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*For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion:  
in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me;  
he shall set me up upon a rock.*

—Psalm 27:5

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And thou shalt command the children of Israel, that they bring thee pure oil olive beaten for the light, to cause the lamp to burn always. In the tabernacle of the congregation without the vail, which is before the testimony, Aaron and his sons shall order it from evening to morning before the LORD: it shall be a statute for ever unto their generations on the behalf of the children of Israel.

—Exodus 27:20–21

### The Statute of the Oil

God gave to his church in the wilderness the loveliest promise of the gospel when he gave to them the statute of the oil. The promise was this: I will forever replenish you with the blessings of salvation in Christ. Shall we consider this lovely promise for a moment? In it we shall see the covenant mercy of our God.

The statute of the oil was that the lamps of the golden candlestick must “burn always” in the tabernacle. Aaron and his sons, the priests, would tend to the lamps in the evening and again in the morning. They would clean, refill, and reignite each lamp in the candlestick before moving on to the next lamp, so that the light was never extinguished. All night long, while the Israelites slept in their tents in the camp, the light of the candlestick would burn in God’s tent. All day long, while the Israelites gathered the bread of heaven, tended their animals, and prepared their meals of manna, the light of the candlestick would burn in God’s tent. As long as Israel was encamped, the light of the candlestick must not go out. It was the statute of the oil.

The constant burning of the lamps was called the statute of the “oil” because the fuel for the lamps was “pure oil olive beaten.” The Israelites would bring olives—perhaps obtained by trade with passing caravans—to Aaron and his sons. The priests would not use the normal process of crushing the olives, for crushing them would yield olive oil mixed with tiny remains of olive flesh and pits. Rather, the priests would

press the olives for only the first few pure drops of olive oil, which would burn virtually smokeless and leave no sooty residue.

The statute of the oil was the good news of the gospel for God’s people. For the statute of the oil testified that God would forever replenish his church with his Holy Spirit. The golden candlestick was a picture of the church. “The seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches” (Rev. 1:20). And the oil was a picture of the Holy Spirit.

I have looked, and behold...two olive trees...So I answered and spake to the angel that talked with me, saying, What are these, my lord? Then the angel... answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the LORD...saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts. (Zech. 4:2–6)

The statute of the oil was God’s promise to his church that he would ever fill her with his Spirit.

And what would the replenishing Spirit bring to the church? Why, all of the blessings of Jesus Christ! The oil would “burn always” with light. And Jesus is the light of the world (John 8:12). God came to his dead, ignorant, sinful, straying, complaining church in the wilderness and gave them the knowledge and life of Christ by his Holy Spirit.

Because of Jesus, the church would always have a place with God. The statute of the oil is

the first place where scripture calls the tabernacle “the tabernacle of the congregation.” It means *the tent of meeting*. That is, it means that this was God’s house, where he would meet with his covenant people. Indeed, the tabernacle was God’s house in which he dwelt with his people and they with him. In the statute of the oil, God

spoke the gospel of Emmanuel to his people, for Emmanuel is God with us.

How lovely! A home with God in Christ! And the eternal replenishment of all his blessings through his Spirit. It was the gospel of the statute of the oil.

—AL

## FROM THE RAMPARTS

### The Life of James Arminius (1)

#### Series Introduction

In this issue of *Reformed Pavilion*, we begin a series of articles on the life and times of James Arminius. Although these articles will take the form of a review of Kaspar Brandt’s biography of Arminius, they will also seek to analyze the controversy that arose in the early 1600s and to show that every form of doctrinal error, however it may disguise itself, is ultimately an attempt to dethrone God.

A proofreader of the first article suggested that it might be helpful to include a “cast of characters” to which readers could occasionally refer, lest they become lost in the sea of names that will appear throughout the series. I thought that was an excellent suggestion, so such a list appears below.

Before you begin reading these articles, I want to make both a disclaimer and a request. I do not consider myself an expert on this subject. I have read as widely as I could and have studied the topic diligently before writing, but a few months of study doth not an expert make. For example, many in the cast of characters listed below were unknown to me only a few months ago, so I had to rely on the biography being reviewed and then on what I could find in various books and online to fill in the biographical data.

There are others who have studied this history far longer and more deeply and whose knowledge and insight far exceed mine. To those,

and to any reader, I make this request: if you can provide additional context or information that might benefit others, or if you know of useful resources, please write in and share them. And if you find an error in what I have written, may God move you to write in so that a correction may be made and his people may have the facts of the matter.

God is faithful to lead his people into all truth, that we “may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ” (Eph. 4:15). To him be all glory, praise, and honor.

#### Cast of Characters

- **Aemilius, Theodore (d. 1575)** – Former Roman Catholic who converted to the Reformed faith and helped care for young Jacob Arminius after Arminius’ father died.
- **Aristotle (384–322 BC)** – Ancient Greek philosopher whose system of logic and metaphysics influenced the formal, academic method of reasoning used by theologians in the Middle Ages; later challenged by Reformed thinkers such as Peter Ramus.
- **Arminius, Jacob (1560–1609)** – Dutch Reformed pastor in Amsterdam and later professor at the University of Leiden; his teachings on conditional election and free will led to the convening of the Synod of Dordt.

- **Beza, Theodore (1519–1605)** – French Reformed theologian and Calvin’s successor in Geneva; strong defender of God’s sovereignty in salvation.
- **Brandt, Gerard (the elder) (1626–85)** – Remonstrant preacher and prominent historian known for his writings defending the Arminian cause; author of *The History of the Reformation in the Low Countries*; father of Kaspar Brandt.
- **Brandt, Kaspar (1653–96)** – Dutch biographer and theologian; author of *The Life of James Arminius*, which presents Arminius in a sympathetic light. Brandt died just as this biography was going to print, at which point his son, Gerard Brandt (the younger), saw to its publication.
- **Calvin, John (1509–64)** – French-born reformer whose theology of sovereign grace, especially as taught in *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, became foundational for Reformed orthodoxy.
- **Coornhert, Theodore (1522–90)** – Dutch writer, theologian, and artist. It was his work that Arminius was tasked with refuting, which work ended up winning Arminius over. Coornhert had controversy with Protestants and Catholics alike and refused to take communion with either. He was known for his criticism of Calvinism, including God’s absolute sovereignty in salvation.
- **Gomarus, Franciscus (1563–1641)** – Dutch Calvinist theologian and professor at Leiden; chief opponent of Arminius and leader of the Contra-Remonstrants.
- **Hommius, Festus (1576–1642)** – Reformed minister and theologian who served as clerk at the Synod of Dordt and possibly authored the historical foreword to the Canons of Dordt.
- **Junius, Adrianus (1511–75)** – Dutch physician and humanist scholar; early tutor of Arminius.
- **Junius, Franciscus (1545–1602)** – French Reformed minister, later professor at Leiden, whose correspondence with Arminius addressed predestination and the nature of sin.
- **Kuchlinus, Johannes (1567–1624)** – Professor of theology and regent of the theological college at Leiden; opposed Arminius’ appointment to the professorship at Leiden but later signed a declaration of peace among professors.
- **Lydius, Martin (1550–1600)** – Dutch Reformed minister and professor at Franeker who warned against Arminius’ appointment to the professorship at Leiden.
- **Narsius, John (dates uncertain)** – Student of Arminius from Dordt who was later examined for heterodox opinions and eventually joined the Remonstrants.
- **Oldenbarnevelt, Johan van (1547–1619)** – Dutch statesman and advocate of religious tolerance who supported Arminius; executed after a falling out with Maurice of Nassau, another prominent Dutch statesman.
- **Pelagius (c. 354–c. 418)** – British monk who denied original sin and taught that human will could initiate faith; condemned by Augustine and later councils.
- **Plancius, Peter (1550–1622)** – Reformed minister and geographer who opposed Arminius in Amsterdam, warning of his unsound doctrine.
- **Real, Elizabeth (1561–1611)** – Wife of Jacob Arminius and daughter of a prominent Amsterdam magistrate; she bore nine children, several of whom died young. Two sons would later go on to become pastors.
- **Snecanus, Gellius (1570–1635)** – Dutch theologian and friend of Arminius; received Arminius’ exposition of Romans 9 and discussed divine sovereignty with him.
- **Snellius, Rudolph (1546–1613)** – Dutch linguist and mathematician at Marburg and Leiden; mentor and guardian of Arminius after the death of Aemilius.
- **Socinus, Faustus (1539–1604)** – Italian rationalist theologian; founder of Socinianism who denied the Trinity and penal substitution.

- **Taffin, John (1533–1602)** – Walloon Reformed minister known for his devotional writings and moderation; was called upon to help mediate peace in the churches.
- **Trelcatius, Lucas (1571–1604)** – Reformed theologian and professor at Leiden whose death opened the chair later filled by Arminius.
- **Triglandius, Jacobus (1583–1654)** – Reformed polemicist and professor at Leiden; strong opponent of Arminius.
- **Uitenbogaert, John (Johannes Wtenbogaert) (1557–1644)** – Brought up a Roman Catholic; later became a Dutch Remonstrant preacher, court chaplain, and chief political advocate for Arminius and the Remonstrant cause.
- **William of Orange (1533–84)** – Leader of the Dutch Revolt against Spain; patron of Protestant liberty and architect of the Netherlands’ independence.

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*The Life of James Arminius, D. D., Professor of Theology in the University of Leyden, Holland.* Kaspar Brandt. Translated by John Guthrie. Reprint, Charleston, SC: Legare Street Press, 2023. Originally published, London: Ward, 1854. 340 pages, paperback, \$26.67. [Reviewed by Dewey Engelsma]

I bought this book years ago after finding it cited in a footnote and thinking it might someday prove enlightening. That “someday” finally came when my church’s Bible study group began studying the Canons of Dort. During the first class our pastor, Reverend Lanning, introduced the Canons and spoke about Arminius and the events that led to the Synod of Dort. His remarks brought this book to mind and gave me the nudge I needed to pull it off the shelf and read it.

What follows is not merely a book review but a reflection and an in-depth reflection at that. My treatment of the book will be slow, even painstaking, sometimes page by page, for reasons I will address at the end. As I read, I was struck again and again by how little the controversies of the past differ from those of the present. The same old errors return in new dress, and in every generation man seeks to exalt himself and diminish the glory of God. Yet the Lord remains faithful, leading his church and restoring to her his truth, which men at once begin to corrupt and which God again purifies. Thus throughout history God proves that there is indeed nothing new under the sun, either in man’s unfaithfulness or in God’s faithfulness.

### Introduction

Kaspar (or Caspar) Brandt, the author of this biography, was born in 1653, the son of Gerard Brandt (1626–85), a prominent Remonstrant historian in the Netherlands. Gerard was born less than twenty years after Arminius’ death and never knew him personally, yet he deeply admired him and saw Arminius as a theological father. Though Gerard wrote many histories and biographies, he never produced one devoted to Arminius. That task fell to his son Kaspar, who drew deeply from the Remonstrant archives and traditions his father had preserved. Kaspar died just as the work was going to press; and after a few years his son, Gerard Brandt the younger, edited and finally published the biography that has come down to us.

This historical background matters because the biography makes no pretense of impartiality. It is less a biography than a hagiography.<sup>1</sup> I found that both fascinating and instructive. Rather than hearing about Arminius from a Reformed writer rightly critical of his theology, here we encounter him through the eyes of a devoted admirer. Most histories of the Synod of Dort, written by Reformed men, treat Arminius as the source of the controversy settled by the synod and portray

<sup>1</sup> A hagiography is a biography of a religious figure written in a highly flattering manner that minimizes or overlooks his shortcomings while overemphasizing and exalting his perceived virtues.

him in a negative light. This book reverses that perspective entirely.

Readers will likely find, as I did, that the contrast is striking: in these pages Gomarus becomes the villain and Arminius the hero, and what is exalted as truth is not God's sovereign grace but man's cooperating will.

Although I will interject occasionally, I will let the author speak for himself. But the reader must not forget that those who teach and preach false doctrine will employ deceit. False teachers are subtle and shrewd, twisting the truth to serve their purposes. Such was the behavior of Arminius and those who followed in his path.

In the historical foreword to the Canons of Dordt—written, perhaps, by Festus Hommius, who served as clerk of the synod—there is a warning given concerning the Remonstrants:

Since the Remonstrants, to hide their stiff-neckedness, would surely not publish anything trustworthy concerning these matters, the States General for the benefit of the churches printed the acts and proceedings of the synod, faithfully reproduced from the public documents.<sup>2</sup>

This should come as no surprise. The aim of the false teacher has always been the same as that of the serpent in the garden: that Christ should be displaced—or rather, replaced—and man enthroned in his stead. The ultimate goal is not merely to deny a doctrine but to dethrone God. As you read this history, observing the subtle machinations and smooth words of Arminius and his followers, I trust you will hear, as I did, that ancient question hissing once more through their arguments: “Yea, hath God said?”

### **The Life and Times of Arminius**

Jacobus Hermans (or Hermanson) was born in 1560 in the Dutch town of Oudewater. As was common among scholars, he later Latinized his family name, Hermanszoon (“son of Herman”), choosing the name Arminius. He is called either

Jacob Arminius or James Arminius because “James” is simply the English form of the Latin *Jacobus*, the name he would have used in his own day. Thus he comes down to us in history as Jacob or James Arminius.

Arminius' father, Hermann Jacobs (or Jacobson), was a cutler; his mother's name was Angelica. Arminius was still an infant when his father died, and he was placed under the care of Theodore Aemilius, a former Roman Catholic who had embraced the Reformed faith. Recognizing the boy's aptitude for language and learning, Aemilius encouraged him to devote his gifts to God's service. After a few years Aemilius also died, and the young Arminius came under the guidance of Rudolph Snellius, a linguist and mathematician. Snellius brought him to Hesse-Cassel, a Protestant city-state in central Germany about 150 miles east of the Dutch border, where Arminius continued his studies.

This relocation of Arminius from his hometown ultimately saved his life, according to the providence of God. In 1575, when he was about fifteen years old, the Spanish army attacked his hometown, the strategically important city of Oudewater. After a siege of nearly a month, the city fell. The victors plundered it, set it on fire, and massacred most of the inhabitants, among them Arminius' mother, siblings, and other relatives.

When news of the destruction reached him, Arminius returned to view the ruins of his native city and then went on to Marburg, Germany. Later he settled for a time in Rotterdam, where he met some of the few survivors of the massacre, as well as others, who had fled Amsterdam, which was still under Catholic-Spanish control.

Around that same year, according to local tradition and as recorded by the historian J. A. J. Davies, the Prince of Orange rewarded the citizens of Leiden for their heroic defense against the Spanish by offering them a choice: a university or a fair. As Davies relates, “To the honour of the citizens they chose the university, and to

<sup>2</sup> Homer C. Hoeksema, *The Voice of Our Fathers: An Exposition of the Canons of Dordrecht* (Jenison, MI: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2013), 568.

the honour of the Prince and States they gave them both; and both sustained and enhanced the city's well-earned renown."<sup>3</sup>

It was to this new university at Leiden that Arminius went to study. There he quickly distinguished himself. His biographer, revealing the hagiographic nature of the work, writes that Arminius "soon made such proficiency that he far outstripped his fellow-students, to whom he was held up by his distinguished preceptor in terms of public commendation as a rare example of industry and virtue" (17).

After six years, in which Arminius showed himself "destined to be a great man" (19), the heads of the merchants' guild, influential men in Amsterdam, took him under their patronage. They agreed to finance his future studies, and in return Arminius bound himself to the service of that city and pledged that if he entered the ministry, he would not serve elsewhere without the consent of the Amsterdam senate (the rulers of the city).

To further advance his education, the senate of Amsterdam deemed it wise to send Arminius to study at foreign universities. Thus he found himself in Geneva, where he studied under Theodore Beza, the successor of John Calvin. There, Brandt records, "with ears intent Arminius drank in his [Beza's] words; with eager assiduity he hung upon his lips; and with intense admiration he listened to his exposition of the ninth chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Romans" (20–21).

In Geneva Arminius formed friendships that would endure throughout his life, most notably with John Uitenbogaert. It was also there that he first tasted controversy. Having embraced the philosophy of French philosopher Petrus Ramus, Arminius spoke critically of Aristotle and began privately teaching Ramist logic at the request of several students. According to Brandt, this aroused the "fierce jealousy" (22) of some of the academy's rectors. Confronted with this opposition, Arminius left Geneva and continued his studies in Basel, Switzerland, where his

growing reputation quickly spread. Brandt relates that the professor of sacred literature, James Grynaeus, when faced with a difficult question, would sometimes turn to Arminius and say, "Let my Hollander answer for me" (22–23).

After declining "with utmost modesty" (23) the title of doctor offered by the faculty of the University of Basel, Arminius returned to Geneva, where he found that the hostility against him had subsided. There he conducted himself in such a manner that even Theodore Beza wrote a letter of commendation on his behalf, in which he said:

To sum up all, then, in a few words, be it known to you, that from the time Arminius returned to us from Basle, his life and learning both have so approved themselves to us, that we hope the best of him in every respect, if he steadily persist in the same course, which, by the blessing of God, we doubt not he will; for, among other endowments, God has gifted him with an apt intellect both as respects the apprehension and the discrimination of things. If this henceforward be regulated by piety, which he appears assiduously to cultivate, it cannot but happen that this power of intellect, when consolidated by mature age and experience, will be productive of the richest fruits. Such is our opinion of Arminius, a young man, unquestionably, so far as we are able to judge, most worthy of your kindness and liberality. (23–24)

Arminius remained in Geneva three more years before undertaking, at the urging of his friend Adrian Junius, a seven-month tour of Italy to broaden his education and see the great cities of the world, including Rome. Brandt notes that this journey, especially his visit to Rome, provoked envy among some of his peers and criticism from others, who considered such a pilgrimage to the seat of Romish power ill-suited, if not improper, for a student.

<sup>3</sup> Kaspar Brandt, *The Life of James Arminius, D. D.* (London: Ward, 1854), 16, quoting John Davies, *A History of Holland*, vol. 2 (London: 1668), 15.

Following his tour of Italy, Arminius returned to Geneva and then, after a few months, was summoned home to Amsterdam by his patrons. Upon his arrival he immediately presented himself to his superiors “to clear himself of the aspersions of weaker brethren” (28) concerning his journey. With that matter resolved, he appeared before the ecclesiastical court, presented his testimonials, and expressed his desire to enter the ministry.

The following year, 1588, he underwent an examination and was “unanimously judged worthy to undertake ministerial functions” (30). Once approved, he began preaching, which the biographer describes in glowing terms.

He did so with such applause—his style of speaking being marked by a certain sweet and native grace, tempered with gravity—that, in the course of a few months (on the 21st July), the consistory of that city—all the deacons being assembled along with them—resolved, by their common vote, and without a

dissentient voice, that he should be offered the sacred ministry of the church in Amsterdam, and that the consent of the honorable senators should be asked for that purpose. (31)

Arminius was twenty-eight years old when he began his public ministry; and, according to Brandt, he “far exceeded the expectations of his patrons” (31). Within a few months Arminius set himself to preaching through the epistle to the Romans, determined to establish the doctrine of justification and to “exhibit to the church, plainly and distinctly, the necessity of faith and of gospel grace, as well as the inefficacy of legal works” (32). And, although he had great respect for those whose writings he had studied, he would not “take their opinions for law, but was determined to follow the direction of Christ alone, the supreme teacher and guide” (33).

It was then, Brandt declares, that “events began to make manifest” (33).

(To be continued)

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## HERMAN HOEKSEMA'S *BANNER* ARTICLES

*The Banner*

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(pp. 677–78)

**Our Doctrine** by Rev. H. Hoeksema

### **Article CXXXIV: The New King and His Kingdom: The Children of the Promise (continued)**

“He took his brother by the heel in the womb.” – Hosea 12:3

It is evident that the Word of God in Hosea 12 comments favorably on the incident of Jacob holding his brother's heel. For in the first place the whole of verse 12 leaves the impression that the prophet means to mention something commendable of the patriarch. In one breath he speaks of Jacob's struggle with Esau in the womb and of his struggle with God at the Jabbok. And in the second place the prophet

wants to call Israel's attention to the example of their father Jacob as a good example, an example for them to follow. They were at this time the very opposite of their ancestor. He was a powerful man of faith, fighting for the Kingdom and the covenant of God; they were weak and indifferent, without strength to struggle with God or men, trusting in their very enemies.

The passage reminds us of a word our Savior spoke to the generation of his own time. It was immediately after the disciples of John the

Baptist that had approached Jesus with the question: “Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?” had departed again. The Lord compares the children of his generation to children sitting in the market and calling to their fellows: “We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented.” John the Baptist had come, and the people had piped unto him. He was too gloomy, too secluded, too separatistic a character for them. They had tried to cheer him up. They had wanted him to eat and to drink and to come out of the desert. But John had not danced as they piped. He would neither eat nor drink. He was a prohibitionist. He called people to the desert. And the people, not understanding John the Baptist, still less his calling and place as the last of the Nazarites, had become offended in him and they had concluded: “He hath a devil.” But Jesus had come. He was no Nazarite. He came eating and drinking. And before him these same men that had piped for John the Baptist now mourned. They had criticized him because he ate and drank. They had told him that he might not eat with publicans and sinners. But Jesus had not lamented to their mourning tune. And they had become offended in Jesus, too. He also had a devil, they said. He was a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. The trouble with them was that they had piped with John when they should have mourned, and they had mourned with Jesus when they should have piped. And the result was that they failed to enter into the Kingdom of heaven. They were a silly, weak generation without the power of faith to take the Kingdom of God. But over against these the Lord speaks of another class of people, also existing in his day since the days of John the Baptist. For “from the days of John the Baptist even until now, the Kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.” There were other men than these children in the market place. Men of strength. Men that had the spiritual power to take the Kingdom of heaven. Men that said, like Jacob of old: “I will not let thee go till thou bless me.” They entered

into the Kingdom, while these silly children remained without.

It is in this light that we must view the history of Jacob from the moment of his birth till the victory with God at the Jabbok. Jacob is the violent one, the spiritual giant that fights with God and man for the covenant and the Kingdom of heaven. Nay, still more. If we read the narrative in Gen. 25 carefully, we will find that Scripture presents the two brethren as struggling even before the moment of their birth. It was this that led Rebekah to go and inquire of the Lord. For we read: “And the children struggled together within her; and she said, If it be so, why am I thus? And she went to inquire of the Lord.” And this condition of Rebekah is explained in the answer she received from the Lord: “Two nations are in thy womb and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger.” This explains the struggle of the two children within her. This also explains the struggle of the two children at the moment of their birth. The meaning of Jacob’s holding of Esau’s heel is plain. Esau was to be the firstborn. He was ahead of Jacob. But Jacob struggled to take his place. He was even at that moment the violent, attempting to take the Kingdom of God by force. Surely, we admit, this struggle between the two children before and at the moment of their birth remains a mystery. We cannot explain it. It is a wonder of God’s grace. But the fact remains that Jacob’s holding of Esau’s heel can be interpreted in no other way. The purpose of the Word of God is to present to us Jacob as struggling for the Kingdom of God and his covenant from the moment of his birth. That is the meaning of the name Jacob. He is the heelholder. And he holds the heel of his brother because he wants to take his place. And he wants to take his place because he is desirous to obtain the Kingdom of God.

Nothing less than the Kingdom of God was involved in this struggle. It was ultimately a battle not for earthly possessions or an earthly

kingdom. With the first birth was connected the birthright. And with the birthright was connected the covenant blessing. That covenant blessing implied that God would be the God of him that received the blessing. That he would be his friend and party. That he would bless him with all the blessings of Abraham. That he would make him heir of the world. It was, therefore, very plainly a battle for the Kingdom of God. As such the battle is a typical one. It is typical of the struggle between the twofold seed in the world fighting for nothing less than the dominion over all things. The struggle between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. It is the same struggle that is principally settled on Golgotha, that will be completely finished in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ, when all things shall be reunited in our King Supreme.

Of course, there is in this struggle between Jacob and Esau a wrong and sinful element on the part of Jacob. That he aimed at the possession of the Kingdom of God was commendable, but that he attempted to obtain this Kingdom by an arm of flesh was both his mistake and his sin. It was of no avail to him to hold his brother by the heel, for physically his brother was the stronger. Esau was born first in spite of the fact that his brother tried to prevent it. The arm of flesh did not help Jacob. And this he must learn also in later life. It was the arm of flesh he employed to obtain the Kingdom when he induced Esau to sell the birthright to him for a mess of pottage. It was the arm of flesh he used when with his mother he deceived his aged father and obtained the birthright blessing. But after twenty years he discovers that all this is vain and of no avail. For then he is about to meet his brother Esau approaching him with a strong army. And then it looks as if all his struggle has been vain. For Esau's wrath will undoubtedly be terrible. He will deprive him of all he has and take his life. It is a dark moment in Jacob's life.

And even though he sends presents ahead to his brother to mitigate his wrath, he feels that he is helpless. But it is at that moment, too, that Jacob becomes Israel. Instead of battling with his brother, he now struggles with God. We can easily conceive of the manner of this struggle. The prophet Hosea tells us that he overcame God with weeping and supplication. He possessed the promise. God had given his word that the elder should serve the younger. God had designated Jacob as the child of the promise. Upon that Word of God Jacob now casts himself. He acknowledges his sin in employing the arm of flesh and not confiding in the Word of Jehovah. But at the same time he pleads with God upon the basis of his own Word. He may not abandon him to the wrath of Esau. Esau may not deprive him of the blessing of the covenant. He may not destroy him and his seed. God's own promise is the sure basis upon which Jacob now pleads. And he gains the victory. Also here he is the powerful one, the violent, taking the Kingdom of God by force. But now his force is purely the power of faith. And he gains the victory. God blesses him. Jacob still holds his brother by the heel, but now in the power of faith and in the strength of Jehovah's word. And in that strength he is victorious.

The people of God must be heelholders. They must be strong to fight the battle for the Kingdom of God.

They must, however, not put their trust in an arm of flesh, as if they could ever be stronger than the world in their own might. The world is always stronger. The world is always in the majority. It is plain that the people of God cannot establish the Kingdom of God by force of arms, of numbers, of politics.

But fighting the spiritual battle for the Kingdom of heaven they must believe and trust that their God will give them the victory.

—Grand Rapids, Mich.

