this day, that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days upon the earth, which the Lord thy God giveth thee, for ever;” – Deut. 5:29: “O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear Me, and keep all My commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever;” –Deut.12:25; 28: “Thou shalt not eat it; that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee, when thou shalt do that which is right in the sight of the Lord Observe and hear all these words which I command thee, that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee for ever, when thou doest that which is good and right in the sight of the Lord thy God.”

Together, the parents and their children serve the Lord, as in the following passages: Deut. 6:2: “That thou mightest fear the Lord thy God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments, which I command thee, thou, and thy son, and thy son’s son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged;” –Deut. 30:2: “And shalt return unto the Lord thy God, and shalt obey His voice according to all that I command thee this day, thou and thy children, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul;” –Deut.31:12, 13: “Gather the people together, men, and women, and children, and thy stranger that is within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the Lord your God, and observe to do all the words of this law And that their children, which have not known any thing may hear, and learn to fear the Lord your God, as long as ye live in the land whither ye go over Jordan to possess it;” Joshua 24:15: “And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord;” –Jer. 32:29: “And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear Me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them;” –Ezek. 37:25: “And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they, and their children, and their children’s children for ever: and My servant David shall be their prince forever;” –Zech. 10:9: “And I will sow them among the people: and they shall remember Me in far countries; and they shall live with their children, and turn again.”

The acts and ordinances of the Lord must be delivered by the parents to the children, as in the following passages: –Ex. 10:2: “And that thou mayest tell in the ears of thy son, and of thy son’s son, the things I have wrought in Egypt, and My signs which, I have done among

them; that ye may know how that I am the Lord;” –Ex. 12:24: “And ye shall observe this thing for an ordinance to thee and to thy sons for ever;” –Ex. 12:26: “And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service?;” –Deut. 4:9,19 40: “Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons’ sons . . . Specially the day that thou stoodest before the Lord thy God in Horeb, when the Lord said unto me, Gather Me the people together, and I will make them hear My words, that they may learn to fear Me all the days that they shall live upon the earth, and that they may teach their children . . . Thou shalt keep therefore His statutes, and His commandments, which I command thee this day; that it may go well with thee and with thy children after thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days upon the earth, which the Lord thy God giveth thee, for ever” –Deut. 6:7: “And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up;” –Deut. 11:29: “And it shall come to pass, when the Lord thy God hath brought thee in unto the land whither thou goest to possess it, that thou shalt put the blessing upon mount Gerizim, and the curse upon mount Ebal;” –Deut. 29:29: “The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law;” –Joshua 4:6, 21: “That this may be a sign among you, that when your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean ye by these stones? . . . And he spake unto the children of Israel, saying, When your children shall ask their fathers in time to come, saying What mean these stones?;” –Joshua 22:24-27: “And if we have not rather done it for fear of this thing, saying, In time to come your children might speak unto our children, saying, What have ye to do with the Lord God of Israel? For the Lord hath made Jordan a border between us and you, ye children of Reuben and children of Gad; ye have no part in the Lord: so shall your children make our children cease from fearing the Lord. Therefore we said, Let us now prepare to build us an altar, not for burnt offering, nor for sacrifice: But that it may be a witness between us and you, and our generations after us, that we might do the service of the Lord before Him with our burnt offerings, and with our sacrifices, and with our peace offerings; that your children may not say to our children in time to come, Ye have no part in the Lord.”

Finally, the Old Testament Scriptures teach us that the covenant of the Lord, with its blessings, develops from child to child, and from generation to generation, as in the following passages: –Gen. 9:12: “And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations;” –Gen. 17:7, 9: “And I will establish My covenant between Me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee . . . And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep My covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations;” –Ex. 3:15: “And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: This is My name for ever, and this is My memorial unto all generations;” –Ex. 12:

17: “And ye shall observe the feast of unleavened bread; for in this selfsame day have I brought your armies out of the land of Egypt: therefore shall you observe this day in your generations by an ordinance for ever;” –Ex. 16:32: “And Moses said, This is the thing which the Lord commandeth, Fill an Omer of it to be kept for your generations; that they may see the bread wherewith I have fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you forth from the land of Egypt;” –Deut. 7:9: “Know therefore that the Lord thy God, He is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love Him and keep His commandments to a thousand generations;” –Ps. 105:8: “He hath remembered His covenant for ever, the word which He commanded to a thousand generations”.

This truth, that the Covenant follows the line of the generations of the believers, is also taught throughout the New Testament. Jesus continues to view the children as children of the covenant, as in the following passages: –Matt. 18:2 ff.: “And Jesus called a little child unto Him, and set him in the midst of them, etc.”; –Matt. 19:13 ff.: “Then were there brought unto Him little children, that He should put His hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them, etc.”; –Matt. 21:15 ff.: “And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that He did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the son of David; they were sore displeased, etc.”; –Mark 10:13 ff.; Luke 9:48: “And said unto them Whosoever shall receive this child in My name receiveth Me: and whosoever shall receive Me receiveth Him that sent Me: for he that is least among you all, the same shall be great;” see also Luke 18: 15 ff.; these passages clearly teach us that the Lord calls the children unto Himself, embraces them, lays His hands upon them, blesses them, declares to them that theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven, presents them to the adults as examples, warns not to offend them, declares that their angels watch over them, and sees in their cry of Hosanna a fulfillment of prophecy.

We also read that entire families are added to the Church: –Luke 10:5: “And into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house;” –Luke 19:9: “And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham;” –Acts 5:42: “And daily in the temple and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ;” –Acts 20:20: “And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house;” –Acts 11:14: “Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved;” –Acts 16:31: “And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house;” –Acts 16:34: “And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house;” –1 Cor. 1:16: “And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other”.

The promise of the covenant, that God will be our God, we read, for the believers and their children, Acts 2:39: “For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.” Hence, the children of believers are admonished, as Christian children, in the Lord: –Acts 26:22: “Having therefore obtained

help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come;” –Eph. 6:1-3: “Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and thy mother, which is the first commandment with promise; That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth;” –Col. 3:20: Children, obey your parents, in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord;” –1 John 2:13: “I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known Him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father;” –2 Tim. 3:15: “And that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” These passages from the New Testament, we understand, can easily be multiplied.

To this we would add the following. There is an organism in the midst of the world, the Church of God, which is called in the Scriptures Israel, Vine, Olive Tree, and these various names are addressed to the entire organism. The entire Church is addressed in The New Testament epistles in various ways: elect, believers, saved in Christ Jesus, saints in Christ Jesus, beloved of God, called of God, etc. And also these expressions are addressed to the entire Church. Moreover, they are not suppositions, so that we presume regeneration with respect to all; they are statements of fact. To this thought we will return in due time. The Scriptures, therefore, abundantly speak of an organism in the midst of the world, consisting of a two-fold seed, elect and reprobates, beloved and hated of God and that sovereignly, blessed and cursed of the Lord, which is called Israel, Church, etc. It is surely Biblical, therefore, that the covenant of the Lord, in its development in the midst of the world, follows the line of the generations of the believers. But, then the question will also assert itself: How must we understand these things? Are all in the covenant of the Lord? If so, in what sense are all covenant children? In what sense are all within the Church saints of God and of Christ Jesus, beloved of God, elect of God according to the foreknowledge of God, called of God, etc.? Are all essentially in the covenant? Is the promise of Jehovah, which comes without distinction to all, also meant for all? Does the Lord purpose or intend to bless all but man turns this blessing into a curse? To these questions we will attempt to give an answer in our following article.

H. Veldman.

Chapter 17

The Covenant Established Organically In The Generations

*The Dispensation of the Covenant
Follows the Line of the Generations of the Believers.*

In our previous article we called attention to the Scriptural truth that the development of God's covenant runs along the line of the continued generations of the believers. This we proved from the Scriptures, historically and textually. In this article we are confronted with the question: How must we understand this organical development of God's covenant with His people? In what sense are all within the covenant and what, according to the Holy Scriptures, is the Divine purpose with respect to this two-fold seed, the carnal and spiritual Israel?

God's Covenant Established Centrally With Christ.

We have already called attention in this series of articles on "The Covenant" to the fact that the question has been much discussed among Reformed theologians: With whom does the Lord establish His covenant: Does the Lord establish this covenant with Christ? And if He does establish His covenant with Christ, is it with Christ as Head or as Mediator or as Surety? Or, does the Lord establish His covenant with the elect? Again, the question is asked whether God, establishes His covenant with the elect sinner in Christ, or with the believers. and their seed, and, then, with all the seed?

It must be clear that God's covenant is certainly established with Christ. This is the undeniable testimony of Holy Writ. In Galatians 3 we are told that "to Abraham and his seed, were the promises made and this seed is Christ" and also, "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." And in Ps. 89: 1-3: "I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever: with my mouth will I make known Thy faithfulness to all generations. For I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever: Thy faithfulness shalt Thou establish in the very heavens. I have made a covenant *with my Chosen, I have sworn unto David My servant.*" That God should establish His covenant with Christ lies in the very nature of the case. God's covenant, we have noted in preceding articles, is that relationship of living friendship with His people, whereby the Lord and His people are united in the bond, of perfect love, a relationship of love in which God blesses us as our Sovereign. Friend and we bless and praise the Lord as His friend-servants. Christ, alone, is the Servant of Jehovah. Apart from Him there is no fellowship between God and man. For we all have departed from the living God and corrupt the glory of the Lord. In Christ, and in Christ alone, the law of God is fulfilled and completely satisfied. In Him and alone in Him is everlasting life. God's covenant of living friendship has therefore been established in Christ, rests in Christ, is possible only in and through our Lord Jesus Christ. He is surely the Head and Mediator of God's covenant with His people.

God's Covenant Established With The Believers And Their Seed.

On the other hand, the covenant of God with man is established with the believers and their seed. This is surely Scriptural. We read in Gen. 9:12, 17:7, 9: "And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: And I will establish My covenant between

Me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. . . . And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep My covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations.” And in Acts 2:39 we read the well-known words already quoted: “For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.” In connection with this last passage we note the following. Firstly, the implication of the text is certainly such that we may read: “For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, and their children. Secondly, the calling whereof the text speaks must surely be understood in the saving efficacious sense of the word.

We are aware of the fact that some would interpret this calling as an invitation. The implication, then, would be that the Lord extends the promise of eternal life to all, together with their children, to whom the gospel is proclaimed. The Lord invites all unto eternal life, the promise is Divinely meant for all who come within range of the preaching of the gospel. However, this interpretation of the text in Acts 2 is impossible. Firstly, it is not Scriptural to confuse the promise with an offer. Even in our daily life, to promise something is not the same as to offer something. And, according to the Word of God, the promises of God are Yea and Amen in Christ Jesus; besides, according to Romans 9 the Word (or promise) of God has not become of none effect, exactly because not all are Israel who are called Israel and in Isaac shall the seed be called. Moreover, how can, e.g., the sacraments speak of an offer of salvation to all without distinction when they symbolize the sacrifice of the Lamb of God Who laid down His life only for His sheep, for those whom the Father gave Him from before the foundation of the world? Furthermore, this “arminian” interpretation of Acts 2:39 is also impossible in the light of the context. Do we not read in the concluding verse of this chapter, “And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved”? Must verse 39 not be explained in connection with verse 47? And do we not read later in this book of Acts, chapter 13, verse 48: “And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.”?

Hence, the calling of Acts 2:39 must be understood in the saving, efficacious sense of the word. Permit me to quote but one passage, Rom. 8:29-30: “For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified.”

What is the implication of the truth that the covenant of God is established with the believers and their seed? On the one hand, this cannot mean that all the seed of Abraham, or that all the seed of the believers are essentially in the covenant, that all are covenant-children in the same, equal sense of the word, that all have equally a right to the promises of the Lord, that that which distinguishes them does not lie therefore in God but in the fact that some believe and others reject the one, well-meaning offer of salvation. This, we maintain with all the powers at our command, is impossible. Fact is, according to 1 Cor.

10:1-5, the Lord was not well pleased with many, of the Israelites, and we quote:

“Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; And did all eat the same spiritual meat; And did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.”

Please notice, in this passage, that externally all the Israelites had everything in common. They were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea; all were baptized unto Moses and in the sea; all ate the same spiritual meat and all drank the same spiritual drink. One thing, however, distinguished the one group of Israelites from the other: the Lord was not well pleased with many of them. And it is clear from the apostle’s epistle to the Romans, in chapter 9, that the Lord’s good pleasure towards some of them and not towards others is not based upon the good of some and the evil of others, but only upon the sovereign good pleasure of Jehovah. It is simply not true that all have an equal right to the promises of God and eternal life, that all therefore stand equally before the Lord. How could this be possible? God elected some and sovereignly reprobated others; He does not love all but only the people of His eternal love. Christ did not die for all but only for His sheep. How can the sacraments speak of a promise which is Divinely meant for all the seed of the believers, when they symbolize a sacrifice which is atoning and particular and speak of a blood which flowed only for some?

God’s covenant fellowship and communion applies, therefore, only to some of the seed of the believers and not to all the children of the people of God. And neither does the Lord make the attempt to save all the seed of the covenant; to the contrary, He causes the gospel to be preached with the Divine intention that only some shall be saved whereas it is also His divine good pleasure that the same gospel shall be a savor of death unto death. We conclude and maintain, therefore, that although the covenant is established with the believers and their seed, this can never mean that all the seed of Abraham, or all the seed of the believers are essentially and equally in this covenant of God. And yet, on the other hand, it is also true that all are Israelites, that Esau was a covenant-breaker, that all receive the sacrament of Circumcision or Baptism, that all are, therefore, covenant children.

To understand this Scriptural truth we must bear in mind the following. In the first place, the stream of God’s election follows the river-bed of the continued generations of the believers and that in such a way that this river-bed is dug out and prepared for this stream. This river-bed is the seed of Abraham, the seed of Abraham, if you will, according to the flesh. The Jewish nation, in the Old Dispensation, was the river-bed in which the stream of the elect people of God flowed. Also, it pleases the Lord to develop His covenant, essentially and spiritually, from generation to generation, or, if you will, God calls His elect

people out of sin and darkness into His blessed covenant fellowship from generation to generation. Fact is, the glory of God's Name is *the* purpose of salvation. God saves us, not for our sake but for His own Name's sake.

The fundamental question is not, therefore, "Are you saved?" We hear this often nowadays, especially from those who would minimize the distinctiveness of our church, who would emphasize that too much emphasis is being laid upon the truth, and who would therefore maintain that the all-important question does not concern the knowledge and profession of the truth but our personal salvation. We must not be deceived in this respect. Of course, we deplore any intellectual maintaining of the truth when it is not accompanied by a conviction of the heart.

Nevertheless, the purpose of salvation is the glory of God. We have been called out of darkness into the light to proclaim the virtues of the alone blessed, God: And it is an undeniable fact that the love for and maintaining of the word and truth of God constitutes eternal life itself—to know the Triune God, through Jesus Christ, is eternal life. Then we also understand why the Lord establishes His fellowship and communion in the sphere of the truth and from generation to generation. His Word must be preserved; His truth must be maintained and confessed; the knowledge of the Scriptures must be passed on from generation to generation; the purpose of our salvation, the glory of God's Name, is possible only in the sphere of the truth and the development of that truth.

It is also for this same reason that God usually regenerates His people in infancy and provides for their instruction from infancy on. This truth has been maintained by the Reformed fathers throughout the ages. They even regarded Baptism as a sign and seal of this regeneration, not because they assumed the regeneration of every baptized child but because it was their conviction that, although we may not limit the work of Divine grace and determine when it takes place, the Lord usually calls His own out of darkness into the light in their earliest infancy. This was not a supposition on the part of the fathers but, a conviction. Hence, the stream of God's election follows the river-bed of the continued generations of the believers.

Secondly, inasmuch as the elect people of God follow the river-bed of the original development in the generations of the believers, also the carnal seed, organically one with the spiritual seed, stand in close connection with this covenant of Divine friendship with His own. The Scriptures emphasize this truth when they employ the common and well-known figure of the vine and the olive-tree. Or, let us use the figure of the tomato plant. A tomato plant has two kinds of branches, fruit-bearing and non fruit-bearing. Both branches are very much alive. Both grow. Only the one bears fruit and the other does not. Nevertheless, the entire plant is called 'tomato plant'. And this is due to the fact that both branches constitute a single organism which bears the name of what it essentially is: a tomato plant.

This also applies, spiritually, to the organism, church, in the midst of the world. There is a people, an organism, called “Church, Israel”, in the midst of the world. This organism is composed of a two-fold seed. Moreover, even as the tomato plant bears the name of what it essentially is, so also this organism bears the name of its elect kernel, and is called “church”. That this organism bears the name of its elect essence or kernel, is for various reasons. On the one hand, God’s covenant is established with the believers and their seed. The reprobate shell comes forth out of the elect not *vice versa*. This is simply an historical fact. Branches that depart from the ways of the living God and reveal their reprobate mind in their rejection of the gospel are cut off, also historically, from, the line of the covenant, and the covenant of the Lord continues with His people and their children.

Moreover, the entire organism, the entire church is treated according to its elect kernel. This also applies to a tomato plant. If the whole plant were composed of “suckers”, branches that do not bear fruit, no attention would be paid to that particular plant. Now, however the entire plant is treated according to its essential character. This is also true spiritually. The entire organism receives the same spiritual treatment. Thirdly. the entire organism grows out of Christ. Also this applies to the natural figure of the tomato plant. The “suckers” grow as well as the fruit-bearing branches. Only, the one bears fruit whereas the other does not. The church, too, the whole church grows out of Christ. The preaching of the Word, the catechetical instruction, all the spiritual labor which is bestowed upon all the members of the church, influences all the members. All are affected. All respond to the same spiritual treatment. The difference is, of course, that the one responds positively and the other negatively. The one bends the knee in humility and contrition whereas the other hardens himself and progresses in the *way* of sin and evil. And this growth of both seeds, elements within the church of God, is effected through the same means and by the same Spirit of God and of Christ Jesus. It is He Who causes the same gospel to be a savor of life unto some and a savor of death unto others.

*In The Realization Of God’s Covenant
All The Seed Comes Into Contact
With The Blessings Of The Lord.*

Hence, in this dispensation of the covenant of God, the Lord’s realization of His eternal covenant in Christ with His people, all come into contact with the promises of God, yea, all the blessings of the Lord. This does not mean that this is in itself grace for all the children of the covenant. To this we have already called attention in this article. The Divine promise is simply not extended unto, meant for all. All do not share the favour and love of God. All do not have equally a chance to be saved. To be historically and externally in the covenant is not in itself a token of Divine grace and mercy. This does mean, however, that the promises *come to all in the historical dispensation of the covenant of God*. All are baptized. All receive the gospel, in the preaching of the word and in catechetical instruction. All are subject to the same discipline. All are commanded to repent; all come into contact with Christ as the only Way of salvation; and are exhorted to believe in the way of repentance.

And therefore all stand before, the responsibility to serve the Lord with all their heart and mind and soul and strength. None has the right to choose the way of sin and reject the gospel because they love the darkness rather than the light.

And what may be the purpose of God with respect to this? What the Lord's purpose is with respect to the elect we all understand. And the reprobate? That he has a name and place in the midst of the church is surely not a token of Divine grace unto him. God loved Jacob and hated Esau before either had done good or evil. The Divine purpose of the two-fold seed in the sphere of the covenant is surely that the Lord's eternal purpose according to both, election and reprobation, may stand and be sovereignly realized. God seeks and realizes the salvation of the elect and the eternal ruin of the reprobates, and that according to His eternal good pleasure.

The Reprobate Trample God's Covenant Under Foot.

Of Esau we read that he was a covenant-breaker. To be a covenant-breaker or trample the covenant under foot does not necessarily imply that we belong essentially to the covenant of God's fellowship and friendship. To reject the promise of the gospel does not necessarily mean that that promise is offered unto us. All who know the way but refuse to walk therein, who have been born and raised within the sphere of the church but choose the things below rather than the things above are covenant-breakers. This expression refers to a conscious act on the part of these wicked for which they are and will be held responsible. Our calling and obligation is to serve the Lord with all our heart and mind and soul and strength. However, we refuse to serve the Living God. We refuse the things above in preference to the things below. We refuse to forsake the way of sin and corruption and walk in the way of God's statutes and commandments. We thereby show by our every action that we are profane, love the earthy rather than the heavenly, the fellowship of the world rather than the fellowship of God, the glories of Egypt and of this world rather than the afflictions of the people of God and to be called an heir of the world to come. We are covenant-breakers.

The idea, of course, is not that we can break what the Lord has once begun. The viewpoint is that of the wicked. We trample the covenant of the Lord under foot. We reveal our scorn and disdain for the fellowship of the living God. We reject the Christ and turn our backs upon the gospel because faith in Christ must be accompanied by a forsaking of the ways of sin, and we, love sin and the things of this world and refuse to forsake them for the affairs of God's church and covenant.

This also seals the condemnation of the wicked. They are held responsible. Responsibility does not imply freedom of action in the sense that we are sovereignly free, are able of ourselves to choose either the good or the evil, and that the Lord's attitude toward us is therefore determined by our attitude toward Him. Responsibility, however, does imply that we are morally free, Spiritually and subjectively we sin because we choose sin, never

because we are driven unto sin. Our walking in paths of evil is always characterized by a voluntary choice on our part whereby we willfully choose the world and reject the things of God's kingdom and covenant. For this we are held responsible and accountable. But the Lord fulfills all His counsel, also with respect to the reprobate wicked. We cannot explain this phenomenon of the responsibility of man and the sovereignty of God. Both are true and must be maintained, not as at conflict with one another but in the light of each other. The elect, on the other hand, are saved to the uttermost. In them the Lord fulfills His promises which are Yea in Christ. And they are enabled to stand by the grace of the Lord as the party of the living God.

H. Veldman.

The Appendix

The Expression "Sanctified In Christ" In Our Baptism Form

By Rev. Herman Veldman

A Paper delivered at the Ministers' Conference
held April 9, 1948 at the First Church.

Introduction

The Liturgy of our Reformed churches, to which also our Baptism Form belongs, is historically not as rich as our highly treasured Confessions. With respect to our Confessions, our Belgic Confession, also called The Thirty Seven Articles and our Confession of Faith, reminds us of Guido de Bres and of the fact that he preferred martyrdom to a renouncing of his faith and principles. These articles, originally composed by, the above named French Reformer, were born of the blood and suffering of the saints of God for the cause of Christ, and we treasure them, also for this reason, even before we have begun to read them. Our Heidelberg Catechism, drawn up by Ursinus and Olevianus upon the request of Elector Frederick III, also called "The Pious," can also trace its origin to the fact that Germany, then composed of hundreds of greater or lesser states, had become a battleground of the various conflicting views, such as Catholicism, Lutheranism, Calvinism, etc. And our Canons of Dordrecht, too, are the fruit of an uncompromising opposition to Arminianism and all which: that ungodly theory implies.

It is somewhat different with our Liturgy, although it, too, was composed in trying times of hardship and peril, as in the days of bloody Mary, Queen of England, wife of Philip II of Spain, who ruled England in the years 1553-1558, during whose reign many Protestant

leaders were compelled to suffer martyrdom, among whom we may name Cramer, Latimer, and Ridley. This persecution, we understand, was not merely confined to the English isles.

Our Liturgy and our maintaining of it are significant. They, too, serve as a bond to preserve the unity of the church of God in the midst of the world. It is not difficult to foresee what the result would be, if these ecclesiastical bands were relinquished, abandoned, if each minister were left to himself to determine the policy and course of action which he would choose to adopt.

This is applicable particularly to our Baptism Form. In the history of the church of God in the Netherlands, following upon the year, 1834, a person's ecclesiastical identity was determined by his conception of Infant Baptism, To maintain "presumptive regeneration" as the ground of infant baptism stigmatized one as a follower of Kuyper; to oppose this conception placed one in the camp of the "A" group. To emphasize the first view exposed a person to the charge of Catholicism; to champion the "A" conception exposed him to the accusation of despising the sacrament and of Methodism.

The minister who spoke a few edifying words at the administration of Baptism was regarded as a pure "A" man; whoever omitted such words was truly "B." And, indeed, no other question reveals our truly and distinctively Reformed identity more clearly than the question which pertains to the ground of and reason for the baptism of all our children. And of all the difficult questions connected with our Baptism Form, so it is claimed, none is acknowledged to be more difficult than that which concerns the expression, "Sanctified in Christ."

A Historical Review of Our Baptism Form.

Our Form of Baptism we owe largely, together with our other Forms of worship and our psalms, to one man, Petrus Dathenus, or Datheen as he is also called, had fled from the Netherlands to a small village in Germany, Frankenthal. There a place of refuge had been, accorded him by the great Elector, Frederick III. Because many of Reformed persuasion had fled with him to Frankenthal, gradually a strong city developed there and with that growth a powerful and active congregation sprang into being. In the midst of this congregation a liturgical book was composed and used, which served, almost without change, until 1737; this book, at least for the greatest part of it, still remains our heritage. Peter Dathenus although performing the lion share, did not work alone. Others helped him and he drew from various sources, as for example, A Lasco, the great London Reformer. Another source which aided Dathenus was a liturgy drawn up by Olevianus, who corresponded with Calvin and was greatly influenced by that great French Reformer. Calvin, therefore, be it indirectly, has set the stamp of his spirit upon our Baptism Form.

As far as the subsequent history of our Baptism Form is concerned, in 1574 the provincial Synod of Dordt shortened it considerably. However, because the national Synod of Dordt

neglected to bestow upon the churches a carefully prepared and established version, the Baptism Form was corrupted in various ways and arbitrarily explained. In 1897 Professor Rutgers presented a new edition of the Baptism Form, and this product of Prof. Rutgers was adopted, preliminarily, by the Synod 'of Arnhem in 1902.

A Highly Significant Question

The phrase, "Sanctified in Christ" occurs, in our Baptism Form, in the first question which is asked of the parents. This question reads: "Whether you acknowledge, that although our children are conceived and born in sin, and therefore are subject to all miseries, yea, to condemnation itself; yet that they are sanctified in Christ, and therefore, as members of His Church ought to be baptized?" The true interpretation of the phrase, "Sanctified in Christ" is a highly significant question, because it is obviously the heart and core of our entire Baptism Form. We have here the all-important question directed to the parents whether they acknowledge that their children *ought* to be baptized. It is true that the parents are asked whether they confess the truth as contained in the Old and New Testaments and as taught in their Christian Church to be the truth and also whether they will instruct or help instruct their child or children in that Christian doctrine. But in this first question the fathers touch upon the very ground and basis of infant baptism. This is a self-evident fact.

And, it is also self-evident that this first question, as far as its essential significance is concerned, can be summarized as follows: "Whether you. acknowledge that our children, because they are sanctified in Christ and therefore are members of His Church, ought to be baptized?! We *may* safely conclude, therefore, that the phrase, "sanctified in Christ," is the very heart, the nerve-center, of our Baptism Form.

Besides, in our appraisal of this expression, we must be strictly honest. The important question is not, "How *can* we explain it?" Because of the failure of the National Synod of Dordt to produce a carefully prepared and established version of our Baptism Form, it was often arbitrarily explained and interpreted. Recognizing the dilemma which confronted them in this first question directed to the parents, several preachers very arbitrarily asked this question of the parents in the form of their own choosing. According to the book, "*Ons Doopsformulier*" by Ds. B. Wielenga, page 275, the following change would be made in this first question of our Baptism Form: Do you acknowledge that some children are sanctified in Christ?; or: Do you acknowledge that they can be sanctified in Christ?; or: Do you acknowledge that they are probably sanctified in Christ?; or: Do you acknowledge that they ought to be sanctified in Christ?; or: Do you acknowledge that they, sanctified in Christ, that is, when they are sanctified in Christ? However, it is not the important question whether we *can* interpret or how we *can* interpret our Baptism Form and particularly this first question directed to the parents.

We must ask ourselves this question: How *must* this phrase be explained? How did our

fathers interpret the expression? What does it mean as it constitutes a part of our officially adopted confession? In regard to this point the undersigned is convinced that no doubt need exists in our minds relative the interpretation by our fathers of the much disputed phrase, “sanctified in Christ.”

Finally, we will attempt in this paper to limit ourselves to these words, and refer to the rest of our Baptism Form only insofar as it throws light upon this expression. We need not, therefore, enter upon a detailed discussion of our Baptism Form in general. Neither will it be necessary to discuss the sacramental operation in the sacrament of Infant Baptism, whether we must conceive of such an operation of the Spirit upon the elect recipient of the sacrament. The question which confronts us in this paper is: What is the interpretation of the phrase, “sanctified in Christ,”?

Various Interpretations of the Expression.

Some would interpret this phrase in a subjective-spiritual sense. The expression, then, refers to spiritual, actual, subjective holiness. To be “sanctified in Christ” would signify that we are spiritually in Christ and consequently partakers of His holiness in that spiritual, subjective sense of the word.

Others regard this sanctification or holiness in the objective sense. Such, e.g., was the presentation of the late Prof. W. Heyns. Baptism, as such, is an objective sign of God’s covenant, of our entrance into God’s fellowship through the blood of Christ and the grace of the Holy Spirit; that is, the sacrament itself is an earthly picture and therefore a sign of this fact as such. This sacrament, however, is also an objective seal, whereby the Lord declares, in this sacrament of baptism, that the child has the right to all the covenant blessings of God in Christ Jesus our receiving of these blessings, we understand, is contingent upon our acceptance of the proffered salvation. Hence, all our children are “sanctified in Christ,” set apart in that objective sense of the word.

A third presentation of this phrase is called a sort of covenant holiness. This conception was entertained exclusively by the “A” brethren during the famous controversy in the Netherlands prior to and including the Synod of Utrecht, 1905. The undersigned candidly admits that it is difficult for him to distinguish sharply between this view and that of the late Prof. W. Heyns. The following explanation of the phrase, “sanctified in Christ,” by J. Van Anandel, which appeared, in his ‘Pastoral Epistles’ in the year 1907, was quoted in the pamphlet “*Rondom 1905*” page 115, and we translate:

“Exactly because they are so seldom, the apostolic references concerning our children are of such great value. We know the much-discussed passage: ‘your children are holy’, I Cor. 7:14. Would. Paul here define the children of believers as regenerated? Not at all; this idea lies completely beyond his vision. But wherein does the holiness of the child consist? We must seek the answer in the Old Covenant. While God gave the peoples of the world over unto sin, in the same measure that

they held under the light of His general Revelation, His dealings with Abraham's seed were exactly the opposite. He separated it from the peoples of this world, covered its impurity with the blood of sin-offerings, placed upon it the imprint of His peculiar possessions, and redelivered (*hergaf*) it unto men's original destiny, by calling it unto His service. Israel became thereby an holy, priestly people. Now, our children occupy the same position. This holiness can undoubtedly be lost. This does not take away the fact, however, that it is of great value. The sanctified child partakes of privileges which have been denied entire peoples. It is not estranged from the blood of Christ, Heb. 10:29; fact is, none is sanctified except by blood. Christ bought with His own also their seed, and merited for them the right to serve God instead of being given over unto sin and being subject to its condemnation. If this were not true, God could exercise no fellowship with the seed of His own whatsoever, yea, He would not will to have fellowship with them. Neither does the sanctified child stand outside of all communion with the Spirit of God Who lives in the church. He resides underneath His holy influence (*heiligen adem*), is led by Him unto the knowledge of salvation, and also considered worthy to taste the good work of God, Heb. 6:5. . . . But the most important gift to them remains, that they have been laid, at the open gate of heaven, and may request, in all confidence, all grace of the Lord which they need to enter."

And on page 37 of the same booklet we quote the following as an expression of the beliefs of Ds. T. Bos, a prominent "A," man:

"Because of the words 'in Christ' the word 'sanctified' (in this phrase of our Baptism Form-H.V.) means more than a separation to reside underneath the means of grace; it is a privilege which the children have in common with the believers, and which distinguishes them from unbaptized, who reside underneath the Gospel. On the other hand, it is less than being regenerated. To him 'sanctified in Christ' is the same as being member of the church, as we know her; to express it with his own distinction: sanctified refers to membership of the church, 'not according to the line of election, but according to that of the covenant.' We do not err, therefore, when we conceive of Bos as understanding covenant-holiness as being partaker of the promise. The possession of the promise is, on the one hand, more than a residing underneath the gospel, and, on the other hand, less than a being regenerated" –thus far this quotation concerning the beliefs of Ds. T. Bos.

In this same vein, spake all the "A," men of that day who so furiously opposed the conception of the late Dr. A. Kuyper. It is clear that they did not interpret "sanctified in Christ" in a subjective, real, spiritual sense, but objectively, as a sort of covenant holiness. All the children of believers were regarded as in the covenant, as possessing a special privilege, as receiving a certain right to the service and blessings of God. That also Prof. Berkhof, in his *Systematic Theology*, conceives also of the unregenerate as being in the covenant in the sense that they have special privileges, such as the right to lay claim to the promises of God and as sharing the so-called common covenant blessings, appears from his

writings on page 289, and we quote:

“They are in the covenant in the sense that they may lay claim to the promises which God gave when He established His covenant with believers and their seed. Paul even says of his wicked kinsmen, whose is the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises,—Rom. 9:4. . . . They are in the covenant also as far as the covenant blessings are concerned. Though they do not experience the regenerating influence of the Holy Spirit, yet they are subject to certain special operations and influences of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit strives with them in a special manner, convicts them of sin, enlightens them in a measure, and enriches them with the blessings of common grace, Gen. 6:3; Matt. 13:18-22; Heb. 6:4-6.”

*The Spiritual-Subjective Interpretation
the Only Possible Interpretation of the
Expression, “Sanctified in Christ.”*

First, the expression, “sanctified in Christ,” appears throughout the New Testament in this ethical, spiritual sense. On the one hand, this phrase as it appears in our Baptism Form is surely not a quotation of I Cor. 7:14. There we read: “For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy.” The meaning of this passage is surely not that the believing wife renders the unbelieving husband spiritually, ethically holy, or that the believing husband renders the unbelieving wife holy in that sense of the word. This, we know, is impossible. But the apostle would teach us that the marriage relationship between such parents is sanctified by God to the extent that He will establish His covenant with their seed. There is, however, and this is self-evident, a striking, difference between I Cor. 7:14 and the expression as it appears in our Baptism Form: the words, “in Christ,” which do appear in the first question directed to the parents do not appear in the text in I Corinthians. Also the late Prof. Bavinck declared that it cannot be established that the expression in the first question directed to the parents is a quotation of or an appeal to I Cor: 7:14; yea, he adds that if the author of our Baptism Form inserted the phrase, “sanctified in Christ,” because of I Cor. 7:14, he would have misinterpreted the text. On the other hand, the phrase is a quotation of several other passages in the Word of God. Permit us to quote the following:

“Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours” —Cor. 1:2; “Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons.” —Phil 1:1; “Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth.” —John 17:17; “And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of

our God,—I Cor. 6:11; “That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.” —Ephesians 5:26.

In all these texts the expression must be understood spiritually-subjectively. In fact, no text can be quoted from the Scriptures in which this expression ever has another connotation.

Secondly, the context of this phrase, “sanctified in Christ,” demands that it be spiritually-subjectively interpreted. Notice with me, first of all, the immediate context. To the parents the following question is directed:

“Whether you acknowledge, that although our children are conceived and born in sin, and therefore are subject to all miseries, yea, to condemnation itself; yet that they are sanctified in Christ, and therefore, as members of His Church ought to be baptized?”

The words; “conceived and born in sin,” speak for themselves. They can be understood only in a spiritual-subjective sense of the word. Hence, if then the phrase, “sanctified in Christ” merely refers to covenant holiness and does not necessarily imply ethical holiness, we would be able to ascribe this quaint interpretation to this first question: “Whether you acknowledge, that although our children are conceived and born in sin, and therefore are subject to all miseries, yea, to condemnation itself; yet, that they are sanctified in Christ, and therefore still in their sin, as members of His Church ought to be baptized?” To explain the phrase objectively surely leaves room for the possibility that they are yet in their sin.

Notice with me in the second place, however, the general tenor of the Baptism Form. In the didactic part of the Form (the first part) we are told, firstly, what the Father *has done*. We are told that “God the Father witnesseth and sealeth unto us, that He doth make an eternal covenant of grace with us, and adopts us for His children and heirs, and therefore will provide us with every good thing, and avert all evil or turn it to our profit.” Thereupon we are told what the Son *has done*. We read that “the Son sealeth unto us, that He doth wash us in His blood from all our sins, incorporating us into the fellowship of His death and resurrection, so that we are freed from all our sins, and accounted righteous before God.” Finally, in this first part of the Form, we are told, not what the Spirit *has done* but what he *will do* not because this work of the Spirit is dependent upon us, but because this work applies to our entire future. And we are told that “the Holy ‘Ghost assures us, by this holy sacrament, that He will dwell in us, and sanctify us to be members of Christ, applying unto us, that which we have in Christ, namely, the washing. away of our sins, and the daily renewing of our lives, till we shall finally be presented without spot or wrinkle among the assembly of the elect in life eternal.”

And that this truth as expressed in this didactic part of our Baptism Form also applies to the children is evident from the Thanksgiving Prayer. We read: “Almighty God and merciful Father, we thank and praise Thee, that Thou hast forgiven us, and our children,

all our sins, through the blood of Thy beloved Son, and adopted us to be Thy children, and sealed and confirmed the same unto us by Holy Baptism. . .” Notice, please, that we read here: And received us (also our children therefore) *through Thy Holy Spirit* as members of Thine only begotten Son, and adopted us to be Thy children, and sealed and confirmed the same unto us by Holy Baptism.” All that we read, therefore, in the didactic part of our Form is applied to our children. And all this is further emphasized by the words which appear shortly before the prayer: “Since then baptism is come in the place of circumcision, therefore infants are to be baptized as heirs of the kingdom of God, and of His covenant.”

Thirdly, another reason why the phrase, “sanctified in Christ,” must be interpreted in a spiritual-subjective sense of the word will become apparent when we refer to related baptism forms of the days of the Reformation. Remember, our own Baptism Form was composed by Petrus Dathenus during the days of the Reformation. In the Baptism Form of A Lasco (1499-1560-born in Poland –a prominent reformer who came to England in 1550 where he labored for the cause of Protestantism), in the second question the confession is required of the parents that these children must be baptized upon the command of Christ with the seal of the adoption of His righteousness. Of ‘greater significance’ is what Micron declares in his Catechism which appeared in London in the year, 1561, with a preface by A Lasco, Micron or Micronius was a Dutch Protestant who was born in the year, 1522(3) and died in the year, 1559. His ninetieth question reads:

Why are not faith and confession by the mouth not demanded in the same manner of the children of the Congregation before they are baptized? And the answer reads: “Because the Congregation has a much surer testimony of their salvation out of the Word of God; than one could have from the confession of adults, and their innate sickness (because of which they can neither believe nor Confess) is not imputed unto them for Christ’s sake, in Whom they are considered blessed, that is, holy, justified, pure, and believing, not less than the adult believers.”

Fourthly, in support of the assertion that the phrase, “sanctified in Christ,” must be spiritually-subjectively understood, I would offer you several quotations from the fathers of the time of the composition of our Baptism Form. Bullinger, a contemporary and friend of Calvin, writes in his “*Huisboek*,” 5th decade, eighth sermon or lecture: “I pray you, why do we baptize our minor children? Because they confess with the mouth? I think not. Do we not baptize them because God has commanded to bring them unto Him? And because we believe, that God *out of pure grace and mercy through the blood of Jesus Christ has cleansed them, has adopted and made them heirs of His eternal kingdom?* Whereas we baptize the children for this reason, we thereby sufficiently declare that grace is not bestowed upon them through baptism, but that that is sealed unto them which they already possess.” In his “small Catechism” Ursinus declares: “The first reason why the children must be baptized, is that the Holy Spirit operates also in them, and inclines them to believe and obey God, although they can believe as the adult believers can.” Caspar van der Heyden writes in his – “Short and clear proof of the Holy Baptism,”: “Even as in Adam

our children are not merely reckoned as dead, but really are dead, so also in Christ they are not only reckoned to be alive, but they are ingrafted into Christ, even as they can be partakers of His life.” And to the Baptists he directs the question: “If now the children are pure and holy . . . and such does not occur through the Holy Spirit of regeneration, the ingrafting of Christ, will you tell us whereby it does occur.?” Batingius writes in his “Explanation of the Catechism of the Christian Religion”: “The second proof for infant baptism is founded upon this, that the children, as well as the adults, are promised the forgiveness of sins and the Holy Spirit. From this we conclude thus. Whereas it is revealed, that the sign and the outward ceremony cannot in any way be denied them to whom the things signified, as the forgiveness of sins and the Holy Spirit, are promised and given. And whereas it appears that the forgiveness of sins and the Holy Spirit are promised and given the small, minor children, how then could the element of water be justly deprived the young children?” Having said this he proves this statement with Matt. 19:14, in connection with John 3:5, and then concludes: “So there can be no doubt of their (i.e., the children) regeneration, which is further strengthened by the fact, that regeneration is a work of the Holy Spirit.” Festus Hommius, clerk of the Synod of Dordt, declares in his: *Disputationes Theologicas adversus Pontificios*: “Although the children lack the aptness or adaptation (*hebbelijkheid*) of operating faith and do not possess active faith, nevertheless they may not therefore be reckoned among the positive unbelievers; not because they receive active faith in baptism, or that of them it can be said that they believe through the faith of another, namely, of the church or those who present them for baptism; but because *they have faith in the first activity, in the root and in the seed and that through the inner operation of the Holy Spirit.*” In his *Loci Communes* Antonius Walasus appeals to Calvin in his opposition to Beza and expresses himself thus: We say that the children (ye take them indeterminately, leaving unto God His judgment) must be reckoned among the believers, because the seed of the Spirit of faith is in them, which some call the aptness and others the inclination of faith; out of which subsequently, through the hearing of the Word active faith is gradually formed, sometimes earlier, sometimes later.” Jacobus Trigland, one of the most vehement opponents of the, Arminians, directs in one of his writings the following question at the Arminians: “Whether the young child of believers are truly regenerated and sanctified by the Holy Spirit? If not, how then can they be saved. . . and upon what ground are they then baptized, inasmuch as baptism is the washing (*bad*) of regeneration?” Voetius declares: “In no other way is baptism administered to children and the word of the promise applied to them, than the Supper of the Lord or baptism is applied to adults. *For inner faith and inner conversion is supposed out of the outward confession.* If these be present then they are sealed by baptism, which is actually and formally the seal; if not, then baptism seals nothing.” And of the same writer we would also quote the following: “It is the consensus of opinion of Reformed theologians, that the power of baptism does not consist in the producing of regeneration, but in the confirmation of regeneration, which is already present.”

From these quotations we may draw some definite conclusions. On the one hand we may say that the fathers here are surely speaking of the children of believers according to

election. At first glance we might say that they do not distinguish here. They do not mention election or reprobation in these quotations. At first glance, therefore, we might draw the conclusion that the fathers here are speaking of all the children of the believers without discrimination. Against this view, however, we may object that the language of the fathers in these statements is altogether too positive. We read, for example, “that God out of pure grace and mercy, through the blood of Jesus Christ, has cleansed them, has adopted and made them heirs of His eternal kingdom.” Ursinus declares that “the Holy Spirit operates also in the children and inclines them to believe and obey God, although they cannot believe as the adult believers can...” And thus we could continue. The language of the fathers in these quotations is positive. They do not presuppose or assume something to be true. What they say concerning the children they declare to be facts. They are speaking of the children according to election. And on the other hand, it is apparent that many of the fathers understood regeneration to precede baptism.

To quote Voetius again: “It is the consensus of opinion of Reformed theologians that the power of baptism does not consist in the producing of regeneration (Roman Catholicism H.V.), but in the confirmation of regeneration, which is already present.” And although Calvin also has been quoted in support of the contention that regeneration precedes baptism, yet the great Reformer remarks in his *Institutes* that the Baptists are guilty of the error that the thing signified always must precede the sign. He writes in his *Institutes*, IV, chapter 16, page 152 (Calvin is opposing the Anabaptists who, in their denial of infant baptism, contend that, inasmuch as baptism is a sign of regeneration and we know not of the infants that they are regenerated, baptism should therefore not be administered to them): “And though in adults a knowledge of the mystery ought to precede the reception of the sign, yet a different rule is to be applied to infants, as we shall presently show. . . . They contend that this passage (1 Peter 3:21, H.V.) leaves not the least room for the baptism of infants, who are not capable of that in which the truth of baptism is here stated to consist. But they frequently fall into this error, maintaining that the thing signified should always precede the sign.” Calvin; therefore, in this statement evidently rejects the idea that regeneration always precedes baptism which is the washing of regeneration. A third conclusion which we may draw from the quotations of the fathers is that they all agree that the work of God’s grace usually occurs in the hearts of His people during their infancy. Nothing more need be said on this point. The quotations speak for themselves.

Its Proper Significance in our Baptism Form

Let us understand the question clearly. That the phrase, “sanctified in Christ” has a subjective, spiritual connotation is plain. The question, however, is: “Understood in that spiritual, subjective sense of the word, what is its significance in our Baptism Form?” Does the expression refer to all the children of believers? Must we then adopt Dr. Kuyper’s view of presumptive or presupposed regeneration? Must we assume that all our children are actually sanctified in Christ, a view which Kuyper advocated because of his unique conception of the sacrament? Dr. Kuyper distinguished between form and essence. The

administration of baptism to a certain child was only then a sacrament if it be accompanied by the operation of the Holy Spirit. If this operation of the Holy Spirit were lacking, then that which was administered was not really a sacrament but merely a form. Hence, the sacrament of baptism could only be administered and was only administered to regenerated people or children of God. But, inasmuch as not all the children of believers are elect children, how can the church administer the sacrament of baptism? How can we administer a sacrament instead of a mere form? And Kuyper's answer to this question was that the church must presuppose regeneration whenever the sacrament of baptism is administered.

But, please observe with me the following. In the first place, nowhere in, our Baptism Form do the fathers presuppose anything. Kuyper's "presupposed regeneration" and the various quotations of the fathers which we quoted are surely not identical. Kuyper presupposes things; the fathers speak facts. Also, Kuyper presupposes regeneration of all the infants of believers; the fathers express, themselves thus only with respect to the elect children. Nevertheless, although Dr. Kuyper expressed himself in favour of the of doctrine of "presupposed regeneration" and the fathers regarded the sacrament of baptism as a seal of the regeneration already present in the child, nowhere in the Baptism Form or in our Confessions do these ideas occur. Nowhere is the idea of a presupposed regeneration expressed. And in the Utrecht Conclusions we read, and I quote: "Meanwhile Synod is of the opinion, that the proposition, that each elect child is therefore regenerated already before baptism, cannot be proven either upon the basis of Scripture or the Confession, inasmuch as God, fulfills His promises according to His sovereignty, in His time, whether it be before or during or after baptism, so that one is required to express himself in this matter very carefully and not be wise above that which God has revealed unto us."—thus far the quotation from the Utrechtsehe Conclusions. And this certainly applies to our Baptism Form. Where do we read of a presupposition in this first part:

"Holy baptism witnesseth and. sealet unto us the washing away of our sins through Jesus Christ. Therefore we are baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. For when we are baptized in the name of the Father, God the Father witnesseth and sealet unto us that. He doth make an eternal covenant of grace with us, and adopts us for His children and heirs, and therefore will provide us with every good thing, and avert all evil or turn it to our profit. And when we are baptized in the name of the Son, the Son sealet unto us, that He doth wash us in His blood from all our sins, incorporating us into the fellowship of His death and resurrection, so that we are freed from all our sins, and accounted righteous before God. In like manner, when we are baptized in the name of the Holy Ghost, the Holy Ghost assures us, by this holy sacrament, that He will dwell in us and sanctify us to be members of Christ, applying unto us, that which we have in Christ, namely, the washing away of our sins, and the daily renewing of our lives, till we shall finally be presented without spot or wrinkle among the assembly of the elect in life eternal."

Neither is the idea of a presupposition present in the words: "Since then baptism is come in the place of circumcision, therefore infants are to be baptized as heirs of the kingdom of God, and of His covenant" The first question addressed to the parents is also devoid of all presupposition: "Whether you acknowledge, that although our children are conceived and born in sin, and therefore are subject to all miseries, yea, to condemnation itself; yet that they are, sanctified in Christ, and therefore, as members of His Church ought to be baptized?" And, finally, the language of the Thanksgiving Prayer is equally positive:

"Almighty God and merciful Father, we thank and praise Thee, that Thou hast forgiven us, and our children, all our sins, through the blood of Thy beloved Son Jesus Christ, and received us through Thy Holy Spirit as members of Thine only begotten Son, and adopted us to be Thy children, and sealed and confirmed the same unto us by holy baptism."

Secondly, in connection with the language of our Baptism Form, please note with me the language of the first question. That first question does not read, "Whether you acknowledge, that although this child or these children is or are conceived and born in sin. . . ." But we read here of "our children." This is significant. In the light of the first prayer, it is evidence that the fathers purposely spoke of "our children" in this first question instead of "this child" or "these children." In that prayer the fathers do speak of these children." Is it not therefore significant that, in this first question, when the fathers speak of a fact, they do not speak of "these children" but of "our children"?

We conclude, therefore, that the fathers speak here, in this first question as well as throughout the Baptism Form; of the church organically and her seed. And they speak of the church according to election. This does not necessarily mean, therefore, that these children are "sanctified in Christ" before the administration of the sacrament of baptism, and that, in this Baptism Form they either presuppose regeneration in our children or believe it to be a fact. But it does mean that, as a rule, our elect children are regenerated during infancy, and of this fact also the administration of baptism is then a sign and seal. And to this fact the parents testify, when they answer the first question propounded unto them.

The Thanksgiving Prayer.

Permit us, in conclusion, to say a few words about the Thanksgiving prayer. We quote it in full:

"Almighty God and merciful Father, we thank and praise Thee, that Thou hast forgiven us, and our children, all our sins, through the blood of Thy beloved Son Jesus Christ, and received us through Thy Holy Spirit as members of Thine only begotten Son, and adopted us to be Thy children, and sealed and confirmed the same unto us by holy baptism: we beseech Thee, through the same Son of thy love,

that Thou wilt be pleased always to govern these baptized children by Thy Holy Spirit, that they may be piously and religiously educated, increase and grow up in the Lord Jesus Christ, that they then may acknowledge Thy Fatherly goodness and mercy, which, Thou hast shown to them and us, and live in all righteousness, under our only Teacher, King, and High Priest, Jesus Christ; and manfully fight, against, and overcome sin, the devil and his whole dominion, to the end that they may eternally praise and magnify Thee, and Thy Son Jesus Christ, together with the Holy Ghost, the only true God. Amen.”

The explanation of this prayer which satisfies me completely is that which was given by the Rev. Hoeksema in Volume IX of our *Standard Bearer** First, we would remark that the first part of this prayer cannot be applied to all the children. The fathers surely knew that Christ did not die for all men. All their writings, and our Confessions emphasize this truth. They could not believe that all the children had been received by the Holy Spirit as members of God’s only-begotten Son and adopted to be His children. This appears from the language of the entire Baptism Form whose language is positive throughout.

Secondly, in the second part of this prayer, when the church prays that “Thou wilt be pleased always to govern these baptized children by Thy Holy Spirit, that they may be piously and religiously educated, increase and grow up in the Lord Jesus Christ: . . . the fathers place these children, in their address and prayer to God, among the elect seed. This not only explains why they pray that it may please the Lord always to govern them by the Holy Spirit, etc., but also why they are able to say that God has shown His Fatherly goodness and mercy, not only to us, but also to them. And consequently, this prayer must be prayed and only then can be understood if we insert the thought of Scripture: According to Thy will.

Thirdly, and finally, should or could not the fathers have expressed themselves more clearly in this final prayer or thanksgiving? To this we answer, in the first place, that the language of the fathers here is surely the language of the Scriptures. According to Gen. 17:7, God will establish His covenant with Abraham and his seed, and notice that the word “seed” appears there without any limitation. If then, according to Romans 9, we are taught that this promise does not apply to all the natural seed of Abraham, this does not alter the fact, that, although all is not Israel that is called Israel, yet they are all called Israel. In the various epistles of the New Testament the entire church, whether located at Rome, Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, Philippi, Colosse, etc., is addressed as saints in Christ Jesus, beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ, elect strangers, holy and beloved of God, etc. And please understand that these words are addressed to the entire church. These names indeed apply to all. This must be understood and can only be understood on the basis of the principle that the whole body is addressed by the name which it has received according to its elect kernel. The reprobate, although not saints in Christ Jesus, beloved of God, etc., bear the name of the elect because, organically, they constitute one body with the people of God in the midst of the world.

In this light I wish to pray this thanksgiving prayer. All are spoken of according to election. Also the children are addressed according to God's decree of election. Whether this particular child or these particular children will actually grow up as members of Christ's body we may safely leave in the hands of God. And, therefore, we pray with the reservation of course, that all this may occur according to the will of our God. Then our prayer will surely be heard.

H. Veldman

* "Rev. Hoeksema in Volume IX of our *Standard Bearer*." The reference is to a series of articles in the Dutch language written by Rev. H. Hoeksema in 1933. In 1933 Prof. W. Heyns of the C.R.C. was writing on the covenant in *De Wachter*, C.R.C. Dutch language paper. Hoeksema had formerly refuted the views of Heyns in Hoeksema's book *Believers and Their Seed*.

In response to these *new* articles by Heyns, Hoeksema wrote an additional series of articles which were published in the *Standard Bearer* in volume 9 and later in book form as *Het Evangelie: De Jongste Aanval Op De Waarheid Der Sovereine Genade*, (*The Gospel: The Recent Attack upon the Truth of Sovereign Grace*).

Rev. H. Veldman is referring to Chapter 9 of *Het Evangelie* by Hoeksema. In Chapter 9 Hoeksema treats Heyns' explanation of the "Prayer of Thanksgiving" in the Baptism Form. Heyns regarded the prayer as proof for the idea of a universal objective behest or promise to all the children, head for head, who are baptized with grace to fulfill the conditions of faith. Heyns' view of grace is blatantly Arminian.

Hoeksema sets forth in that context the fact that the prayer must be understood as referring to the children of believers organically, as a body, from the view point of the elect seed of the covenant which God gathers by sovereign grace in the generations of believers. It is this approach to the prayer which Rev. Veldman is commending and it is the PRCA view of the prayer to this day. TCM, Ed