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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 they shall make the ephod of gold, of blue, and of purple, of scarlet, and fine twined linen, with cunning work. It shall have the two shoulderpieces thereof joined at the two edges thereof; and so it shall be joined together...And thou shalt take two onyx stones, and grave on them the names of the children of Israel: six of their names on one stone, and the other six names of the rest on the other stone, according to their birth. With the work of an engraver in stone, like the engravings of a signet, shalt thou engrave the two stones with the names of the children of Israel: thou shalt make them to be set in ouches of gold. And thou shalt put the two stones upon the shoulders of the ephod for stones of memorial unto the children of Israel: and Aaron shall bear their names before the LORD upon his two shoulders for a memorial. And thou shalt make ouches of gold; and two chains of pure gold at the ends; of wreathen work shalt thou make them, and fasten the wreathen chains to the ouches.

—Exodus 28:6–7, 9–14 (See also 39:1–4, 6–7.)

The Ephod

The main garment of the high priest was the ephod. The ephod was attached to many of the other garments. It was worn over the blue robe, which was even called “the robe of the ephod” (Ex. 28:31). The breastplate was attached to the ephod by golden chains and ties of blue lace. The curious girdle, or belt, was also attached to the ephod. Because of its central position, *the ephod* became a kind of shorthand that included all the special garments of the high priest. God referred to the high priests as those who “wear an ephod before me” (1 Sam. 2:28).

The ephod was made of three sections. The first was a rectangular cloth that hung from shoulder to waist on the high priest. The second was a matching rectangle on his back. The third was golden ouches, or clasps, upon the high priest’s shoulders. The front and back sections of the ephod were attached to these shoulder clasps so as to be held in place upon the high priest.

The ephod was a gloriously multicolored garment of the high priest, and how striking it must have been! It was made of fine twined linen dyed blue and purple and scarlet. Gold was beaten thin and cut into strips that could be used as

thread. This golden thread was woven throughout the ephod, so that the ephod had a deep shine to enhance its rich colors. The clasps of gold upon the shoulders added to the rich and beautiful appearance of the high priest.

The significance of the ephod is found in the golden shoulder clasps. More precisely, it is found in the precious onyx stones that were placed in those shoulder clasps. On one stone were engraved the names of six children of Israel: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, and Naphtali. On the other stone were engraved the names of the other six: Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph, and Benjamin. These striking and brilliant stones engraved with these names were set in the golden shoulder clasps of the ephod.

The shoulder is a symbol of strength. A man puts his shoulder to his work and lays on his shoulder the burdens he must bear. The burden of government is borne on the shoulder of the prince of peace (Isa. 9:6). The shepherd lays the one lost sheep upon his shoulders when he finds it, to bear it home (Luke 15:5). So also the names upon the onyx stones on the high priest’s shoulders showed that he powerfully bore God’s people into the presence of God in

the tabernacle. “And Aaron shall bear their names before the LORD upon his two shoulders for a memorial” (Ex. 28:12).

The ephod was a prophecy of our high priest, Jesus Christ. By his death, resurrection, and ascension, he has powerfully borne us into heaven

upon his shoulders. We have no strength to stand in the presence of God, but our high priest has carried us there so that we “sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:6). What a holy garment for glory and beauty, and what a memorial to direct us to Christ!

—AL

FROM THE RAMPARTS

The Life of James Arminius (3)

We ended the last article by quoting Carl Bangs, who said that when Arminius appeared before the Amsterdam magistrates, he was appearing before “friends” and that “Br’er Rabbit was in the briar patch.”¹

What, then, was the relationship between church and state at that time? The Reformed church operated under the protection and supervision of the magistrates, who wielded significant control over the church’s public actions and appointments. That explains why the city magistrates issued the call to Uitenbogaert to serve as a pastor in Amsterdam, while the classis merely met to deliberate on it.²

This arrangement extended far beyond an advisory role. Although the church may not have been a state church in the technical sense, this arrangement represented a departure from the biblical principle governing the proper relationship between church and state. Here the state interfered in the spiritual work of the church, exerting control not even under the pretense of

the church’s well-being but because it regarded “unanimity in the church as essential to the welfare of the state.”³ For that reason Plancius was rebuked for his remarks against Arminius, deemed inflammatory by the magistrates, while Arminius was permitted to continue preaching, on the condition that he exercise caution in teaching new doctrines.

The *vroedschappen*, or city councils, were composed of *regents*, whose authority in a city or town rested largely on social standing, usually derived from family prominence and wealth. Whereas earlier periods had allowed for broader civic participation, the dukes of Burgundy, after gaining control over the Low Countries, including what would become Amsterdam, centralized power in the hands of a small circle of affluent merchants drawn from only a few families. As historian Jonathan Israel notes, the Burgundians were responsible for “reducing access to civic government and confining it to the hands of the richest segment of urban society.”⁴ He later

¹ Carl Bangs, *Arminius: A Study in the Dutch Reformation*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan [Francis Asbury Press], 1985), 145, as quoted in Dewey Engelsma, “The Life of James Arminius (2),” *Reformed Pavilion* 3, no. 31 (November 8, 2025): 11. The phrase “Br’er Rabbit in the briar patch” originates from an American folktale popularized by Joel Chandler Harris, where the rabbit outsmarts the fox, exclaiming, “Bred en bawn in a briar patch, Br’er Fox—bred en bawn in a briar patch!” The reference here is that, just as the rabbit was at home in the briar patch, so Arminius was at home, and among friends, when he stood before the city council.

² According to Peter Lodberg, a state church is one in which the church is “financed and regulated by the state.” This has taken many forms; but in a state church system, the church is financed, protected, and regulated by the state, with the civil authorities often exercising authority over the doctrine of the church, as well as its organization, finances, and appointments. (See Peter Lodberg, “State and Church,” in *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, ed. Erwin Fahlbusch, et al., vol. 4 [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Leiden: Brill, 2003].)

³ Bangs, *Arminius*, 147.

⁴ Jonathan I. Israel, *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall, 1477–1806* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 125.

summarizes this development by observing that the cities of the Habsburg Netherlands “were governed by a patrician élite drawn from amongst each city’s wealthiest and most prominent citizens.”⁵

It was this ruling elite who selected the *burgomasters*, those charged with the daily administration of the city, and it was this same elite who proved so welcoming to Arminius, or to any minister willing to yield ecclesiastical authority to the state and sacrifice biblical truth on the altar of political peace.⁶

Neither was the state theologically indifferent. As one historian notes, “there was a wide chasm between the Reformation of the Calvinist preachers and that of the regents, a point later emphasized by Grotius. As Grotius put it, where the preachers followed Calvin, the regents preferred the Reformation of Erasmus.”⁷

In the face of theological controversy—controversy with which the church of Jesus Christ will be engaged until his return—the magistrates were both willing and able to intervene. They warned the ministers that if they did not bring an end to the disputes, at least publicly, the magistrates would be obliged to seek a “remedy” so that no harm might come to the church or, more importantly, to the republic.⁸ It was under that thinly-veiled threat that the church operated.

Arminius and others with him were eager to turn this arrangement—of a state’s exerting considerable control over the church—to their advantage, as Homer Hoeksema observes in his exposition on the Canons of Dordt.

The Arminians took advantage of this situation by gaining influence with the civil authorities to prevent or repeatedly to postpone the convening of a national synod, which was the prerogative of the state. The Calvinists for many years saw their efforts to deal with Arminianism frustrated, but they persisted until eventually a government sympathetic to their cause called a general synod.⁹

Faced with the magistrates’ warning, the ministers responded that they had always desired peace; yet if any of them detected error, it was their duty to oppose it. Their goal, however, was to resolve the differences through peaceful conferences, and they committed themselves to renew these efforts in earnest.

Then Arminius spoke. He affirmed that when he had explained Romans 7 in a different way than many of the Reformed, he had not intended to contradict the Belgic Confession or the Heidelberg Catechism. He had never imagined that he would be denied the freedom to teach according to the dictates of his conscience. Moreover, he expressed his willingness to hold a conference with his peers to discuss their differences—on the condition that the civil authorities or their delegates be present not merely as witnesses but also as moderators and arbiters “in respect to all that might be advanced on either side” (54). Once again we see Arminius using the relationship between church and state to his advantage.

Upon hearing this, Reverend J. Kuchlinus objected, declaring that such a conference ought

⁵ Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, 128.

⁶ It appears that Calvin’s Geneva was structured much the same way, governed by men whose concern for the church extended only as far as political peace permitted. This no doubt explains why Calvin’s relationship with them was so turbulent, even leading him at one point to refer to the council as the “Devil’s Council” (Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. 8, *Modern Christianity: The Swiss Reformation*, 3rd ed. [New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1910], 360).

⁷ Hugo Grotius, *Verantwoordingh* (29), quoted in Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, 369. Hugo Grotius was a Dutch jurist who supported the Remonstrants and the position that the calling of the magistrates was to maintain peace in the church.

⁸ Kaspar Brandt, *The Life of James Arminius, D. D., Professor of Theology in the University of Leyden, Holland*, trans. John Guthrie (Charleston, SC: Legare Street Press, 2023; originally published London: Ward, 1854), 53. Page numbers for subsequent quotations from this book are given in text.

⁹ Homer C. Hoeksema, *The Voice of Our Fathers: An Exposition of the Canons of Dordrecht*, 2nd ed. (Jenison, MI: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2013), xii.

to be held in the presence of the classis alone. After the ministers withdrew from the room, the rulers deliberated and resolved that there would be no conference at all. The churches were to “allow this whole matter to rest, and permit whatever discussions had arisen out of it up to this time to be consigned to oblivion” (55). The ministers were to remain silent on these issues and to confine any disputes to private discussion until such time as a general church council might be convened.

After receiving a “grave and serious admonition” from the magistrates, the ministers “gave thanks and withdrew” (55). Brandt claims that by this means the “foregoing matter” was settled (56), though in truth nothing was settled, except that Arminius could continue to preach and teach.

And preach he did. Continuing his exposition of Romans, Arminius drew large audiences; people “high and low” flocked to hear him. Brandt laments that not all came with good intentions, however. Some, he says, came “with blind impulse,” eager to find material with which to tarnish Arminius’ reputation and “lessen his growing fame, and array against him as much as possible of envy and ill-will” (56).

Brandt states that Arminius exerted himself, even in the face of such opposition, to take all the more care not to do violence to his conscience by teaching doctrines about which he had his doubts, while at the same time not teaching anything that might be at odds with the opinions of the day. Yet despite his supposed best

efforts, he could not extinguish the growing unrest.

There was relative calm throughout the remainder of 1592, but tensions resurfaced in early 1593, when Arminius turned his attention to Romans 9. A layman, Pieter Dirksen, refused to partake of communion because “Arminianism” was being preached in church; when one of the magistrates also objected, the matter again came before the consistory.¹⁰

Brandt notes that Arminius regarded Romans 9 as the “main prop of [the Reformed] tenet of absolute predestination” and therefore resolved neither to “advocate” nor “contradict” predestination from Romans 9. Instead, he interpreted the chapter as teaching “*the justification of man by faith* against a variety of objections urged by the Jews” (57; emphasis is Brandt’s).

Brandt concedes that in this sermon on Romans 9 Arminius took a course that was “in some respects new,” while adding—with evident disdain for the biblical truth of predestination—that Arminius made “no reference whatever to the more crude opinions which were commonly grounded upon it” (57–58).

Brandt does not linger on the sermon further than to note that it again provoked unrest within the church. However, it will be helpful to look more closely at Arminius’ expositions of Romans 7 and 9, which, Lord willing, we will consider in the next two articles.

(To be continued)

—DE



¹⁰ Bangs casts doubt on this account, noting that it was Plancius who later related this story in 1617 (Bangs, *Arminius*, 147).

Rev Lanning, I do not fully understand the relationship between our sins and chastisement from God. We know that Christ suffered for and paid the debt that was owed for our sins. And His righteousness is imputed to us, so that is why we will be able to stand blameless in the day of Christ's return. But we also still sin, even knowing this incomparable gift that has been given us. Even if we did not commit one single sin (which is impossible), in Adam we have sinned unto eternal death.

Is there a cause and effect relationship between our sins and chastisement? Does the amount of suffering equate to the sin? For example, if a child of God lives in great sin as the prodigal son or as the thief on the cross did for much of his life, should the chastisement be greater (from an earthly point of view) for them than for an old saint, who lived their life seemingly free of great sin? And when seeing loved ones who have been stricken with disease or unrelenting pain, do we then press them (as Job's "friends" did) to confess their great sins? Why are we (each knowing the depths of our own depravity) not all stricken with leprosy and living alone and penniless?

My inclination here is to say that even one sin that we commit is worthy of the worst physical and mental distresses that we could imagine, so that to say that one that has been

stricken with debilitating illness is because of a great sin would minimize the seriousness of all sin. And then to what end would we press for a confession? So that the chastisement would go away? We (imperfectly) confess our sins regularly in prayer, but not to gain anything, much less to lessen any chastisement from God. And that we confess our sins is only because of faith worked in our hearts, including that knowledge of our sin, and knowing that we are nothing and Christ is everything.

The Bible is God's Word, the gospel. Where is the gospel in chastisement? In the Old testament, Israel and her leaders were chastised (and the wicked among them punished) often for forsaking God. In Jeremiah 24 we see that the same horrible thing, being sent into captivity in Babylon, was for God's people "for their good," and to the wicked "for their hurt." In Hebrews 12 we read of the love of our Lord for those whom He chasteneth, and how that chastisement, "grievous" at the time of suffering, "afterward yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness." So we can trust by faith that whatever befalls us on this earth is for the good of our salvation, because of Christ's work. That is the gospel. Then the visits and words to those stricken with trials and sicknesses on this earth would be with the sure hope of faith, that it is for our good.

In Christ, Tim Kuiper

Reply

A warm welcome to our correspondent, whose letter is chock full of hearty and invigorating doctrine. Our correspondent asks about the blessed, comforting doctrine of God's chastisement. And yes, the doctrine of God's chastisement of his sinful people is blessed and comforting. Chastisement itself is often grievous to be borne, as our correspondent points out from

Hebrews 12. But the truth of chastisement is wonderful. In fact, the truth of chastisement is the gospel of Jesus Christ and is refreshing for God's weary people in this vale of tears.

In dealing with the doctrine of chastisement, our correspondent asks the pertinent questions. Questions about "the relationship between our sins and chastisement from God"; whether

there is “a cause and effect relationship between our sins and chastisement”; whether “the amount of suffering equate[s] to the sin”; and “to what end would we press for a confession” when someone is suffering chastisement. Our correspondent brings the doctrine of chastisement home to our hearts when he asks about what we should say to our loved ones in their suffering and pain. Our correspondent also answers his own questions, doing the undersigned a great service! Our correspondent teaches the gospel of chastisement when he writes,

So we can trust by faith that whatever befalls us on this earth is for the good of our salvation, because of Christ’s work. That is the gospel. Then the visits and words to those stricken with trials and sicknesses on this earth would be with the sure hope of faith, that it is for our good.

Yes! Amen! That could be the end of our correspondence. But since our correspondent asks for a further explanation, let us settle in and see what more there might be to say on the matter.

There are two main things to say about chastisement. First, God’s chastisement of his people in Christ is never, never, never punishment for their sins. That is such a simple truth, but it is one of the hardest things in life to truly know. We cannot help but think that God deals with us after our sins and rewards us according to our iniquities. One of God’s children falls into drunkenness and loses his job—God deals with him after his sins! Doesn’t he? One of God’s children falls into fornication and loses his family—God rewards him according to his iniquities! Doesn’t he?

No, no, no! Never, never, never! God does not deal with us after our sins but in mercy. God does not reward us according to our iniquities but removes them. Listen to how God deals with his sinful people:

He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the

earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him. (Ps. 103:10–13)

And why does God not deal with us after our sins? Because he dealt with Christ after our sins! Why does God not reward us according to our iniquities? Because he rewarded Christ according to our iniquities! And God deals with us after Christ’s righteousness and rewards us according to Christ’s obedience. “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (II Cor. 5:21).

It is an entirely different story for the reprobate. God only deals with them after their sins and rewards them according to their iniquities. Not only their suffering but also their rejoicing is God’s curse upon them. “The curse of the LORD is in the house of the wicked.” But as for the elect, God only ever blesses them for Jesus’ sake. “He blesseth the habitation of the just” (Prov. 3:33).

For Jesus’ sake there is no punishment left to inflict for our sins. For Jesus’ sake there is no payment left to be made for our sins. Therefore, for Jesus’ sake chastisement is not punishment! This is the blessed gospel of chastisement.

The second main thing to say about chastisement is that God’s chastisement of his people in Christ is instruction—not punishment but instruction. The Greek word for *chastisement* in the New Testament means *the whole training and education of children* and refers to instruction. One could read the word *instruction* wherever one finds the word *chastisement* in Hebrews 12.

My son, despise not thou the chastening [instruction] of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth [instructeth], and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening [instruction], God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom

the father chasteneth [instructeth] not?
(Heb. 12:5–7)

God’s instruction may be heavy and grievous, as any son being chastised by his father can attest. The child of God who fell into drunkenness and lost his job groans under the heavy hand of Father’s chastening. The child of God who fell into fornication and lost his family grieves under Father’s correcting hand. But for all the heavy burden of his chastisement, God is not punishing his elect people but instructing them. The purpose is not their destruction or their payment for their sin but their learning and their being exercised unto thankful obedience. “Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby” (Heb. 12:11).

This, too, is the gospel of chastisement: God makes “whatever evils he sends upon me, in this valley of tears, turn out to my advantage” (Lord’s Day 9).

Most of our questions or misunderstandings about chastisement probably stem from our default assumption that chastisement is some form of punishment. The gospel is so good that it hardly seems like it can be real. God does not deal with us after our sins because God dealt with Christ after our sins! That truth of the gospel opens an entirely new perspective on chastisement as instruction, not as punishment. With those main truths of chastisement before us, we can briefly address our correspondent’s questions.

Question: Is there a cause and effect relationship between our sins and chastisement?

Answer: Never in the sense that our sins *deserve* God’s chastisement. Deserving or not deserving simply does not enter in with chastisement. God exacted from Christ all that our sins deserve, and that is now finished.

If we speak of a direct relationship between some sins and some chastisement, then it means only that God is teaching us by a particular

sorrow the evil of a particular sin. God instructs the man who loses his family about the life-changing wickedness of fornication.

But even then, much of God’s chastisement of us does not come in the form of a direct relationship. God is always chastening us for our instruction and profit. Consider the family members of the man who committed fornication. They live under the heavy hand of God, too, though they were not at fault. Or consider the saint who suffers the grievous infirmities of his age or his injuries. He lies under the heavy hand of God, though not to correct him regarding any particular iniquity. God simply deals with his people as his children, laying burdens upon us for our good, for our profit, and for our instruction. “For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth” (Heb. 12:6).

Question: Does the amount of suffering equate to the sin? For example, if a child of God lives in great sin as the prodigal son or as the thief on the cross did for much of his life, should the chastisement be greater (from an earthly point of view) for them than for an old saint, who lived their life seemingly free of great sin?

Answer: No, the amount of suffering does not equate to the sin. Why not? Because chastisement is not a matter of deserving. As our correspondent has shown in his letter, every sin deserves God’s eternal wrath, which God visited on Christ in our place. Therefore, when we talk about chastisement, we are not talking about what we deserve. Chastisement is not punishment, and suffering is not payment. It is our default position, as Job’s friends illustrate, to equate the *wickedness* of the sin with the *amount* of suffering. Job is suffering greatly? Job must have sinned much! But the gospel is that there is no such equation for us. God balanced the equation of sin and suffering at the cross, where our sins were laid on Christ and paid in his blood. There is now no condemnation in Christ, no matter if one is the prodigal son, the thief on the cross, or the saintly old woman.

Question: And when seeing loved ones who have been stricken with disease or unrelenting pain, do we then press them (as Job’s “friends” did) to confess their great sins?

Answer: No, we do not falsely accuse the suffering of some hidden sin and press them to confess. Rather, we bring the gospel of Christ to bear on their chastisement. “Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith” (Heb. 12:1–2). “For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth” (v. 6). “He will make whatever evils he sends upon me, in this valley of tears, turn out to my advantage; for he is able to do it, being Almighty God, and willing, being a faithful Father” (Lord’s Day 9). As our correspondent himself concludes,

So we can trust by faith that whatever befalls us on this earth is for the good of

our salvation, because of Christ’s work. That is the gospel. Then the visits and words to those stricken with trials and sicknesses on this earth would be with the sure hope of faith, that it is for our good.

Thank you to our correspondent for writing in and giving us as readers the opportunity to study together the marvelous gospel of Jesus Christ as it applies to our chastisements. May the Lord bless this study for his glory and our profit.

Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy. (James 5:11)

—AL

HERMAN HOEKSEMA’S *BANNER* ARTICLES

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Our Doctrine by Rev. H. Hoeksema

Article CXXXVI: The New King and His Kingdom: The Children of the Promise (continued)

“I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.”—Rom. 9:15; Ex. 33:19

God had established his covenant with Israel as a nation.

With a mighty hand he had delivered them from the house of bondage; had led them safely through the Red Sea and delivered them from their enemies; had guided them to Mount Horeb, and there he had revealed himself to them as their covenant God, and they had promised to obey and serve him alone.

But at that very moment they had also violated the covenant with Jehovah. Weary of

waiting for Moses, of whom they knew not what had become of him, they made themselves gods of gold and acknowledged them as their deliverers.

The inception of Israel’s sin as a nation that breaks the covenant must be sought at Mount Sinai. There they break God’s covenant. There it becomes apparent, too, that not all would be Israel that was called Israel. Organically the covenant of God would follow the line of Israel’s history. And that it would embrace Israel as a nation was something new, a new phase, a further development in the history of God’s covenant and kingdom. But, although the historical

development of God's covenant must henceforth be sought in Israel, it does not mean that all that bears the name of Israel shall actually be Israel. The true Israel will always be there. The remnant according to election shall never be wanting. But as in all organic development, so also in this case there will be dead branches in the organism that will ultimately be separated from it. And this truth is foreshadowed already in what happens at Mount Sinai. There Israel breaks the covenant. And there Jehovah reveals himself to Moses as the One that will have mercy on whom he will have mercy and that will have compassion on whom he will have compassion.

After the sin committed at Mount Sinai we find Moses pleading with God for his people.

Jehovah threatens to destroy the nation as such. "And the Lord said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and behold it is a stiff-necked people: now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them, and I will make of thee a great nation" (Ex. 32:9, 10). In these words of Jehovah there are three elements that require our attention. In the first place there is the threat that God will destroy the nation as a whole because they have so speedily broken their covenant relationship with him. In the second place there is the assurance that even though the Lord destroy the nation he will not forget his covenant established with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. For he suggests that he will make a great nation out of Moses. The generations of Abraham, therefore, will be maintained, but chiefly through Moses. And in the third place we may notice that Jehovah suggests to Moses as mediator of his people to plead for them. For he says: "Let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them." This last sentence suggests to Moses that he stands as mediator of the people. The fate of the people depends upon him. He stands between the wrath of Jehovah and the sinful people. And Moses understands. He becomes the mighty man, struggling with Jehovah for his fierce wrath against his people. "And Moses besought the Lord his God and said, Lord, why

doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people. Remember Abraham, Isaac and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all the land which I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it forever" (Ex. 32:11–13). Moses pleads in the faith that God cannot destroy the people there and then. And he does so on the basis of God's own deeds in the past and of the promises made unto the fathers of old. Why should the Lord bring an entire nation out of Egypt with such a mighty hand and with such a strong hand, performing signs and wonders as he delivered them, if he meant to destroy them soon after in the wilderness? Why should they and the name of their God become a reproach unto the Egyptians when they should see how the Israelites were consumed by the wrath of God in the desert? No, Moses cannot believe that this is God's purpose. And yet, that would be the case if the Lord destroys the nation, even though he should make a great nation out of Moses. If this latter had been Jehovah's purpose, he might have left the nation of Israel in Egypt and immediately have realized his purpose in Moses. And, therefore, since Moses does not believe that the Lord will do things in vain, since he does not believe that the counsel of the Lord can ever be thwarted and made vain, and since it is plain from the recent past that the Lord's purpose was to make Israel a great nation, he finds courage to plead with Jehovah to turn from his fierce wrath against his people. The mighty deeds of the Lord would prove to have been vain, and the purpose of Jehovah would plainly have been made vain, and thus the name of the Lord would become a reproach if he should destroy the nation now. And this may, this cannot be. But, in the second place, Moses pleads upon the basis of the

promises made to the fathers. Had he not promised to the fathers that their seed would be multitudinous as the stars in heaven and as the sand by the seashore? And, moreover, had he not promised that they should inherit the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession? All this could not be realized if the Lord should destroy the nation, even if afterward he should make a great nation out of Moses. At least, this would mean that all these promises would be realized only in a far distant future, while the Lord had evidently intended to fulfill them now, as he had led the people out of the house of bondage. On the basis, then, of the mighty deeds Jehovah had performed for this very people he now threatened to destroy; and on the basis of his own promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Moses is the mighty man, struggling with God for his people and the glory of God's name.

And Moses remains victor. Even as Jacob at the Jabbok, so Moses is now the strong man, and while pleading on the basis of God's own covenant, gains the victory. "And the Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people" (Ex. 32:14). He will not destroy them. So much Moses has gained by his mediatorial prayer.

This plea of Moses for the people does not, however, mean that the latter are not to be punished. On the contrary, severe punishment is inflicted upon them through the same mediator that pleaded for them on the mount. Moses had learned to understand that not all are Israel that are called Israel, and that the people as a whole are to be saved only for the righteous'

sake. When, therefore, he comes down from the mount, he first of all makes the people to understand that they must bear their sin by grinding their god to powder and having them drink it. And further he makes a separation by calling them: "Who is on the Lord's side? Let him come unto me" (Ex. 32:26). And when the Levites responded, he put their faithfulness to a severe test by requiring of them that they shall pass through the camp and slay every man his brother and every man his companion and every man his neighbor. By obeying this injunction they would reveal that they estimated the covenant relationship as being ultimately the only relationship that might weigh with them. They were called upon to be Jehovah's party over against the people that had broken God's covenant, even if these latter were their own brethren and companions and neighbors. For Moses had said: "Consecrate yourselves today to the Lord, even every man upon his own son, and upon his brother; that he may bestow upon you a blessing this day" (Ex. 32:29).

Three thousand of the people fell by the sword of this discipline.

In a measure, a separation was made between the righteous and the unrighteous among Israel.

For the first time it had become very plainly evident that not all were Israelites in the true sense of the word; that not all would remain faithful to God's covenant.

But God will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and he will have compassion on whom he will have compassion.

—Grand Rapids, Mich.

