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MEDITATIE

Het Oordeel Dezer Wereld

Nu is het oordeel dezer wereld; nu zal de overste dezer wereld buiten geworpen worden.
Joh. 12:31.

Nu?

Het oordeel dezer wereld?

De overste dezer wereld buiten geworpen? Nu? . .

Maar ziet dan dit “nu” niet op de “ure”? Is dan dit “nu” niet hetzelfde als dat, waarvan de Heiland nog pas gesproken had, toen Hij klaagde: “Nu is mijne ziel ontroerd”?

Ja, toch; en alles begon er hoe langer zoo meer op toe wijzen, dat de “ure” nabij was, en dat de dingen zich haastten om die ure te bereiken en te verwerkelijken, de ure, waarin de Zoon des menschen zou worden overgeleverd in de handen der zondaren!

't Was de eerste dag der week, der laatste week van Jezus' omwandeling en arbeid op aarde. 's Daags tevoren, bij gelegenheid van den maaltijd, dien men Hem bereid had ten huize van Lazarus in Bethanië, had Maria van de nabijheid dier ure geprofeteerd, toen ze de voeten van den Heiland had gezalfd met den zeer kostelijken nardus, de reuk waarvan het geheele huis vervulde, en dien ze bewaard had tegen den dag Zijner begrafenis. En thans was Hij in Jeruzalem, naar welke stad Zijn aangezicht gericht geweest was in deze laatste maanden. Zijn intocht in de oude Godsstad had Hij gemaakt in de gestalte van haren eenigen Koning, in beeld vervullende het profetisch woord van Zacharia: “Vrees niet, gij dochter Sions! zie, uw Koning komt, zittende op het veulen eener ezelin”; terzelfder tijd het wezenlijk karakter van Zijne komst naar Jeruzalem ditmaal aanduidend: want, waarlijk! thans kwam de ware Koning tot het

ware Jeruzalem, om eeuwiglijk op den troon Davids te zitten en als Jeruzalems Koning te regeeren.

De haat en nijd des vijands werd steeds bitterder!

Reeds door de opwekking van Lazarus was het vuur dezer vijandschap en van dezen fellen haat aangeblazen. Immers had dit grootsche en machtige wonder een diepen indruk gemaakt op het volk. Met geestdrift was men vervuld voor dezen machtigen profeet, en als Jeruzalems Koning begroette men Hem dan ook, toen Hij, gezeten op het veulen eener ezelin Zijn intocht deed in Jeruzalem, met palmtakken Hem ontmoetend en jubelend: “Hosanna! Gezegend is Hij, Die komt in den Naam des Heeren, Die is de Koning Israels!” De woede der Joodsche leiders kende geen grenzen. Diepe en felle haat had reeds het oog verlicht van Kajafas, zoodat hij, waar anderen geen raad wisten, duidelijk inzag, wat gedaan moest worden, en zelfs onwetend profeteerde: “Gij verstaat niets; en overlegt niet, dat het ons nut is, dat een mensch sterve voor het volk, en het geheele volk niet verloren ga.” En men begon bepaalde plannen te smeden, om Hem te doden. En ook Lazarus!

Alles spoedt zich in de richting van de “ure”!

Ook de bede van de Grieken, die opgekomen waren naar Jeruzalem om het Paaschfeest mede te vieren, en die Jezus wel wilden zien, wees in dezelfde richting. Zoo althans verklaarde de Heiland deze bede. Hij zag er in het begin van de vervulling der belofte, dat Hij zaad zou zien, als Zijne ziel tot een schuldoffer gesteld zou zijn, en antwoordde: “De ure is gekomen, dat de Zoon des menschen zal verheerlijkt worden. Voorwaar, voorwaar, zeg Ik u: Indien het tarwegraan in de aarde niet valt, en sterft, zoo blijft hetzelfde alleen; maar indien het sterft, zoo brengt het veel vrucht voort.”

En als de donkere schaduw van het kruis zich over Zijne ziele had gespreid, was Hij ontroerd geworden, had Hij iets ervaren van die bange vrees en worsteling, die straks in Gethsemane zou worden uitgestreden, en had Hij uitgeroepen: “Nu is Mijne ziel ontroerd; en wat zal Ik zeggen? Vader, verlos Mij uit deze ure!”

Maar hierom ben Ik in deze ure gekomen. Vader! verheerlijk Uwen Naam!". . . .

O, zeker, de ure was nabij!

Reeds stond de Heiland aan den ingang dezer "ure". Voor Zijn bewustzijn was de ure reeds aangebroken. "Nu" was het de ure! En in dat bewustzijn, en dus met het oog op alles, wat er in die ure zou geschieden, roept Hij triumfantelijk uit: "Nu is het oordeel dezer wereld; nu zal de overste dezer wereld buiten geworpen worden!"

Maar hoe dan?

Hoe kan de Heiland zeggen, dat thans de tijd is aangebroken voor het oordeel dezer wereld?

Weet Hij het dan niet?

Is het dan in de werkelijkheid niet juist andersom? Is juist "nu" het oordeel dezer wereld niet ver, verder dan ooit in 't verschiet? Is dan Jezus' "ure" niet het tijdstip, waarop niet Hij de wereld, maar de wereld Hem zal oordeelen?

Weet de Christus dan niet, wat het "nu" voor Hem inhoudt? Zal Hij niet worden overgeleverd in de handen der goddelooze menschen, en zal niet juist de overste dezer wereld zijn triumpfen vieren? Zal men Hem niet gevangen nemen, binden, van alle zijden beschuldigen, met de misdadigers rekenen, ter dood veroordeelen, slaan, bespuwen, bespotten, de doornenkroon op de slapen drukken, Zijn rug met geeselen doorploegen, aan 't schandhout slaan?

Ja, toch; Hij weet het ook wel. Zwijg maar stil!

En juist omdat het wel weet, veel beter weet dan gij of ik, veel beter ook dan "de wereld", en juist omdat Hij dat alles in zijn ware beteekenis ziet in 't licht van Gods eeuwig welbehagen, daarom kan Hij ook "nu" den vijand zijn oordeel en ondergang aankondigen :

Nu is het oordeel dezer wereld!

Nu zal de overste dezer wereld buiten geworpen worden!

Ja, metterdaad: "Nu"!

De wereld!

Daar is tweeërlei wereld!

Daar is de wereld van Gods eeuwige liefde, die Hij zóó liefhad, dat Hij Zijn eeniggeboren Zoon gegeven heeft, opdat een iegelijk, die in Hem gelooft, niet verderve, maar het eeuwige leven hebbe; de wereld, die Hij in Christus was met Zichzelven verzoenende, hunne zonden hun niet toerekenende.

En daar is ook de wereld van Zijn haat en groote verbolgenheid, de wereld voor dewelke Christus niet wil bidden, wier vriendschap vijandschap tegen God is; de wereld, die gij niet kunt liefhebben, indien de liefde des Vaders in u is, omdat al, wat in de wereld is, de lust des vleesches, de lust der oogen en de grootsheid des levens, niet uit den Vader is, maar uit de we-

reld. Daar is de wereld, die eeuwig blijft; en daar is de wereld, die voorbijgaat met hare begeerlijkheid. Daar is de wereld, die met haar overste in het oordeel moet ondergaan, verdoemd worden; en daar is de wereld, die met haar Vorst en in Hem gerechtvaardigd moet worden in het oordeel.

En die ééne wereld is in de andere tijdelijk ingewikkeld!

De wereld van Gods eeuwige liefde is tijdelijk één met de wereld van Zijn haat; is met die wereld ondergegaan in zonde en dood in het eerste Paradijs, moet dus met die wereld geoordeeld worden, Gods gramschap dragen; en moet door het vuur dier gramschap heen, door hetzelfde vuur des oordeels, waardoor de andere wereld verdelgd wordt, verlost en verheerlijkt worden!

Wonderlijk mysterie!

En de tijd voor dat oordeel is thans aangebroken! Nu is het oordeel dezer wereld!

Die wereld is het geheel der dingen, aan het hoofd waarvan de gevallen mensch staat. Het is de wereld van den mensch, die eens uit Gods hand voortkwam, versierd met Zijn beeld en Zijn gelijkenis, en die als koningsknecht Gods geplaatst werd aan de spitse der aardische schepping; maar die zijne heerlijkheid niet achtte, van zijn God afweek, Zijn gebod met voeten trad, Zijn verbond overtrad en schond, een verbond sloot met den vorst der duisternis, onderging in de duisternis der zonde en des doods; en die thans, als knecht es Satans, nog altijd staande aan de spitse der aardische dingen, die echter der ijdelheid onderworpen werden, de ongerechtigheid liefheeft en dient. Hij, wien alle dingen dienden, opdat hij zijn God zou dienen, wordt thans nog wel door alle schepselen gediend, maar om den Satan en de zonde te dienen. . . .

Dat is de wereld.

En die wereld staat thans, in de ure van Christus' lijden, geoordeeld te worden!

Heel die wereld!

Neen, niet maar de wereld van dat bepaalde moment, door Jezus in het "nu" aangeduid, maar de wereld van alle eeuwen, van het begin der schepping tot het einde der historie, van Kaïn tot den Antichrist, zal "nu" worden geoordeeld. Niet maar de wereld, zooals ze toen op die bepaalde plaats, in het oude Jeruzalem vergaderd was, en ter gelegenheid van het Joodsche feest der eerstelingen zich verdrong, maar heel de wereld, uit alle landen en oorden, tot aan haar uiterste grenzen, waar ook maar volken en natiën en tongen wonen, gewoond hebben, of zullen wonen, zal thans gedagvaard worden voor den rechterstoel Gods!

En die "wereld" heeft zich niet te beklagen, want "nu" is ze op haar best vertegenwoordigd!

Op geen enkel moment harer geschiedenis zal die wereld kunnen zeggen, dat er nu een gunstiger oogenblik voor haar oordeel is aangebroken dan in het "nu" van Jezus' woord.

De rechterstoel werd niet opgericht in een uithoek der wereld, in een vergeten oord, onder wilde stammen en "blinde" heidenen, die nog nimmer hadden meegeleefd in de geschiedenis der wereld, nog veel minder aandeel hadden gehad in hare ontwikkeling en beschaving. Het oordeel had niet plaats onder volkeren, bij welke het "licht der natuur" bijna was uitgedoofd, of op een moment, waarin de "beschaving" tot op een laagst mogelijk peil was ingezonken. Het kruis mocht niet worden opgericht aan het "einde" der wereld, maar moest staan in haar centrum, beide uit het oogpunt van plaats en tijd. En dat centrum was niet Rome, noch Athene, maar Jeruzalem, en dat wel in het jaar onzes Heeren drie en dertig!

Daar en toen was de wereld op haar "best."

Daar en toen was de wereld der "gemeene gratie," zooals ze nimmer zich had vertoond, noch ook ooit zich weer vertoonen zou, gegrondvest op het Romeinsche recht van menschen, "die betoonen het werk der wet geschreven in hunne harten," bogend op de wijsheid der Grieken, versierd met al de heerlijkheden der Grieksche kunst. Het was een moment, waarop de "cultuur" der wereld een hoogtepunt had bereikt, waarop menschenlijke recht, menschenlijke macht, menschenlijke wetenschap en kunst helder schitterden!

En daar was ook de godsdienstige "wereld"!

Daar was de "kerk," die toch "wereld" was! Het was de "wereld," zooals ze in aanraking was geweest, nu voor vele eeuwen, met het licht der openbaring, wier de verbonden waren en de wetgeving, aan wie het Woord Gods was toebetrouwd maar die de profeten doodde, en hen steenigde, die tot haar gezonden werden!

De wereld van Pilatus, den Romein; en van Herodus, den Edomiet

De wereld van Annas en Kajafas, van de Fari-zeën en Schriftgeleerden, van de theologen en de mannen der wet!

De wereld van Judas, ja ook van Judas, ja vooral ook van Judas, die drie jaren in aanraking geweest was met het Licht der wereld, die het evangelie des Koninkrijks had verkondigd, die duivelen had uitgeworpen, en vele krachten had gedaan!

Die wereld, en door haar vertegenwoordigd, heel de wereld uit alle landen en tijden, wordt nu gedagvaard!

De wereld op haar best!

Nu is het oordeel!

Ach, de wereld had het liever anders gehad!

Ze trachtte de dagvaarding te ontloopen. Eene publieke procedure wilde ze eigenlijk niet. Liever zou ze het maar heimelijk afmaken tusschen haar en dezen Jezus. Ze wilde Hem met listigheid vangen en dooden,

in 't geniep, met een dolksteek van den sluipmoorde-naar. . . .

En: "niet op het feest"!

Maar de Rechter van hemel en aarde oordeelde anders. Hij wilde de wereld oordeelen in het publiek, voor aller oog; publiek Zijn vonnis uitspreken, en uitvoeren! En zoo kwam het! Niet in 't geheim, maar in het openbaar; en toch op het feest, voor aller oog, had dit oordeel plaats!

Daar was een rechterlijk onderzoek, opdat de wereld openbaar zou worden "wereld" te zijn, der verdoemenis waardig! 't Liep over de vraag: wat dunkt u van den Christus? Wat wilt ge met den Zoon Gods? Wat zoudt ge met den levenden God doen, zoo Hij voor u stond als een machteloos mensch? En antwoorden moest men! En toen antwoordde heel de wereld, Pilatus en Herodus, Judas en Annas en Kajafas, theologen en wetgeleerden, en het volk, ja, ook het volk: "Dan dooden we Hem!". . . .

Weg met Hem!

Kruis Hem! Kruis Hem!

Het onderzoek openbaarde, dat heel de wereld door vijandschap tegen God wordt beheerscht, voor God verdoemelijk is: Nu is het oordeel dezer wereld!

En 't vonnis wordt geveld, en uitgevoerd. De violen van Gods brandenden toorn worden "nu" uitgegoten, tot aan den laatsten druppel

Doch wacht! Daar is in die "wereld" de andere wereld van Gods eeuwige liefde! Ook zij ligt in zichzelf voor God verdoemelijk! Ook zij zal in die ure Gods vonnis moeten ondergaan. Doch hoe?

Als in de ure des oordeels dezer wereld de violen van Gods gramschap worden uitgegoten tegen de zonde der wereld, dan gaat Hij, de Zoon des menschen, Zelf in de plaats des oordeels staan, om aan het hoofd Zijner Hem door den Vader gegeven wereld den toorn Gods te dragen. Hij maakt van der goddeloozen kruis *Zijn* kruis. Hij verandert het schandhout der bloeddorstigen in een altaar Gods, om op dat altaar de volmaakte offerande der gehoorzaamheid en der voldoening Gode te brengen in Zijn eigen vleesch! Het Lam Gods neemt de zonde der wereld weg!

En de Rechter van hemel en aarde stemt toe! Want hiertoe, om in de ure des oordeels 't vonnis te dragen, heeft Hij Hem verordineerd!

't Kruis van goddelooze menschen wordt ook Gods kruis!

En terwijl de "wereld" veroordeeld wordt, en de overste dezer wereld wordt onttroond, wordt de Vorst van Gods wereld met Zijne wereld gerechtvaardigd!

Want Hij wordt opgewekt! En Hij wordt verhoogd aan de rechterhand des Vaders!

Straks zal Hij de veroordeelde wereld verdoen, om Zelf eeuwiglijk te regeeren!

De Vorst der nieuwe wereld!

H. H.

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EDITORIALS

Common Grace

8.

In our last article we discussed Van Til's notion of the "limiting concept." And we also attempted to define the nature of the limiting concept, and to indicate the causes for the necessity of working with them. We stated that limiting concepts arise: 1. When in the light of revelation the finite mind of man attempts to form a conception of the Infinite; 2. When earthly man, in the light of the same revelation, conceives of the "things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor entered into the heart of man." 3. When, on the other hand, the Church is called to define and limit the truth of God over against the errors of evil men, and the false philosophy of the world.

However, if I consider the instances in his book in which Van Til applies his idea of the limiting concept, I fear, that he will not so define it as I have attempted to do. Sometimes I receive the impression that with him the notion of limiting concept is akin to that of "working hypothesis," a theory which one accepts for the time being as true in his search for the truth, but the truth of which must be still established and proved, and, perhaps, must be further defined and altered. And if this be the case, I cannot accept his notion of the limiting concept, nor consider that the confessions of the Church are limiting concepts in this sense of the word. Let us call attention to a few of these instances in Van Til's book.

On p. 59 he writes:

"With Zwier we believe that this criticism of Schilder's is not to the point (*De Wachter*, Nov. 21, 1939, Jan. 30, 1940). For better or for worse Synod meant to teach that God has a certain attitude of favor toward the reprobate. The use of a broad popular phrase gives no justification for drawing such consequences as Schilder has drawn. Besides, the broad phrase itself expresses the fact that God loves all His creatures. And as for the idea that God loves all creatureliness as such, including the creatureliness of the devil this is, we believe intelligible only if we use it as a limiting concept. If not so used, it is an empty concept. Schilder himself has warned us to think concretely. And thinking concretely implies the use of such universals as 'creatureliness' as limiting concepts only."

To the name notion of "creatureliness" the author refers on p. 95:

"Accordingly we would not speak of God's loving

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creatureliness always and everywhere. Schilder uses this idea. He says that God greatly loves creatureliness everywhere, whether in the drunkard, the anti-Christ, or the devil. (See Zwier's discussion in *De Watcher*, Nov. 2', 1939). Creatureliness is then conceived statically, as though it were something to be found anywhere and everywhere and always by itself. But creatureliness should be used as a limiting concept. It is never found in moral beings, whether men or angels, except in connection with an ethical reaction, positive or negative. We cannot intelligently speak of God's loving creatureliness in the devil. God's good pleasure pertains no doubt to the devil. But that is because the devil is frustrated in his opposition to God. God has once upon a time loved the devil. But that was before the devil was the devil. We shall make no progress on the common grace problem with the help of abstractions."

I confess that here I do not clearly understand the author's meaning of the term "limiting concept." How the concept "creatureliness" can be an empty concept when used without limitation, but becomes a material concept with definite contents when used as a "limiting concept," I fail to understand. I admit, of course, that pure "creatureliness" does not exist anywhere, not only not in moral beings, but strictly nowhere, for creation is not a conglomeration of separate creatures, but an organic whole. It is often alleged that, though God hates the fallen and sinful "world," He loves the world as His creation. But this is a pure abstraction. The "world" as a pure creation of God exists nowhere. And the same is true of "creatureliness." It simply never actually exists by itself. But this does not make the *concept* creatureliness an empty one. One can very readily define its contents. Off hand, it implies such notions as gifts and talents, intelligence, will, power, dependance, obligation, activity, development, etc. Of course, the moment I draw a conclusion from this abstract universal conception of "creatureliness" to the concretely existing creature, I make a fundamental mistake. I cannot possibly argue thus: 1. God loves "creatureliness" (which is a pure abstraction). 2. There is creatureliness in the devil (which is a very concrete form of creatureliness). 3. Therefore, God loves the devil. The very contrary of this conclusion is the truth. For, exactly because all creatureliness is of God, and because what is of God must be directed to His glory, and because the devil turns all his creatureliness against the living God, God hates the devil. But even so I do not use the concept "creatureliness" as a limiting concept. I simply maintain that it is a pure abstraction, that as such it does not exist anywhere, and that, therefore the judgment: "God loves creatureliness," is false, because it presents the abstract as concretely existing as an object of the love of God. But we feel that, perhaps, we do not quite understand Van Til's

idea of the "limiting concept," and that he would render us a service if he would clearly define his notion of it, and could tell us exactly under what conditions he would have it employed.

The same desire for more light on the subject is aroused by the following paragraph:

"But we must go further than this. Man was originally created good. That is to say, there was (as? H. H.) a matter of fact, an ethical reaction on the part of man, and this ethical reaction was approved by God. It may be said that God created man with a good nature, but that the test was still to come whether he would voluntarily live in accord with his good nature. But surely Adam could not live for a second without acting morally. The 'good nature' of Adam cannot be taken otherwise than as a limiting concept. Further still, the decisive representative act was still to come. Granted that Adam's nature was an active nature, this active nature itself must be taken as a limiting concept in relation to the decisive ethical reaction that was to take place in connection with the probationary command. This goes to prove that the representative act of obedience or disobedience presupposed for its possibility the revelational character of everything created. It goes to prove further, that as an aspect of that revelatory character of everything created must be taken man's *good* ethical reaction. To be sure, this good reaction was not the consummated good that shall be obtained in the case of those that will be in glory. Yet it was a good ethical reaction. It was good not so much in a lower *sense* as in an *earlier* sense." p. 94.

Now, I understand that all this must be viewed and understood in the light of Van Til's conception of the "covenant of works." For us, who have become quite accustomed to the repudiation of the implications of this so-called "covenant of works," there is a danger of trying to understand (and, therefore, of failing to understand completely) Van Til's notion of the "good nature of Adam as a limiting concept" from the viewpoint of our own conception of Adam's relation to God in the state of original rectitude. It is well, therefore, that we remember that Van Til labors with the traditional conception of the "covenant of works." According to this conception Adam's state would have been changed, and, accordingly, God's attitude toward him would have been altered, even had he obeyed the "probationary command." If he disobeyed, his state would be changed to that of a guilty and damnable sinner, and God's attitude would have been changed to that of wrath; if he obeyed, his state would have been changed to that of highest and heavenly glory, of "the consummated good" and God's attitude would have become that of permanent favor. In other words, Adam's good works, his good ethical reaction to God's revelation, merited a higher good, eternal life. Now, for a time (it makes no particle of difference

how long, a day, a week, a year, or a hundred years) Adam's reaction was good. He obeyed. Not only did he not immediately eat of the tree of knowledge, but all his ethical reactions were good. Van Til draws still another conclusion from this fact. According to him, the elect and the reprobate were in him, and represented by him. Hence, according to Van Til, it may be said that for a time the elect and reprobate both did good works in Adam, and God loved them both in the original state of righteousness.

But now Van Til, if I understand him correctly, perceives a difficulty. Before the final act of disobedience, Adam's nature was constantly active, and the ethical reaction of that nature was constantly good. What is the inevitable conclusion of this fact, when viewed in the light of the "covenant of works" theory? This, of course, that all this time before the fall (it makes no difference how long) Adam really merited eternal life, or, at least, merited more than he had in Paradise, for himself and for his posterity. Every good ethical reaction of Adam was meritorious. This leads to the question: what became of this reward? Evidently, it was all cancelled by the later act of disobedience on the part of Adam. What then? When viewed in the light of this later act of disobedience, can we still say without qualification that Adam's nature before the fall was a "good nature," and that his ethical reaction was a *good* ethical reaction? To this Van Til replies: "The 'good nature' of Adam cannot be taken otherwise than as a limiting concept." And again: "Granted that Adam's nature was an active nature, this active nature itself must be taken as a limiting concept in relation to the decisive ethical reaction that was to take place in connection with the probationary command." And here, it seems, the term "limiting concept" is employed in the sense of "a concept with qualification." For the time being the nature of Adam appears and reacts as a good nature. But when viewed in the light of what took place later, that nature proved not to be good without qualifications. It was good in a limited sense.

If we misinterpret Van Til's meaning, we trust that he will let us know, and explain himself.

In the meantime, we do not share Van Til's conception of the "covenant of works," and certainly not his idea that Adam in the state before the fall, and by his good ethical reaction, represented both the elect and the reprobate. And for the same reason we have no difficulty of taking the statement that Adam was created "good and after God's own image," without qualification.

But even so, and even if we have interpreted Van Til's notion of the limiting concept in this particular passage of his book correctly, we still have no very clear idea of what he means by the term "limiting concept." He certainly could do us a favor by serving us with a definition.

H. H.

The Triple Knowledge

An Exposition Of The Heidelberg Catechism

PART TWO

OF MAN'S REDEMPTION

LORD'S DAY VI.

Chapter III

The Holy Gospel. (Cont.)

That the holy gospel, according to the Heidelberg Catechism, is essentially good news concerning the promise, may be gathered from the statement: "and lastly, has fulfilled it by his only begotten Son." The gospel was fulfilled in the fulness of time in Jesus Christ our Lord. But this is possible only if the gospel is essentially a promise. And also the fact that the gospel was always proclaimed and received by the heirs of the promise, from the very beginning of history, is plainly taught by the Catechism in this nineteenth answer. The holy gospel is not the same as the Bible. For the Bible did not always exist, in fact, in its present form it exists only a comparatively short time. More than twenty centuries elapsed of the world's history before there was even a part of the holy Scriptures written, another two thousand years became history before the entire canon of the Bible could be adopted by the Church; and even then and long after, copies of Holy Writ were scarce and expensive. That every believer may rejoice in the possession of a Bible for himself, and may daily read the Scriptures, is of relatively recent date. But although the Bible was not always in existence, there never was a time when the heirs of the promise were without the holy gospel. And let us understand this clearly: they did not have *a part* of the gospel, but they possessed the *entire* gospel of the promise from the very beginning of history. It is true that the riches of the gospel were only gradually displayed, proclaimed and understood as the centuries rolled by and the time of the fulfillment approached. All the implications of this glorious gospel of the promise could not all at once be explained and comprehended. But this does not alter the fact that the *whole* gospel was revealed from the beginning of the world, and not only a part of it. When the seed of a maple tree has sown itself in my garden, and the following year a small plant appears with a slender stem and a couple of small leaves, that little sprout is not a part of a maple tree, but is just as complete a tree as the tall maples that

stand forty or fifty feet tall in our front lawn. The same is true of the holy gospel. It was revealed in early times in a simple form, adapted to the needs of the hearers, and it gradually grew in riches of contents, but also that gospel in its simple form was, nevertheless, the entire gospel. And wholly in harmony with this, the Catechism teaches us that God Himself first revealed the holy gospel in Paradise; afterwards published it by the patriarchs and prophets, and represented it by the sacrifices and other ceremonies of the law; and lastly, has fulfilled it by His only begotten Son.

In the light of this proper conception of the holy gospel throughout the ages of history, we can understand why the promise of Gen. 3:15 was always called the *protevangel*, the *moederbelofte* (mother of promises). It is the first revelation of the entire holy gospel immediately after the fall of our first parents, Adam and Eve, in Paradise. The first man Adam was an image of Him that was to come. He had been created in earthly glory, in covenant friendship with the living God, king over all the earthly creation, and servant of the Lord of all. All creatures served him that he might serve his God. But "being in honor, he understood it not, neither knew his excellency, but willfully subjected himself to sin, and consequently to death, and the curse, giving ear to the words of the devil. For the commandment of life, which he had received, he transgressed; and by sin separated himself from God, who was his true life, having corrupted his whole nature; whereby he made himself liable to corporal and spiritual death. And being thus become wicked, perverse, and corrupt in all his ways, he hath lost all his excellent gifts, which he had received from God, and only retained a few remains thereof, which, however, are sufficient to leave man without excuse; for all the light which is in us is changed into darkness." Conf. Belg. XIV. By violating the covenant and eating of the forbidden fruit, man had plunged himself into the night of sin and death, from which he could see no way out. And in Adam the whole human race, including also the seed of the promise, the heirs of eternal salvation according to God's sovereign purpose of election, was carried into the abyss of corruption and death. But God has provided some better thing for these heirs of salvation. And although he causes the whole creation to bear henceforth the curse of His wrath, vanity and death, toil and suffering, yet He maintains His covenant, and at once begins the work of salvation and grace in Christ the Lord. And He proclaims at the same time to the heirs of the promise the holy gospel in the words that announce the utter defeat of the devil: "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 its heel." That promise is the whole gospel. Nothing is ever added to this first revelation of the gospel of the promise

that is not, in principle, implied in it. And the entire revelation of the holy gospel that follows in succeeding centuries is but the unfolding of the riches of this mother of promises, this *protevangel*.

And since that time the gospel is always preached, and revealed in ever increasing clarity and fulness of riches. And in the light of this holy gospel the heirs of the promise walk through the darkness of the present night of sin and corruption and death. The way is dark, indeed, and the battle with the children of darkness in this world is often hard and fierce, but God fulfills His promise, works His work of grace and deliverance, and causes the light of the gospel of the promise to strike an ever clearer path through the darkness of the night. He proclaimed the gospel concerning His Son through patriarchs and prophets. He revealed the gospel to them, directly through His Spirit, indirectly through visions and dreams, through angels and by the revelation of the Angel of Jehovah, and through many signs and wonders. Thus the gospel was revealed and proclaimed in the awful world of predeluvian times. The night of suffering and toil, "because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed," was oppressive; and the struggle with the generation of the children of this world was a bitter one. But in that dark night the heirs of the promise carried the gospel of the promise revealed in paradise with them and the patriarchs of those days proclaimed what they had heard from above of the glad news concerning the promise. In the days of Enos, the son of Seth, men began to call upon the name of the Lord. Enoch walked with God, and already clearly spoke of the coming day of the Lord, and of the redemption of His saints, when he prophesied: "Behold, the Lord cometh 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 have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him." The seed of the serpent was to suffer defeat, the promise of the gospel was to be fulfilled! Lamech called his son Noah, convinced that in him Jehovah had given them a seed that would comfort them over their work and toil. And, indeed, in Noah God continues and establishes His work of grace. He becomes a preacher of righteousness in the midst of the ungodly world of his days. In his days the seed of the serpent is crushed, and the seed of the woman is saved in the ark. Noah becomes heir of the world through faith. With him God establishes His everlasting covenant, and the sign of this covenant He establishes in the clouds when He sets His bow in the expanse of the firmament, a silent but mighty witness of the holy gospel of promise!

But also through the patriarchs and prophets after the flood God continues to reveal the gospel of the promise in ever brighter rays of light. The attempt

of the seed of the serpent to establish itself as all-powerful in the world is frustrated in the confusion of tongues at Babel. And God calls Abraham from Ur of the Chaldees and out of Haran, in order that He might show him the land of promise, make a great nation out of him, and establish with him and with his generations for ever His everlasting covenant. And God proclaimed the gospel unto Abraham, saying: In thee shall nations be blessed. Gal. 3:8. And He showed him the realization of the promise, not only in Isaac, in whom his seed would be called, and who was the seed of the promise, but also in the land of Canaan, which He promised to him and to his seed for an everlasting possession. And although in all these things the patriarchs could only see the beginning of the promise, and though with Isaac and Jacob he lived in tents, and confessed that he was a stranger and sojourner in this world, yet he understood and received the promise, saw the fulfillment afar off, even saw the day of Christ, and died in faith.

Thus the light of the gospel continued to shine with ever increasing brightness and clarity in the thickening darkness of the world. Dark, indeed, was the night when the children of Israel, the heirs of the promise, were in bondage in the land of Egypt, groaning under the oppressive hand of a haughty world-power, and threatened with extinction. But Jehovah realizes the promise of the gospel afore preached to Abraham. With a mighty hand He delivers His people Israel from the house of bondage and leads them out to liberty. The seed of the serpent is crushed, indeed, when Pharaoh and his host are destroyed in the Red Sea, and the seed of the woman is given the complete victory. He realizes His promise unto them, receives them into His covenant, forms of them a people peculiar unto Himself, and leads them through the desert into the land of promise. Even in the desert He constantly reveals the gospel of the promise unto them by word and deed, through His mediator Moses, and by mighty signs and wonders. For He feeds them daily with the Bread from heaven, a promise of the true Bread from heaven that was to come; and He quenches their thirst by water that gushed from the rocks in the desert, and they drank from the spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ. And thus He performed His work of grace and salvation for them, constantly causing them to walk in the light of the gospel, and finally leading them into the "Rest" He had promised unto them, that there He might dwell among them, and He might be their God, and they might be His people!

It is true that at Sinai, and from that moment until the fulfillment of the promise in the fulness of time, the law was imposed upon the promise. Yet, it was never the purpose of the law to make the holy gospel of the promise of none effect. For the apostle writes: "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 added thereto. Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to his 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 the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels into the hand of a mediator. . . . Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster (to bring us) unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith." Gal. 3:15-24. In fact, although the law was superimposed, as it were, upon the promise, for a time, yet the law itself plainly revealed that it was never meant to replace the promise of the gospel, as if from Sinai on the way to the inheritance was that of the righteousness of the works of the law. The glory of the light of the gospel clearly shone through the law. In fact, the very law was a medium for the revelation of the gospel. For Christ is the end, the *telos*, of the law, and the finger of the law clearly pointed forward to Him. Beautifully this was witnessed in the face of Moses when, with the tables of the law in his hands, he came down from the mount. For the light of the glory of the holy gospel was reflected in his face. Without that light, there was, indeed, nothing but the law, and the mount that could be touched, and thunder and lightning and smoke and darkness; and there was the terrible sentence: "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all that is written in the law." But the light that shone in the face of the mediator of the old dispensation was a reflection of "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." II Cor. 4:6. And it was typical of the attitude of all carnal Israel that "the children of Israel could not look stedfastly to the end of that which is abolished," 11 Cor. 3:13; and that, therefore, they asked Moses to cover his face with a veil, thus extinguishing the light of the gospel in the law, and having nothing left but the righteousness which is through the law, and the resulting curse. For "their minds were blinded: for until this day remains the same veil untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament; which veil is done away in Christ. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart." II Cor. 3:14, 15.

Indeed, God proclaimed the gospel of the promise through the law. It is to this fact that the Heidelberg Catechism calls attention by stating that God also "represented (the holy gospel) by the sacrifices and other ceremonies of the law." In two ways God revealed the holy gospel through the law. In the first

place by making the ordinances of the law shadows and symbols of things to come. Heb. 10:1. The entire tabernacle, with its ark of the covenant, and the mercy seat; with its holy of holies, and holy place; its altar of incense and altar of burnt offering; its candlestick and table of shewbread; was an "example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount." Heb. 8:5. And in the entire service of the tabernacle, with its priests and sacrifices, its washings and shedding of blood, the gospel of the promise was clearly proclaimed to the heirs of the promise. And, in the second place, these ordinances of the law, these shadows and types and examples of heavenly things, plainly bore the testimony of their own unreality and imperfection, and thus pointed forward to the fulfillment of the holy gospel in Christ. "For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did." Heb. 7:19. "And truly they were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death." Heb. 7:23. And "the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity," and they needed daily "to offer up sacrifice, first for their own sins, and then for the people's." Heb. 7:27, 28. And again: "when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God. But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people. The Holy Ghost thus signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing. Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience." Heb. 9:6-9. "For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins." Heb. 10:1-4. On the one hand, therefore, there was a rather clear shadow of things to come in the ordinances of the law; on the other hand, these ordinances clearly testified by their very imperfection that they were not the things themselves; and thus they pointed to Christ as the end of the law and proclaimed the holy gospel to the heirs of the promise of the old dispensation.

"And lastly, has fulfilled it by his only begotten Son." It is remarkable that, as the time of fulfillment approaches, the shadows gradually grow dimmer, but

at the same time, the direct word of prophecy, the holy gospel as proclaimed through the prophets, becomes more distinct. The tree of David is cut down: nothing remains of it but a root in a dry ground. The sceptre is, outwardly at least, departed from Judah. The glory of Mount Sion is extinguished. The temple is demolished. And although it is rebuilt after the captivity, the ark of the covenant never returns: a stone must take its place in the holy of holies. At the time of that cruel type of Antichrist, Antiochus Epiphanes, the holy place is defiled, and the people "are killed all the day long." But as the light of the gospel in the law grows dim, the direct proclamation of the gospel through the prophets becomes clearer, more definite, fuller and richer. And in the fulness of time, the holy gospel is fulfilled in God's only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. It is fulfilled in the incarnation, the cross and resurrection of the Son of God, His ascension and exaltation at the right hand of God, and the outpouring of His Spirit upon all flesh. And while the gospel is being fulfilled, it is also revealed and proclaimed more fully and clearly than ever before. For not only *is* Christ, as the fulfillment of the holy gospel, Himself the revelation of the promise in all its riches, but He also preached the gospel during the years of His public ministry, as it never had been proclaimed before. For "God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son." Heb. 1:1, 2. And having ascended into glory, and having received and poured out the promise of the Holy Ghost, He still revealed the riches of the holy gospel and proclaimed them through the apostles. And He guided them through that same Spirit even in committing the fulness of the holy gospel to writing, so that the Church of the new dispensation may possess the infallible record of the revelation of the gospel in the holy gospel. But still, it is always He, the only begotten Son, come in the flesh, crucified, dead, and buried, raised on the third day, exalted into highest glory, Who not only is the fulfillment of the holy gospel, but Who also reveals it, and proclaims it by His Spirit and Word, gathering His Church, and causing men to know everywhere that the Mediator, Who in one person is both very God, and real righteous man, is our Lord Jesus Christ, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.

H. H.

CLASSIS EAST

of the Prot. Ref. Churches will meet D. V., Wednesday, April 7, at nine o'clock, at Fuller Ave.

D. JONKER, S. C.

The Distribution of the Amoritish Kingdoms

NUMBERS 32

The Ruebenites and the Gadites solicit for their inheritance on the east side of the Jordan. This country recently dispossessed of the Amorites, impressed them, from its abundant pastures, to be well adapted to their occupations with respect to their large possessions in cattle. Then, too, the land was without an owner, as it was not literally included in the promise. "Wherefore," said they to Moses and the princes of Israel, "if we have found grace in thy sight, let this land be given to thy servants for a possession, and bring us not over Jordan." Hearing, Moses was vexed and greatly alarmed. He understood them to mean that, in addition to their being allowed to settle at once in that territory, they be freed from the obligation of assisting the other tribes in the conquest of Canaan. His reply to them was severe. He first struck at their unbrotherly thought and its glaring injustice. "Shall your brethren," said he to them, "go to war, and shall ye sit there" (ver. 6)? 'How can ye want to be following the peaceful pursuits of life with your brethren wrestling with the adversary for the possession of their inheritance?' Then he upbraided them for the demoralizing effect of their proposal on the people. "And wherefore discourage ye the heart of the children of Israel from going over into the land which the Lord hath given them" (ver. 7 chap. 32). He held up their conduct as akin to the evil doing of the spies who disheartened the people before hand through their evil report and brought upon them the judgment of God by which the entire generation had perished in the desert, Joshua and Caleb excepted. "Thus did your fathers, when I sent them from Kadesh Barnea to see the land. For when they went up unto the valley of Eshcol, and saw the land, they discouraged the heart of the children of Israel, that they should not go into the land which the Lord had given them. And the Lord's anger was kindled the same time, and he sware saying, Surely none of the men that came up out of Egypt, from twenty years old and upward, shall see the land which I sware unto Abraham . . . because they have not wholly followed me: . . . and the Lord's anger was kindled against Israel, and he made them wander in the wilderness forty years, until all the generation that had done evil in the sight of the Lord, was consumed" (vers. 9-13). He tells them finally that they now arise in the room of their fathers, as an after-growth, a sinful brood, of such sinners to bring to a climax the fierce anger of Jehovah toward Israel in the destruction of the people altogether. Such will be the outcome, if they draw back behind Him; and the

doom of the people will be laid to their charge. (vers. 14, 15).

This speech was hard. The Gadites and the Reubenites reply. They say: "We will build pens for our cattle, and cities for our little ones (families); but we will arm ourselves with haste in the presence of the sons of Israel until we have led them to their places; and our little ones will dwell in the fortified cities from the presence of the inhabitants of the land. We will not return to our houses until the children of Israel have inherited each his inheritance. For we will not inherit with them on yonder side of Jordan, or forward; because our inheritance is fallen to us on this side of Jordan eastward." (vss. 16-19).

They meant no wrong, then. But if not, the rebuke of Moses was ill-deserved. He should now confess this and extend to them his apologies.

But Moses makes no amends. He holds him to his original interpretation of their speech, continues to regard it as expressive of their intent to withdraw from the rest of the tribes and to settle at once in Gilead. Though they now have promised to be loyal, he is still ill at ease with respect to them, so much so that he thinks it necessary to warn them that, if they will not go armed before the Lord to war, they may be sure that their sins will find them out. "If ye will do this thing . . . and the land be subdued before the Lord, then afterwards ye shall return and be guiltless before the Lord, and this land shall be your possession before the Lord. But if ye will not do so, you have sinned against the Lord: and be sure your sin will find you out." (vers. 20-24).

The Gadites and the Reubenites, perceiving that Moses still distrusts them, once more repeat their promise: "Thy servants will do as the Lord commandeth. Our little ones, our wives, our flocks, and all our cattle, shall be there in the city of Gilead: but thy servants shall pass over, every man armed for war, before the Lord to battle, as my Lord saith." (vers. 25-27).

Moses now gives assent in the shape of a command addressed to the high-priest, to Joshua, and to the elders of Israel, since he knows that he would not live to accomplish it: "If the children of Gad and the children of Reuben will pass with you over Jordan, each armed to battle, before the Lord, and the land shall be subdued before you; then ye shall give them the land of Gilead for a possession." (ver. 29).

But Moses still has his misgivings. He is yet afraid that they will refuse to proceed before them, armed for the conquest. For he now adds an alternative: "But if they will not pass over with you armed they shall have possessions among you in the land of Canaan." (ver. 30).

Moses reasons that their desire for the land east of the Jordan is that strong, that, rather than lose this country and be compelled to settle in Canaan on account of disloyalty, they will choose to assist their

brethren in the conquest of Canaan. This is revealing. It shows that they continue to stand out in his mind as men who are reluctant to be joined with their brethren in the war that must still be fought and who therefore must be held to the line of duty by the prospect of losing the land of their desire.

Once more therefore do they solemnly promise that they will do as the Lord has said, will pass over armed before the Lord into the land of Canaan, that the possession of their inheritance on the east side of the Jordan might be theirs. (vss. 31, 32).

Then Moses "gave unto them, even to the children of Gad, and to the children of Rueben, and to the half tribe of Manasseh the son of Joseph, the kingdom of Sihon king of the Amorites, and the kingdom of Og king of Bashan, the land with the cities thereof in the coasts, even the cities of the country round about." (32:33).

It is to be noticed that the half tribe of Manasseh, though they did not sue for their inheritance east of the Jordan, were nevertheless given possessions in that region.

As to Rueben and Gad, it is plain that Moses continued to distrust these tribes. He remained apprehensive. He seemed to be incapable of being convinced that they would hold them to their word. He treated them harshly throughout the entire transaction. They did not by their promise, twice repeated, change his first impression of them.

Did Moses do right here? This depends on whether they had given him grounds for suspecting them. This they had. They therefore deserve the treatment which he afforded them. Let us go over the case from the beginning.

First, why was this territory divided among these tribes? Verse 33 seq. contains the answer. "And the children of Machir the son of Manasseh went down to Gilead and took it, and dispossessed the Amorites which was in it. And Jair the son of Manasseh went down and took the small towns thereof And Nobah went down and took the villages thereof." According to this notice the land east of the Jordan had been conquered by the tribe Manasseh and, it must be supposed, by the two tribes Dan and Reuben. However, according to Nu. 21, the conquest of this territory had been the fruit of a military campaign against Sihon king of the Amorites and Og king of Bashan in which *all the tribes* had participated. "And Israel," mark you *Israel*, "smote him (Sihon) with the edge of the sword and *Israel* took all the cities" (21: 24, 25). "So they (*Israel*) smote him (king Og) and his sons and all his people, until there was none left alive; and they possessed the land" (ver. 35). The difficulty is easily removed. The exploits of these heroes from the tribe of Manasseh formed a part of the military campaign as conducted by all the tribes; and the reason therefore that the sacred narrator

singles out at chap. 32:39 these few heroes from the tribe of Mannaseh is that this tribe, together with Reuben and Gad, had been conspicuous in that conquest. This may account for the peculiar wealth of these tribes in cattle.

Having thus taken the lead in these earlier wars, the tribes Dan and Reuben (the tribe of Manasseh keeps silence about the matter) asked Moses that he give them their possessions east of the Jordan. They think that, as compared with the other tribes, they have acquired a special claim to this region. The part of their request that offended Moses is the final sentence: "Bring us not over Jordan." These words are equivocal. They can be taken as setting forth merely the desire of the speakers not to receive their inheritance on the west of the Jordan without the wish to withdraw their assistance from their brethren in the conquest of Canaan; or they may be understood to be expressive of the wish to settle east of the Jordan at once and to leave the conquest of Canaan to the other tribes. Moses understood the words in the latter sense and rightly so. Had these men meant differently, they would have expressed themselves differently at the beginning. Their manner of speech was calculated to obscure the real intent of their heart, yet not so completely as to leave Moses in the dark as to what they wanted, yet just enough to allow them to put themselves in the clear by complaining of their being misunderstood, should their proposal be ill-received. Their veiled speech betokens caution. They plainly doubted the rightness of their request and feared that it would call forth strongest rebuke. And it did so. And their reactions show that Moses understood them aright and that they were guilty of what he accused them. Had they not entertained the meaning that he attributed to their words, they would have become indignant and in their indignation vigorously resent these accusations as untrue. They didn't do this. But neither did they admit guilt and denounce their proposal as sinful and regrettable. Having heard themselves taken severely to task, they simply told Moses what they now planned on doing, to wit, settle at once east of the Jordan and assist their brethren in the conquest of Canaan. Moses, therefore continued to distrust them.

Fact is that he had more reason for persisting in his distrust of them. These men were overbold; and their replies bespeak a carnal spirit. They laid out the law to Moses. They said: "For we will not inherit with them (the other tribes) on the west of the Jordan; *because our inheritance is fallen to us on this side of Jordan eastward.*" How did they know. They didn't, of course. They spake here not as they knew Moses to have decreed but as they had decided among themselves.

They also said: "(But) we ourselves will go ready armed before the children of Israel, until we have

brought them to their place" These are boastful and martial words. The tribes of Reuben and Gad were conspicuous in the earlier war. And they thought they had done enough. Besides, mindful of their easy defeat of the two mighty kings of the Amorites, they concluded perhaps that the other tribes should be strong enough to conquer the land on the west of the Jordan. But if Moses thought otherwise, and if he insisted *they* would consent to lead also in the war that still awaited the nation and *they would bring* them to their places. *They* would do all this. They seemed to forget that the Israelites were the army of Jehovah, that at His command they waged war, that the battle and the victory is His, and that Israel's help cometh from the sanctuary. The speech of these tribes strangely contrasts with the truly theocratic reply of Moses: "If ye will go armed *before the Lord* . . . until *he hath driven out his enemies before him*, and the land be subdued *before the Lord*. . . . then we shall be guiltless *before the Lord*. . . . and 'this land shall be your possession *before the Lord*.'"

Then, too, their words betoken an overpowering love for their cattle and pastures, which lie closer their hearts than their children even. They say: "We will build pens here for our cattle and cities for our little ones . . ." Hence they will first protect their herds, then when they are secure, their families. Moses in his reply reverses the order: "Build you cities for your little ones, and folds for your sheep."

It is clear that it would be wrong to say that Moses ascribed to these tribes thoughts and intents that were not in the beginning present in their soul and that, therefore, this reproof was uncalled for and should have been recanted. Not Moses but these tribes were in the wrong. To adopt the opposite view is to hold up Moses as a shepherd who had no regard for his people and who was wont to ride roughshod over their feelings; as a man unwilling to admit his mistakes and to make amends for wrong done thus as a man proud and overbearing and groundlessly suspicious, whose habit it was to misjudge the motives of others. Moses, certainly, was not this kind of a man; but, according to God's own testimony, he was a man of remarkable meakness.

These tribes were in the wrong. Their demand was, in the highest degree, dangerous. It could have worked great harm and brought on another disaster of the first magnitude. For there can be no doubt that the original intention of these tribes was to settle at once east of the Jordan and to leave to the other tribes the conquest of Canaan. Had these tribes not been checked in their wrong ambition, had their intention crystallized and passed into action, the law of unity in heart and conduct of the army of God, as the indispensable condition of the conquest of the promised land, would have given way to the law of disruption and moral disintegration. This Moses perceived. He

realized what was at stake. And he took a firm stand. Seizing upon the sinful element in their request, he held it up in full view and exposed and denounced it for what it was, unsparingly and without mincing words. Let us honor the man for it. And let us understand that always the crying need of the church is for men of this courage.

The request itself, as freed from its wrong element, was not sinful. It was not overhasty in the time at which it was made. There was nothing wrong in the thought that it was peculiarly adapted to the habits of life of the two tribes. So far was Moses from denouncing the request as such, that he sanctioned it. What he frowned upon was the wrong spirit that led to the request — the wrong intention expressed in the words, *Bring us not over this Jordan*, to leave their brethren in the lurch and to withdraw themselves from the leadership of Moses and Jehovah.

But praise is also due to these tribes. They did not become angry and loud-mouthed when reproved; justify themselves in their wrong ambition, (which they could have done with some show of fairness,) and serve Moses notice that they were holding them to their original intention. They did not ask for their papers and leave the church. To the contrary, they received his words of rebuke and allowed themselves to be reprimanded and corrected: they put from them their wrong intention; and they solemnly promised over and over to assist their brethren in the conquest of Canaan. It need not be supposed that, when they first opened their mouth to speak,—their intention was standing out in their minds in all its sinful implications and dangerous possibilities. They had failed to weigh properly their own proposition. They were not wicked men at heart. If so, they would have reacted to the words of Moses' rebuke differently, as wicked men are wont to react to words of correction. Fundamentally they were good men. Only their trouble was that they had allowed themselves to be ensnared by the lust of the eyes. The land was pleasant to the eye; it was good pasturage; and they had much cattle. So they fell temporarily into the sin—the sin of the flesh—of seeking their own things and not the things of Jehovah, of Christ. But when reproved, they were immediately willing to see their sin and to promise not to separate themselves from the tribes. Thus they made the wise concessions and brotherly sacrifices. Their response is noble. They are spiritually pliable and tractable, capable of easily being led. They even correct immediately their errors of speech. Their first reply contains language such as this: "But we ourselves will go armed before the children of Israel; until we — mark you, *we* — have brought them (the children of Israel) to their place." In replying, Moses speaks of them as going armed *before the Lord*. They take notice of this. When they again open their mouth to speak, it is to once more assure Moses that they will

"pass over every man armed for war, *before the Lord.*" At first they put their cattle before their families. Moses reverses the order. Again they take notice and do likewise. And their promise to be loyal is made in all sincerity. For they hold them to their promise after Moses' decease, so that, at the close of his campaigns Joshua (22:1 seq.) can dismiss them with the testimony that they have fulfilled their word. So, after all, these were likeable men, when once brought to their senses.

But if these men—the Gadites and the Reubenites—were fundamentally good men, did Moses do right in continuing to suspect them? The proof that these men could be trusted, is that they fulfilled their promise, so solemnly made. We have this proof; Moses did not have this proof. It is especially in the light of the after history of these tribes, that they stand before us as a generation of men, fundamentally sincere and honest and fearing God.

The distribution of the land east of the Jordan among these tribes had greatest significance. As the conquest of this land precedes the conquest of Canaan, so the distribution of this land was to Israel a pledge of the victory in the war still to be fought and thus of the possession of the promised land. It was the earnest of the inheritance.

G. M. O.

Geloof Tegen Vuilen Laster

(Psalm 64)

Wat een machtig verschil bestaat er toch tusschen de gebeden dergenen die nog op aarde zijn en de aanbidding van hemelbewoners!

Het eerste woord, dat God van David in dit bidden beluistert is: "Hoor!" Ik dacht zoo, bij het overdenken van dezen psalm: Zou Hij die het oor geplant heeft niet hooren? Waarom mocht David zoo harts-tochtelijk schreeuwen tot God? Moet dat zóó?

Evenwel, laat mij de hand maar op den mond leggen: ik ben zelf ook vaak zoo bezig geweest.

En 't is geen wonder.

Stelt het U voor: de duif Gods is in 't midden van het hatelijk gevogelte. Het lammetje te midden van verscheurende wolven. Jezus wandelt te midden van de Farizeën en Schriftgeleerden. Kaïn loert op Abel en Ezau knarsetandt tegen Jacob. De vuile heidenen zeggen: Komt laat ons optrekken tegen Jeruzalem in den nacht! Overal waar God Zich openbaart in al Zijn schoonheid in deze bedeeing van bloed en tranen hoor ik het sissen der slang.

Als 't nog heel donker is gaat Jezus ten huize uit

en spoedt Zich naar de rotsblokken en het zand der wildernissen—om te klagen en te weenen en te bidden.

'k Denk dat Jezus vaak Zijn gebed begonnen is juist zooals David het hier doet: "Hoor, o Mijn God!"

Bij 't bestudeeren van dezen psalm was er ook nog iets anders wat mij aangreep en het is dit: wat ellendige en jammerlijke en beklagenswaardige menschen zijn die lasteraars toch geweest! O, wij allen die waarlijk kinderen des Allerhoogsten zijn hebben ook wel eens onzen mond opengedaan om kwaad te spreken van onzen broeder: beken het maar! En toch is er zulk een hemelsbreed verschil!

Dit zijn lasteraars "van professie"! Dit zijn menschen die *verstand* van lasteren hebben. Ze hebben al hun hebben en houden in dienst gesteld van hem die de lasteraar bij uitnemendheid is: de duivel. Dat soort van menschen hebben schik van lasteren. O, als het thema van het gesprek den broeder is: hoe heerlijk is dat voor hen. Daar wordt alles breed uitgemeten! Ze verkneukelen zich! Gaat nog niet weg; wacht nog wat; ik ben nog niet uitgepraat; maar, denkt er om: het moet hier blijven hoor! En zoo gaat men met elkander den nacht in. "En het was nacht". Zoo spreekt het Evangelie, hetwelk in zijn donkere achtergrond het woelen van Satan's instrument, Judas, beschrijft. En die arme, beklagenswaardige Judas strompelt op de straten van het donkere Jeruzalem! Hij is op weg om te lasteren van Hem Wiens Naam Waarheid is.

Temidden van dat soort menschen had David zijn wandelingen.

'k Denk dat deze periode mooi past op de samenzweering die het gevolg had dat David van Zijn troon gestooten werd.

En is *vervuld* toen Jezus omgeven werd van het net der boosdoeners, die zoolang ploegden totdat de duif Gods aan 't gevloekte hout hing. En hooren we ook daar: Mijn God! Mijn God! Die bevende, harts-tochtelijke schreeuwen trillen nog na in ons heelal.

Toen David al dat samenzweeren der lasteraars zag en hoorde, is hij naar God gegaan. Luistert naar hem: "Hoor, o God! mijne stem in mijn geklag; behoed mijn leven voor des vijands schrik!"

Zeker, Hij die het oor plantte kan hooren. Ook behoeft ge niet luidkeels te schreeuwen om audientie bij God te ontvangen. Hij hoort ook de fluisterstem van het kleine kind. Soms biddet ge zonder woorden; dan was er een schreeuwen in 't hart. En Hij hoorde.

Maar David is in groote benauwdheid! Dat maakt het groote verschil hier. En is een klein beginsel van de nieuwe gehoorzaamheid in elk kind van God; en dat kleine beginsel bevindt zich temidden van hellsche machten. Wij moeten het dan ook niet te hard vallen als het schreeuwt tot God. 't Kan niet anders. Hebreë spreekt van "sterke roeping en tranen" van Jezus!

“Des vijands schrik”. Ik vraag me soms af: wat genot zit er toch in om de onschuld te belagen, om Jezus op 't aangezicht te slaan. Indien men dooden wilt, waarom dan niet het verachtelijke en afschuwelijke vertrap? Doch deze menschen joegen *David* schrik aan. En David is de beminde des Heeren. Daarin zit hun oordeel opgesloten. Daarin verraden zij zichzelf. Daarin ligt het bewijs, dat zij zelf vuil en goddeloos zijn.

“Verberg mij voor den heimelijken raad der boosdoeners, voor de oproerigheid van de werkers der ongerechtigheid.” David geeft ons een beschrijving ten voete uit van dit arme soort menschen. Zij hebben een heimelijken raad. Hunne werken zijn werken der duisternis. 't Licht kan het niet velen. En omdat David Koning van Israel was, waren hunne werken dan ook gebrandmerkt door rebellie: het zijn oproerige werken. Men wil David van zijn troon stooten, waar de Heere hem op geplaatst had.

Dan volgt een beschrijving der methode die gevolgd wordt om David te schaden: “die hunne tong scherp en als een zwaard, een bitter woord aanleggen als hunnen pijl, om in verborgene plaatsen den oprechte te schieten: haastig schieten zij naar hem, en vreezen niet. Zij sterken zichzelf in eene booze zaak; zij houden sprake van strikken te verborgen; zij zeggen: Wie zal ze zien?” Ach, wie heeft dat soort menschen nooit ontmoet?

Het zijn menschen die het edelste en schoonste misbruiken tot hun eigen verderf. Ze misbruiken de tong en het woord. Het zijn die dingen welke ons zoo hoog boven het brute schepsel verheffen. Een sprekende en jubelende tong om te verhalen, wat in het harte woont. Het is immers God die Zijn Woord eeuwiglijk spreekt. Welnu dan, Zijn beeldrager ontving een lichaamsdeel om te spreken. Voorts is er een woord des menschen. En naar Gods doel met Zijn schepsel zou dat spreken en dat woord enkel billijkheden zijn. Doch wat is er van te recht gekomen? Gij kunt het in dezen psalm lezen.

Zij scherp hunne tong.

En dat is op zichzelf niet kwaad. Elders zegt Gods Woord, dat wij met een scherpe tong scherpe dingen zullen spreken tegen onze kinderen. Het beduidt bloot formeel, dat men zich oefent in juist te spreken. Men moet niet klakkeloos maar woorden vermenigvuldigen. Men zou eerst goed nadenken wat men zal zeggen. Het juiste woord en met de juiste klank der stem. Dat is een scherpe tong. Het is een tong die met voorbedachte rade spreekt.

Doch hier is de scherpe tong boos en vuil en verkeerd, omdat zij een *bitter* woord spreekt. Leest het maar in den tekst. Zij scherp hunne tong om een bitter woord te spreken. Zóó is het redebeleid in den tekst.

En dat is o zoo kwaad.

Daarom wordt zulk doen vergeleken bij het wonden

van een zwaard en een snorrende pijl, die doorboort en doorpriemt.

En zoo doen die menschen hun duivelswerk tegen den oprechte.

Ze hebben eust goed bestudeerd hoe te spreken en in welk klankgeslacht. Ze hebben er studie van gemaakt om toch maar te mogen verwonden en doen lijden. Hun prooi zal 't uitvinden.

Ook schamen zij zich niet.

Let er op: Haastig schieten zij naar hem, en vreezen niet.

Er is geen twijfel aanwezig in t' zwarte hart. Ook schaamt men zich niet in dit Satanswerk. Neen, verre vandaar: de beschrijving van dit soort menschen mitsgaders hun boos werk geeft den indruk, dat zij er ook schik van hebben. O, de wereldling zondigt zoo geheel anders dan het kind van God. De laatste aarzelt altijd als de atmosfeer rondom hem en in hem doezelig wordt en de schaduwen over zijn ziel trekken. Te zondigen voor Gods kind meent te lijden. Hij heeft nooit schik van zijn kwaad.

Doch deze menschen lachen in hun kwaad.

Merkt er op: “Zij sterken zichzelf in een booze zaak; zij houden sprake van strikken te verbergen; zij zeggen: Wie zal ze zien?” Er staat vaak van Gods volk, dat zij zich sterken in hun God; doch van dit soort menschen staat hier, dat zij zichzelf versterken in het booze. Vreeselijk oordeel.

Evenwel: God spreekt in hun geweten. Dat kan men merken aan hun gesprek: Wie zal onze verborgen strikken zien?

Deze lasteraars die David aanvallen zijn menschen die zich gedurig oefenen in het kwade. Alles moet hen dienen om hun booze plannen uit te voeren. Zij doorzoeken allerlei schalkheid, staat er. Dat wil zeggen, zij bedenken allerlei wegen en middelen om sluwe, fijn uitgesponnen plannen te verwerkelijken. Zij gaan te rade met hun diepste hart, doorzoekende dat hart, om toch maar alle boosheid die hen vervult te gebruiken in den strijd tegen David. Zelfs de Psychologie moet er aan te pas komen.

Meer dan eens heb ik dit soort mensch arm en elendig genoemd. Ook beklagenswaardig. Dat blijkt wel uit het laatste gedeelte van den psalm.

Ik schreef boven dit opstel: Geloof tegen vuile laster. En terecht.

David weet, dat er een God in den hemel is die alles ziet en alles zoekt. En hij weet tevens, dat die God hem liefheeft. O wee dan de goddeloozen!

Daarom staat er: Maar God zal ze haastig met een pijl schieten, hunne plagen zijn er!

Verschrikkelijk oordeel. Dit soort menschen belagen den beminde Gods. Daarom staat er dat God *haastig* zal schieten. Dat hadden zij ook gedaan. Ook zij schoten haastiglijk, met hartstocht om te wonden, tot David. Welnu, dat zal God ook doen. Met groote hartstocht der liefde tot David, doch met de hartstocht

der wrake tot zijn belagers, zal God schieten Zijn pijl. O, doorwond te worden door God. Wel mocht Paulus later schrijven: Vreeselijk zal het zijn te vallen in de handen des levenden Gods.

Hunne plagen zijn er.

Ja, zoo spreekt het geloof.

Zij zijn er nu al. We behoeven niet te wachten tot den oordeelsdag. God oordeelt alle dagen. Eerstens. hierin, dat een ieder die zondigt een verloopige straf ontvangen in het zondigen zelf. Gij kunt nergens van de rechte lijnen van het gebod afdwalen zonder het misnoegen Gods te ervaren. Tweedens is er een belofte van smart in de toekomst die spreekt in 't hart van alle zondaren. Er is angst voor God. Vraagt het aan den stervenden booswicht. Hij zal het verhalen in zijn angstig gehul.

Zijn plagen zijn er.

Doch de uiteindelijke uitstorting van Gods wrake over dat volk zal vreeselijk zijn. Die dat zien zal zich wegpakken, staat er in dit lied. Het doet ons denken aan het Wee, Wee, Wee van die Babel beweenden.

Alle menschen zullen vreezen.

Dat zal een mooie tijd zijn. Dat is nu nog niet zoo. Doch als God blinkende verschijnt ten oordeel, dan zullen alle menschen vreezen en Gods doen verstandiglijk aanmerken. Dat zal een mooie tijd zijn. Want dan wordt God in 't gelijk gesteld. Dan wordt onzen God gerechtvaardigd.

Dat weet Gods kind nu al.

Dat volk vertrouwt nu al in Zijn Woord en door 't geloof, hetwelk ons een geestelijk gezicht geeft op zijn oordeelen.

Daarom zal de rechtvaardige zich in God verblijden. Het is een goed kind dat naar zijn vader aardt. Dat volk spreekt voor God want zij zijn Godes.

Daar vindt men den roem. Daar hoort men psalmen die strekken tot de grootmaking van Zijn Naam.

Daar neemt Miriam de leiding op zich en roept de vrouwen van Israel toe: Stelt U allen in de reien met trommelende maagden: De Heere is zeer verhoogd! Hij heeft het ros en zijn ruiters in het roode meer geworpen!

Dat lied is uitgestorven. 't Was slechts een type.

Doch gij gaat voorts het lied van het Lam zingen: Gods oordeelen zijn openbaar geworden !God alleen de eer!

G. V.

Rechterlijke Erkenning

Joh. 8:8.

Opvallend en sterk in het ooglopend, is de wijze waarop de Schriftgeleerden en Farizeers Jezus macht en invloed zochten te breken, ja Hem trachten onmogelijk te maken en tegelijkertijd, huns ondanks, daardoor blijk geven van Hem te erkennen.

"De schare, die de Wet niet kent, is vervloekt" doch dat weerhield die schare niet, om des morgens vroeg wederom in den Tempel te komen, om naar de woorden van den Mond der Wijsheid te luisteren. En het weerhield de leiders in Israel niet, om toch die gunst te zoeken van die zelfde vervloekte domme schare. Natuurlijk, de Farizeers ontbraken er op dit oogenblik en zullen pas later ten tooneele verschijnen, om de prediking, zoowel als de Persoon des Heilands onmogelijk te maken. De getabberde heeren waren er op uit, om die schare voor zich te herwinnen en konden het niet uitstaan, dat die pseudo-profeet uit het verachte Galilea, zonder zich om hen te bekommeren, zijn onderwijs bleef geven aan dat domme volk, dat zij toch, voor eigen eere en grootheid niet konden missen. De miskenning van Zijn kant, was al te groot.

Neen, niet alsof zij op eenige wijze het wilde doen voorkomen, alsof zoude de toestand alreeds hachelijk zijn. Maar men kon toch nooit weten hoe het nog eens zou komen als er aan deze kromme verhouding van Jezus en het volk geen eind werd gemaakt.

In eigen kring had alreeds Nicodemus een goed, zij het den ook een zwak woord gesproken voor den Nazarener, doch daar kon men er zich zoo gemakkelijk met een voornaam handgebaar van af maken. Heldere koppen waren wel in staat het gevaar daar te bezweren. In die kring deelde men min of meer de eere onderling en men was één in doel en streven.

Maar tenopzichte van het volk ging dat nu eenmaal niet zoo gemakkelijk. Die begrepen maar al te dikwijls niet veel van handgebaren en van groote doen, natuurlijk, ook al weer te verklaren uit hun grooie domheid.

Daardoor stond de zaak heel eenvoudig zoo, dat het eindelijk toch wel duidelijk gemaakt moest worden, wie de eigenlijke plaats in Israels leeraarsstoel toekwam, nietwaar? O, die bezorgheid voor het eigen hachje in Israels clericale kringen. Het groot-doen onder elkander en het met verachting spreken over de domme schare, knakte tenslotte Jezus macht en invloed niet, door Hem op het volk uitgeoefend.

Daarom moesten zij wel, of zij het wilde of niet, met meer deugdelijke middelen te voorschijn treden, zouden zij de vroegere reputatie bij het volk niet verliezen. En daarom komen zij, op de brutaalste wijze denkbaar—de zonde is altijd brutaal in haar openbaring, vooral als zij door 'vrome' menschen be-

Our sins and griefs on Him were laid;
He meekly bore the mighty load:
Our ransom price He fully paid,
In groans and tears, in sweat and blood.

dreven wordt—te voorschijn en stappen zij op de saamgekomen schare toe, met een groote zondares in hun midden. Zie, zij waren op hun eigen manier met de Middernacht Zending bezig geweest en hadden hun prooi (niet een prooi der zonde) gevonden, waarmee zij den 'veeraar' op den proef zullen stellen.

Dwaasheid der zonde. Maar wat anders is de zondaar dan een groote dwaas? Hij wordt altijd in zijn eigen garen gevangen en de strik voor anderen gespannen, wordt voor eigen verderf klaar gemaakt.

Want, om nu van Jezus een oordeel te vergen over de bedreven zonde was toch wel geheel en al overbodig. *Dat* hadden zij alreeds bij den aanvang erkend. Mozes liet hen niet in twijfel aangaande het onderhavig geval, noch ook was het een raadsel wat in dezen de straf moest zijn. Daarom was dan ook geheel dien opzet zoo heel erg in het ooglopend.

Ja, wij weten wat Mozes zegt, maar nu 'Wat zegt Gij'? Meeningsverschillen in de Kerk met dien Ouden Vader Mozes. Natuurlijk, het klonk werkelijk heel ernstig, vooral als Mozes er te hooi en te gras bij wordt gesleept. Doch het Koningsoog ziet direkt waar het hen om te doen was. Och, het was niets slechts een vragen naar den bekenden weg, veeleer een ontkenning van het feit, dat zij zelven tot de grootste der zondaren behoorden, nu den Zondelooze wilden verzoeken. Spelen met het heilige en den Heilige.

Maar, schoon niet zoo bedoeld van hun kant, is het komen tot Jezus een erkenning, dat de Heiland behoort in de rei der Profeten en dat nog wel met Mozes daarbij inbegrepen. Meer nog, Hij zal tenslotte ook Mozes moeten beoordeelen, of deze dan wel, of ook niet het bij het rechte einde had.

Zoo wordt het ook door Jezus aanvaard. Gewillig geeft Hij getuigenis aangaande Zichzelf, aangaande de vrouw en. . . ook aangaande deze verzoekers en dat in het licht van Mozes den Profeet des Heeren.

En daarom, in dit aanvaarden om een uitspraak te doen, hebben we dan allereerst het onomstootelijk feit, dat Jezus de bevoegdheid, de macht en de bekwaamheid wordt toegekend, om een oordeel te vellen, omtrent datgene waartoe Hij in de wereld was gekomen. Hij zit nu alvast op den Rechterstoel.

Let er dan ook op, dat het er niet op aan komt wat de motieven waren, die deze Sanhedristen er toebrachten Hem op dien eereplaats te zetten. De motieven zijn over duidelijk. Immers, men wilde Hem van twee kanten vangen, daarom stelde men de vraag zóó, dat naar men meende, wat nu verder het antwoord ook moge zijn geweest, het in ieder geval in moeite zoude hebben gebracht. Zegt Hij, hier zult ge de Wet van Mozes moeten toepassen en haar steenigen, dan is het gevolg, dat Hij in strijd komt met de Romeinsche overheid, die de zonde van overspel niet rekende onder de misdrijven, waarop de doodstraf volgen moest. Neen, dan was men nog niet klaar, daar de voltrekking van het vonnis niet bij den Heiland, doch bij den Jood-

schen Raad lag. Waar dan nog bij komt, dat men ook voor het eigen geweten tot geen andere opvatting of resultaat kon komen en zou moeten concludeeren, Hij is het toch ook met Mozes en dies met ons eens. Men zette toch wel wat al te veel op het spel, door zoo willekeurig met vragen om te springen.

Aan de andere zijde, veroordeelde Jezus deze vrouw niet, dan was, zoo meende deze leiders, het pleit door hen gewonnen, dan zou het ook een ieder duidelijk zijn, Hij heeft Mozes verworpen en behoort niet in de lijn der ware profeten. Met andere woorden, het zou dan niet langer moeilijk zijn het volk van Hem af te trekken. Zoo meende men.

Desniettegenstaande, was het daarom voor deze leidlieden in Israel toch een daad, waardoor zij, zonder het zoo te bedoelen, Hem een macht en bevoegdheid toekende, die zij zelf bezaten. Zij toch moesten, mochten en konden oordeelen ook in het onderhavig geval, omtrent de zonde van deze vrouw? Waarom nu niet gezegd, wat ons betreft, wij staan met beide voeten op de Oudtestamentische Schriften en Jezus zou daarop geen aanmerking hebben gemaakt. Immers, ware de zaak aldus aangepakt dan was het oordeel van wien dan ook, geheel en al overbodig geweest.

Dat de Heiland Zich van dez macht en bevoegdheid bewust is blijkt wel uit de handeling, die Hij verricht.

Hij neigt Zich ter aarde en schrijft in die aarde met Zijn vinger. Men heeft wel gemeend, dat dit zich voorover buigen en dit schrijven een schijnbeweging was. In der werkelijkheid heeft Hij dan niets geschreven. Deze daad diende dan enkel en alleen, om Zijn verontwaardiging uit te spreken over hun valsche wijze van optreden. En, volgens deze voorstelling, krijgen deze aanklagers pas een antwoord als zij toch met hun vragen blijven aandringen.

Wij hebben er echter een andere gedachte over. Allereerst, het antwoord, dat zij ontvangen, zoowel als de vrouw geven blijk van Zijne bevoegdheid om uitspraak te doen. Hij doet dit echter als de Herder, Die Zich wendt tot de verloren schapen van het huis Israels. Dan is Zijn werk dat van den Profeet, Die de wereld overtuigt van zonde en oordeel. Die dus niet slechts spreekt en ziet wat voor oogen is, wat in daden te voorschijn komt, doch Die het hart oordeelt en in dat oordeel Zich strikt houdt aan wat God in Zijn Woord daarvan zegt.

In de tweede plaats, hebben we hier dan te doen met den Priester, Die maar niet een oordeel velt — schoon Hij dat ook doet — doch die tot Zijn Kerk spreekt als de Barmhartige Hoogepriester en Zijn volk roept tot de bekeering, van niet meer te zondigen en Zich tot Hem te wenden in allen nood en dood. Daarom zegt Hij dan ook tot de vrouw, niet Ik spreek u vrij, doch, zondig niet meer. Laat af van uw bozen weg en wandel op Gods weg. De goddelooze verlate zijne weg en wende zich tot den Heere en Hij zal Zich zijner ontfermen. Maar dan kan ook een eigen-

gerechtige Farizeer het bij Hem niet vinden, loopt weg, knerst de tanden en rechtvaardigt zichzelf.

Maar aldus sprekend, treedt het toch ook tegelijkertijd te voorschijn, dat het Koningsoog alles heeft gezien en doorgrondt en ligt er in Zijn spreken, het vonnis en komt er bij het spreken dan nog het schrijven. Want de Rechter spreekt niet slechts, doch schrijft ook het vonnis, zonde en ongerechtigheid veroordeelende van een iegelijk en een ieder, die Hem vraagt omtrent alle ongerechtigheid van den daad, zoowel als van de ingeboren verdorvenheid.

W. V.

Ingezonden

Eerwaarde Redakteur:

In De Standard Bearer van December 15, ontmoette ik een persoon bij den naam A. Folkertsma, die mij broeder noemde. Nu dat doet nog al wat aan. Maar, nadat hij verder kennis met mij maakte, zeide hij al spoedig dat ik onmenschelijk, goddelooslijk, en dierlijk handelde, en stukken van een laag karakter schreef; misschien welgemeend, maar hetwelk toch de Standard Bearer wel ter dege ontsiert, verlaagt, bevuilt, berooft en ondermijnt. Maar waarin onze broederschap bestaat heeft die broeder niet aangetoond. Wel heeft Folkertsma *zeer veel* met weinige woorden gezegd, maar heeft er niet *een* woord van bewezen. Ja, het is al weer als met de C.L.A., hij tracht niet één schriftuurlijk bewijs bij te brengen voor al zijn gezegde. Inderdaad een rare broederschap, maar dat kan wel terecht komen.

Ook valt deze broeder de Redakteur aan voor het plaatsen van zulke stukken. Maar, broeder, indien mijne gedachten over de C.L.A. dan zoo geheel verkeerd zijn, dan zou u de Redakteur moeten danken voor het plaatsen van zulke stukken, want dan zou het uw zaak versterken. En nu, broeder, wat nu van uw stuk? Is dat bedoeld tot broederlijke vermaning, en terechtwijzing, op grond van Gods Woord, (indien ik dwaal in dezen). Versiert, verhoogt, zuivert, en verrijkt zulk schrijven de Standard Bearer? Ik betwijfel het wel terdege. Ik zou u hier willen wijzen op hetgeen de Redakteur geschreven heeft onder uw protest, namelijk: "Hier mag ik er aan herinneren, dat ingezonden stukken buiten de verantwoordelijkheid van de Redakteur staan wat hun inhoud betreft." En dat geldt ook u, want wie zou voor een stuk zooals dat van uw hand, verantwoordelijk willen zijn, (*) .

En nu, wat is onmenschelijk en goddeloos? Zeker niet wat God in de eerste 6 verzen van Jacobus 5 zegt tot de rijke ongehoorzame werkgevers. En ook niet

de vertroostende woorden van vers 7-12. Dan zal het zeker wel moeten zijn, omdat God alleen rechter wil wezen. Maar broeder dat is Hij, en dat blijft Hij eeuwiglijk. En geve God ons die genade, dat wij ons hierin mogen verblijden, ook temidden van verdrukking. Maar ook wanneer dat de begeerte niet is, dat God rechter wezen zal, dan is ook het lot van de ongehoorzame arbeider juist hetzelfde als van de ongehoorzame rijke.

En nu, broeder, u schreef dat ik het misschien wel gemeend had, en daar verzeker ik u van. Het was ons doel om er op te wijzen dat Gods volk geen *ander* juk moet aantrekken, want indien wij het juk, dat de Heere ons oplegt willen ontloopen, dan komen wij zeker onder een ander juk. En nu weet ik misschien niet zoo veel van de C.L.A., maar dit staat bij mij vast dat zij haar beginsel *niet* heeft in Jacobus 5, noch in eenige andere schriftuurplaatsen. Want wat Gods Woord ons daar zoo uitdrukkelijk leert, wordt verder overal bevestigd.

En verder zegt broeder Folkertsma, "En wij Christen arbeiders kunnen geen dag en geen uur wachten." Als wij het nu ééns kunnen worden wie die christen arbeiders zijn, dan zullen wij het ook wel eens kunnen worden dat wij niet wachten kunnen. En dan vinden wij die christen arbeiders alweer in Jacobus 5 beschreven. En ook in Efeze 5:15, 16: "Ziet dan hoe gij voorzigtiglijk wandelt, niet als onwijken, maar als wijzen. De tijd uitkoopende, dewijl de dagen boos zijn. Zoo beschouwd hebben wij geen dag en geen uur tijd om te wachten.

En nu schrijf ik deze regelen niet alsof het zoo gemakkelijk is om die weg te bewandelen, want dat ondervind ik ook iedere dag. Ja, menigmaal zouden wij wel met een Jacob willen uitroepen, "Mijn weg is voor den Heere verborgen, en mijn recht gaat van mijn God voorbij." Maar hoe kon Jacob dat toch zeggen. Zou God dan Jacob's weg niet gezien hebben? En welk recht had Jacob? Ja, als wij God uit het oog verliezen, dan zijn wij zoo geneigd om beschuldigingen tegen God in te brengen. Maar als God voor ons is, wie zal dan tegen ons zijn? Ja, ik hoor mij wel toeroepen, ja, maar het is zoo gemakkelijk niet. Nu, broeders, dat weet ik maar al te goed, want dat moet ik ook iedere dag ondervinden van wegen mijn ongehoor. En dan is het alsof de duivel met al zijn macht tegen ons is. En dat is ook wel terdege zoo, want hij gaat rond als een brieschende leeuw, zoekende *wie* hij zou mogen verslinden. Maar daar tegenover staat de heerlijke belofte Gods, ziet ik heb u in mijne hand palmen gegraveerd. Die belofte, dat God altoos over ons waakt ten goede, van de dag onzer geboorte tot onzen dood toe; in weelde of in armoede, in voorspoed óf tegenspoed, in blijdschap óf in druk en vervolging. Geve God ons dit voor oogen te houden dat zijn volk alleen een overwonnen vijand te bestrijden heeft, al staat hij ons zoo tegen dat wij menigmaal niet weten,

wat wij doen moeten. Zelfs weten wij niet wat wij bidden mogen als behoort. Zie vraag en antwoord over het gebed, in de Standard Bearer van December 15. Daar wordt de vraag beantwoord, of wij wel mogen bidden voor dingen, die wij gaarne willen ontvangen óf zien geschieden, maar waarvan wij niet weten of ze overeen-komstig de wil des Heeren zijn. En indien wij zoo voorzichtig moeten zijn in ons gebed, hoe moeten wij ons dan wel wachten om onze toestanden (waarvan wij niet weten of zij overeen-komstig de wil Gods zijn) aan een union toe te vertrouwen, al draagt zij ook de naam van C.L.A., en dat ten onrechte.

A. H.

Zeeland, Michigan.

(*) Broeder Hirdes heeft geen recht om deze verklaring te geven aan mijn note onder het stuk van Folkertsma. Dit noot had heelemaal niet de bedoeling om een reflectie te zijn op den inhoud van het ingezonden stuk, zooals A. H. thans suggereert. Het was slechts eene herinnering aan een altijd vaststand feit, die ik maakte, omdat broeder F. meende, dat zulke stukken als dat van u niet in de S. B. behoorden te worden opgenomen. Wat ik in die noot schreef, geldt van het stuk van broeder H. even zoo als van dat van broeder F.

Red.

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Modern War and Common Grace

Although our topic presents a double subject, the reader will understand that it can not be our purpose to write first about Modern War and then about Common Grace. The purpose is, rather, to view the one in the light of the other, that is, to view the theory of Common Grace in the light of Modern War. More specifically, we have been set to the task of showing the untenable position of those who hold to the theory of common grace, when we regard that theory in the light of the great conflict which is raging in the world today.

The reader will undoubtedly understand that by speaking of the *theory* of common grace, we have already formed a judgment of this concept which serves as a basis of procedure. By the use of the word theory we have already expressed that that which is called "common grace" is according to our conviction not a Scriptural truth but a theory of man's wisdom and philosophy. It is not to be expected that, in this article, we should first prove the error of the theory of common grace in the light of the Word of God. It would be foolish to attempt to do that in this one article and still expect to be able to say something about the subject proper; nor is that necessary since so much has already been written to that effect, and, since our history as Protestant Reformed Churches is vitally connected with the rejection of this error. Hence, in this article we proceed from the assumption that "Common Grace" is a theory of man's invention and not a Scriptural truth. And the purpose of our article will be to show that this theory is also untenable in the light of this present modern war in which the whole world is engaged.

Now, the theory of common grace holds that, through the gracious activity of God's Spirit there is still some good left in the unregenerated man, so that he is not wholly cast away by God but, as long as he remains in this earth, is still the object of God's love and mercy, and since through the gracious operation of God's Spirit in his heart sin is restrained in him, he is able, through the operation of that same Spirit, to produce much that is still pleasing to God. The practical import of this teaching is:

1) That the unregenerated sinner is still the object of God's love and therefore receives from God many blessings in this life;

2) That, on the part of God, there is a restraining activity upon the heart and mind of the unregenerated man, so that sin does not develop as fast as it otherwise would;

3) That, consequently, the reprobate sinner, in this life, is not always the object of God's constant wrath and punishing judgments;

4) That, because of the operation of God's Spirit,

the sinner is able to live a virtuous life and can do much that is pleasing to God.

Of course, much could be added to the above paragraph, but we believe that this is sufficient to give a workable basis for the discussion of our subject. We should not forget that there are many who hold that the above is true, that it is based upon the Word of God and was confessed by our Reformed fathers. It was also because of our refusal to acknowledge that as the truth that we were cast out of their fellowship and exist today as a separate denomination. In this light it will be understood that our subject is of a controversial nature. If it were not for the fact that many people of God are being led astray today by that error, we, on our part would feel no need at all of writing on this subject. It stands to reason that, since we do not believe in common grace, this present war presents no problems to us in that respect. Actually, therefore, the burden of proof in this discussion lies with the opposition. We cannot escape the thought that it would be interesting to read some literature on his subject by those who hold to this theory.

Since we do not hold to the teachings of common grace we cannot very well approach our subject from the point of view of the question: does modern war lend any support to the theory of common grace? To that question we would answer an unequivocal NO. To the contrary, we are of the opinion that modern war plainly disproves that theory and also shows that in practical reality there is no basis for it.

The question before which we must place ourselves is, therefore, in which way does modern war disprove the teaching of common grace? Wherein does it become apparent that such a reality as our present conflict denies the possibility of holding this view? How does modern war contradict the teaching of common grace?

In answering this question we must first understand what war actually is according to the Word of God. Now, there can be no doubt but what everyone will agree that war is the result of sin and stands very closely related to the fact of sin. This appears both from the description of the first paradise, before sin entered the world, as well as from the description of the new heavens and earth where there will be perfect peace. James also ascribes war to sin in James 4:1-4. "From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts. Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." In the light of this passage there can be no doubt but what war is the result

of sin and that it is the judgment of God upon the sinner. The deepest cause of all war lies in the fact that man has turned away from the living God Who alone is Good and has become the enemy of God. Sinful man cannot experience God's friendship for God hates that which is opposed to Him and visits His wrath upon all them that hate Him. There surely is no need to prove this from the Scriptures, we all know that the Psalms are full of that. That war is a judgment of God is plain also from the fact that time and again God would punish Israel by bringing the armies of the heathen against them. Moreover, among the judgments which preceded the coming of Christ, and also serve as signs of His coming, is mentioned "wars and rumors of wars", of which Christ Himself said that this was only the beginning of sorrows.

There have always been wars, almost as long as the world has existed. And war has always been terrible. Still, there has never been a war like this present world-war which commands all continents, all races, all walks of life, all spheres of life, all man's powers, talents and productivity. The weapons of destruction have been increased, their power has been multiplied, so that today man is able to kill more and destroy more in a given amount of time than ever before. Death reigns on the land, on the sea and in the air. Surely no one will deny that there has been a rapid development in this respect in recent years. There is therefore every reason to believe that rather than restrain the awful power of sin, God is causing it to develop very rapidly. One must certainly look in vain for any evidence of the restraining activity of God's Spirit in the world today. All the knowledge of science and invention, man employs in the service of death and destruction. He lusts and desires to have and he devises ways and means to rob and plunder. He kills, he loves to kill, he desires to kill as much as he can. He seeks to instill in all the spirit of hatred and revenge. We must hate our enemies, we must hate with all that is in us. We must not become weak and overlook the enemies' crimes; we must not show him any mercy but we must hate and kill, we must take our revenge. Such is the philosophy of our military leaders today. Our boys must learn to hate and the more they hate the better soldiers they will be.

In the light of these things we have mentioned, and there are many more, it would seem impossible to maintain the truth of the theory of common grace. Surely, no one would maintain that this present war is the result of God's blessings upon the ungodly; nor could it hardly be the manifestation of God's favor for the wicked. And what will one do with the idea of God's restraining Spirit? Is this war the result of that restraining activity of God's Spirit? How must that be explained?

We are convinced that anyone will have a difficult task to maintain the teachings of common grace in

the light of modern war. We believe that it disproves that theory altogether. This present war, as a means of judgment in the hand of God, teaches us that God is wroth with the wicked and that He hates all the workers of iniquity and will requite them. Also we, as children of God, have deserved to perish in those judgments of God because of our sins and iniquities. And herein do we perceive the love of God, that for His Own Name's sake, He has given us His only begotten Son that through Him we might escape His punishing wrath and have eternal life. By His grace, God makes us His friends through Jesus Christ our Lord. And now in the midst of war and desolation, which is but the beginning of sorrows, He grants us the peace that passeth understanding in the knowledge of His love.

This present modern war teaches you and me that God's grace is very particular, that it is bestowed upon those that fear Him and call upon His Name. And by that grace we are protected in the midst of, and saved through the very means of, the judgments of God, this present war.

H. D. W.

BLADVULLING

Bij U is kracht! Bij U, mijn God! is leven,
 Wat was en is, blijft enkel door Uw
 macht,
 Vraag aan 't heelal: wie is uw levens-
 kracht?
 En 't zal u: God alleen! ten antwoord
 geven.

Waar 't wormpje kruipt, daar moet men U
 verhoogen,
 De Seraf zelf, die voor Uw troon mag
 staan,
 Is maar een beek uit Uwen Oceaan;
 Gij geeft; zij stroomt! Gij neemt; zij moet
 verdroogen.

Aanbid, mijn ziel! de Sterke zal u dragen,
 Rust bij die bron! ga heen in deze uw
 kracht!
 Uw zijn en 't heil, dat gij in Jezus
 wacht,
 Staan op de rots van 't machtig welbehagen.

Sanctified In Christ

This statement, as you will all realize, is taken from the first of the three questions to which the parents must answer affirmatively, when they seek to have their child baptized. The parents are asked whether they acknowledge that, although their children are born in sin, are nevertheless, sanctified in Christ. This statement of question and its corresponding answer is based chiefly upon a passage from God's Word, found in 1 Cor. 7:14. Let me quote that text in this connection: "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the wife and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband (brother, perhaps) else were your children unclean but now ARE THEY HOLY."

The matter of our children being sanctified in Christ is one which has evoked much difference of opinion the more in connection in which it is used in our Baptism Form. I am aware of the fact that 1 Cor. 14 is not used as a ground for infant baptism until one comes to the days of John Calvin (H. Browne, 39 Arts. Art 27 and Dr. Bavinck (IV P. 506) states, "In 1 Cor. 7:14 Paul is not thinking about infant baptism nor on anything which must serve as a basis therefore," but nevertheless it is evident from the long list of divines who wrote about this, as well as from our own Baptism Form that 1 Cor. 7:14 involves us in the very things which lie at the root of our baptism and our covenant conception. It might be said to be the very heart of it.

We would not want to, of course, but even then, it is too late to inquire whether the seed of believing parents is holy, the parents have answered yes to that for countless years already, and we will by the grace of God continue to answer yes thereto.

But we involve ourselves in an ocean of contradicting expositions if we proceed now to ask: what did we mean when we, with infant in arms pledged faith that our seed was sanctified in Christ? What did we mean? What does it mean that our children are holy? If we ask this and turn to those gone before for solution we find that we run into a veritable storm of dissenting opinions. In the main lines we find some agreement between the expositors, but in details I doubt whether there are even two who could be said to agree. No matter therefore which view we champion, we must not become smugly complacent, we shall have to be able to answer questions and give good account of ourselves.

Sundry Interpretations

I shall not trouble you with the out and out arminian and baptist views about this matter.

Maybe, briefly, we could classify the leading views

of reformed interpreters and thus come to some understanding of what others have said about this particular matter.

There is first the view that we must "consider," "count" or "hold them to be" holy. Whether they really ARE holy is something we cannot and dare not say, but we may HOLD THEM to be holy. We do not say of all our children that they ARE holy we only confess that we conceive of them as holy, and on the basis of that we baptize them and later we educate them. Calvin, although not distinct on these things, frequently speaks of "De kinderen, ddwelke met recht voor leden van de kerk gehouden worden" (Inst. IV, 16, 22) and again he says: "Zoo in het Nieuwe Testament worden de kinderen der christenen heilig geacht" (Inst. IV, 16, 6). Dr. Vander Groe (Heraut, No. 3006) emphasizes that it refers to all children of believers and then states "dat ze voor bondelingen *gehouden* worden" (I underscore). The Utrechtsche Conclusies combined the various views and said, "Naar het oordeel der liefde hebben wij onze kinderen te houden in Christus geheilgd, totdat het tegenovergesteld blijkt" (Heraut, No. 3039). Along this same line T. Bos in his book: *Bondzegelen* (p. 171) as well as Dr. Bavinck (Dog. IV, p. 507) explain the issue. From all these we notice that the view is, not that the children ARE holy (we cannot be sure of this until later in life), but that we are to account them holy and wait until later in life to see who really were and who were not.

We can easily see how men come to this view. It is an attempted escape from a great difficulty. But, with all respect for their serious attempts to escape one difficulty I feel that they have brought us into a difficulty which is equally as great. If all we have is that we "hold them to be holy", we have little ground for rejoicing in the sure promises anent baptism. Besides, 1 Cor. 7:14 does not allow us to "hold them to be holy" since Paul tells us very definitely that they are holy. Finally, on the basis of the two seeds (Rom. 9) one cannot well count ALL seed of believers holy without making reservations of silent denial.

The second category of expositions attaches itself to the question "What kind of holiness is this"? Calvin also had something to say about this, the holiness consisting chiefly in this that henceforth they are distinct from the heathen (Heid. Cat. Qu. 74) see (Inst. IV, 16, 22). If one held that every child born of believing parents were really sanctified, how then explain apostacy in later life? The late Prof. W. Heyns resolved this into a promise to all that the Holy Spirit WOULD (I capitalize) sanctify them; if they did not accept and believe, this holiness was not realized in them. Dr. Aalders in the Netherlands (remember de leergeschillen just previous to this war) held that this holiness pertained only to the elect and that the covenant really is only with the elect (Reformatie

39, 45, 355) and then he goes on to distinguish between "wezen" en "verschijning." Dr. K. Schilder emphatically denied that and maintained that the covenant reaches further than the elect, that 1 Cor. 7:14 speaks of "Verbonsheilighed" that is covenant-holiness, holiness by virtue of the covenant and not of personal salvation (Ref. 39, 46, 362-364). With an appeal to Dr. Bouwman and Rom. 11:16 he maintains that if the root is holy so are the branches. But holiness then in a federal not in a personal sense (Ref. 39, 46, 364). Along this same line Vander Vegt holds, "De gedoopte blijft kind Gods tot in de hel" (Ref. 39, 47, 371). Every baptized one is a child of God, in the federal sense no doubt. These then would interpret the term "sanctified in Christ" to refer to all the seed of believing parents but only in the federal sense. Thus K. Schilder comes to what he calls the "sancties" (sanctions) as well as the antithesis of covenant blessing and covenant-vengeance. Against this view also there is the fact, it seems to me, that one does not do justice to the term holiness as used in 1 Cor. 7:14 and the Form. With the same firm confession that our children are sanctified the parents also thank God that He has forgiven us and our children all our sins, and it would hardly do to apply the federal view to the one and the personal-salvatory to the other. Our Form puts the sanctified in Christ over against the lying under condemnation, thus, it is evident it seems to me that the confession implies something more than the federal, it wants to imply that our children are holy, escaped from curse and damnation.

The third view is the Organical interpretation. This view shares no categorical associates, sad to say. This is the view occurring in the book "De Geloovigen en hun Zaad" by the Rev. H. Hoeksema. He interprets it as being an organical holiness i. e. the whole bears the name of the elect nucleus (Page 67). Each baptized individual is not per se genuinely holy or sanctified or child of God but they are holy, all of them, because there is a nucleus of the elect there which IS holy through Christ. And now the honor of God's Cause warrants not only but demands that the whole must be called by the name of its central part. This view is related (in certain specific aspects then) to those of Drs. Schilder, Bouwman and Vander Vegt, but it goes beyond them all in consistently maintaining that grace is particular, always particular, and that the holiness spoken of applies centrally and essentially to the elect seed and to none other. Others are called holy because of the organical relation they bear to the elect seed. This view has in its favor that it offers a consistent interpretation, removes even the semblance of a falling from grace and does full honor to the word "sanctified." It has in its favor also that it places us directly before the obligation of reckoning with or shunning the doctrine of election and reprobation.

Conclusions

What is this holiness then?

From I Cor. 7:14 various things are plain. (1) That this holiness stands opposed to uncleanness. In Paul's letter to the Cor. all that which held contact with idolatry and the idolatrous world was unclean, but the children are holy. Seperate therefore from the unclean. And this must refer to the Levitical blood cleansing, realized in Jesus Christ (Heb. 9:22 etc). (2) Paul argues that if only one of the parents be believers, it is enough, the children are holy. The faith-holiness bond is so strong that even if (as in Corinth) the partner in marriage be unbelieving, the children are holy. Paul found persons there who were married, of course, upon preaching there some were converted and others not. Shall they get a divorce? How about their children? It is then Paul tells them that the bond of faith-holiness has been laid by God and guarantees holy seed. Again that this holiness means more than mere external separation. (3) The Baptism Form has seen correctly when it takes this holiness to be a holiness "IN Christ." Not merely a federal, outward (Church versus world) holiness, but an inward holiness. The sanctified in Christ of 1 Cor. 1:2 I think includes the children which are holy in 1 Cor. 7:14. It is therefore essential and inward holiness as effected by the grace of God in Christ Jesus and His shed blood.

Then it evidently cannot refer to every child individually. For there are two seeds in our generation. The wicked coming up out of our generations also are holy but only in the sense that they are branches on an holy tree and one shall have to name the branches according to what the tree really is, not visa versa. Israel was an holy people but many thousands of them were unclean and unholy blasphemers. It is not all Israel that is called Israel, thus also it is not all holy which is called holy.

Hence then we may conclude that the elect seed, and it only, is holy indeed, and all our seed is named holy because of the presence of that holy seed in our generation. Rom. 9, the two seeds; Rom. 11, John 15 etc. bear out this thought, and experience bears it out no less. When the Great Judge makes His separation He says: "And YE are clean, but not all. . . . for He knew who should betray Him." (John 13:10-11). So we say, with 1 Cor. 7:14 "ye are clean" that God has commanded us to do, and in His own time God will say "But not all."

It remains yet to state that it is our duty as parents, not to curiously inquire into who might and who might not be holy, but it is our calling to treat our children as an holy heritage of God. And believing parents shall experience that proportionately as they treat their children as Holy seed, they shall see holy seed in their generation. . . .

M. G.

Rejoicing In The Lord

THANKSGIVING RADIO ADDRESS

One of the most remarkable and beautiful professions of a strong and living faith, that is always victorious, and that triumphantly transcends all the things that are seen, may be found in the last verses of the prophecy of Habakkuk, which reads as follows: "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." If we would paraphrase this inspired declaration of the Old Testament seer, and garb it in a more modern form that is more directly applicable to the conditions on this present Thanksgiving Day, we would speak somewhat as follows: "Although the wheels of industry shall be completely stopped, and the labor of the machines shall fail; although the factories in our great industrial centers shall yield no work, and there shall be no profit in business; the money shall be cut off from the banks, and there shall be no savings for tomorrow's needs; though our sons are torn from our homes, and are being killed at the battle front; though our armies shall suffer defeat, and the enemy shall ravage our countryside and rain its destructive and murderous bombs upon our cities,—yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation in Christ Jesus our Lord." Or if we project this mighty shout of faith into the future, and look forward to the day of the Lord, we might express the same victorious confidence in the following words: "Although the very foundations of the universe shall be shaken and the heavens shall depart as a scroll when it is rolled together; though the sun shall become black as a sackcloth of hair, and the moon shall become as blood; though the stars shall drop out of the firmament, and the mountains and islands shall be moved out of their places,—even then will I rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of my salvation."

True thanksgiving is not easy. It surely is not everybody's work. Even though Thanksgiving Day is a national holiday, and the impression might be left that thanksgiving is something in which at least every American may take part once a year, it remains an act of faith in the God of our salvation, and, therefore, of the people of God in as far as they live from the principle of the new life in Christ, and have become new creatures. To give thanks is to rejoice in God as the God of our salvation. And for that reason it is not dependent on, but victorious over things. Even today there are those that prosper in the world, who "are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men; "whose "eyes stand out with

fatness", and "have more than heart could wish;" Ps. 73:5, 7; but who cannot and do not give thanks, because their joy is not in the Lord, but in things. And on the other hands, there are thousands upon thousands today, in the war-stricken countries of Europe, who sorely feel the iron heel of the oppressor, whose homes have been destroyed by bombs, whose fields have been laid waste, whose scanty provisions only prevent them from finding rest in death; or who have been taken to cruel concentration camps and dark prison cells, but who join the Church over the whole world in giving thanks to God most high, because their joy is in the Lord, and they rejoice in the God of their salvation.

What then is this ever victorious joy? Often the Bible speaks of it, and it exhorts us to rejoice in the Lord. The psalmist sings: "There be many that say, who will shew us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased. I will both lay me down and sleep, for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety." Ps. 4:6-8. And again: "But let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice: let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them: let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee." Ps. 5:11. And again: "Let the righteous be glad; let them rejoice before God: yea, let them exceedingly rejoice." Ps. 68:3. "O come, let us sing unto the Lord, let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms." Ps. 95:1, 2. Even all creation is exhorted to participate in this joy of the people of God: "Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar and the fulness thereof. Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein: then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord." Ps. 96:11, 12. And the apostle Paul writes to the church at Philippi: "Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I say, Rejoice." Phil. 4:4; and to the Thessalonians: "Rejoice evermore." I Thess. 5:16.

It is evident from all this that this joy in the Lord, of which also the prophet Habakkuk sings, is an abiding and unchangeable gladness of the heart, that is always victorious and cannot be downed by circumstances, because it is independent from them. And it is such because the ground, the source and cause of this joy is the unchangeable God Himself. For such is the meaning of "rejoicing in the Lord." To rejoice in the Lord means to rejoice because of Him. Just as when we say that we rejoice in good health, we mean that we rejoice because of good health; and to rejoice in prosperity is to rejoice because of prosperity; so to rejoice in God is to rejoice because of God. And to rejoice because of God signifies that we are joyful because we may confess that He is our God, that He

is our possession, and that we are His. The prophet therefore, means to say: "Whatever betide, and though all things turn against me, I shall still rejoice, because I know that God is my God."

Now, to say that the Lord is my God is to express a very definite relationship between Him and myself. In a general sense, of course, the Lord is God over all. For He is the Creator of the heavens and of the earth and He is their absolute Sovereign. He has dominion over all, and no one can ever dispute His sovereignty. In that sense He is everyone's God, the God of the righteous and the wicked alike, of angels and devils: they are all under the everlasting obligation to glorify Him as God; and He holds them all in His power, and makes them subservient to His divine purpose. But when God's people rejoice in God, because He is their God, they express something far richer. The prophet explains himself when he adds in the eighteenth verse: "I will joy in the God of my salvation." To call God my God means that He is the God of my salvation, who stands in a very definite relationship to me, and I to Him, because of His eternal love wherewith He loved me before the foundation of the world. He is my God, the God of my salvation, as He has revealed Himself in the face of Jesus Christ. In that definite sense, according to which His relation to us is that of His everlasting covenant of friendship, He is not everyone's God, but the God of His people only. He saves them, redeems them from the guilt of sin, forgives all their iniquities and clothes them with an everlasting righteousness. He delivers them from the dominion of sin and death, renews their inmost heart, cleanses them from all defilement, draws them with chords of love and takes them into His blessed fellowship, blesses them with all the blessings of salvation in Christ Jesus their Lord, calls them His sons and daughters, His peculiar possession. And because He speaks to them and says: "Ye are my people," they respond, and say: "Our Lord and our God, God of our salvation!"

Now, this joy in the Lord is an essential element of all true thanksgiving. This is true, not only because thanksgiving itself presupposes a glad heart, rejoicing in the remembrance of blessings received, but also because joy in the Lord is an indispensable requisite for prayer, and prayer, true prayer results in gratitude because our prayers are heard. If our joy is really in the God of our salvation, prayer itself becomes the highest expression of thankfulness, and that signifies that in our prayers we will ask for those things that are pleasing to Him, and not seek our own carnal gratification. And we know, that if we ask anything according to His will, He will surely hear us, and give unto us that which we ask of Him. When one listens to many prayers, one receives the impression that prayer is looked upon as a means to impose our will upon the will of God, to change the mind of

the Almighty, to tell Him all about our opinion as to how He ought to rule the universe, the affairs of men, and especially our personal interests. Instead of an expression of childlike submission to the will of our Father which is in heaven, we insist on having our own way; instead of committing our way to Him, we ask Him to change our way; instead of seeking His glory, His kingdom, His will, we seek our own earthly, individual, carnal interests. He sends us sickness, and we immediately ask Him to change our way and restore us to health; He sends us adversity, and we demand immediate prosperity; He sends war, and we ask for peace. All this is quite different from what the prophet professes to be his joy. When the fig tree does not blossom, and there is no fruit in the vine, and the labor of the olive fails, and the fields yield no meat, and the flock is cut off from the fold, and there is no herd in the stalls, he does not call a prayer-meeting for the purpose of supplicating the Most High to change the situation, but his joy is even then in the Lord, Who doeth all these things. If we do not learn to pray according to His will, we shall not be able to give thanks, for the simple reason that our prayers are not heard. We asked for health, and, behold, we are still sick; we wanted prosperity, but adversity is still our lot; we sent up what we thought was a mighty prayer for peace, and, behold, the war continues. Our prayers were not heard. Why, then, should we give thanks for that which we did not receive? But if our joy is in the Lord, and not in the things of this world, we shall learn to pray for those things that are pleasing to Him, our prayers shall be heard, and we shall come before Him with grateful hearts, and give thanks to Him, because we have tasted that the Lord is good!

(To be continued)

H. H.

IN MEMORIAM

Whereas it pleased the Lord to call from this life on Tuesday, March 9, 1943

JANTJE HOLWERDA

the Consistory of the Oak Lawn Protestant Reformed Church expresses its sincere sympathy to one of its deacons, Mr. J. Polstra. May the loved ones left behind find comfort in the blessed hope of reunion in glory.

Rev. C. Hanko, Pres.
Mr. J. Buiters, Clerk.

IN MEMORIAM

The Consistory of the Protestant Reformed Church of Kalamazoo, Michigan hereby wishes to express its heartfelt sympathy to our brother-elder, D. Langeland, in the loss of his mother,

MRS. H. LANGELAND

May the God of all grace comfort the brother and his family in this their bereavement, by the assurance that she has gone to her Lord and Saviour.

The Consistory of the Prot. Ref. Church,

Rev. H. Veldman, Pres.
L. De Koekkoek, Clerk.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On Saturday, March 6, our dear parents,

GERARD KOSTER

and

MRS. G. KOSTER—Tuinman

commemorated their 30th Wedding Anniversary.

We their children extend our sincere and loving congratulations.

We thank our God for sparing them for each other and for us, and pray that the Lord may continue to be with them in grace and loving kindness and if it be His will reunite us at His appointed time.

Their grateful children,

Mr. and Mrs. P. Blanker
Mr. and Mrs. P. Koster
Henry
John
William
Andrew
Helen
Eleanor
Gerard Jr.
and 2 grandchildren.

Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Sing we to our God above,
Praise eternal as his love,
Praise him, all ye heav'nly host,
Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Report Of Classis West. Met In Sioux Center March 3, 1943.

The Rev. Gerrit Vos opens the meeting with prayer after the brethren sing a psalter number and the chairman reads Gen. 28. From the credentials coming to the table of Classis it appears that ten consistories are represented with nineteen delegates. Bellflower was absent with the opening but the Rev. L. Doezeema came in the afternoon, having experienced travelling difficulties.

The Rev. Blankespoor assumes the presidency and Rev. Vos masters the minutes. Advisory vote is extended to Rev. L. Vermeer who visits with us. Minutes of the previous meeting are read and their transcription approved. Church visitators are called upon for their report. The Calif. churches ask the report delayed until the afternoon when Rev. Doezeema shall have arrived. Manhattan as yet had no visit, due to illness on the part of the brother who was to conduct the church visitation there. For the Iowa-Minn. churches Revs. Blankespoor and Gritters report and the report is favorable. The committee in re Synodical assessments is called upon for report but the committee had nothing to report. Committee is continued. Rev. Lubbers reports for the sermon committee, not all the sermons asked for have come in and the supply is low.

Comes now the matter in re brother H. H. Kuiper. The Classis of two years ago had stipulated certain conditions which the brother should meet before his candidacy could be accepted. The committee appointed by the last Classis has finished its work and reports that all the conditions have been met. There comes also testimonies and affidavits anent this matter. As result the Classis decides as follows: "That brother H. H. Kuiper be re-instated as minister of the Word on the basis of the testimony of Mayo Clinic and the affidavit of the doctor from Elk River. . . but inasmuch as the brother has lived and is now living without the pale of our churches for certain economical reasons, amendment is made that the Classis declare that brother H. H. Kuiper's candidacy shall not commence until he has returned within the pale of our churches, so that he regularly may worship with us." Amendment et al accepted.

A committee is appointed to regulate classical supply for Orange City. After which we adjourn for the dinner hour. Elder J. Dokter closing with prayer.

Afternoon Session

The Rev. P. Vis opens the meeting with prayer after classis sings from Psalter 110. Elder Katje from Orange

City arrives to take his place at Classis. Classis decides to acquaint Classis East with our decision anent brother H. H. Kuiper case. Classical committee renders its report by mouth of Rev. Blankespoor. Rev. Doezeema arrives to take his place. This brother thereupon renders the church-visitation report for the congregations Redlands and Bellflower. Report favorable. A minister from our midst, Rev. Blankespoor has accepted the call to Doon. Classis reads and approves the credentials.

Now the Stated Clerk reads the report of a Synodical committee on the matter of synodically supervised radio broadcasting. The Classis passed the following decision: "Inasmuch as this matter does not come to Classis in the legal way, Classis declares same to be out of order and that on the basis of D.K.C. Art. 30."

The consistories of Sioux Center, Pella and Hull bring to the Classis certain instructions in re the matter of Camp Pastor. After reading the various instructions Classis decides to appoint a committee composed of the three ministers with whose consistories the instructions originated, namely, Revs. Gritters, Lubbers and Cammenga, plus two elders, N. Kimm and A. Katje. This comm. is requested to formulate an overture to the forthcoming Synod. After adjourning for a while and the comm. going into study of this thing the report comes back to the floor of Classis and Classis decides as follows: "That the Missionary consider our military camps as his first field of labor." Herewith follow also: **The Grounds:** 1. "The injunction of Christ to preach the Gospel to every creature places upon our shoulders the responsibility of carrying our preaching activities also into this realm."

2. "The reformed heritage, the conception of God's sovereignty, is the lofty and comforting message which we should exert ourselves to carry to the men in the camps in these perilous times. What should lend special incentive for this work is that we are provided with a great and comparatively easy accessible field, where as churches, we may truly labor in missionary activity, being by grace a sweet savour to God both in those who are lost and those who are saved."

The Incentive: "We deem that the following should be a sufficient incentive for this type of missionary work: 1. The testimony of our men in service who testify of the value and the need of this work, and appreciate this type of work done by other denominations.

2. The testimony of the Chief of Chap-

lains of the 7th Corps Area of Omaha, we quote, 'Itinerant evangelists, well equipped and bearers of a solid religious message would be an asset to any post or camp.'

3. Also that by carrying our doctrine to these young men we carry it to the coming generation and thus shall there be seeds sown in many fields". Accepted by Classis to overture.

The Rev. J. Vander Breggen leaves the meeting because of illness. Classis adjourns until 7 o'clock. Rev. De Wolf closes this session with prayer.

Evening Session:

Classis now treats the matter of subsidies and decides to overture subsidy according to the following advices:

Bellflower \$500; Orange City \$900 (with) \$300 (without pastor); Rock Valley \$350 with advice to raise pastor's salary to \$1200; Doon \$900 with advice to raise pastor's salary to \$1200; Pella \$700; Manhattan \$300; Sioux Center \$250 with advice to raise pastor's salary to \$1300.

Classis decides to hold its next regular meeting in Rock Valley, Sept 1, 1943.

Supply for Orange City scheduled as follows: Mar. 14, Cammenga; Mar. 28, Vis; Apr. 11, Verhil, 25, Gritters; May 9, Blankespoor; 23, Vander Breggen; June 6, Lubbers; 20, Cammenga; July 4, Verhil; 18, Vis; Aug. 1, Gritters; 15, Blankespoor; 29, Vander Breggen.

Classis proceeded to vote its delegations to the next Synod: Result:

MINISTERS

Primi	Secundi
Wm. Verhil	G. Lubbers
A. Cammenga	J. Blankespoor
M. Gritters	P. Vis
G. Vos	H. De. Wolf

ELDERS

Primi	Secundi
H. Kuiper	Wm. Vis
T. Kooima	A. Katje
C. Vander Molen	J. Dokter
J. De Vries	J. Kuiper

The various consistories respond to the questions of DKO 41, one consistory asks advice concerning a certain matter and it is given. Classis decides to request the Rev. Doezeema to do church visitation at Manhattan at his coming to Classis next Sept. Rev. Vos alternate Classis also advises the ministers who failed to send in sermons to the sermon committee to do this within the next two months.

After expressing gratitude at the peace and unity which prevailed at our classis meeting the chairman calls upon Rev. Verhil to close the meeting with prayer. M. Gritters. S. C.