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MEDITATIE

De Gespleten Olijfberg

En Zijne voeten zullen te dien dage staan op den Olijfberg, die voor Jeruzalem ligt tegen het oosten; en de Olijfberg zal in tweeën gespleten worden naar het oosten, en naar het westen, zoodat er eene zeer groote vallei zal zijn; en de eene helft des bergs zal wijken naar het noorden, en de helft deszelven naar het zuiden. Dan zult gijlieden vlieden door de vallei Mijner bergen (want deze vallei der bergen zal reiken tot Azal), en gij zult vlieden, gelijk als gij vloodt voor de aardbeving in de dagen van Uzziä, den koning van Juda; dan zal de Heere, mijn God, komen, en al de heiligen met U, o Heere!

Zach. 14:4, 5.

Ontkoming!

Altijd is er ontkoming voor Jeruzalem!

Nooit zal het den vijand gelukken Jeruzalem te verwoesten, of om hare inwoners te verdelgen.

Altijd worden de overgeblevenen behouden.

't Moge schier onmogelijk schijnen voor de Kerk om te ontkomen, en de wateren mogen tot aan de lippen stijgen, zooals in de dagen van Noah's acht zielen temidden der goddelooze wereld, of van den rechtvaardigen Lot in het goddelooze Sodom,—de Heere weet de godzaligen uit de verzoeking en te verlossen.

De dag des Heeren mag vreeselijk zijn, en hij mag komen met ontzetting, zijne teekenen mogen zijn in bloed en vuur en rookpilaren, zoodat de zon veranderd zal worden in duisternis, en de maan in bloed; hemel en aarde mogen worden bewogen, en de elementen mogen brandende vergaan,—ook in dien dag zal een

iegeijk, die den Naam des Heeren zal aanroepen, zalig worden, want op den berg Sions en te Jeruzalem zal ontkoming zijn, gelijk als de Heere gezegd heeft. Joël 2:30-32.

O zeker, benauwde dagen zullen nog aanbreken voor Jeruzalem.

Immers gaat het altijd om het derde deel: twee derden worden uitgeroeid. En nimmer komt er in deze wereld een einde aan het proces der scheiding en zifting. Nooit bestaat het derde deel zuiver. Altijd weer wordt het derde deel in 't vuur geworpen, beproefd, gelijk men goud beproefd, gelouterd, gelijk men zilver loutert.

En in dat louteringsproces moet Jeruzalem lijden, is het dikwijls donker!

Want: "ziet, de dag komt den Heere, dat uw roof zal uitgedeeld worden in het midden van u, o Jeruzalem! Want Ik zal alle Heidenen tegen Jeruzalem ten strijde verzamelen; en de stad zal ingenomen, en de huizen zullen geplunderd, en de vrouwen zullen geschonden worden; en de helft der stad zal uitgaan in de gevangenis; maar het overige deel des volks zal uit de stad niet uitgeroeid worden". . . .

Altijd weer hetzelfde! Hoe lang, Heere?

Hebben we dan niet nog pas aanschouwd, wat ons hier wordt voorspeld als iets, dat in de toekomst zal geschieden? Werd Jeruzalem niet pas en voor onze oogen door de Heidenen aangevallen, ingenomen, geplunderd, verwoest? Werd niet pas Uw heilig huis, o Heere, door den vijand in puin gelegd? En kwamen we dan niet pas terug uit het wreede en trotsche Babylon, waar we harp in de wilgen hingen, en weigerden om Sions liederen te zingen. Zijn we niet nog altijd bezig om Jeruzalem en tempel uit de puinhoopen te doen herrijzen? En moeten de Heidenen nu alweer tegen Jeruzalem verzameld worden, de stad innemen, plunderen, als een roof uitdeelen?

Hoe lang, Heere?

Tot aan het einde toe! Totdat de Heere komt en al Zijne heiligen met Hem!

Want ver tot buiten de grenzen van het aardsche

Jeruzalem, en ver in 't verschieft, tot den dag des Heeren toe, strekt deze profetie zich uit.

Maar vrees niet!

Altijd zal er ontkoming zijn.

Want immers: het overblijfsel wordt niet uitgerooid. "En de Heere zal uittrekken, en Hij zal strijden tegen die Heidenen, gelijk als Hij gestreden heeft ten dage des strijds." Een weg ter ontkoming zal Hij banen voor het overblijfsel.

Een veilige, een zekere weg ter ontkoming, waardoor de vijand hen niet kan achtervolgen!

De weg door "de vallei Mijner bergen," groot en breed, wijd en reikend tot aan Azal.

Ontkoming door den gespleten Olijfberg!

De Olijfberg gespleten!

Want "Zijne voeten zullen te dien dage staan op den Olijfberg. . . . en de Olijfberg zal in tweeën gespleten worden!". . . .

Machtig en heerlijk wonder Gods ter verlossing van zijn volk!

Ach, laat hen, die niet verstaan, dat Jeruzalem door de eeuwen heen en tot in eeuwigheid één is, en dat het oude Jeruzalem niet de blijvende stad was, doch slechts een tijdelijke vorm van de stad Gods, laat hen, die altijd de profetie aangaande Jeruzalem willen beperken binnen de grenzen van die oude, aardsche stad en hare Joodsche inwoners, en die daarom bazelen van eene letterlijke verklaring, laat hen ook hier het wonder Gods verkleinen en vernietigen door te verklaren, dat de kleine bult, die tegen het oosten voor Jeruzalem lag, letterlijk in tweeën gespleten zal worden. . . .

Wie de profetie verstaat in het licht der gansche Schrift, wie belijdt, dat Christus één Herder is, met ééne kudde, vergaderd de eeuwen door en uit alle volken, ziet hier een veel grooter en machtiger wonder!

't Is waar, het wonder wordt hier voorgesteld in beeldspraak ontleend aan de toestanden en vormen der oude bedeeling.

Hoe kon het ook anders?

Hoe zouden de heiligen der oude bedeeling, die op de vervulling der belofte hoopten, ook maar iets aan de profetie gehad hebben, indien ze zich niet bij de toenmalige toestanden hadden aangesloten?

Vandaar het Oud Testamentisch beeld, dat ons hier wordt geteekend van de ontkoming der overgeblevenen. Stel u de zaak goed voor. Jeruzalem is door de vijanden ingenomen, wordt door de Heidenen vertreden. Men deelt haren roof uit in het midden van haar. De stad wordt geplunderd. De vrouwen worden geschonden. De helft des volks wordt gevankelijk weggevoerd. Het overblijfsel is echter nog in de stad. Voor hen schijnt er geen uitkomst. Maar de Heere strijdt voor hen. Hij baant een weg ter ontkoming. Zijne voeten

staan op den Olijfberg. En de Olijfberg wordt gespleten!

Een kleine berg, niet veel meer dan een heuvel, was de Olijfberg, tegen het oosten van Jeruzalem gelegen.

Hij wordt gespleten. Door de aanraking der heilige en machtige voeten des Heeren beeft en schokt en splijt de aarde, en de Olijfberg wordt in twee helften verdeeld. De spleet strekt zich in oostwestelijke richting, en de twee helften des gespleten bergs worden van elkander gescheiden, de eene helft naar het noorden, de andere naar het zuiden. Het gevolg is, dat een groote en wijde vallei wordt gevormd, die zich strekt van Jeruzalem tot aan Azal toe, eene plaats, de bepaalde lokaliteit waarvan ons niet bekend is.

De vallei van Gods bergen!

En de gedachte is, dat in deze vallei een weg ter ontkoming is gebaad voor de overgeblevenen, die nog in Jeruzalem zijn!

Er is ontkoming van den Heere!

Een net belemmerd' onze schreden;

Een enge band hield ons bekeld;

Gij liet door heerschzucht ons vertreden;

Gij gaaft ons over aan 't geweld;

Hier scheen ons 't water t' overstroomen;

Daar werden wij gedreigd door 't vuur!

Maar Gij deedt ons 't gevaar ontkomen,

Verkwikkend' ons ter goeder uur.

Maar hoe dan? Is hier te denken aan eene letterlijke splijting en scheiding van den Olijfberg, en het vormen van eene letterlijke vallei, waardoor de inwoners van het letterlijke Jeruzalem den vijand mogen ontvluchten? Duizendmaal neen! En dat niet, omdat Hij, Die eens een weg baande voor Zijn volk door de zee, geen bergen kan splijten, maar omdat het zin noch beteekenis zou hebben, dat is Schriftuurlijken zin, dat enkele menschen zouden trachten te ontvluchten door een aardsche vallei; en omdat in dien aardschen zin, eene vallei geen ontkoming zou bieden, daar de vijand hen ook daar zou kunnen achtervolgen.

Doch wat dan?

Geen bezwaar kan er zijn tegen de algemeene verklaring, dat God altijd voor Zijne Kerk strijdt, en altijd weer zorgt voor ontkoming. Jeruzalem is de Kerk op aarde. En in die Kerk zijn de geestelijke kinderen Gods, maar daar is ook altijd het vleeschelijk zaad. En daarom heeft die Kerk altijd weer behoefte aan beproeving en loutering. En als dan de Heere de Heidenen, de vijanden gebruikt om Zijne Kerk te vervolgen, te doen lijden, maar in en door dat lijden te louteren, dan schijnt het soms alsof zij zal ondergaan. Maar altijd is er ontkoming, en het overblijfsel wordt behouden. En de gespleten Olijfberg is zeker beeld van den weg ter ontkoming, dien de Heere voor Zijne Kerk altijd baant.

En toch doet de tekst denken aan een meer bepaalde kentering in de geschiedenis van Gods Kerk op aarde,

aan een bepaald wonder Gods, waardoor de weg ter ontkoming eens en voor altijd wordt geopend.

Waartoe toch dat splijten van den Olijfberg, die vallei, die bergen Gods, die aardbeving, dat vluchten met ontzetting der overgeblevenen? . . .

Het is beeld van het begin van den "dag des Heeren!"

De gespleten Olijfberg werd principieel vervuld in Christus, de weg ter ontkoming voor de Kerk werd door Hem geopend. O, Hij is zeker het hart, het Centrum van de Kerk, haar Hoofd, haar merg en been, het overblijfsel van het overblijfsel. En in Jeruzalem vergaderden de Heidenen zich tegen Hem, om Hem, en in Hem de Kerk te verwoesten. En men doodde Hem in het vleesch. Doch in dat gedood worden worstelt Hij met de machten der zonde en des doods, en overwint. Bij Zijn dood splijt alles, het voorhangsel, de aarde, de rotsen, de graven. En Hij ontkomt, overwinnend en opdat Hij overwinne! Door dood en graf ontkomt Hij, en in Hem de Kerk, in Zijne heerlijke opstanding. En straks staan Zijne voeten, de voeten van den God onzer volkomene zaligheid, ook even letterlijk op den Olijfberg (was deze berg niet daarom zoo gezocht door den Heiland?), en vaart Hij ten hemel op vol eer! . . .

De Olijfberg is gespleten!

De weg ter ontkoming, o ja, ook uit het aardsche Jeruzalem, maar dan uit de wereld, is voor het overblijfsel eens en voor altijd bereid!

Want in Christus is de Kerk gezet in den hemel!

Door den gespleten Olijfberg, eindelijk geopenbaard in de hemelvaart van Christus, vlucht het overblijfsel naar den hemel!

Door dien berg kan de vijand de Kerk niet achtervolgen!

Machtig wonder der genade!

Ziet ze vluchten!

Vluchten door de vallei van Gods bergen!

Want immers deze bergen, gevormd door het splijten van den Olijfberg, zijn thans de bergen Gods in den geheel eenigen zin des woords: de bergen van Gods recht!

Ziet ze vluchten, de overgeblevenen, met stroomen, uit het aardsche, en thans ook veroordeelde Jeruzalem dat aan de Heidenen is overgeleverd, door den weg ter ontkoming, naar het hemelsch koninkrijk, waar ze met Christus gezet zijn in den hemel!

Ziet ze vluchten met vrees en ontzetting!

Want immers: "gij zult vlieden, gelijk als gij vloodt voor de aardbeving in de dagen van Uzziā, den koning van Juda!" Eene aardbeving, die niet opgeteekend is in de historische boeken van het Oude Testament, maar waarvan Amos het gezicht zag, die profeteerde "in de dagen van Uzziā, den koning van Juda,

en in de dagen van Jerobeam, zoon van Joas, koning van Israel; twee jaren voor de aardbeving," en waarvan hij zeide: "De Heere zal brullen uit Sion, en Zijne stem verheffen uit Jeruzalem!" Een oordeel Gods!

Ziet ze vluchten, om aan het oordeel te ontkomen, dat immers bij den dood en de opstanding van den Heere Jezus Christus over Jeruzalem werd voltrokken! De bijl, die reeds lang aan den wortel des booms had gelegen, had den boom geveld. De dorschvloer werd gezuiverd. Nu is het oordeel dezer wereld! 't Is de dag des Heeren! . . .

Ziet ze vluchten op die doorluchtigen Pinksterdag! Want Petrus, staande met de elfen, maakt gewag van den gespleten Olijfberg in al zijne rijke beteekenis. "Want David is niet opgevaren in de hemelen; maar hij zegt: De Heere heeft gesproken tot Mijnen Heere: Zit aan Mijne rechterhand, totdat Ik Uwe vijanden zal gezet hebben tot een voetbank Uwer voeten. . . . En als wij dit hoorden, werden ze verslagen in het hart, en zeiden tot Petrus en de andere apostelen: Wat zullen wij doen, mannen broeders? Bekeert u, en een iegelijk van u worde gedoopt in den Naam van Jezus Christus, tot vergeving der zonden! Wordt behouden van dit verkeerd geslacht!" . . .

Ziet ze vluchten!

Er werden op dien dag tot hen toegedaan omtrent drie duizend zielen!

En nog aldoor vluchten ze, heel de nieuwe bedeeeling door!

Door de vallei van Gods bergen!

Om met Christus gezet te worden in den hemel!

Machtig wonder Gods!

Ja, kom! Heere Jezus!

Dan zal de Heere Mijn God komen!

Ja, kom! En al de heiligen met U, o Heere!

Want zoo kan het ook niet eeuwig blijven! De Kerk is wel ontkomen, en ontkomt aldoor, en is wel met Christus gezet in den hemel. Maar ze toch ook in deze wereld; en aldoor wordt Jeruzalem nog door de Heidenen vertreden. En juist het feit, dat we ontkomen zijn, en dat we thans met Christus in den hemel gezet zijn, doet ons treuren en klagen in hope, en verlangen naar de eindelijke en volkomene verlossing!

Naar het einde van den dag des Heeren!

Naar de voleinding waarin het splijten van den Olijfberg vervuld zal worden in het splijten van heel de aardsche schepping, en de verlost en ontkomene Kerk zal ingaan in de nieuwe schepping, de nieuwe hemelen en de nieuwe aarde, waarin gerechtigheid woont!

Kom dan, Heere Jezus! Kom, met alle Uwe heiligen, naar Uwe belofte, waarop wij hopen!

Kom haastelijk!

Amen!

H. H.

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CONTENTS

MEDITATIE

- | | |
|------------------------------|-----|
| DE GESPLETEN OLIJFBERG | 429 |
| Rev. H. Hoeksema | |

EDITORIALS —

- | | |
|---|-----|
| COMMON GRACE | 432 |
| Rev. H. Hoeksema | |
| EXPOSITION OF THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM..... | 434 |
| Rev. H. Hoeksema | |
| THE CHANGE UNDER CONSTANTINE | 437 |
| Rev. G. M. Ophoff | |
| DE UNIVERSEELE ZEGEN | 440 |
| Rev. G. Vos | |
| ABSOLUTE SOVEREIGNTY & HUMAN FREEDOM..... | 443 |
| Rev. H. De Wolf | |
| THE CONCEPT "PERSON" IN SCRIPTURE | 445 |
| Rev. H. Veldman | |
| CURRENT EVENTS | 447 |
| Rev. J. Heys | |
| CONCERNING THE STRIKE | 449 |
| Rev. C. Hanko | |
| CONTRIBUTION | 450 |
| Mr. B. Veldkamp | |
| INGEZONDEN | 452 |
| Mr. J. Vander Wal | |

EDITORIALS

Common Grace

As a rule for the believer's life in this world, Van Til's "as if" theory is, I think, quite inadequate. The rule, if I understand Van Til correctly, is that the believer must "to a certain extent" assume the attitude toward the unbeliever and live with him "as if" there was something in common between them apart from the "metaphysical situation." It would seem that this principle as a standard of living for the Christian in the world is rather vague, stretchy, ambiguous. The question arises inevitably: to what extent would Van Til apply this "as if" theory in actual life? It appears that he would give no definite answer to this question, but that he would let the extent of the "commonness" between the believer and the non-believer be continued upon the degree of their "epistemological consciousness." The more they become "epistemologically self-conscious" the more the "territory-in-between" narrows in scope; the less self-conscious they are in this respect, the larger is the field of their cooperation and common activity. But all this is quite subjective, relative, ambiguous. It would be very difficult, on this basis, for the church to take any stand at all, and act accordingly, in concrete cases of amalgamation with the world on the part of the Christian. What stand would Van Til suggest, for instance, in such cases as membership of the worldly unions, the lodge, all kinds of worldly clubs and associations; or in cases of indulgence in worldly pleasures, theatre and movie attendance, etc? In all these cases, those that defend membership, or indulge in such pleasures, frequently appeal persistently to their lack of "epistemological self-consciousness;" they cannot see any wrong in it! Must the Church be satisfied with this subjective excuse, or will she have to take a stand and act according to some objective criterion?

As for me, I am quite convinced that Scripture must have nothing of the "as if" theory of Van Til. It teaches us very distinctly that believers and unbelievers have *all things* in common in this world except *grace*, and that, for this reason, there can be no agreement or cooperation between them in the spiritual-ethical sense at all. On the common stage of "natural" things, they live from the principles of sin and grace respectively. And these two have nothing in common. Hence: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what con-

cord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." II Cor. 6:14-18. There is no "as if" about this clear exhortation of Holy Writ.

And how this "as if" theory can be applied to God and to His attitude toward the elect and reprobate, I confess to be wholly beyond the scope of my comprehension. Yet, this too Van Til appears to think quite possible and proper. Discussing the difference of opinion between Zwier and Schilder with regard to the question of "a certain grace of God to the reprobate," he writes as follows: "With the last statement of Schilder we may well express agreement. We may add that in making up the balance all of the factors existing in man at any particular time in history must also be taken into consideration. We are Schilder's pupils if we say that in everything Scriptural we deal with 'covenant-dating.' If we speak of grace to the non-elect, we must, therefore, with Zwier speak of a 'certain grace.' This indicates the fact that all of God's attributes have been thought of simultaneously. It is to recognize that there is a similarity of attitude on God's part toward the elect and the non-elect, but a similarity with a difference. It is therefore an 'as if' similarity." P. 61. Now, as far as I can see, if this last statement is supposed to have any real meaning, it signifies that God assumes an attitude to the reprobate "*as if*" He were gracious to them, while in reality He is not at all. He acts "*as if*" He blesses them while in reality He curses them. But even Van Til could not possibly mean this, for it would ascribe duplicity to the living God. But if he does mean this, what sense does the statement have: "It is therefore an 'as if' similarity?"

However, this leads us to the consideration of Van Til's discussion of the "Three Points," particularly of the question concerning the gracious attitude of God to the elect and reprobate alike, and, still more particularly, that which concerns the "general well-meaning offer of grace and salvation on the part of God." After his discussion of the principles of the philosophy of history which we have tried to explain to our readers thus far, Van Til offers a criticism of all that has been written on the problem of grace in recent years. He begins by discussing Kuy-

per's views, pp. 22-32. Thereupon he gives a review and evaluation of the "debate on common grace" including a discussion of the "Three Points," pp. 32-65. And the book closes with "Some Suggestions for Further Discussion." We are now concerned with his review of the "debate on common grace," and particularly with his evaluation of the "Three Points."

But we must limit ourselves. To enter into all the details of Van Til's criticism would make our discussion too lengthy, and, besides, would necessarily lead us simply to repeat what we have written long ago and repeatedly. We will, therefore, select some points that seem to us to be of chief importance.

Let me begin by saying that in his presentation of our criticism of the Three Points, Van Til is quite fair. He quotes rather elaborately from our writings on the subject, and leaves a rather correct impression of our chief objections against the doctrines adopted by the Synod of Kalamazoo, 1924. And this we appreciate, especially in view of the fact that we have not been used to such treatment on the part of those that sought to defend the Three Points over against our criticism of them. But what be said of the fairness of Van Til's critique as long as he presents our view, is not always true of his critical evaluation of the same. He writes that we "have been unable to be fair" to our opponents. p. 53. I now raise the same complaint against Van Til's criticism of our position. I do not mean to bring this as an accusation, as if he purposely distorts our view in his criticism. The fact remains that he does so, nevertheless.

Thus, for instance, Van Til writes about our criticism of the "two wills" in God defended by Heyns as if we had proposed a fatalistic, deterministic view of man in relation to God. I quote from p. 53:

"Over against this, however, Hoeksema argues the equally abstract, in fact more abstract, position that the 'facts' do not exist at all since they must be interpreted in the universal God. This is, we believe, involved in what we have heard him say, particularly in what he says about the relation of the divine will to the human. His argument is very similar here to that of Karl Barth. God, because He is God, says Hoeksema, cannot offer anything. He says that even the murderer does not resist the will of God on the ground that he is punished for his murder. These points, and other of a similar nature, presuppose the idea that a party to be a party next to God must be an absolute or underivative party, and that man to resist the will of God must resist the secret counsel of God. On this point we believe the criticism of Heyns fair enough. It is perfectly true that God cannot and does not 'in the same sense with respect to the same Object' will the mutually contradictory. But the thrust of Hoeksema goes further than that. It says that because man is not ultimate and therefore

cannot set aside the secret counsel of God it follows that man can *in no sense* set aside the will of God. Or when man obeys the will of God he in no sense really obeys; it is God that obeys in him. It is thus that Barth, not committed to the doctrine of temporal creation as he is, reasons; it is virtually thus also that Hoeksema reasons. It is in effect to say that the distinction between the revealed and the secret will of God has no significance. It is to do away, in short, with the significance of 'secondary causes'; it is to destroy the meaning of the relative on the ground that we must believe in an absolute that is really an Absolute."

Now, we have become acquainted with Van Til's tendency to compare someone, especially the undersigned, with Karl Barth. Van Halsema, we recall, was greatly impressed by this novel comparison, and put me to bed with that Swiss theologian. And even though comparisons are odious, I am not at all offended at this as far as Van Til is concerned, though, I think, he should warn his satellites, whose imagination is set afire by such comparisons even though they know nothing about their implications, not to repeat them blindly and ignorantly, lest they make fools of themselves in public. But it is but natural that Van Til, who has been making a good deal of study of Karl Barth, is even, I am informed, going to publish a critique of Barth in the near future, should be inclined to look at others from the viewpoint of their comparison with Barth.

Now, I have stated before, and will repeat it here, that even though I would not be classified as a Barthian theologian, and feel quite sure that, if I should attempt to do this, Barth would immediately disown me and expel me from his school, I have a notion that Van Til and I do not agree on the question just what Barth teaches, and, therefore, we differ in our criticism of him. I am afraid that, because of this fact, Van Til is suspicious that I rather agree with *his* Barth, i. e. with Barth as he sees him; while the truth is that I do not agree with *my own* Barth, i. e. with Barth as I see him, even though I cannot so utterly condemn him as some of the theologians of Westminster do. And, surely, I do not agree with the statement that "facts do not exist at all since they must be interpreted in the universal of God," whether Barth would put it that way or not. And, again, whether or not Barth would subscribe to such a doctrine or repudiate it, I certainly would never teach, that "when man obeys the will of God he in no sense really obeys; it is God that obeys in Him." In fact, in my opinion this last statement is a contradiction in terms.

However, this is an ever interesting problem. And I must say a little more about it next time, the Lord willing.

H. H.

The Triple Knowledge

An Exposition Of The Heidelberg Catechism

PART TWO
OF MAN'S REDEMPTION

LORD'S DAY VII

Chapter 3.

The Object Of Faith

At the close of the important seventh Lord's Day the Catechism introduces the object or contents of the Christian's faith, which then, in subsequent chapters it expounds in detail. In Question and Answer 22 it briefly defines that which "is necessary for a Christian to believe" as "All things promised us in the gospel, which the articles of our catholic undoubted christian faith briefly teach us." And in answer to Question 23 it quotes the so-called Apostles' Creed.

It draws our attention that the Catechism defines the object of saving faith, not as "the Word of God," nor as "all that God has revealed to us in his Word," as was stated in Answer 21, nor even as "all things contained in the holy gospel," but very definitely as "all things *promised* us in the gospel." The promises of the gospel, therefore, are the object of saving faith, according to the Catechism. The question arises: how must this be understood? It is possible, of course, to take this expression in a perfectly sound sense. In that case it does not intend to exclude the rest of the Word of God in any sense of the word from the object of saving faith, but merely intends to emphasize that to true faith, as *saving* faith, that embraces Christ and all His benefits, the holy gospel is the gospel of the promise, the *euangelion* of the *epangelia*, and the promises of God, therefore, stand in the foreground. Or one could express it in this way: just as in Scripture the entire Word of God is sometimes called *law*, or *law and prophets*, or *testimonies*, *statutes*, *precepts*, etc., so it may also be designated by the term *the holy gospel*, and the heart of that gospel are the promises of God realized in Christ; and saving faith naturally looks upon the Word of God especially from the viewpoint of its being the gospel of Christ, the good tidings concerning the promise of God. But it is also quite possible to offer a different interpretation of the statement in Answer 22. The promises of the gospel may be taken in the strict sense, as referring to only part of the Word of God. The meaning of the answer then would be that, while *faith in general* holds for truth and assents to all that is revealed in the Scriptures, *saving* faith

appropriates particularly the promises of the gospel.

The former interpretation must undoubtedly be considered as conveying the truth, regardless now of the question whether it was the intention of the authors of the Catechism to express this meaning. Saving faith is assured of and relies on the entire Word of God as revealed in the Scriptures, and it does not have the promises of the gospel only for its object. All that the Scriptures teach concerning God and creation, man and sin, Christ and salvation, the Holy Spirit and sanctification, the Church and means of grace, the coming of Christ and things eternal, is included in what is necessary for a Christian to believe. That this is true, is evident even from the fact that the Catechism refers to the Apostles' Creed as the brief expression of the object of saving faith. For in that catholic confession the Church does not declare itself with regard to the promises of the gospel only, but speaks concerning all the main doctrines of Scripture. And, therefore, when the Catechism here answers to the question what is necessary for the Christian to believe, "All things promised us in the gospel," we will have to take the statement in the broadest sense, so that it includes all the knowledge of God, His Will and precepts, and the whole counsel concerning our salvation and all things as revealed in the Holy Scriptures.

When we insist on this we assume the stand that agreement with the Heidelberg Catechism does not necessarily always imply agreement with the meaning and interpretation of its authors. For Ursinus in his explanation of the Catechism makes it quite plain that he intended to convey the sense set forth in the second interpretation mentioned above. As we explained in a previous chapter, in the answer to question 21 he distinguished between the knowledge of *faith in general*, which holds for truth all that God has revealed in the holy Scriptures, and *saving or justifying faith*, consisting in a hearty and assured confidence that the blessings of salvation are freely given me of God, for the sake of Christ's merits. That this presentation of the authors' meaning in Ans. 21 was correct, is corroborated by Ursinus' own commentary on the answer to Qu. 22. Writes he: "After our treatment of the subject of faith, the question now follows concerning the contents of what must be believed or the object of faith. Faith in general, as became evident from our description of it, embraces the entire Word of God, and assents to it fully. But justifying faith in particular respects the promises of the gospel or the preaching of grace through Christ. The gospel is therefore particularly the object of justifying faith. For this reason the gospel is also called the doctrine of those things which are to be believed, in distinction from the law which is the doctrine of those things that must be done." p. 155. Here Ursinus makes it very plain that, according to him, the whole Word of

God is the object of the knowledge of *faith in general*, while *justifying* or *saving faith* deals exclusively with the promises of the gospel. And these distinctions are, in our opinion, untenable. Faith is one. And that one faith is both a true spiritual knowledge and a hearty confidence. And it has for its object the one and entire Word of God, revealing the God of our salvation in Jesus Christ our Lord. And the knowledge of this Word of God is briefly expressed in "the articles of our catholic, undoubted christian faith."

A word must here be said about these "articles of our catholic, undoubted christian faith, generally known as the Apostles' Creed. Its exact origin is unknown. The tradition that gave rise to its name, as if the apostles themselves were the authors of this confession, must be rejected as false. For not only is there no shred of evidence for this tradition, nor even for the contention that this symbol in its present form existed in the time of the apostles, but it did not belong to the proper calling of the apostles as such to prepare confessions of faith for the Church. Their proper task it was to lay the foundation of the Church, other than which no man can lay, and their infallible writings belong to the Canon of the Scriptures. The confession of the Church is based on their word. This does not mean that there can be any serious objection to maintain the name by which these articles of our faith are universally known. But the name expresses that the contents of this confession are truly apostolic, in fact they are almost verbally taken from the New Testament Scriptures. It is, however, one of the most ancient symbols of the Church. And even though in its present form it cannot be traced farther back than the sixth or fifth century of our era, parts of it date from the immediate post-apostolic time. It was not composed at once in its present form. The general opinion is that it gradually developed from the instruction that was given by the church to catechumens before their being baptized, and from the confession they were required to make at baptism. Writes Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom*, Vol. 1, p. 16ff.: "As to the origin of the Apostles' Creed, it no doubt gradually grew out of the confession of Peter, Matt. 16:16, which furnished its *nucleus* (the article on Jesus Christ), and out of the baptismal formula, which determined the trinitarian order and arrangement. It cannot be traced to an individual author. It is the product of the Western Catholic Church (as the Nicene Creed is that of the Eastern Church) within the first four centuries. It is not of primary, apostolic, but of secondary, ecclesiastical inspiration. It is not a Word of God to men, but a word of men to God, in response to his revelation. It was originally and essentially a *baptismal confession*, growing out of the inner life and practical needs of Christianity. It was explained to the catechumens at the last stage

of their preparation, professed by them at baptism, often repeated with the Lord's Prayer, for private devotion, and afterwards introduced into public service. It was called by the ante-Nicene fathers 'the rule of faith,' 'the rule of truth,' 'the apostolic tradition,' 'the apostolic preaching,' afterwards 'the symbol of faith.' But this baptismal creed was at first not precisely the same. It assumed different shapes and forms in different congregations. Some were longer, some shorter; some declarative, some interrogative in the form of questions and answers. Each of the larger churches adapted the nucleus of the apostolic faith to its peculiar circumstances and wants; but they all agreed in the essential articles of faith, in the general order of arrangement on the basis of the baptismal formula, and the prominence given to Christ's death and resurrection. . . .

"The most complete or most popular forms of the baptismal creed in use from that time in the West were those of the churches of Rome, Aquileja, Milan, Ravenna, Carthage, and Hippo. They differ but little. Among these again, the Roman formula gradually gained the acceptance in the West for its intrinsic excellence, and on account of the commanding position of the Church of Rome. We know the Latin text from Rufinus (390) and the Greek from Marcellus of Ancyra (336-341). The Greek text is usually regarded as a translation, but is probably older than the Latin, and may date from the second century, when the Greek language prevailed in the Roman congregation.

"The Roman creed was gradually enlarged by several clauses from older or contemporaneous forms, viz., the article 'descended into Hades' (taken from the creed of Aquileja), the predicate 'catholic' or 'general' in the article on the Church (borrowed from Oriental creeds), 'the communion of saints' (from Gallican sources), and the concluding 'life everlasting' (probably from the symbols of the churches of Ravenna and Antioch). These additional clauses were no doubt part of the general faith, since they are taught in the Scriptures, but they were first expressed in local creeds, and it was some time before they found a place in the authorized formula.

"If we regard, then, the *present* text of the Apostles' Creed as a complete whole, we can hardly trace it beyond the sixth, certainly not beyond the close of the fifth century, and its triumph over all the other forms in the Latin Church was not completed till the eighth century, or about the time when the bishops of Rome strenuously endeavored to conform the liturgies of the Western churches to the Roman order. But if we look at the several articles of the Creed separately, they are all of Nicene or ante-Nicene origin, while its kernel goes back to the apostolic age. All the facts and doctrines which it contains are in entire agreement with the New Testament. And this is true even of

those articles which have been most assailed in recent times, as the supernatural conception of our Lord (cf. Matt. 1:18; Luke 1:35), the descent into Hades (Comp. Luke 23:43; Acts 2:31; 1 Pet. 3:19; 4:6), and the resurrection of the body (1 Cor. 15:20 sqq., and other places)."

There is something charming in the simple beauty of the structure and contents of this creed of the whole Christian Church. It is very brief, yet quite comprehensive, giving expression to all the main truths of revelation that are "necessary for a christian to believe." Its form is wholly positive, not controversial: in it the Church professes her faith, apparently without considering the possibility of its being gainsaid, or the necessity of defending the truth over against heretics. It is a declaration of the historical facts of the gospel, rather than an abstract statement of doctrines. It professes faith in the triune God, yet it does not expressly mention the trinity, far less declare any specific doctrine concerning the relation of the Persons of the trinity to the divine Essence. All the salient doctrine of Christology are professed in this *Credo*, the divinity of Christ, His virgin birth, the humiliation and exaltation of our Lord, and His expected return, but they are all stated simply as so many facts of the gospel, without as much as suggesting their dogmatic implications. And the same is true of the articles concerning the Holy Spirit, the Church and the benefits of Christ's work such as the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and everlasting life. Schaff truly gives the following evaluation of this creed: "It is not a logical statement of abstract doctrines, but a profession of living facts and saving truths. It is a liturgical poem and an act of worship. Like the Lord's Prayer, it loses none of its charm and effect by frequent use, although, by vain and thoughtless repetition, it may be made a martyr and an empty form of words. It is intelligible and edifying to a child, and fresh and rich to the profoundest Christian scholar, who, as he advances in age, delights to go back to primitive foundations and first principles. It has the fragrance of antiquity and the inestimable weight of universal consent. It is a bond of union between all ages and sections of Christendom. It can never be superseded for popular use in church and school." (Creeds of Christendom, 1, p. 15). Indeed, one can conceive of the wish that this *Credo* of our catholic undoubted christian faith might have proved sufficient for all times, and that the Church of Christ in the world could have remained united on its basis!

However, as the Church developed and advanced in the knowledge of the truth a brief statement of the object of faith like the Apostles' Creed must needs prove inadequate as a bond of union; and it would be quite impossible for the Church of today to turn the clock of history back, and return to this ancient creed

as the sole basis of agreement for the whole church in the world. For, first of all, many doctrines whose maintenance is quite essential to the Church on earth, are not even mentioned in this symbol. The fundamentalists of our time may, in this respect, be satisfied with the declaration of the Apostles' Creed, for the four truths on which they lay emphasis as essential to Christianity, the virgin birth of the Saviour, vicarious atonement, the resurrection of Christ, and His return for judgment, are at least mentioned here, although this can hardly be said of the doctrine of substitutional atonement. But they are in error when they think that the defense of these general doctrines is sufficient to safeguard the faith of the Church over against the attack of the enemy. They may be compared to a certain extent to a gardener that weeds his vegetable plot, but is satisfied by pulling off the tops of the weeds, leaving their roots in the soil. There are fundamental doctrines without whose maintenance even truths such as the vicarious atonement of our Lord cannot be successfully defended. The great doctrines of sovereign predestination, with election and reprobation, of sin and grace, of preservation and perseverance, are not even mentioned in the Apostolic Confession. And yet it is quite essential that they be defined in the standards of the Church of today.

But, in the second place, such a summary and factual statement of the great truths of the gospel as is contained in the Apostles' Creed can hardly be considered adequate as a clear and unambiguous expression of the faith of the Church. And this is especially true in our times. It is a well-known fact that those that seek to undermine the foundation of the truth upon which the Church is built, and to introduce false doctrines, hardly ever reveal their evil intention by openly declaring their opposition to the doctrines as they have been formulated by the Church in the past. On the contrary, they prefer to employ the very same terms the Church has always used to express her faith, although they give them a new and entirely strange content. If they mean to deprive the Church of the truth of sovereign grace, and to introduce the false doctrine of free-will, they employ the Scriptural terms of predestination, election, and reprobation nonetheless; only they declare that God has chosen them that believe, and rejected those that remain in their unbelief. Or they speak of a "double track" and insist that, while they firmly believe in the truth of absolute predestination, they also hold the very opposite, viz. that God will all men to be saved. And thus they do with regard to every fundamental truth of the Bible. Even present day modernism, though it rejects and opposes all the fundamental doctrines of historical Christendom, is often very efficient in the employment of practically all the terms used to express the object of the Christian faith. They, too, speak of Christ as the Son of God, but in their

mouth the term is completely emptied of its true significance so that it does not express at all the essential divinity of the Saviour. And they love to speak of the kingdom of God and its righteousness, while they refer to a kingdom of mere man, and of this world. And so we might go on. It shows, that as the Church advances in the knowledge of the truth, it will not only need a more elaborate confession to express its faith positively, but it must also more definitely and fully define its doctrines, lest they be open to the attack of gainsayers because of their ambiguity. And, therefore, though the Apostles' Creed will certainly always remain the basis of unity for all that understand its declarations in their historic and biblical sense, it cannot possibly serve as the *sole* basis of unity for the Church in the world. And for this reason, the Heidelberg Catechism proceeds from the correct standpoint, when it does, indeed, declare that these articles contain all that is necessary for a Christian to believe, but at the same time offers a rather elaborate exposition of these articles in the chapters that follow.

H. H.

The Change Under Constantine

As we have seen, the first three centuries of our Christian era formed a period of intermittent persecutions for the Christians. As Christ had predicted, all men—men of every class of society and every station of life—hated and harassed God's people. For, as was pointed out, in the eyes of men the followers of Christ formed a strange and dangerous community. They chose to live outside the pale of the religion of Rome. They refused to worship as God the emperor and his stature and to take part in any idolatrous ceremonies at public festivals. Their religion—the worship of the only, true God—being pure, denounced the nameless pollution of the Roman-Graeco world. It demanded of men that they forsake their abominations, turn to the living God and be saved from their sins by faith in His resurrected Christ. It proclaimed that God looked down with holy indignation upon all unrighteousness of men, that He would avenge all wrong and that a day was coming when all the world would stand at His tribunal and that every man—emperor and slave—should receive according to his deeds. The result was that the pollution of Rome was roused to a frenzy of rage.

Especially the Roman statemen, so we saw,—the statemen including the serious thinkers who in their heart were too conscious that the pagan religion of the empire was unreal, viewed Christianity as the Empire's deadliest foe, an enemy which must be

stamped out. There was present in these statesmen a strange instinctive dread of Christianity. They could not help noticing how in spite of edicts and persecutions Christianity was rapidly increasing. And they heard rumours of a new kingdom which the Christians were to establish, of confidently expressed hopes that the kingdom would soon come, and of openly asserted prophecies that it would be established on the ruins of Rome itself. Yet, the people of God were the meek of the earth.

So the lot of the Christians in these first three centuries was hard. They were terrified by their adversaries. They had trials of cruel mockings and scourgings, of bonds and imprisonment; they were stoned, tempted, slain with the sword; they were destitute, afflicted and tormented. They wandered in deserts and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. In the Revelations of St. John, Babylon—the Graeco-Roman world of his day—appears as drunken with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. In these three centuries, the despised sect, like Christ in the days of His humiliation, had not where to lay its head.

However, in the year 311 this state of things began to undergo a fundamental and radical change. As was said, Diocletian (284-305), immediately after coming to power, had called to his side three subordinate vice-gerents, Maximian, Galerius, and Constantine Chlorus, and divided with them his vast empire. In 303, he promulgated three persecution edicts of ascending severity. A fourth one was issued soon after by Maximian. The aim of these edicts was the entire uprooting of the Christian religion. The terrible persecution which these edicts initiated lasted ten years. In 311, Galerius, under the constraint of a conscience awakened by a terrible disease with which he was smitten, and almost died, published, in connection with Constantine and Licinius, his colleagues in the imperial throne, an edict of toleration; and the persecutions of the Christians by the Roman emperors and the pagan Graeco-Roman commonwealth permanently ceased. In 313 Constantine, in conjunction with his colleague, Licinius, published an edict of religious toleration which granted full freedom to all existing forms of worship including the Christian and thus placed the latter on equal footing with heathenism. At the same time it ordered the governors in all the provinces to restore all confiscated property to the body of Christians at the expense of the imperial treasury.

From this time Constantine favored the church, yet without forbidding heathen sacrifice. In his imperial edicts the Christian church is always mentioned with reverence. Christian bishops were admitted into his confidential circle. He freed the clergy from military and municipal duty (313); abolished various customs and ordinances hateful to the Christians; and

granted the church (321) the right to receive legacies i. e., gifts of property by will.

In 323 Constantine, through defeating his last rival, Licinius, in battle, became the sole ruler of the Roman world and the first Christian occupant of the throne of the Caesars. With the defeat of Licinius, who was hostile to Christianity, the church was everywhere free from its enemies.

Constantine, in a general exhortation, now besought and urged his subjects to embrace the Christian religion. In the year 330 he transferred the seat of his government to Byzantium, turned the city into a new Christian Rome and named it Constantinople after himself. Here, instead of idol temples, Christian churches rose; and all forms of pagan worship were forbidden and with them the gladiatorial shows, so popular in Rome. But among the churches the crucifixes and statues of deities from all over Greece were also gathered in the new metropolis.

Constantine was faithful in the attendance of divine worship. He even himself wrote and delivered sermons to his court. In response to general invitations, issued by the emperor, the citizens in crowds flocked to the palace to hear the imperial preacher. When applauded by his audience, he would show his disapproval by pointing to Heaven as the source of his wisdom. He called himself the bishop of bishops, summoned the first general council, and made Christianity the religion of the empire. But it was not until he felt that the hour of his death was at hand, that he allowed himself to be admitted by baptism into the full communion of the church in the sixty-fifth year of his age. A few days later he died, trusting in the mercy of God. "So passed away the first Christian emperor, the first Defender of the Faith. Pagan and Christian, orthodox and heretical, liberal and fanatical, not to be imitated and admired, but much to be remembered, and deeply to be studied."

Doubtless, Constantine's acceptance of Christianity was, in a measure, a matter of personal conviction. His generous conduct towards the Christians betokens a certain degree of sympathy. There is ground for supposing that he was Christian minded. He himself attributed his conversion to the appearance, in the course of one of his military expeditions, of a flaming cross in the sky at noon-day with the motto "By this (cross) conquer." Some treat the story as a fable. It may be supposed, however, that Constantine narrated the incident on good faith. There is nothing improbable in the theory that accounts for the appearance of the cross by the natural phenomenon of a parhelion i. e., of a bright spot at the altitude of the sun in the form of a cross. But it is likelier that Constantine gave external reality to what was nothing more than an optical delusion and that the voice which he heard was purely subjective. But whatever the nature of the experience may have been,

its effect upon Constantine, to judge from his later conduct, fell far short of a true and thorough conversion; it probably did not amount to more than the creation of a superstitious belief in the symbol of the cross. To maintain that he was converted in the sense of a true and wholehearted acceptance of the religion of Christ, and of a thorough rejection of paganism, is inconsistent with the hesitating attitude in which he stood toward both and with the crimes that darkened his career. Paganism was an operative force with the man down to the close of life. He continued to cleave, after his conversion, to many pagan superstitions. To judge the tree by its fruits, he was half heathen and half Christian, who sought to combine the worship of Christ with the worship of Apollo. He had the name of the one and the figure of the other impressed upon his coins. He ordained the observance of Sunday under the name "God of the Sun." He gave orders that, if lightning struck the imperial palace or any other public building, the pagan diviners should be consulted as to what it might signify, and a careful report of the answers should be drawn up for his use.

But if his acceptance of Christianity was a matter of personal conviction in the sense just explained, it was also, on the other hand, a matter of shrewd judgment was also, on the other hand, a matter of shrewd statesmanship. There can be little doubt that he embraced Christianity from expediency and as driven by necessity. Christianity could be of use to him for instilling new life into the organism of the dying empire of Rome; also, it was the oncoming thing so that to oppose it was to be destroyed by it. So, instead of trying to crush its power, as his predecessors in the imperial throne had tried to do, he entered into an alliance with it in order to secure political control over its growing organism. In this he succeeded. He took it upon himself to supervise what he termed the external affairs of the church, and thus brought into being an imperial papacy alongside the existing spiritual hierarchy. In his self-appointed role of "bishop of bishops" he convened the council of Nicea, presided over its meeting, and took a prominent part in its proceedings both before and behind the scenes. The year before it met he had urged such a formula as might include Arians and orthodox in the one church. He was thus the earliest of broad churchmen. Afterwards he approved the orthodox creed that was the result of the council's deliberations and thereupon addressed himself to the task of enforcing uniformity by means of subscription. His conduct in supporting first Arianism and then the orthodox faith was perfectly consistent. He acted in the interest of the state. The rending of the church into a number of bitterly contending factions would be a constant source of danger to the empire. In all likelihood, it was by this consideration that Constantine was guided in deal-

ing with the Arian controversy; there are no traces of deep personal interest on his part in the cardinal question. True, the church was everywhere free from its enemies; but it now found itself under the dominion of a new master—Constantine the great, the first Christian occupant of the throne of the Cæsars.

The conception of the empire-pope did not originate with Constantine. All the pagan emperors from Augustus on were supreme pontiffs, heads of state religion, who performed priestly functions even to offering sacrifices.

As to the Christian Church, under the favor and patronage of Constantine, it grew by leaps and bounds in numbers and soon found itself fabulously rich in earthly goods. As was said, he granted the church the right to receive legacies i.e., gifts of money or property by a last will. He himself made liberal contributions in money and grain for the support of the clergy. But being Lord of the public treasury as well as of his private purse, he could afford to be generous—generous at the expense of his realm. He also gave to the church i.e., to the clergy in distinction from the laity, the depleted heathen temples and their estates and the confiscated property of heretics. Wealthy subjects of the realm, following his example, bequeathed their property upon the church. Bishops and monks became legacy-hunters by playing upon the superstitious fears of widows and dying persons. The result was that the hierarchy became the owner of enormous wealth in money and gold and in houses and lands. In the early feudal age it possessed most of the non-land wealth in Western Europe. It owned, in addition, fine church buildings; chapels, abbeys, cathedrals, cloisters, libraries, merchandise of all kinds and descriptions, fine cloth embroidered with gold, besides enormous chests of treasures. These treasures were in turn converted into real estate so that the higher clergy soon came to own a tenth part of all the landed property. From its extensive lands it received payments of the peasants to whom this land was let for cultivation. Thus did the clergy (not the laity) come into the possession of a huge and independent source of income of its own and thereby ceased to be dependent on the voluntary contributions of the lay members in the church. So was the clergy raised to a position of material independence. This, certainly, was contrary to Scripture. The greatest church fathers realized this. Augustine asked his people in Hippo to take back the church property and to support the clergy and the poor by free gifts. The stand of Augustine was certainly correct. It is the Lord's will that the ministers of religion be dependent on the free gifts of the brethren for whose spiritual benefit they labor. The teachings of St. Paul are to the effect that even as the Lord ordained that they (the Levites) which ministered about holy things live of the things of the temple, so hath the Lord ordained that they which

preach the gospel should live of the gospel.

The enrichment of the clergy by Constantine worked great harm. It entangled them in the affairs of this world. With a thousand matters foreign to their office they had to meddle. For these large estates had to be managed and cared for. Besides, the clergy became lovers of ease and luxury, and a host of unworthy persons were lured into the service of the church.

Constantine corrupted the church in still another respect. By making Christianity the religion of the empire, he secularized the church. It became a matter of fashion to be a Christian, so that, as was said, the church grew by leaps and bounds in mere numbers. Pagan customs defiled the service of God and contaminated the lives of Christians. Hypocrites and formal confessors abounded. True Christian zeal and brotherly love diminished. For the church became the church of the masses. Rulers and subjects alike worshipped at the shrine of mammon. There was a morbid passion for vain display among the clergy and laity alike. Speaking of the clergy, Gregory of Nazianzen draws the following picture: "We repose in splendour on high and sumptuous cushions, and are vexed if we but hear the voice of the moaning pauper; our chamber must breathe the odor of flowers; our table but flow with the most fragrant and costly ointment, so that we become perfectly effeminate. Slaves must stand ready, rightly adorned and in order, with waving, maidenlike hair, and faces shown perfectly smooth, more adorned than is good for lascivious eyes; some to hold cups both delicately and firmly with the tips of their fingers, others, to fan fresh air upon the head. Our tables must bend under the load of dishes, while all the kingdoms of nature, air, water, and earth, furnish copious contributions. . . . The poor man is content with water; but we fill our goblets with wine to drunkenness, nay, immeasurably beyond it." This was said with reference not to the lower but to the higher clergy and the rich laity in the church. According to Libanus the household of Constantius (the son of Constantine) had a thousand barbers, a thousand cup-bearers, a thousand cooks, and eunuchs so many that they could be compared only to the insects of a summer day.

As to Constantine, his reign is marred by the grossest crimes. Though he had solemnly promised Licinius, his vanquished rival, mercy, he ordered and secured his execution. His suspicions lead him to cause the death of his nephew, a lad of eleven years. He murdered his eldest son on the generally held false charge of political intrigue and incest.

Such was the moral character of the pagan masses that, following the example of Constantine, joined themselves to the Christian church and by which the church was enriched. Speaking now in general, it was said with such men that the higher clergy, the

bishops and the archbishops in the church locked arms, flattered and petted and praised often to the point of nausea. At the celebration of the third decenium of his reign, Constantine was told by one of his bishops, congratulating him, that he had been appointed by God to rule over this world and would reign with the Son of God in the other. Eusabius was so blinded by imperial favor that he saw in a banquet which Constantine gave to the bishops at the close of the council of Nicea an emblem of the glorious reign of Christ upon earth.

So did a great many of the pagan nobles of the empire adopt the religion of their sovereign, Constantine, and of the court. But many others of the patrician houses and of the cultured classes held themselves aloof and viewed the strange triumphal march of the Christians with shuddering disdain. But for them the end came when their cults were swept away in the wild torrent of barbarian invasion. Yet, all that really went is merely the shell of paganism, the form. The essence abided to stalk the earth in the dress of the Christian religion. The "beast" embraced Christianity. The old satanic hostility to the light of Heaven, as emitted by God's believing people, continued.

G. M. O.

De Universeele Zegen

(Psalm 67)

Men heeft dezen psalm een zendingpsalm genoemd en terecht: het gaat over den universeelen zegen van het evangelie, die zoolang de volkeren zal zegenen tot dat de uitverkorenen uit alle natiën zullen komen en aanbidden voor Zijn troon in Sion.

Een zendingpsalm, want men zal op aarde Gods weg en heil eerst kennen wanneer wij de genade en de zegen Gods ontvingen. Leest slechts de verzen 2 en 3. Daar staat: "God zij ons genadig en zegene ons; Hij doe Zijn aanschijn aan ons lichten, Sela, opdat men op de aarde Uw weg kenne, onder alle heidenen Uw heil." Het redebeleid is dus: Zegen ons, Uw kerk, o God, opdat men op aarde Uw heil moge kennen!

Wat dat beduidt is doorzichtig.

Als wij, de kerk, ons mogen baden in de genade, de zegen en het licht Zijns aanschijns, dan kan het niet uitblijven, dat er een helder schijnend licht van ons uitgaat tot allen die met ons in aanraking komen. Dan zal ons leven een gedurige prediking zijn. Zooals, b.v., de Heidelberger er nadruk op legt, hoe wij door ons godzalig leven anderen mogen trekken tot den Heere onzen God.

De zegen en de genade en het licht dat afgebeden wordt in het tweede vers doet ons denken aan den zegen die Aäron moest leggen op Israel. Daar staat van geschreven: "De Heere zegene u en behoede u! De Heere doe Zijn aangezicht over u lichten en zij u genadig! De Heere verheffe Zijn aangezicht over u en geve u vrede!" Numeri 6:24-26. Het was de zegenspreuk die rechtsstreeks van Godswege aan Israel werd geschonken, op hen moest gelegd door Aäron. En vers twee van onzen psalm is een fragment van dezen zegenspreuk. Ge moogt andere zegenspreuken gebruiken, zooals, b.v., ons voorgehouden worden in het Nieuwe Testament, in Filipp. 4:23, waar staat: "De genade onzes Heeren Jezus Christus zij met u allen! Amen"; of ge moogt wijzen op een tiental anderen, meestal door Paulus ons gegeven van Godswege, feit is, dat alles wat ge elders in Gods Woord moogt vinden eigenlijk alreede opgesloten ligt in den zoogenaamden Aäronitischen zegen van Numeri 6 welke we boven afschreven. Het is de zegen Gods over Zijn volk in de gave van behoeding, genade en vrede. Ge herkent zelfs de DrieEenige Fontein der zegeningen: tot driemaal toe wordt den verbondsnaam Gods herhaald: De Heere, de Heere, de Heere. Men kan zelfs de distinctieve werken van Vader, Zoon en Heilige Geest in het verlossingswerk onderkennen, waar de zegen spreekt van behoeding, genade en vrede, in die volgorde.

Welnu, die bijzondere zegen Gods, welke voor eeuwen in lieflijke akkoorden geruischt had in Israel's vergaderingen, wordt hier afgebeden, zij het dan ook in een kort fragment.

De Heere zij ons genadig!

O, dan is het goed. Genade is aanvalligheid, lieflijkheid, schoonheid. Als God ons genadig is, dan buigt Hij zich naar ons toe met het voornemen om ons schoon en lieflijk te maken. Zijn we zondaren, dan houdt, als vanzelf, genade ook in, dat we onverdiende en verbeurde zegeningen ontvangen. Doch dat is niet de hoofdzaak als we van genade spreken. Genade is schoonheid. Denkt aan het Hollandsche woordje: gracieus. Als God ons genadig is, dan is het einde van de zaak, dat wij in ongekende schoonheid, zullen "worden als vleugelen eener duive, overdekt met zilver, en welker vederen zijn met uitgegraven geel goud." Als David in den vijf-en-veertigsten psalm den Heere Jezus Christus bezingt, zegt hij van Hem: "Gij zijt veel schooner dan de menschenkinderen; genade is uitgestort op Uwe lippen!" Het is daar duidelijk, dat de genade Hem schoon deed zijn.

En de schoonheid en aanvalligheid der genade is deugd, deugd van God die siert en tooit. Krijgt ge genade van God, zoo wordt ge goed, recht, heilig, wijs en vol van kracht.

Doch er is veel meer in dezen zegen.

Tweedens wordt er gebeden om zegen.

De tekst zegt: God zij ons genadig en *zegene* ons!

Dat is ook de Goddelijke orde. Laat ons nogmaals naar psalm 45 gaan. We hoorden David zingen: Gij zijt veel schooner dan de menschenkinderen; genade is uitgestort op Uwe lippen! Doch daar volgt dit op: "*daarom* heeft U God gezegend in eeuwigheid!" En dat is recht. God zegenet alleen die genade ontvingen. God zegenet alleen Zijn kerk, want die kerk maakt Hij schoon en lieflijk.

Wat beteekent het nu, dat God U zegenet?

Dat beteekent dit: Hij spreekt u troostelijke woorden toe; en die troostelijke goede woorden kristalliseert Hij in daden en dingen die voor U medewerken ten goede. Zegenen is goede woorden spreken. Wij zegenen God ook, d.w.z., wij spreken Gode woorden toe. Evenwel, onze woorden kristalliseeren zich niet in daden en dingen. God wordt er niet rijker door als Hij door ons gezegend wordt. Doch dat is wel zoo met Zijn zegenen. Dan wort de kerk rijker. Dan komt er een oogst. Ge kunt het de kerk aanzien, die zich baden mocht in Gods genade. De kerk die schoon werd, dat wil zeggen, de kerk die heilig, recht, goed en krachtig bevonden wordt, is ook gezegend. Men ging aan 't werk met alle deugd die men van God ontving, zoodat alles fleurde en groeide. Als David dit zag zoo zong hij: "Zij gaan van kracht tot kracht steeds voort; elk hunner zal in 't zalig oord van Sion, haast voor God verschijnen!"

Eindelijk wordt er in het zendingsgebed gevraagd om de verheffing van het licht van Gods aanschijn. Letterlijk staat er: "Hij doe Zijn aanschijn aan ons lichten!" In den Aäronitischen zegen wordt dit lichtend aanschijn in verband gezet met vrede. En dat is goddelijk juist. Alles klopt en past. Eerst wordt ge lieflijk gemaakt: dat is genade. Dan wordt ge krachtig bevonden in den Heere: dat is de zegen Gods over u. En het einde is dat ge U baden moogt in het licht van Gods aanschijn: en dat is de vrede die alle verstand te boven gaat.

Dit laatste moet echter verklaard.

Gods aanschijn is Zijn aangezicht. En het licht van Zijn aangezicht is Zijn welgevallen, Zijn goedkeuring, Zijn genieting die Hij in U heeft. Om het nu eenigzins eigenaardig uit te drukken: Het licht van Gods aanschijn over U beteekent, dat God naar U glimlacht! Daar hebt ge het! Nu begrijpt ge toch wel, dat die uiteindelijke daad Gods den vrede heeft tot vrucht? Luistert naar Aäron: De Heere verheffe Zijn aangezicht over U en geve U vrede! Als ik weten mag dat God in den hemel naar mij glimlacht, dan verzeker ik U, dat ik luidkeels ga lachen. Dan ga ik lachen en opspringen van vreugde, al zou men mij wreedelijk het vleesch van de beenderen afscheuren. Och lieve! Bestudeer de historie. Het is gebeurd. Waar, denkt ge, lag de reden, dat men menschen kon verbranden of martelen voor dagen en maanden lang,

zonder dat die stakkerds ooit den God des hemels en der aarde herriepen? Het lag hierin: die martelaren wisten en ervoeren, dat de hemel hen toelachte, dat God hen liefhad, dat Hij met innig welgevallen op hen terneer blikte. En terwijl de duivelen en de menschen rondom den brandstapel joelden en schreeuwden, was het stil en vredig in 't hart.

Toen men zich later, veel later, bedacht, heeft men zich vaak afgevraagd waarom het aangezicht van Stefanus toch zoo blonk gelijk het aangezicht van een engel. Zij wisten van geen afdoend antwoord; doch gij weet het: Het kwam van dat gezicht van Jezus. Hij zag Jezus staande aan de rechterhand Gods. En hoewel de Bijbel er niet van spreekt, weet ik toch zeker, dat Jezus hem met een glimlachend aangezicht toestaarde.

Wel, als de kerk van Jezus Christus die drie zaken mag ontvangen van God, namelijk, genade, zegen en licht des vredes, dan zal men op aarde Gods weg kennen en Zijn heil onder alle heidenen.

Ziet ge, de gezegende en begenadigde kerk is als een stad die boven op een berg ligt: die kan niet verborgen zijn. Steekt men een kaars aan en zet die op een kandelaar, zoo schijnt ze tot allen die in huis komen.

Zoo is het dan ook gegaan met de kerk.

Wat een uitwerking bracht de uitstorting des Heiligen Geestes op die 120 discipelen, nu ongeveer 2000 jaren geleden. Zij ontvingen genade, zegen en vrede. En het keizerrijk van Rome werd verwoest; en het Evangelie begon en voltooide zijn zegetocht over geheel Europa en groote deelen van Azië. Straks kwam het ook in de eilanden der zee, waarvan Amerika een deel uitmaakt.

Let ook nog even op den Oud Testamentischen vorm van het Evangelie van Gods Zoon. De Kerk vraagt om genade, zegen en vrede opdat de heidenen *den weg* Gods en *het heil* mogen kennen. Welnu, Jezus heeft ons geopenbaard, dat Hijzelf de weg tot God is en het woordje *heil* van mijn tekst is het Oud Testamentische woord voor Jozua, of in 't Grieksch: Jezus. Ge moogt dus van daag de tekst zóó lezen: "Geef ons al die zegeningen, Heere, opdat de volkeren der aarde Uw Christus mogen kennen en alle heidenen Uw Jezus! Schoon zendingsgebed, zelfs vandaag.

De dichter van dit lied ziet in de verte de vervulling van al zulk bidden. Luistert maar naar hem: "De volken zullen U, o God! loven, de volken altemaal zullen U loven!"

Hoe is dit profetisch lied alreede vervuld in onze dagen. Mijn voorvaders en de Uwen verschole zich in de bosschen van noord-europa voor den donder van hun afgod Thor. Doch wij zingen de liederen Davids en hebben vrede bij God door Jezus Christus onzen Heere. Toen dit lied gedicht werd was er een hoopje amechtige Joden die Jehovah kenden en eerden, doch nu is er een schare van menschen uit vele natiën en

tongen die Hem beter kennen dan zij in het Oude Testament. Ik ben geen vriend van het Leger des Heils, doch in dit verband denk ik aan hun wereldcongres, hetwelk ik in 1914 te London, Engeland, bijwoonde. Daar waren nu letterlijk alle landen en volkeren vertegenwoordigd. Het was een indrukwekkend gezicht. En vele heidensche volkeren hadden er hun vertegenwoordigers, veelal in de kleurige rokken en kleederen van hun vaderland. En in het midden der zaal hing een banier, waarop geschreven stond den naam van den Heere Jezus Christus. En toen heb ik het gezien hoe de eene heiden den anderen meetroonde met teekenen en met onverstaanbare klanken; en bij die banier aangekomen wees de eene den anderen op dien naam. En beiden glimlachten. Zij loofden den eenen naam gegeven onder den hemel. Die dingen treffen diep en men vergeet ze niet. In dezen psalm was het geprofeteerd. Ook zal het nog meer vervuld worden. De tijd zal dan toch aanbreken, dat alle volkeren der aarde den Heere zullen loven! Wat zalige gedachte. Als men er aan denkt zou men geneigd zijn om te gaan zingen.

Ziet ge, de natiën zullen den Heere zien. En ze zullen Hem kennen als een Rechter en Herder die gerechtigheid doet en hen zal richten met rechtmatigheid.

Dat doen de tegenwoordige leiders niet. De wereld is zekerlijk bankroet. Het is een rauwelings schreeuwen wat men hoort. De een vermoort den ander. En God kennen ze niet.

Daarom is er dan ook nog geen groot gewas op de aarde. En ik denk niet aan koebeest en varken, noch ook aan koren en most. Ik heb het oog op den oogst des Heeren. Ik bedoel Zijn veelvuldigen lof.

Als de aarde en den hemel vereend zullen zijn; als de aarde en den hemel lieflijk en schoon, gezegend en begenadigd zullen zijn; als de aarde en den hemel uiteindelijk den vrede zullen bezitten; dan, ja dan, zal het gaan. Dan zal het eeuwiglijk goed gaan.

Dat is dan ook het slot-akkord van dit schoone lied

Als God ons uiteindelijk zal gezegend hebben, dan zullen alle einden der aarde Hem vreezen.

Nu zijn onze zonen ingewikkeld in den krijg die hen wegvoert naar de einden der aarde. En van de einden der aarde komen hunne brieven naar huis. In die brieven mogen zij alles niet schrijven. Doch tusschen de regels in kunnen we het weten, dat het er vreeselijk naar toe gaat daar in de einden der aarde.

Dat houdt straks op.

Straks gaat de gansche aarde en het gaensche verlorene menschedom den hemel in en zullen ze al lovende en zingende voor den troon staan.

En dat volk is zoo gelukkig, omdat in 't midden van den troon het aangezicht van God gezien werd.

En dat aangezicht glimlacht!

Dat is de hemel daarboven bij God.

G. V.

Absolute Sovereignty And Human Freedom

In discussing the above mentioned subject, we shall call your attention first to each of the two parts and shall then attempt to throw some light upon the relation between these two. It will readily be admitted that our main difficulty will be encountered in the attempt to harmonize the two parts of our subject. We do not promise a solution to the problem, nor do we assume for a moment that we shall be able to answer every question which may be raised. However, we are of the opinion that an honest attempt should be made to understand, in as far as that is possible, the relationship which exists between God's sovereignty and human freedom. We surely are not justified in doing what so many have done and still do, namely to deny the one or the other, or, even worse, to make an attempt to hold both, to formally confess both but actually lose one or the other because they present a contradiction to our mind. The result of this is, that while one seeks to maintain theoretically both truths, one finds that it is impossible practically and becomes either a determinist or a palagian, or, as many in our day, sometimes one and sometimes another. There are those who will one day preach the doctrine of absolute sovereignty and the next will deny it by their presentation of the human will. They pride themselves with the boast that they preach the Word of God as it is and will in their smug complacency accuse those who seek to harmonize these doctrines of rationalism. However, far from condemning such an attempt as rationalistic, we believe that it is our duty to seek such harmony in the light of the Word of God. And while many excuse themselves and accuse others by saying that "the secret things belong unto the Lord our God," we would rather remind ourselves of the truth expressed in the rest of that text, "but those things are revealed to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law." Surely, if both the truth of God's sovereignty and that of human freedom belong to the revealed things (and who would deny that?), then it is most arbitrary to insist that the relation between them belongs to the hidden things of God.

Absolute Sovereignty

The term "absolute sovereignty" is applicable only to God. This implies that God alone is sovereign. Although an earthly king may be called "a sovereign," the term is applicable to him only in a relative sense because he is the man who rules over other men in a certain kingdom. In respect to God such a man is not sovereign in any sense. God alone is Sovereign of heaven and earth. To say that God is

sovereign is to say that He is God! It means that all things that are His sole possession, are maintained and governed by Him; that He does whatsoever it pleaseth Him as the Almighty because He is the Supreme Ruler, so that no one can thwart His purpose, resist His will or defeat His counsels. Scripture tells us, "Our God is in the heavens; He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased." (Ps. 115:3) "And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?" (Dan. 4:35.) "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof" (Ps. 24:1.) "Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherd of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands?" (Is. 45:9.) "...Who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will." (Eph. 1:11.)

God's sovereignty is universal, absolute, immutable, irresistible and infinite. It extends over all things in heaven and on earth. It has no limit, His authority is supreme over all creatures. It cannot be denied, ignored or rejected. It holds all creatures, great and small, within its grip and nothing can escape its sway.

God is sovereign in all His attributes and in all His works. He does as it pleases Him and He is never obligated to answer to anyone. Whatever He does He does because He wills to do it and never is He in any sense of even in the slightest degree forced to do anything or restrained in doing what He desires. He is sovereign in the work of creation, in His providence, in His government, in salvation, in reprobation, in all things. The Word of God can be quoted in great lengths in support of the above facts. However that does not lie within the scope of our subject. We will have to limit ourselves to the study of God's sovereignty as it pertains to the lives of His rational-moral creatures.

God's sovereignty extends over all mankind and over all his affairs. In His sovereign counsel the Lord has fore-ordained all things that shall come to pass as well as all things that shall be, when, how and where. In that counsel He has sovereignly determined not only the destiny of every one of His rational-moral creatures but also every step and every detail of that creature's way to that destiny. Every work, every word, every thought, every plan and every purpose of man has been determined by God with a view to every man that ever lives in this earth. What he says, what he wills and what he thinks has all been ordained by the sovereign God from before the foundation of the earth. Never is there, as far as God is concerned, any surprise or uncertainty in the works of men. God has in His absolute sovereignty ordained all things, also all things that pertain to the lives and the affairs

of all men. He guides and directs them all and fulfills all His counsels through them. Scripture teaches us this very plainly when it says: "In Him we live, *and move*, and have our being" (Acts 17:28,) "The preparation of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord" (Prov. 16:1,) "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: He turneth it whithersoever He will" (Prov. 21:1.) Scripture teaches us also that out of the heart are the issues of life (Prov. 4:23) and that as a man thinketh in his heart so he is (Prov. 23:7.) If therefore the heart of the king is in the Lord's hand and He moves it as He pleases, it must mean that the Lord directs all his thoughts, desires, plans, purposes and all his acts. It must be plain therefore that God's sovereignty rules over the entire man.

Human Freedom

In discussing this phase of our subject we shall have to be brief lest we exceed our allotted space. We will not be able at this time to enter into any detail with a view to this doctrine of human freedom. We can approach our subject most directly by asking, in what sense can we speak of human freedom?

In answer to this question we would make plain first of all that this human freedom does not consist in what so often is considered to be liberty, namely to do or to be able to do anything that we please. True freedom is not lawlessness but consists in being in harmony with the law. Human freedom does not consist in this therefore, that a man is able to choose the good as well as the evil, to love God or to hate Him, to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ or not to believe in Him, to repent or not to repent, to love his neighbor or to murder him. Such freedom does not exist anymore. The Arminian contention of free will is not a scriptural truth but an invention of human philosophy. It flagrantly contradicts and denies all that Scripture teaches us concerning the condition of the natural man, namely that he is dead in trespasses, inclined to all evil and incapable of any good. We need not quote Scripture in this respect since this is readily confessed by all those of Reformed persuasion. The natural man is free only to sin and commit iniquity, not because he is forced to that from without, but because he is bound from within. His heart is evil and therefore he is evil in all his life. True freedom, on the other hand, is the freedom wherewith the Son makes us free, the freedom of our Lord Jesus Christ Who could not sin but Whose meat and drink it was to do the will of God.

Human freedom, as far as we are concerned with it, consists in this that man as a rational-moral creature by means of his mind and will determines for himself his way of life. He assumes an attitude in respect to God and His law as well as all things with which he comes into contact. He contemplates and

chooses, he affirms and denies, he considers and decides and thus in a sense determines his course through life. When he does something he does it because he chooses to do it, he wills to do it. In his own mind he was free to do it or not to do it and what he does is the result of his choice.

The Relation

The problem which presents itself must be plain to all of us. It is this: how can we harmonize this freedom of man with the sovereignty of God? How must it be explained that God sovereignly determines all man's thoughts, words and acts, and so directs and guides him that he always fulfills His decrees and counsel but that man nevertheless is free in his choice? The problem becomes more difficult of course in the light of man's depravity and natural corruption. On the one hand we must be careful not to lose man's responsibility, while on the other hand we must not fail to maintain God's sovereignty. Moreover there is also this angle to be considered: how can God determine that a man will commit wickedness while He hates all wickedness and commands man to do the good? How can God demand that a man love Him when He has sovereignly ordained that that man shall hate Him? And if God has determined that a man shall hate Him, how can we still speak of human freedom? And so the questions multiply. We cannot even begin to answer all the questions that arise even if we were capable of doing so. Perhaps the greatest benefit of our present study will consist in this that we become increasingly aware of our insignificance and God's infinite greatness. He is God and God alone, and we are but creatures of the dust, less than nothing because we are sinful and corrupt. In this connection it will be proper to remind ourselves that, whether or not we will be able to understand it, the solution to our problem lies in this direction, that we confess that God is so great that He is able to sovereignly control and direct all the acts of His moral creatures and yet leave them free, in the sense that they freely choose to perform what He has fore-ordained and determined. It is in this light that man's responsibility is to be explained. Man does what he does because he desires to do that. When Judas betrays the Christ, he is not motivated by the fact that God has determined that he shall do that but by his own desire. There lies his responsibility. The fact that wicked man fulfills the counsel of God does not excuse him. Although God and Judas both willed the same thing, Judas did not will the will of God. That would imply love; Judas however was motivated by hatred. Hence, although from the point of view of God's sovereignty it must be admitted that Judas could not do anything else than betray the Christ, from the point of view of human freedom it must be maintained that Judas was not aware of that at all

but that when he stood before the choice of betraying or not betraying the Christ, he freely chose the former. God therefore fulfills His counsel through Judas and still leaves Judas responsible for that wickedness. Suppose now the question arises, where did the idea of the betrayal of Christ originate? It must be plain, in answer to this question, that the idea originated in the counsel of God. God determined that this should be done and God sees to it that it is fulfilled. He not only determines that it shall be done but He also ordained that Judas do it. Hence, God is the deepest cause of all things that take place. Nevertheless, God does not commit any wickedness. It is Judas who commits the sin and must bear the guilt. And that holds true of all the acts of His moral creatures.

To the question, how can God determine that a man shall sin when He Himself hates all sin and delights only in righteousness, we answer as follows: God's work is synthetic; it must also be viewed as such, that is, for example, God does not delight in the suffering of His people, and still He does, for if He did not they would not suffer: how is that to be explained? The suffering of God's people does not stand alone as an isolated work of God but it stands in relation to all the other works of God. That suffering is a *means* to a high end. As a *means* God delights in it. As an end in itself He could not delight in it, but it isn't an end in itself and may never be regarded as such. It is a *means* and as such God delights in it because it serves its purpose which He has ordained. Therefore God can allow the wicked to persecute His people; He can ordain from all eternity that the anti-christ will torment His people, not because He delights in the suffering of His Church but because He realizes His purpose of their salvation through this means. Therefore He will also punish the wicked who have persecuted His people, even though in this persecution they were fulfilling His counsel.

Finally, to the question, how does God operate in man to cause him to fulfill His decrees, we can only answer that we stand before a mystery. We know that there is some direct operation of God upon man. This is true also when man sins, for it is no solution to say that God *permits* the wicked to sin. That brings us into a dualistic conception of God and sin. Moreover it does not help in any way since when one permits something it implies that he has power to prevent it and therefore essentially stands in the same relation to it as though he had caused it.

We realize that we have made a very feeble attempt to throw some light on this age old problem. We have perhaps done no more than to write what others have written before us. But if the above may serve to cause us to confess that God is God, it will not have been in vain.

H. D. W.

The Concept "Person" In Scripture

We believe in a personal God. We consider this to be a fundamental tenet of our faith, so fundamental, in fact, that it is basic for all religious life. It is impossible to deny this truth and continue to maintain any exercise of true religion. Whosoever denies that God is personal denies God. And, inseparably connected with this denial, inexorably following from it, he has denied the essence and the possibility of prayer, the reality of sin and guilt, the moral responsibility of man. This is evident in the modern world which is guilty of exactly this abominable heresy. The modern world speaks of God's almighty power, of God's wisdom, of God's omnipresence, speaks of God in the abstract. Of course, God is almighty, omniscient, and omnipresent. However, God is not merely power, wisdom in the abstract. He is the personal God. A person we define as an individual substantiality existing in a moral-rational nature. Applying this to man we may say that his person is that unnameable something in him, whereby he is conscious of himself as a moral-rational being, and that as such he conducts himself and is the author of all his deeds. That God is personal would imply that He knows Himself as the living God, that He is conscious of Himself as the Absolute Good, infinitely exalted above all that is called creature, the product of His hands, and that He therefore also maintains Himself as that Absolute and infinite Good, loving Himself and His people for His Name's sake and hating and condemning all iniquity and workers of iniquity. Man also is a personal being. This we must not merely understand in the sense that his is an individual existence in distinction from other human beings. Understanding self-consciousness merely in this general sense we might safely assert that also the animal would then be a personal being. Also an animal can make certain distinctions between itself and other creatures. Yet, we do not speak of an animal as being personal—we do not use the personal pronoun, for example, when speaking of or unto an animal. Neither do we refer to man's heart when we speak of his person. The heart in Scripture is the center of all man's spiritual life. Scripture teaches us that out of the heart are all the issues of life. As a man's heart is, so is he. Our heart determines all my life from a spiritual-ethical point of view. And it is plain from Scripture, particularly from Rom. 7, that my person does not determine my being, but my being determines whether my person, my I, is holy or corrupt. Man, then, is a personal being in the sense that he is conscious of himself as a moral-rational creature and conducts himself accordingly. My person is that unnameable focal point in my being, in which my entire nature concentrates itself, which renders me a

self-conscious, moral-rational creature.

Moreover, we can distinguish between man's person, his I, in an essential sense and also in a conscious sense. We have an essential "I" and a conscious "I". All men are personal beings. However, this does not necessarily imply that every moral-rational creature is conscious of himself as such. An infant or a young child is a personal being. Yet, when he begins to speak he does not use the personal pronoun with respect to himself and to others. Only then will he use the personal pronoun with respect to himself and to others when he becomes conscious of himself as a moral-rational being. The concept "person" refers therefore to an individual substantiality existing in a moral-rational nature.

The question which arises, however, and which alone can determine whether the above is the true interpretation of "person" is, of course; Is this Scripture's presentation of the concept "Person"? We believe this to be the presentation of Holy Writ. In this connection permit me to remark that the word "person" as such is a Latin word and that it does not appear in Scripture. Besides, the Latin "persons" is of uncertain derivation. Its exact meaning, according to the late Dr. A. Kuyper, cannot be determined. It is true, as far as Scripture is concerned, that the translation Hebrews 1:3 contains the word "person." However, the Holland version of this text uses the word "zelfstandigheid." And the original word in this Scripture simply refers to a setting or placing under, a substructure, foundation, and it then acquired the meaning of actual existence, a substance, a real being. Scripture does not know the word "person." It is undoubtedly for this reason that the subject assigned to me deals with the *concept* "Person" in Scripture. The term "person" is of later origin. Moreover, there has been difference of opinion as to the exact meaning of this term. We believe that we can and should speak of the personal God, of the three Persons of the Trinity, of man as a personal being. And we are also convinced that the above interpretation of "person" is clearly the teaching of Holy Writ.

In the first place I would call attention to Jehovah's speaking of Himself. I need not, of course, quote in this connection from Holy Writ at length. The Word of God abounds in these expressions. Continuously the Lord speaks of Himself, using the personal pronoun. Expressions such as "I am the Lord, I am the Holy One of Israel" appears throughout Holy Writ. In the ten commandments we are commanded, "Thou shalt have no other gods before *Me*." These Scriptural expressions, wherein the Divine Scriptures abound, surely convey and must convey to us the truth, not only that the Lord is God, Who gives His glory to none other, but also that He is that God consciously, that He knows

Himself, that He loves and maintains Himself, that He seeks Himself as the Infinite and Absolute Good. We deem this to be of the utmost significance. And it is surely characteristic of the Word of God throughout. Secondly, in close connection with this truth, the living God always addresses Himself as the living God to man (we would leave the angels in this essay out of consideration). God does not address Himself to the animals. They are not exhorted and commanded to love and serve the living God. This Divine address comes only to man. Man is commanded to forsake his evil way and turn unto the living God. It is with man that God establishes His covenant, speaks as a Friend with His friend, imparts unto him the secrets of His own heart. For man was created in the image of God, is conscious of himself as a moral-rational creature, and understands his calling with respect to the living God. The point which I wish to make here is that this establishes the analogy existing between the living God and man, the creature of God's hand, formed in God's own image.

Thirdly, to limit ourselves in this brief essay to the New Testament, I would call attention to the word "prosoopon," which means literally "face." To be sure, the literal meaning of this word is "face." As such it is used very often in the Holy Scriptures. It would be superfluous on my part to quote the Word of God to support this fact. Then again, this word is also used in the sense of outward appearances. When I read in 2 Cor. 10:7: "Do ye look on things after the outward appearance?" the words "after the outward appearance" are a translation of an original expression which reads "according to the face." The implication of the word "face" in this verse of Holy Writ has undoubtedly been correctly interpreted by the translation. The same interpretation of "outward appearance" also appears to be the idea of this word as appearing in 1 Thess. 2:17 where the expression "in presence" is a translation of this word "prosoopon."

However, it is our conviction that this word, which in the early Christian church was first used as the word designating "person," is used also in Scripture as implying more than merely one's facial appearance. Permit me to quote a few passages from the Word of God. In Matt. 18:10 I read: "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of My Father which is in heaven." Surely in this passage the "face of My Father" is the Father's Self-manifestation, inasmuch as none can see God essentially and live. In Acts 20:25 I read: "And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more." And in Rev. 22:4: "And they shall see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads." In this latter passage this word "face," which

undoubtedly refers to the face of the Lamb, does not merely emphasize Christ's facial expression in the outward sense, but refers to the blessed Self-manifestation of the living God. Therefore it will be a wonderful glory to see that face, and to be adapted to be able to see it. And the text of Acts 20:25 does, of course, refer, first of all, to Paul's face. However, the underlying thought of the passage is surely that not seeing Paul's face again they would not see him again. Speaking of himself he uses the word "face." It is evident therefore from Scripture that the word "face" is used as referring to more than merely the outward facial appearance.

This last use of the word "face" is striking and surely throws light on the concept "person" in Holy Writ. Does not the apostle use the word "face" when referring to himself? Is the face of man not therefore his self-manifestation, the outward appearance of his inner life? We speak of the eye as the light of the soul, do we not? Animals do not have faces. Man has. If then the face, particularly the eye, is the focal point of his inner life, and Scripture uses the word to denote man himself, we conclude that the person of man is that focal point in his being, of his entire life, through which he is conscious of himself as a moral-rational being.

Our person is therefore not a separately created part of our human nature. We were not created body and soul and person. Thus Dr. A. Kuyper would understand the person of man. According to him it is the center, the core of our being, and it influences and determines the nature of man. This, however, is not in harmony first of all with Rom. 7. According to this passage it is not man's person which determines the spiritual-ethical condition of his nature, but his nature determines his person, his "I". Paul does not teach there that our nature is holy or corrupt because our person is holy or corrupt, but the ethical condition of my nature determines my I. When the apostle writes that "I am carnal, sold under sin; I perform not the good, which I will; I serve with the flesh the law of sin," it is evident that his person sins, and that his person is corrupt exactly because of the corruption of his nature. And, secondly, to explain the person as the heart and core of my being is surely not in harmony with the Incarnation of the Christ. For we confess that the Person of the Son assumed the human nature. If then my person is the core, the heart of my human nature, and the Person of the Son of God, He must have assumed a human nature without a core or center, and, consequently, an incomplete human nature. Hence, also the analogy of the Incarnation supports the view that the concept "Person" in Holy Writ does not refer to an essential part of my being but to man as an individual substantiality in moral-rational nature.

H. V.

Current Events

The events of the past two months have once more reminded the child of God of his utter dependence upon God. The world rushly madly on and says, "There is no God." But call it fate or nature or providence or whatever you will, even the world must admit that it is helpless and is coping with a power against which it cannot succeed. Call it what you will, the ungodly cannot plant their seed or till their ground any sooner than the child of God. The storms and floods of the past two months have very seriously endangered this nation's program for a huge crop wherewith it expects to feed the nation's of the world. The child of God, however, sees the hand of God in this. The world madly rushes on, frets and fumes about the weather and says, by its actions as well as word, "There is no God."

The child of God not only knows that there is a God who controls all things, but he also knows that God cannot be mocked, and wonders if God is not now coming with punishment. He wonders if the events as he sees them transpire about him are not preliminaries to a stinging display of God's wrath upon the workers of iniquity. Not so many years ago God gave us an abundance of wheat and meat, we plowed our wheat under and burned our little pigs while thousands in our own country were poorly fed and many more thousands in Europe were starving. A few of God's children dared to condemn this sinful practice at that time. But the world laughed. How self-centered sin really is! It cares not for God nor man. And apparently God did wink at this sin. Nothing happened. Still one cannot help wondering if God is not waiting to come in His wrath at a time when the punishment will be felt the more keenly. Today the attitude of the world hasn't changed one whit (at least not for the better). There was no acknowledgment of sin, no confession of penitence, no humbling of themselves before God. Instead with even more pride man lifts his head, looks away from God and claims to be the master of his own fate. He is sure of victory in his own power. He sits down and plans a huge harvest for this coming autumn without one thought of God. But God, whom the world ignores, suddenly and unexpectedly appears on the scene in His wrath. The rain descends, floods come and now, the middle of June, many fields must still be plowed. Many crops which should have been in the ground by the first of June at the latest, cannot be sown until after the waters recede and the soil is worked. In other instances crops planted before and during this rainy spell have rotted in the ground. and this condition prevails over quite an extensive section of our country. Is this perhaps the beginning of the fulfillment of Matthew 28? "Nation shall

rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines and pestilences, and earthquakes in divers places." In the past our country saw no need for providing food for the hungry in Europe. Now, all of a sudden, we must raise crops for practically the whole world, and man has set out to do so, not because he delights in good works, for then he would not forget God and behave as though he does not need Him, but because he sees the possibility of profit in it for the future of our country. Our country and its principles. Still God may have other plans, and His plan will be carried out.

We must not be hasty to read the signs of the times and predict a famine for this year or the next, but surely we must not close our eyes to the fact that God has declared that in the last days these things shall come, and that they can happen also to our country. Surely it cannot be truthfully denied that we, as a nation, deserve a famine.

The strikes of the coal miners and workers in defense plants, which have taken place in the last two months, remind one of the scriptural expression, "Peace, peace when there is no peace." While our men are dying and suffering on the battlefield that we may have peace, a bitter war is being fought at home. Labor and Capital are again, or rather still at grips. One cannot help but wonder how furious the battle will be after peace has been achieved on the battlefield. If these strikes occur, as they have occurred, at the expense of our war effort, what will transpire when the war is over and it no longer becomes an excuse for desisting from striking? We may very well have peace in the military sense of the word and yet have a labor war which puts the lie to any claim that peace again reigns upon the earth. Regardless of who is unfair—labor or capital, or both—we must first clean our own house before there really will be peace. We may subdue the hostile nations about us, but what does that avail us if, as citizens of one nation, we live in open hostility with one another? Peace? As long as these conditions exist, there can be no peace. And the vicious nature of the union is also revealed in its readiness to defy even the Government. Even after the Government has taken over the mines so that to strike is to strike against the Government, a second walkout is ordered and executed. Can there be peace, at home, when an element defies the Government?

Meanwhile the post-war world and the possibility of a permanent peace is still much talked about. The other day I read an article written by Erich Brandeis for the King Features Syndicate, entitled, "I have the answer." The author is not in a serious vein at all, but I pass it on to you for what it is worth. He surely does have the answer except that he does not realize that the regeneration power of God's Spirit is necessary to bring about this permanent peace ac-

cording to the way he suggests, and that it will never be accomplished in this world. But, read it for yourself. He writes:

"Columns are being written about it.

The wisest men in the allied countries are thinking about it, talking about it, holding meetings, debating, planning, envisioning.

How to have a permanent peace. How to put an end to wars. That is the great problem and it seems to be extremely difficult to find the answer. Well, gentlemen, I'll save you time and money. I'll save you traveling expenses, reams of paper, gallons of ink.

For I, no expert in economics, politics, statesmanship, psychology or black magic—I, a simple-minded newspaperman—I have the answer.

And that answer has been there ever since the twentieth chapter of the book of Exodus in the Old Testament was written.

For in that chapter are contained the Ten Commandments. If we will but live up to them there can never be another war.

Each war, so far conducted, has been caused by the breach of one or more of the ten commandments.

Hitler created strange gods and took the name of the Lord in vain.

He killed. He bore false witness against his neighbour.

He coveted his neighbours house, his servant, his ox, his ass and everything that was his.

He showed no mercy, he stole, he honored neither father nor mother.

And now that he and his accomplices have violated the commandments, there will be eye for eye, tooth for tooth, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.

Don't you see how easy it is?

Why go to all the trouble of finding a way, when the way is so clear, the road so well marked, the whole thing written out—for centuries, ready for use?

This is my plan, a plan I learned from my father and mother who had it handed down to them generation by generation.

That's all you need to do, you learned statesmen and scientists.

Utopia is here—Exodus, Chapter 20."

It is safe to say that the learned statesmen and scientists will not heed this advice. This answer they do not want. They are not able to desire the keeping of God's commandments. Utopia is not here. It will be in the New Jerusalem where all shall do God's will perfectly.

J. A. H.

CLASSIS EAST

will meet in regular session D. V. Wednesday, July 7, at 9:00 A. M. at Fuller Ave.

D. Jonker,—S. C.

Concerning The Strike

Esteemed Editor:

May I once more obtain space in the Standard Bearer?

In the April 15 issue of our paper Mr. Gritter, secretary of the C.L.A. complains that he is growing tired of constantly repeating that his organization wants no part of the strike such as used by unchristian organizations. But for that he has only himself to blame since he still fails to make plain that, even though there is a difference of degree, there is also an essential and principle difference between the stand of the C.L.A. and the worldly unions on the matter of strikes.

Nor do I grant him the right to infer that my sympathies are in any way with the capitalist who oppresses the workingman. No one denies that the injustices of the man of means have frequently and still do cry to heaven for vengeance, and my sympathy is altogether with the man whose sweat and brawn and blood are used to fill the pockets of the rich. But that does not justify us in proceeding from the principle of the class struggle in our arguments on this subject. And no illegitimate means, such as the strike can ever be used in the fight for justice. A just cause demands that justice be maintained throughout.

Moreover, Mr. Gritter should not becloud the issue by presenting the matter as if I denied the absolute sovereignty of God over all things, particularly in the sphere of the employer and the employee. My vantage point has just exactly been that God is sovereign above all and that man as steward over God's goods is responsible solely to God for what he does with those goods. That is the basis for his responsibility, duty and rights, also in the mutual relation of employer and employee. Both are accountable to God, otherwise how could I appeal to the fifth commandment in condemning the strike? Mr. Gritter should have realized that.

From the rest of his article I gather that the stand of the C. L. A. is:

First of all, that the workingman has the right to refuse to work under unjust conditions and yet hold claim to his job, denying anyone else the moral right to fill his place. He can do this even after he has failed to convince his employer by every other means of the justice of his demands, so that he remains the sole judge that his is a just cause. Even then he holds claim to his job, but refuses to fill it.

Secondly, the workingman has the right to refuse to work in concert with others and by means of peaceful picketing prevent anyone else from taking

their places. The strike is planned in advance and the whole group lays down their tools together, undoubtedly with the purpose of exerting pressure on the employer in order to force him to grant them their wishes.

And thirdly, that the workingman has the right to gain certain concessions which the employer refused to grant under any other circumstances and is now forced to grant even against his will.

My position on the contrary is,

That the employer has the right to his personal property and the free use of it without outside interference. That he has the moral right to continue production by calling in other help when his men refuse to work. And that he has the right to decide on the wages of his employees without being forced to a decision against his will by pressure of his workingmen. If he does not have this authority, given him of God, just what authority does he have in distinction from the employee? We need not even conceive of the relation of master and slave to grant that there is much God-given authority placed upon the employer.

On the other hand, the employee is obliged, in the first place, to work in service of his employer as long as he holds claim to his job. To insist on holding his job and refusing to work is an act of insubordination.

In the second place, he is duty bound before God to respect the rights of his employer, allowing him free use of his property without any outside interference. To hold up production and prevent his employer from hiring others in his place, either by denying them the moral right or by hindering them through picketing the plant, is to assume an authority which he does not have and is at the same time an act of revolt.

And in the third place, any concession gained by forcing the employer to grant it against his will is an act of extortion based on insubordination.

All of which is condemned by the fifth commandment, and is contrary to the demand of Scripture that the servant shall be subject to his master, not only to the good and the gentle, but also to the froward (1 Pet. 2:18), as servants of Christ doing the will of God from the heart (Eph. 6:5, 6), in singleness of heart fearing God (Col. 3:22).

I am sure that I have made my point sufficiently clear that Rev. Petter will agree that my appeal to the fifth commandment in condemning the strike in any form, shape or manner, is not "too precarious," as he stated in the May 15 issue of the Standard Bearer.

My appreciation to the editor for allotting me this space.

C. H.

Contribution

Dear Mr. Editor,

Will you please give me another opportunity to reply to Mr. Ten Elshof? I hope that your patience and that of the readers is not being overtaxed.

I am very glad that brother Ten Elshof has struck a better tone, at least toward me if not toward the C.L.A. I noticed also that the arguments I presented in my previous article and the questions asked were passed over very lightly and that the main burden of the brother's last article is a more direct attack upon the organization which I defend.

In regard to that being more or less Scriptural, I think we can now drop that. The brother evidently accepted my explanation, so why go into that any further? Space in this paper is too valuable for that.

However, brother Ten Elshof still asks for Biblical proof. Now I am at a loss somewhat as to what I am supposed to prove. I do not intend to write about the strike question any further so long as the C.L.A. secretary is doing that. If his articles have not made the C.L.A. position clear and have not convinced the critics I am sure I cannot do so.

Perhaps the brother wants Scriptural proof that a Christian may join even a Christian labor union that strives for the betterment of labor conditions and the defense of the rights of the laborer. I get the impression from his writings, and especially from the texts he likes to quote, that he is of the opinion that Christians may not form such organizations. If brother Ten Elshof is consistent in holding to the interpretation which he gives of those quotations, and their literal application in our day, he must come to that conclusion. If I am correct in that the brother ought to be fair in shifting his attacks from an established organization, in concrete, to an abstract condemnation of any and all labor unions.

But, as to the Biblical proof, now for the position that Christians may form Christian labor unions for the purpose of improvement of labor conditions, the removal of sinful labor relationships and the establishment of just and harmonious conditions, through the application of Christian principles. I admit that not one text can be quoted from the Bible that says in so many words that such organizations must be established. (The same is true also of the opposite position). The same can be said concerning the Christian school. There is not one text in the Scriptures that says in so many words that we must have Christian Schools. There is a reason for that too of course. And I am sure that all of us will say that if the Apostles were living today they would most certainly have been very insistent upon the Christian school for our children, in view of the social condi-

tions, the public schools, etc. No-one will find fault with that. We pride ourselves on being very strong in our convictions concerning the Christian school. That's fine. Yet, I repeat, that there is not one text in the Bible that says in so many words that we must have Christian schools. Of course there is plenty of ground for it. The whole Bible teaches it. But it is nevertheless taught indirectly and by implication. We arrive at the conclusion by deduction.

The same is true also in regard to the Christian labor union. It is not based on one text. Anything that is based on the Reformed view of life never is. It is based on what the whole Bible teaches concerning the sovereignty of God in all of life, the industrial sphere included; it is based on the teachings concerning the position of the Christians as bearers of light, as the representatives of God upon earth to proclaim His will and to contend for righteousness. Those duties come to us as individuals but also to Christians collectively. The Bible speaks to the individual, but to the Church as well. And the Christians as members of that body, in its organic sense, must unitedly do that. Such is the teaching of the Scriptures. That is our Reformed life-view. That is Calvinism.

In answer then to Mr. Ten Elshof's plea for a text I answer: My dear man, I give you the whole Bible. Study it, and don't stare yourselves blind on a few texts which in reality have no bearing on the question at all. Leading Bible scholars all agree that the quotations from James and Paul in regard to the submission of the slaves and servants of those days cannot be literally applied to present day conditions. Yes, also today, authority of employers must still be respected but consideration must be given to the changed conditions, to the freedom which the laborer today has as a result of the general operation of God's Spirit. To us that is a blessing which we may fully enjoy. Also texts in regard to Christian suffering as a result of his Christian confession have no direct bearing on our problem. Sinful conditions which the worldling suffers as well as we cannot be classified under crossbearing. And all that is not crossbearing as a result of our Christian testimony we may and must oppose. Let's please remember that, otherwise we will not remain militant.

The secretary of the C.L.A. has supplied the answer to brother Ten Elshof's attacks on the C.L.A. This is what he writes: "Mr Ten Elshof has given some information which is partly true, but which cannot be classified as undeniable. A brief explanation will have to be given. (1) The brother to whom Mr. T. E. refers was, of course, well known to us. When he joined the C.L.A. he was as far as we know a member of an orthodox Christian Church. He was married to a member of the Roman Catholic Church. The brother then and later never once in our contacts

with him showed anything but great interest in the Christian principles of the C.L.A. and remained loyal when others left. In the depression of 1938 he was out of work. His wife went to another city, back to a job she held before. Later she refused to return to him, although he was anxious to have her. Her job was better than his. When the C.L.A. Board became aware of the situation it considered what should be done. But, the C.L.A. is not a church, and we had no reason whatever, on the basis of his personal conduct, to discipline him. We can hardly be expected to check on church attendance, etc. Nevertheless, the brother was not renominated when his term of office was up and during the last two years of his life he was not any longer an officer of the C.L.A., not even a member in fact, although that was perhaps not known in Holland.

(2) I do not doubt that Mr. T. E. was contacted by a C.L.A. agent to join the organization. The C. L.A. does not ask for a confession of faith. But, before members are accepted they must express agreement with the first four or five articles of the Constitution. (3) It seems a bit unfair to condemn the C.L.A. because of what C.L.A. members may or may not have said to acquaintances of Mr. T. E. But, even if they did, I can understand very well that even a Christian might prefer working next to a fair-minded C.I.O. member above working next to a non-union man who lives only for himself and has no sense of social responsibility. All C.I.O. members are not necessarily evil, and all non-union men are not Christian. (4) That joining the C.L.A. will easily lead to another step, that of joining the C.I.O. or A.F. of L. is definitely not true. Mr. T. E. puts it as if joining the C.L.A. is the first step on a downward path. Joining the C.L.A. because of its principles, will never make one a candidate for membership in other unions. The C.L.A. influence will be to the contrary. Some who were formerly C.L.A. members are now in other unions. But, such men never fully understood the principles of the C.L.A. In regard to the carpenters mentioned by the brother, he has the "facts" wrong again. Those men, most of them, never did promptly join the A.F. of L. The C.L.A. carpenters union was wrecked on the strike question. The C.L.A. had enough prestige but would not allow the men to strike when the majority wanted to. The Exec. Comm. would not sanction it. Then the majority quit the union. They did not promptly join the A.F. of L. Many of them never did. Only a minority later were forced into that organization through A.F.L. controlled P.W.A. jobs. Those are the facts. Incidentally, it ought to be of interest to Mr. T.E. and others to know that the very fact that the C.L.A. stood on its Christian principles were the cause of its failure in Holland to hold its membership. In the furniture factories also the C.L.A. lost

control because it refused to allow the men to strike. That broke the organization. So actually the half-truths contained in the brothers accusations become recommendations of the C.L.A. when the facts are fully known."

So far the quotations from the C.L.A. secretary. That surely puts an entirely different light on it. The last part of brother Ten Elshof's article I cannot now answer. It would take too much space. However, I can briefly say this: that, while the government is even now punishing those who violate the labor laws, of which we approve, such state control of every phase of human life as brother T. E.'s suggestions would entail if put into effect, would in a short time rob us of all freedom of action. That is not in accordance with the Scriptures' teachings concerning the function of government. And, if put into practice, it would be the death-knell of all Christian activity in the social realm. I would advise the brother to read *Christelyk Sociale Beginselen* of C. Smeenk, and *Pro Rege* of Dr. A. Kuyper in that connection.

B. V.

Contribution

Dear Editor,

On our last Classis, one Consistory came with a protest against the action of a neighboring Consistory, for admitting to the Lord's Supper members that came to them from the first mentioned Consistory without the proper testimony of a godly walk.

As I understand it, the protesting Consistory did not go in a body to the other, but just sent a cold letter of protest, (for a mere letter to settle difficulties between two parties, who confess the name of Christ is always cold).

The neighboring Consistory did not give satisfaction, and so this protest came to Classis. Would it not be far better, to go to the guilty Consistory in the spirit of love, calling upon the Name of our God, and relying upon His promise: "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them."? Matt. 18:20.

And if this would prove to be a failure, go there again with a third consistory or a committee thereof?

Was this case really ready for Classis?

Is it therefore not necessary or at least much better, that a consistory also follows the admonition

of Matt. 18, just like a consistory does in trouble between brothers of the same household?

Yours for the welfare of our churches.

J. Cammenga. Sec'y.

The above is first of all a matter for the consistory to which Mr. Cammenga refers. However, that consistory cannot answer Mr. Cammenga's accusation without revealing itself. The result would be a public debate on the whole case in our paper. I do not think that this is desirable at present.

Personally I am convinced that the case to which Mr. C. refers was quite legally before Classis.

The Editor.

Ingezonden

Geachte Redakteur:

We zijn dankbaar voor het antwoord dat u de lezers van de Standard Bearer gaf inzake echtscheiding.

Door uw antwoord is onze opvatting die we hadden aangaande deze kwestie geheel gewijzigd.

Ook wij meenden dat de invoeding,—anders dan van hoererij— een vrijbrief gaf aan de onschuldige partij om weer te hertrouwen, doch uwe verklaring werpt een geheel ander licht over deze kwestie.

In de teksten die u aanhaalt gaat het in de eerste plaats niet over de scheiding en de onschuldige partij, doch over het weer trouwen met een ander, en dat noemt de Schrift overspel.

Nu geloof ik wel dat dit onderwerp sommige pen- nen in beweging zal zetten, om een gangbare meening door een vraag en antwoord op te lossen. Zal moeilijk gaan vrees ik. Toch geloof ik zal het zijn nut hebben om ook in deze netelige kwestie te trachten eenheid van gedachten te brengen, want de Bijbel is voor geen twee uitleggingen vatbaar.

J. R. Vander Wal.

Search me, O God, my heart discern,
Try me, my inmost thought to learn;
And lead me, if in sin I stray,
To choose the everlasting way.

NOTICE

The Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches, in session June 3-7, 1943, examined the following students: Sebastian Cammenga, Walter Hofman, John H. Piersma, who had finished their course at our Theological School, and unanimously admitted them to the candidacy for the ministry of the Word of God and Sacraments in our churches.

They will be eligible to receive and consider a call after June 25, 1943.

D. Jonker,—S. C.

18TH ANNUAL FIELD DAY

JULY 4 — IDEAL PARK

Dinner at 12:00

Games at 1:00

Program at 3:30

Supper at 5:30

Program at 6:30

Notice two changes necessitated by wartime restrictions:

1. The canteen will not sell lunches—only confections, soft-drinks, coffee and doughnuts will be on sale.
2. There will very likely not be enough benches to seat everyone. So bring your own camp chairs or blankets to sit on.

Come all day and spend the day in Christian fellowship

The Committee.

IN MEMORIAM

D Vrouwen Vereeniging der Protestantsche Gereformeerde Kerk te Hull, Iowa, wenscht hiermede haar deelneming te betuigen met een harer leden, Mrs. Gerben De Jong, in het overlijden van haar schoonmoeder,

MRS. THOMAS DE JONG

Moge de God van alle vertroosting de bedroefde familie troosten met Zijnen Geest en genade in de blijde hope van het eeuwige leven in Christus den Heere.

Namens de Vereeniging,

A. Cammenga, Pres.

Mrs. P. Vander Schaaf, Secr.