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MEDITATIE

Wandelen Als Vreemdelingen

Geliefden! ik vermaan u als inwoners en vreemdelingen, dat gij u onthoudt van de vleeschelijke begeerlijkheden, welke krijg voeren tegen de ziel. En houdt uwen wandel eerlijk onder de heidenen, etc.

I Petr. 2:11, 12.

Een uitnemend volk is Gods volk!

Een uitverkoren geslacht, een koninklijk priesterdom!

Een heilig volk, een volk, dat God Zichzelf tot een bijzondere en geliefde bezitting, eene erve, verkregen heeft!

Een volk, dat door God, den Heilige, geroepen werd uit de duisternis tot Zijn wonderbaar licht, opdat het Zijne deugden zou verkondigen!

En de geloovigen in de wereld moeten dat weten. Ze moeten eigen uitnemendheid verstaan, en dat wel in schrille tegenstelling met hetgeen ze eertijds waren, opdat ze hun Ontfermer mogen kennen, en Hem alleen hunne uitnemendheid te danken mogen weten. Want eertijds waren ze Heidenen; ze waren geen volk, zooals het Israel van weleer; doch nu zijn ze Gods volk geworden. Eertijds waren ze geen voorwerp van ontferming. Hun naam was Lo Ruchama, gelijk de tien stammen, waarvan Hosea sprak; doch nu zijn ze juist door Goddelijke ontferming een uitnemend volk geworden.

Ze moeten het dus van Godswege hooren, en door het geloof verstaan en aanvaarden, dat ze een voortreffelijk volk zijn.

Niet echter, opdat zij nu op hunne uitnemendheid zouden bogen.

Niet opdat ze zich nu boven alle behoefte aan vermaning verheven zouden achten.

Integendeel, juist omdat ze een uitnemendheid volk zijn, en dus eenerzijds hunne roeping verstaan, om Gods deugden te verkondigen, maar ook anderzijds zich bewust zijn van eigen zwakheid en ellende vanwege de begeerlijkheden des vleesch, die nog in hunne leden zijn, hebben ze altijd weer behoefte aan het Goddelijk woord der vermaning.

Daarom juist kunnen ze dat Woord hooren.

Daarom, wel verre van het te verwachten, en zich er boven verheven te zoeken ze dat Woord.

Daarom plaatsen ze zich altijd weer onder de bediening er van, en bidden ze, dat ze het mogen hooren, niet als een woord van menschen, maar als het machtige, de ziel bekeerende, Woord van God!

Want alle vleesch is als gras!

Maar het Woord des Heeren, dat onder hen verkondigd wordt, blijft in der eeuwigheid!

Daarom dan: "Gij zijt een uitverkoren geslacht, een koninklijk priesterdom, een heilig volk, een verkregen volk". . . .

Maar ook: "Geliefden! ik vermaan u!"

Houdt uwen wandel eerlijk!

En onthoudt u van de vleeschelijke begeerlijkheden, die krijg voeren tegen de ziel!

Altijd weer neemt het Goddelijke Woord der vermaning, gericht tot Zijn uitnemend volk in de wereld. dezen tweeledigen vorm aan.

Want altijd bestaat de bekeering des menschen immers in het afleggen van den ouden, en het aandoen van den nieuwen mensch. Gods volk is een uitnemend, een heilig volk; ja, maar slechts in beginsel. Wie in Christus Jezus is, is een nieuw schepsel; het oude is voorbij gegaan, en het is alles nieuw geworden. 't Is waar, doch niet in den zin der volmaaktbaarheidsdrijvers; nimmer zoo, dat er nu een tijd gekomen is, althans nabij is, waarin de geloovige de volmaaktheid "alreede gegrepen" heeft. Altijd jaagt hij er naar "of hij het ook grijpen mocht." Altijd is er in hem een ernstig streven, om niet alleen naar sommige, maar naar alle geboden Gods te leven. Altijd staat hij als

een nieuw mensch tegenover de zonde, ook en vooral tegenover eigen zonde, zoodat in dezen zin metterdaad alle dingen nieuw geworden zijn. Maar ook is het tot aan zijnen dood toe waar, dat er in hem slechts een klein beginsel der nieuwe gehoorzaamheid is, en dat juist daarom zijn leven in heiligmaking een strijd blijft tot het einde toe!

Een afleggen van den ouden mensch.

Een aandoen van den nieuwen mensch.

De geloovigen worden vermaand, om hunnen wandel eerlijk, goed, eerbaar te houden onder de Heidenen.

Door *wandel* verstaat de Heilige Schrift heel ons actieve leven, inwendig en uitwendig, met gedachten, woorden, en werken, en dat wel wat ons persoonlijk leven betreft, zoowel als ons handelend optreden in alle verschillende levensbetrekkingen. Onze wandel is ons leven in betrekking tot vrouw en kind, tot heer en knecht, tot koning en onderdaan, in huisgezin, in de school, op ons kantoor of in de fabriek, in stad en staat, in oorlog en vrede, in de positie, waarin God ons heeft gesteld, en met al de middelen, die Hij ons ter hand stelt. En door een "eerlijken" wandel wordt verstaan zulk een handelend optreden, zulk eene levensopenbaring, dat de uitnemendheid van Gods volk er in tot openbaring komt, dat het openbaar wordt, dat Gods volk een koninklijk priesterdom is, een heilig volk, dat God Zich tot een bijzondere erve verkregen heeft; een wandel, waardoor metterdaad de deugden verkondigd worden van Hem, Die hen uit de duisternis heeft geroepen tot Zijne wonderbaar licht!

En nu betreft de vermaning met nadruk het leven der geloovigen *onder de heidenen*.

En dat houdt tweeërlei in.

In de eerste plaats wil dit zeggen, dat Gods Woord hier vooral den vinger legt op ons publieke leven, op ons leven in de wereld, op onzen wandel en handel op allerlei levensgebied, in staat en maatschappij. Het gaat hier nu niet in het bijzonder over de verborgen dingen des harten, of over ons privaat leven als geloovigen, of ook over het leven der geloovigen onderling, maar over den wandel der geloovigen daar, waar ze slag op slag in aanraking komen met de wereld, in handel en nijverheid, op het kantoor en in de fabriek, en in heel hun openbaar leven. Dat dit Woord juist hierop doelt, wordt duidelijk uit de verzen, die volgen.

En in de tweede plaats ziet dit Woord ook op de antithese. Die Heidenen toch zijn de goddelooze wereld. Zij wandelen en dat op dezelfde levensgebieden, waarop de geloovigen "eerlijk" moeten wandelen, in de duisternis. Zij dienen daar de god dezer eeuw, zijn vreemd van het leven Gods, en doen den wil des vleesch en der gedachten. Zij volgen de begeerlijkheden des vleesch en der oogen, en wandelen in de grootheid des levens. Onder hen hebben de geloovigen hunnen wandel. Ze kunnen, ze mogen niet uit de wereld gaan. Het is niet hunne roeping, ook al ware dit moge-

lijk, om zich vreesachtig terug te trekken uit die wereld. Integendeel, onder die Heidenen is hun wandel, maar in het midden der wereld is het hunne roeping hunnen wandel eerlijk te houden, als koninklijk priesterdom op te treden, en te staan voor de zake van den Zone Gods!

Houdt uwen wandel eerlijk onder de Heidenen!

De geloovigen hebben een strijd te strijden! Een geestelijken strijd, waarin het nooit door kracht of geweld, maar altijd alleen door den Geest des Heeren geschieden kan, maar dan ook zekerlijk geschiedt!

En deze strijd begint van binnen uit.

De lijn der antithese trekt zich door tot in het eigen bestaan der geloovigen zelf.

Daarom moet aan deze positieve vermaning, om hunnen wandel eerlijk te houden onder de Heidenen, wel worden toegevoegd, ja, zelfs er aan voorafgaan, de negatieve waarschuwing der onthouding: "dat gij u onthoudt van de vleeschelijke begeerlijkheden, welke krijg voeren tegen de ziel."

Vleeschelijke begeerlijkheden, dat zijn alle onheilige lusten, allerlei begeerten, die zich niet om God concentreeren, in Hem niet hun bron, en daar om ook niet hun middenpunt en doel hebben. Het zijn begeerten, die uitgaan naar allerlei dingen los van en tegenover God, om in die dingen, en niet in God, heil en zaligheid te zoeken; om op die dingen, en niet op den levenden God, ons vertrouwen te stellen; om naar die dingen, en niet naar God en Zijnen dienst, te jagen en te streven. Het jagen naar de wereld, naar eer en macht, naar geld en goed en zinsgenot. . . .

Onthoudt u!

Want ze werken immers ook in het vleesch der geloovigen.

En ze voeren krijg tegen de ziel, dat is, in strijd met het streven van het beginsel des nieuwen levens, zoeken ze heerschappij te voeren over de verlorene ziel, over de gedachten, neigingen, begeerten, over verstand en wil van Gods kind. Ze zoeken de heerschappij over de ziel aan den nieuwen mensch te ontworstelen tot haar verderf.

Onthoudt u!

Bevredigt ze niet! Bestrijdt haar met al, wat in u is! Haat en vliedt de zonde, en doodt de werkingen des lichaams!

Opdat gij uwen wandel eerlijk moogt houden onder de Heidenen!

Als kinderen des lichts!

Tot prijs der heerlijkheid Zijner genade!

Zelfs in en door degenen, die tegenstaan, en die de zake des Zoons Gods lasteren!

Zoo toch doen de Heidenen; zoo doet de wereld.

Zij mogen gaarne kwalijk van u spreken, als van kwaaddoeners.

Dat is onvermijdelijk. Gij toch staat door de ge-

nade Gods, als een koninklijk priesterdom voor de zake van den Zoon Gods. En als gij als zoodanig wandelt, dan wordt ge openbaar als kinderen des lichts, en dan wordt de duisternis door u bestraft. Maar zij zijn van de duisternis, en wandelen in de duisternis, en hebben de duisternis lief. En ze haten het licht, juist omdat het hen bestraft en veroordeelt met een oordeel Gods, dat ook hen tot in het diepst van hunne consciëntie raakt, maar dat ze in ongerechtigheid ten onder houden.

Daarom is de haat der Heidenen niet te vermijden.

Ze wordt opgewekt juist doordat gij uwen wandel eerlijk onder hen houdt.

En ze spreken kwalijk van u. Neen, niet rechtstreeks lasteren ze uwen eerlijken wandel, want daardoor zouden ze zichzelf slechts destemeeer veroordeelen. Maar ze stellen u voor als kwaaddoeners. Ze spreken kwalijk van de zake des Zoons van God, van de Kerk, van hare belijdenis, van het Christelijk geloof. Ge zijt eene gevaarlijke secte, ge zoekt niet het welzijn der wereld, ge gelooft in eenen vreeselijken God, ge zijt een groep van achterblijvers en dompers, die eigenlijk geen plaats moest hebben in de maatschappij, omdat ge u altijd weer tegen het belang der wereld stelt. Ge zijt eene secte, die overal tegengesproken wordt. . . .

Als van kwaaddoeners spreken ze kwalijk van u.

Destemeeer is het uwe roeping, om uwen wandel eerlijk te houden in het midden dier kwaadsprekende wereld, opdat ge hun geen werkelijken grond moogt geven voor hun kwalijk spreken.

En opdat ge oorzaak moogt worden, dat ook zij uit de goede werken, die zij in u zien, en die ze, in weerwil van hunne begeerte om kwaad van u te spreken, toch in het diepst hunner consciëntie als goede werken moeten erkennen, en ook werkelijk erkennen, God verheerlijken, als de eenige Oorsprong en Bewerker dier goede werken, in den dag der bezoeking.

De dag der bezoeking is altijd de dag der bezoeking Gods, de dag, wanneer God het bij de menschen komt bezoeken. En als God het bij de menschen komt bezoeken, dan komt Hij altijd als de absolute Heer, en als de alleen rechtvaardige Rechter van hemel en aarde. En als Hij als de Rechtvaardige Rechter van hemel en aarde de dingen bij de menschen komt bezoeken, dan rechtvaardigt Hij in de consciëntiën der menschen altijd Zichzelf, Zijne eer, Zijne zaak, de zake van de Zone Gods, zoodat allen het moeten erkennen, dat Hij alleen de Heere is, en de alleen Goede. Dan stelt Hij ook de goede werken van Zijn volk zoowel als het kwaadspreken der Heidenen, in het rechte licht, en dan moeten ook de kwaadsprekers de goede werken der Zijnen als goede werken erkennen, en Hem als de eenige Bron en Bewerker dier goede werken daarin verheerlijken. Neen, buiten dezen dag der bezoeking, verheerlijkt de natuurlijke mensch niet God in de goede werken der geloovigen.

Hij lastert ze.

Spreekt hij niet kwalijk van hen, als van kwaaddoeners?

Maar de dag der bezoeking komt zeker.

O, zeker, bij sommige dier Heidenen kan die dag der bezoeking ook hier komen, als God hen komt bezoeken en het licht Zijns oordeels zoo in hunne harten laat schijnen, dat ze zich in stof en assche bekeeren, hun eigen kwaadspreken veroordeelen en belijden, en nu voorts de goede werken, die ze eertijds lasterden en als kwaaddoen voorstelden, tot verheerlijking Gods erkennen, om ook zelf daarin te wandelen.

Edoch, van heel de wereld is dit hier nimmer waar.

Doch er komt een andere, een finale dag der bezoeking.

In dien dag moet alles, wat hier voor het oog der wereld krom scheen, recht gezet worden, en dat in het onfeilbare, en nimmer te ontkennen licht van Gods rechtvaardig oordeel.

Dan worden de boeken der consciëntiën geopend, ook der kwaadsprekers.

Dan zal het uit die consciëntië, waarin God immers ook hier altijd Zijn eigen oordeel schreef, openbaar worden, dat ook de kwaadsprekers zelfs in deze wereld de goede werken van Gods volk hebben gezien, en ook erkend, maar dat ze in vijandschap tegen God de waarheid in ongerechtigheid ten onder hielden.

En dan zal God gerechtvaardigd worden in Zijn werk.

Want alle knie zal zich buigen en alle mond Zijn lof betuigen!

De zake van den Zone Gods zal gerechtvaardigd worden!

Tot roem en prijs Zijner genade!

Ik vermaan u. . . .

Als inwoners en vreemdelingen!

Dat wil zeggen: in uwe capaciteit als inwoners en vreemdelingen, vermaan ik u, om uwen wandel eerlijk te houden onder de Heidenen!

Want in geestelijk-zedelijken zin zijn de geloovigen inwoners en vreemdelingen. Een inwoner is eigenlijk een bij-woner iemand, die nog wel ergens bij in woont, maar die zijn eigenlijk tehuis daar toch niet meer heeft; een kostganger, die tijdelijk onderdak zoekt, maar toch naar huis verlangt, en ook als een bijwoner zich gedraagt. En een vreemdeling is iemand, die buiten zijn eigen land verkeert, en geen burger is van het land, waarin hij tijdelijk verkeert.

Zoo is het met de geloovigen krachtens hun nieuwe geboorte door de opstanding van Jezus Christus. Geestelijk-zedelijk zijn ze bijwoners in de wereld, en hun vaderland is boven.

Wandelt dan als zoodanig, u onthoudende van de vleeschelijke begeerten.

En worstelend op naar Sions top!

H. H.

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EDITORIALS

The Evangelical and The Reformed Church

Gradually my collection of the necessary documentary evidence for a complete picture of the manner in which the merger of the Reformed Church in the United States and the Evangelical Synod of North America was accomplished is completed. Through the kindness of the Rev. W. E. Korn of Cassel, South Dakota, I received the *Acta* of the General Synods of the E. and R. of 1934, 1936, and 1938. My hearty thanks!

How much more fruitful could our discussion at the conference of last fall have been, and how much more definite might our advice have been to the brethren that invited us to the conferences, had we had as clear a conception of what really took place, as we have today!

Not as if it would have made any principal difference. For we are still convinced that no man that loves the Reformed truth at all can possibly find a home in the united church. He must be convinced in his deepest soul that it is his sacred calling to break with the E. and R. We expressed this as our conviction at the conference; and that is still our conviction. But we could have given more definite advice as to the way in which this break should be accomplished, and we could even have helped the brethren, if they had so desired, to draw up the necessary documents to make the separation as well as the new organization an accomplished fact.

In the meantime, as my collection of documentary evidence is being completed, I find that what I wrote thus far, is in the main quite correct. I did not err when I stated that no one officially protested against the action of the General Synod of the R. C. in the U. S. of 1932, whereby the Plan of Union was officially adopted. It is true that four classes, Minnesota, South Dakota, Eureka, and North Dakota, are recorded in the *Acta* of 1934 as having rejected the Plan of Union, while three other classes adopted it under certain conditions, and one declined to take action. However, it must be remembered that these negative decisions were received and recorded by the General Synod of the Reformed Church in the United States, 1934, merely as so many contrary votes, and not as protests, nor as notifications that the opposing classes would not abide by the majority. When the decisions of all the classes

had been recorded by the General Synod of 1934, it appeared that fifty-one classes voted in favor of the adoption of the Plan of Union, three voted in favor under specified conditions, four rejected the Plan completely, and one had not taken action. And the Synod then simply took the stand that the Plan of Union had been adopted by the Reformed Church in the United States by an overwhelming majority. And just as any assembly, when a certain proposition is adopted by a majority vote, expects the minority to abide by the decision of the assembly thus arrived at, so the General Synod of 1934, considering that the votes of the Classes stood fifty-four in favor of the Plan of Union to four against and one blank, evidently expected that also the four opposing classes would abide by the decision to accomplish the union.

Nor can I find any official notification in the *Acta* of that year, or of any succeeding synodical year, by any classis, informing Synod that such classis refused to take responsibility for the decision to accomplish the union with the Evangelical Synod.

It is hardly true that even Classis Eureka never had anything to do with the merged Church. On the contrary, at the General Synods of the merged Church held in 1934, 1936, and 1938, Classis Eureka was represented by official delegates.

There, then, you have the complete picture.

What in view of all this, should any group of Churches that do not agree with the principles of the E. and R., and that are determined to break with its fellowship do?

I believe that they should draw up a well-motivated document in which they explain to the General Synod of the E. and R. why they are opposed to the principles of the Evangelical and Reformed Church; and in which they definitely declare that they break with the fellowship of the merged Church, to return to their former Reformed basis.

And then they should reorganize and adopt their own basis of doctrinal and church political principles.

This opinion is, of course, not at all influenced by any considerations concerning church property.

But these must be held secondary.

When a church of which we are members departs from the truth, we have no choice. No other considerations than our calling to join ourselves to the purest manifestation of the Church of Christ in the world may motivate our action. We may never go along with an apostatizing church on her slippery path.

Here that often abused text, Rev. 3:20, must be applied: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock."

The Lord stands, not at the door of the sinner's heart begging to come in, but at the door of the false church that has cast Him out, and which He will spew out of His mouth, calling to the faithful that are still within to open the door and come out to Him.

If we hear His voice, we have His promise that He will sup with us, and we with Him, in other words, that He will receive us as His Church, and instruct us by His Spirit and Word.

And that should be quite sufficient for us.

I promised that I would quote some examples of what is actually being taught in the Evangelical and Reformed Church.

But this must wait now till next time.

H. H.

The Text of a Complaint

In briefly discussing the Complaint of some brethren in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church against the Presbytery of Philadelphia in the matter of the examination and licensing of Dr. Gordon H. Clark, I wish it to be understood that I have no intention of defending the views of the latter, for the simple reason that I am not sufficiently acquainted with them.

I confess that the "Complaint" has left the impression on me that, perhaps, in this controversy I would rather take the side of the accused than that of the accusers.

Besides, I read some statements, reputedly of Dr. Clark, with which I heartily agree. For instance, in the little pamphlet entitled "Hint for Personal Workers," which I am informed is written by Dr. Clark, I find the following statements:

"Sin, however, is worse than a disease. It is true that the Scriptures sometimes speak of sin as a sickness, and of salvation as healing and health. But the Scriptures more fully reveal man's condition when they speak of sin as death, and of salvation as eternal life. In dealing with the sinner, therefore, it is necessary to remember that he cannot be left alone to recuperate, but that, dead in sins, he must be raised to newness of life.

"Scripture is very explicit in teaching that all men are born in sin, and are incapable of doing any spiritual good. Proverbs 21:4 says, *the plowing of the wicked is sin*. Plowing is here taken as an example of ordinary daily occupations, and the verse means that no matter what an unregenerate person does, he is sinning."

Again:

Some earnest Christian workers, not well instructed in the Scriptures, unintentionally pollute the Gospel by denying the awful sinfulness of man. They say that the will of man is free, that he can accept Christ and

please God, if only he uses enough will-power. They claim, in effect, that while most of man's nature needs to be regenerated, his will is unaffected or only slightly affected by sin, and so does not need the almighty regenerating power of the Holy Ghost.

"These Christian workers will tell a sinner that if he first puts faith in Christ and His promises, God will then regenerate him. Thus they make the human will the initial cause of regeneration. Thus they teach that before regeneration, a sinner can have faith in Christ; that man is not dead in sins, but only partly so; and that the part that is not dead, with some co-operation from God to be sure, can save the other part.

... "Man cannot of himself will to exercise faith in God. Faith in God is a good act, not a sinful act; and the unregenerate cannot perform good acts—even their plowing is sinful. The Scripture uniformly presents faith in Christ as a gift of God: a gift, be it noted, that he does not give to all men."

And he concludes:

"The Christian worker, then, must pray that God will regenerate the hearts of his hearers; he must depend neither upon his own powers of persuasion nor upon the sinner's will. He must faithfully present Christ crucified *according to the Scriptures*, being assured that the word of God will not return void, but will accomplish that whereto God sent it.

"Let us then, give all the glory to God, and not divide the glory with a sinful human will."

One receives the impression from these statements that the writer cannot be very far from the kingdom of God, and that, in part at least, the criticism of his accusers is due to the fact that the latter viewed him from the standpoint of the Christian Reformed "Three Points," as is evident from "the Text of a Complaint."

On the other hand, in a pamphlet, also attributed to Dr. Clark, entitled "His People," in which the author defends the doctrine that Christ atoned only for the elect, we find the following statements:

"There is of course a sense in which Christ died for all men. He is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world, as this same John tells us in his first epistle. No greater sacrifice would be needed even if all men were to be saved. But obviously Christ is not the propitiation for all sin in the sense that he saves all men, but only in a vague, general sense."

And again:

"And why, may one ask, does any true Christian, even when emphasizing the general propitiation for all sins, wish to conceal the particular grace and election of God by which God chose him specially and personally out of a mass of lost mankind? We who were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world are his people whom he came to save. To God alone be all the glory."

Now, if I were to formulate a complaint against Dr. Clark, I would surely attack this somewhat dark theory of general propitiation. But the complainants themselves, evidently, did not consider this in conflict with the Reformed view.

It may be worth while to examine the views of the complainants as they are expressed in "The Text of a Complaint."

But this must wait till our next issue.

H. H.

Aangaande Dr. Schilder

We nemen het volgende over uit een brief uit Nederland, gepubliceerd in *De* (Christelijke Gereformeerde) *Wachter*:

"Onze Gereformeerde Kerk is verdeeld door de Schilderkwestie. De scheuring is een feit, en dat is een zeer bedroevende zaak in dezen tijd nu alles om eenheid vraagt. Maar met erkenning van de groote verdiensten van Dr. Schilder was het toch niet mogelijk hem te handhaven. Zijn houding was zeer onhebbelijk en dictatoriaal. Velen dan ook die het dogmatisch met Schilder wel eens waren, zijn niet met hem meegegaan."

Hoe gaarne zouden we van deze "scheuring" wat meer weten!

Eene onhebbelijke en dictatoriaal houding zal toch niet de eigenlijke oorzaak van de scheuring kunnen zijn. Deze termen doen ons al te veel denken aan een voorwendsel van tegenstanders, die iets zoeken om eigen doen te rechtvaardigen, wanneer men een overigens gereformeerd man uitwerpt. We zijn aan zulke beschuldigingen wel gewoon.

Intusschen waren de "meeningsverschillen" in de Gereformeerde Kerken van Nederland vóór de invasie nog zoo onbelijnd, dat we ons niet kunnen voorstellen, hoe op grond dier verschillen eene scheuring zou kunnen worden gerechtvaardigd. En sedert de invasie hebben we niets meer uit Nederland gehoord, zoodat we ook niet weten, hoe zich die "meeningsverschillen" verder hebben ontwikkeld.

We zullen dus moeten wachten tot we meer inlichting ontvangen.

H. H.

ATTENTION, CLASSIS WEST

Classis West will convene D.V. Wednesday, March 7 in the Sioux Center Prot. Ref. Church. Will those who desire lodging please contact the undersigned.

Rev. M. Gritters, S. C.

The Triple Knowledge

An Exposition Of The Heidelberg Catechism

Part Two.

Of Man's Redemption

Lord's Day XIII.

3.

Our Lord.

In the Apostolic Confession, the confession that Jesus Christ is our Lord follows upon the declaration that He is the only begotten Son of God. And this sequence must not be broken or lost sight of in the explanation of the phrase *nostrum Dominum*, our Lord. The lordship of Jesus Christ over His Church as a whole, and over believers individually, is the lordship of the only begotten Son of God. It is true that in the way of sin and grace this lordship receives a new and deeper meaning. For the only begotten Son of God, as we shall learn subsequently, was also conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the virgin Mary; He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried, and descended into hell. He was raised on the third day, and is exalted in the highest heavens at the right hand of God. And in this way He became our Lord in a new, a deeper, a richer sense than could ever have been revealed in His Lordship as the Creator of all things. It is to this that the Catechism refers in its answer to the question: "Wherefore callest thou him our Lord?" For it gives the following reply: "Because he hath redeemed us, both soul and body, from all our sins, not with gold and silver, but with his precious blood, and hath delivered us from all the power of the devil; and thus hath made us his own property." Yet even so, it dare not be forgotten, that this Jesus, crucified and raised, exalted at the right hand of God, is the only begotten Son of God, the same by Whom all things are created, and that as such, even while He is our Mediator in human nature, we call Him our Lord.

This is evidently the meaning of the confession: the *only begotten Son our Lord*.

If we do not bear in mind that Christ is the "natural and eternal Son of God," very God, like unto the Father and the Holy Spirit, or deny it, the confession that He is our Lord is emptied completely of all its real significance. For then He is Lord as mere man, a lord among other lords, more powerful, perhaps, than all, yet strictly limited in His authority and might, both

with regard to its scope and with respect to its intrinsic power. Then His lordship becomes a matter of relative significance. He really is Lord because we call Him so, just as other religious groups in the world might call their leader lord. The act of calling Him lord is really a matter of hero-worship. We are, in that case, only a group of religious enthusiasts, among many others in the world, who reverence the founder of their religion by calling him their lord. And we may, perhaps, claim that, comparatively, he is worthy to become lord of all the world, because the religion he founded is much purer and nobler than any other religion, such as Confucianism, Brahminism, Buddhism, Mohammedanism, and whatever religions there may be found anywhere. Or, to stay a little nearer at home, by calling Jesus Christ *nostrum Dominum*, "our Lord," we probably express a feeling of sentimental piety: we consider that He has done so much for us that we feel we ought to do something for Him. He is our Lord because we are willing to serve Him, to further His cause, to crown Him king, and to win souls for Him. And failing to understand the real lordship of the only begotten Son of God, we feel rather "religious" and self-righteous.

Over against all these inventions of our sinful heart, we must clearly understand, and emphatically maintain, that by calling Jesus Christ "our Lord" we do not place Him in a class, in a category of lords such as we know many in the world, but that we acknowledge Him as the sole Lord over us and over all. We do not understand the term in a relative, comparative, but in the absolute sense of the word. The expression *nostrum Dominum* in the confession of the Church does not refer to a limited, but to an unlimited lordship. It does not tolerate other, perhaps inferior, lordships next to or even under the lordship of Jesus Christ, but it is strictly exclusive of them and wholly intolerant. His lordship is not contingent or dependent upon anything we may do: He is not and does not become Lord, nor even *our* Lord, because we acknowledge Him as such, and are willing to serve Him, but on the contrary, our acknowledgement of Him as our Lord is strictly dependent on the sovereign exercise of His lordship over us. Even the marvellous fact that we are able to say: "*Credo. . . in Dominum nostrum*," I believe. . . in our Lord, is only a manifestation of His mighty and sovereign lordship. For "no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost," which is the same as saying that no one can acknowledge His lordship but by the power of His own lordship over him.

But to maintain this we must not remove the expression "our Lord" from its proper place as it appears in the *Apostolic Confession*, i.e. in immediate connection with "his only begotten Son." We must not even make the mistake of treating, at this point, the exaltation of our Lord Jesus Christ at the right hand of God,

as if His lordship had its deepest origin in the power that was conferred upon Him at this glorification of His human nature. All this comes later, and is not discussed till the nineteenth Lord's Day of the Catechism. We are now dealing with the lordship of the only begotten Son of God, not, indeed, as He created us, but as "He redeemed us, body and soul, from all our sins, not with gold and silver but with His precious blood, and delivered us from all the power of the devil; and thus made us his own property." The only begotten Son, always the revelation of the Father, i.e. of the triune God, is our Lord, not only now as our Creator, but also as our Redeemer and Deliverer. With Thomas the Church confesses: "My Lord and my God." John 20:28. It is He of Whom the apostle Paul writes: "for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Rom. 10:12, 13. The only begotten Son, God of God, and Light of Light, Who, to be sure was manifested in the flesh, Who died and was raised, and Who is exalted at the right hand of God, but Who is still very God Himself,—Him we call *nostrum Dominum*, our Lord. And in Him we call our Lord, and now in a deeper sense than ever before, Him, Whom in our natural state we refuse to acknowledge as such: the God of our salvation!

You see, the only begotten Son is also Lord as our Creator, as the eternal Word, through Whom all things were made. For "in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made." This same Jesus Christ, Whom we now call our Lord, is also the son, by Whom God made the worlds, Who is the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, Who upholds all things by the Word of His power. Heb. 1:2, 3. He is the image of the invisible God, and by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him and for Him. Col. 1:15, 16. He is, therefore, the Creator, the sole Proprietor, the absolute Lord of all things, also of you and me, and with body and soul we belong to Him. Also in creation He is the revelation of the only sovereign God, the Lord of all, Whom we are bound to love with all our heart and mind and soul and strength, to glorify, to serve, to adore, and to give thanks.

But we rebelled against this Lord.

We refused to acknowledge Him as our Lord. We turned away from Him, rejected His Word, and gave heed to the word of the devil in preference to His. And thus we became slaves of Satan, and were held in the bondage of sin and of corruption.

Not, you understand, as if this affected the lordship

of our God, or as if we really succeeded to dethrone the Lord of heaven and earth, the Creator, the Word by Whom all things were made. He is and remains sovereign, the sole Lord of all. Even the fact that by our rebellion we became slaves of the devil, lost in sin, guilty and damnable, so that we were incapable of doing any good and inclined to all evil, dead through trespasses and sins, unspeakably miserable, is but a manifestation of His Lordship, the execution of His sentence upon us. But although He is and ever remains Lord, ethically we choose the lordship of the devil, and our rightful Lord, Whom to know and to serve in love is life, we hated in our unspeakable folly. And although "the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead," yet we held, and do hold, "the truth in unrighteousness," and we "glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in our imaginations, and our foolish heart was darkened," Rom. 1:19-21.

But what happens?

God will give His glory to no other. Before the foundation of the world, He had determined to reveal His Lordship and to be known and acknowledged as the sole Lord, and to be served and glorified as Lord, in a far higher and deeper, a far more intimate and glorious sense than in creation. Accordingly, He had ordained His only begotten Son, the image of the invisible God, the Word of creation, to be the Firstborn of every creature, and that, too, as the Firstborn from the dead, and as the Firstborn among many brethren, the Head of the elect Church. And according to this eternal good pleasure of God, the only begotten Son of God, the eternal Word, in the fulness of time was manifested in the flesh. Our Lord, Whom we had rejected, and against Whom we had rebelled, came very near us, spoke to us face to face and mouth to mouth, united Himself with us in an inseparable union. What is more, He reached down into our misery, into our darkness of sin and death, where in our folly, and by divine sentence of this same Lord, we were held in the slavery of the devil, and He redeems us. He purchased us free from the bondage of Satan, not as He paid the price of redemption to the devil, for he had no other right over us than that which was implied in the divine sentence of death, but to the Father Whose revelation He is, and, therefore,—O wonder of wonders!—to Himself. And He did not pay a mere external price, He did not dig into the treasures of His own creation, for all the gold and silver in the world would not have been sufficient unto our redemption, but He redeemed us with His own precious blood, the price of an eternal love! And thus He obtained for Himself, i.e. at the bar of divine justice, the right to make us His property, not, you understand, as a mere possession with which He may do as He pleases (for this we are even

in our sin), but a precious property of love! He obtained for Himself the right of that lordship according to which we may once more, and now in a deeper sense than ever before, love Him, trust in Him, and serve Him, as our Lord!

But what then?

Does the devil, seeing that the justice of God is satisfied, and that the price of their redemption is paid, now willingly surrender the elect to their rightful Lord? Or, perhaps, does this *only begotten Son our Lord* now send men to us to tell us how He loved us, to offer us His lordship, and are we thus persuaded of our own free will to forsake the service of the devil, and to enter His service? Do we, of ourselves, seeing how great a price He paid for our redemption, now say: "This hath He done for me, now I will do something for Him?"

God forbid!

No, but having redeemed us, He also *delivers* us us from the dominion of sin, and from all the power of the devil. His lordship is always *His* lordship, whether in creation or in redemption. We never make Him our Lord. And no man can say that Jesus is Lord except by His own Spirit. And if anyone hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His. He exercises His lordship over us. He, the only begotten Son of God, the eternal Word, our rightful Lord, against Whom we had rebelled, and Whose enemies we are by nature, and Who became flesh, was crucified and raised, exalted at the right hand of God, and is become the quickening Spirit; He Himself, having destroyed him that had the power of death, that is the devil, now comes to visit us in our prison of sin and death, and *delivers* us, "who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Heb. 2:14, 15. He dethrones the devil and sin from our heart, He breaks the shackles of corruption and death in which we are held, He removes the enmity against our rightful Lord from our inmost mind, He dispels the darkness of our folly, He enlightens us, sheds abroad the love of God in our hearts; and then He calls us by His own mighty and sovereign Word, through the gospel. And then we come. Then we see the folly of our sin, the unspeakable foolishness of ever having wanted to rebel against His blessed lordship, the unspeakable wretchedness of the slavery of the devil. Then we begin to love Him, our Creator-Lord, now as our Lord-Redeemer, and to long for Him, to cry out to Him from the depths. Then we trust in Him, surrender ourselves to Him, and fall down before Him in adoration with the words of glad worship on our lips: "My Lord, and my God!"

Thus we come to the confession: *Credo. . . in dominum nostrum*, "I believe. . . in our Lord." The confession is but the fruit of the exercise of His lordship. It is but the expression of our experience of the lordship of the only begotten Son of God, our Re-

deemer and Deliverer, the God of our salvation.

All boasting is excluded!

No flesh can ever glory in His presence. His lordship is always known and experienced as strictly *His*, and as absolute. Hence, we can only meet it with a *Credo*, that is itself the fruit of His dominion over us!

And since He exercises this particular lordship by the one Spirit, and in the one Body, His Church, therefore, we say emphatically "*Dominum nostrum*," *our* Lord. For now "there is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling. One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, Who is above all, and through all, and in you all." Eph. 4:4-6.

The only begotten Son, the eternal Word, the Creator-Redeemer, Jesus Christ our Lord!

And do you not see now, how serious this confession is? Do you not understand that the lordship of Jesus, which we confess with the Church of all ages, is all-comprehensive, strictly exclusive, absolutely intolerant, and it dare never be mentioned in the same breath with any other lordship? Can you not see the reason why the saints of the early Church preferred the stake and the scaffold, preferred to be cast before the wild beasts, or into a caldron of boiling oil, rather than say: "Jesus is Lord, and Caesar is also Lord." Do you not discern now, that this was ultimately, not a matter of their own choice, but the exercise of Jesus' lordship in them and over them? Next to Jesus, no Caesar is ever lord!

That Jesus is our Lord means that He is our Proprietor, He alone, and that we are His property, His alone and completely. We are His with body and soul, with heart and mind and will, with wife and children, and brothers and sisters, with all our life and possessions. It means that our heart and all its issues are His, that our thoughts and desires, our intentions and our motives are His. It means that the sight of our eyes, the hearing of our ears, the speech of our mouth, the actions of our members belong to Him. They are His alone. They belong to no one else.

That Jesus is our Lord implies that He is responsible for us, and for all that we are, with body and soul, in life and in death, for time and all the ages of eternity, to keep us, to love us, to defend us, and to lead us on to the final victory, to the glory of God's everlasting tabernacle. And it means that He alone can bear that responsibility, that no one else can possibly share it with Him. And the confession that He is our Lord implies that we completely trust in Him, and surrender ourselves to His responsibility, that we trust in no other lordship, neither are fearful of, and terrorized by any other. Under His lordship there is freedom from fear!

That Jesus is our Lord means that He rules over us, not by force and compulsion, but by grace and the im-

elling power of His love. It signifies that His mind is our mind, that His will is our will, that His Word is our law, and that His law is our delight. It is He alone that determines, not only what we shall do, but also what we shall think, and feel, and desire, and by what motives we shall be governed. It means that He has dominion over the life of our body and of our soul, and over all our relationships in the midst of this present world, in the home and in the shop, in labor and industry, in the school and on the street, in the Church and in the State, in peace and in war, in prosperity and in adversity. And the confession that He is our Lord implies that we gladly and willingly acknowledge His Lordship, and that it is our earnest desire and endeavor to know His will, and to obey no other Word than His in any department of our life in the world, no matter what may be the cost, yea, though we should lose our very life in His service.

For, let us make no mistake, the confession that Jesus is Lord is limited to the Church. It does not mean that you can gain the world for Christ, or that you can crown Him King in every domain of this present world. He alone exercises His lordship of grace; and He limits it to His elect Church. And the world hates His lordship, and hates those that consistently confess it. Hence, if you represent the cause of the Son of God in the world, you must expect tribulation. Only by compromising the strictly intolerant lordship of Jesus Christ can you escape this. We must suffer with Him. But even so, we are of good cheer. For we know that He is responsible for us and that He has overcome the world. And if we suffer with him, we shall also be glorified together!

H. H.

Samson's Finding Occasion

In our previous essay on Samson we tried to set forth this judge in a right light ethically. Attending to all that is reported of him in the Scriptures, we arrived at the following conclusions concerning the man. Samson was a true child of God. The principle from which he acted, in warring God's warfare and in judging Israel was faith. His passion for that war proceeded from a good heart. It was thus as to its core love of God and of His people and a holy hatred of God's adversaries. It was in His love that God moved him, love of Samson and of the true Israel. The man was blessed in his deeds. But we saw too that, though the mainspring of his life was faith, his faith was at times obscured by the sins of the flesh. Being a man of gross sensuality, his besetting sin was

that he loved strange women. This came out first in his marrying into one of the Philistine families in Timnah, whither he had gone to seek an occasion against the Philistines by whom Israel was being oppressed and out of whose hand he had to begin to deliver Israel. That was a forbidden marriage, as we saw. For the Philistines were reckoned with the Canaanites. Thus his marrying that Philistine girl was not of the Lord in the sense that He had commanded it and had worked in Samson's heart a desire for such a forbidden marriage. For it bears repeating that God is not the author of sinful affections of men. Yet, as was remarked, Samson had to marry that heathen woman, marry her according to the determinate counsel of God. For the Philistines had to give him occasion. Thus that marriage was just another instance of sin serving God's counsel, another instance of the Lord's achieving His ends through the perverseness of man, in this case of a man, who, as to the heart of his disposition, was a believer. Nevertheless the marriage was sinful. Samson's parents had warned him against the venture. But he would not listen. He persisted in pressing them to get her for him to wife until they finally yielded. The three of them now went down to Timnah—Samson and his parents. Before the consummation of the marriage, Samson talked with the woman and the sacred text again asserts that she pleased him well. Does this mean that, having talked with the woman intimately, perhaps about her religious beliefs and about her outlook on life and the world, he was satisfied that, despite her heathen extraction and background, she was a woman with character and would make him a good wife—satisfied that his people would be her people after they were married and that she would be loyal to him? Those Philistine women were unprincipled, loose, frivolous and profane. An Israelitish man would have to be carnal and foolish indeed to marry into their circle. To do that would be to lay the foundation of a life of misery. Does the notice, "And she pleased him well," imply that he took this all into consideration and wholeheartedly agreed to it, but that he felt certain that this woman—the woman of his choice—was different, strange as this might sound? The notice in question cannot be taken to mean that such were the thoughts of his heart. But if he thought her a good woman, he was soon to discover that, after all was said, she was still a Philistine—discover that he had allowed himself to be bewitched by female beauty and charm and that the good woman he married was the creature of his own imagination. But he did not think her to be a truly good woman. It is unlikely that she had said anything that he could build upon, that all that he had upon which to ground any opinion of her was her feminine charm. All that is reported about Samson's affairs with women, shows that, in the choice of the

wife of his youth he must have been guided by personal desire. He married this woman because she pleased *him* well. This was one reason.

But the sacred writer unmistakably integrates Samson's marriage with his seeking an occasion against the Philistines. "Get her for me, for she pleases me well," was his final word to them. Then follows the notice, "But his father and mother—who had raised their voice in protest against the venture—knew not that it was of the Lord, that he sought occasion against the Philistines. . . ." The antecedent of the pronoun *he* is certainly Samson and not Jehovah, so that the thought conveyed is that Samson sought an occasion against the Philistines and that this was of the Lord. Samson would then be interested in that woman for two reasons; he wanted her for a wife, because she pleased him well. The other reason for his wanting to marry that woman of the daughters of the Philistines is that he felt certain that the Philistines, with whom he would be thrown into close contact on the marriage feast, through some misdemeanor on their part, would provide him with the occasion that he sought for beginning his conflict with them. Whether he went to Timnah with this plan in his soul, or whether it came to him when he first laid his eyes on his wife or shortly thereafter, cannot be determined. Samson's parents were surprised and dismayed when he told them. The Philistines were heathen. They were adversaries of God and His people; they had dominion over Israel at the time. Samson was to begin to deliver Israel. So the Lord had promised. The Spirit of God already had begun to move him. He was ready and eager for the conflict. Yet he was determined to marry a woman from the daughters of that very people from whose oppression he was to deliver Israel. But they knew not that it was of the Lord that he sought occasion against the Philistines.

The enemy must give him an occasion for his making war upon them. They must offend in some way, but not certainly to justify the conflict. His attacking them was righteous apart from whatever occasion they might now give him. It was righteous on the ground that the Lord had commanded him to make war upon the Philistines, they being the adversaries of God and the oppressors of His people. But because he was to make war upon them singlehandedly, as a lone hero of God, one against the many, they had to do him a personal injury, before he could begin attacking them. It would not do for him suddenly to begin slaying Philistines without them having offended in some way with respect to him personally. This must be borne in mind in appraising the man. It is not true what the liberal commentators say of him, namely, that when "he does attack them—the Philistines—it is because he is stung by personal injuries; that his exploits have a mixture of grim humor and fierce hatred

quite unlike anything else in Scripture and more resembling the horseplay of Homeric and Norse heroes than the stern purpose and righteous wrath of a soldier who felt that he was God's instrument." Anyone who will pass such judgment on the man has no understanding of him. His exploits no more resemble the horseplay of Homeric and Norse heroes than the exploits of a Gideon and a Jephthah. His purpose was as stern and his wrath as righteous as was theirs. The only difference between his exploits and theirs was that his were engaged in by him alone, and thus partook of a strictly personal character. He was the lone hero of faith among the judges of Israel. So God willed it. For God commanded him, raised him up, and sustained him. In all his exploits he fought God's warfare as truly as did any of the other deliverers raised up by the Spirit of God. And his victory was his faith. But his faith was obscured by his sensuality. He needed occasion; and what he sought he found. But he sought in a sinful way. His seeking an occasion was of God; but not his seeking it in the way of his marrying into that Philistine family. That was of sinful flesh. It cannot be that he truly loved that woman and that as some interpreters maintain, he actually expected to find a covenant of true love and fidelity in a Philistine family. What he expected to find was hatred and infidelity. For he was seeking occasion. It is not true that he put forth his riddle in a most peaceful spirit and that he meant not to bring the hidden antagonism to light. He meant to do exactly that; for he sought occasion. It is not true that he did not foresee that the wedding would give rise to conflict. He did foresee. It is not true that he was bent on avoiding conflict; he wanted conflict and was eager for it. If he did not want conflict and was not even expecting it, if he did think to find love and fidelity in that heathen family, we would not know what to make of the man. Then certainly his exploits were solely of the flesh. But this they were not. He wanted conflict because God had commanded him. And his obedience was the obedience of love—love of God and His people. But it was an obedience mixed with the issues of sinful flesh.

Samson was to begin to deliver Israel. This he knew from his parents, to whom it had been revealed. But so far as can be determined from the sacred narrative, it had not been revealed, either to him or to his parents, that he was to be qualified physically to inflict punishment upon the adversary singlehandedly, as a lone hero, without the assistance of an army. If the man knew not his strength, he learned to know it now on that journey to Timnah. He had left his parents a little space and come near the vinehills of Timnah when a rapacious and bloodthirsty lion roared against him. Then the Spirit of the Lord descended upon him. His fear was dispelled and instantly he was prepared

for courageous action. Bracing himself, he awaited the beast that came rushing toward him. He seized him and rent his jaws assunder as he would have rent a kid. In his youth, King David, too, prevailed over a lion that had run off with a lamb of his flock; but of him it is reported that he took the beast by the beard and slew him presumably with some weapon. But Samson had nothing in his hand. And the speed and ease with which he dispatched his assailant must have filled with wonder. He must have marvelled at his own strength, and ascribed it to God. Was this prodigious strength to be his at all times or was it given him only in a crisis when needed? This strength was his without interruption so long as he remained true to his vow. This is plain from the language he employed in divulging the secret of his power to the woman who was instrumental in leading him to his fall. He told her that there had not been a razor upon his head in that he had been a Nazarite from his mother's womb and that, were he shaven, his strength would go from him and he would become weak, and be like other men. Samson was wonderfully strong physically; but no statement occurs indicating that he was big and course, a man of giant stature. There is every reason to believe that he was of ordinary build. This would explain the inability of his enemies to know his strength. It could not be explained on the ground that he was a man with a bodily frame of uncommonly large proportions. Besides, how big wouldn't a man have to be to match his strength. What man, though he were many times as big as a giant Goliath, could have done the things that he did. The only possible explanation of his prowess was that God wrought wonderfully in him. Samson was a wonder of God both to the Philistines and to Israel. No one had ever seen or heard of the like of him. Undeniably he was the outstretched arm of God, a wonder of God's grace and as such an unmistakeable sign to the adversary that God fought for Israel and a sign to the true Israel that the man who puts his trust in God will never be put to shame in that He is mighty to save. But of this the carnal Israel and likewise the Philistines were willingly ignorant. Both disassociated in their minds the man from God and insisted to the end that there must be some natural explanation for his being a man of such unheard of strength. They refused to give God honor and ended with the man's strength in his uncut locks of hair. But in their hearts they knew better. Yet carnal Israel bound the man hand and foot and delivered him over to the adversary; and, when the Philistines once had him in their power they put to work all their ingenuity to devise ways in which to humble the man. They put out his eyes; they bound him with fetters of brass and made him grind in their prison-house. For, he being God's sign, they hated and feared him. And the treatment they afforded him only

anticipated the vile treatment that Israel and the heathen were to afford the true Nazarite of God, Christ Jesus. He was to be *the* sign of God whom all men would hate and oppose.

Thus, despite his seeking occasion in the way of a forbidden marriage, the Lord did not forsake him but placed that lion upon his path, in order that in his combat with the beast he might know his power and perceive that he was to begin to deliver his people as a lone warrior of God. But after some days he was again on the way to Timnah, this time to take the woman that she might be his wife. He thought of the lion that he had rent. The victory had been achieved with little effort; and he had been deeply impressed. For coming to the spot where he had the adventure he must turn aside to view the carcass of his victim. Then he found that a swarm of bees had settled themselves in the skeleton of the beast. He drew out the honey, took it in his hands, and refreshed himself with it. He also gave to his parents and they ate; but neither did he tell them whence he had taken it. His putting forth that riddle on the marriage feast shows that he had not dismissed from his mind this incident in his personal history. He perceived instantly that out of the eater had come forth meat and out of the strong had come forth sweetness. This was the riddle he propounded. It may indicate that he had been occupied with the idea all along and had discovered in it a deeper meaning. Certain it is that his victory over that rapacious beast was the prelude to and a sign and pledge of the ascendancy that his faith was to gain over the world as represented by the Philistines. But he fell a victim to his lusts; and the hand of God seized him and cast him into that prison-house of his enemies. Thus the beast, the Philistines, in collaboration with his own lusts, triumphed over him finally. Yet only apparently so. The afflictions of the beast were sanctified to his believing heart. The curses and mockery of the Philistines were turned into blessings for him. Thus out of the eater came forth meat and out of the strong sweetness.

Arriving with his parents in Timnah, Samson and the woman were married. The marriage feast was now in progress. It lasted seven days. It was customary for the bridegroom to provide himself with a retinue. He being a stranger, the inviting was done by the bride and her father. Thirty companions were chosen to be with him. Already on the first day he put forth his riddle. They all agreed to the following. He was to give them thirty shirts and thirty changes of garments, should they find the answer to his riddle within the seven days of the feast. Should they fail in this, they were to give to him the same amount of garments. Especially for Samson, it was not a small price that was put upon the solution of the riddle.

And it is well to notice that they did not accept his

proposition in so many words, actually promise to give him the specified amount of garments in case they found not the solution. "Put forth thy riddle that we may hear it," they said to him. Such a statement, as coming from an honest man, would be binding. But they were not honest men. They had no thought of playing fairly with him. Being proud men, they would not endure being humbled, especially not by that despicable Hebrew. They had no intention of losing that game. Besides, they had their hearts set on those garments. As for them turning over that much wealth to him—the thought was too ridiculous to contemplate. What is more, what riddle could he propound that could defy their powers of penetration—he a Hebrew. Who was the man? They knew not. They had never seen nor heard of him. But they soon would know him well enough and this to their great hurt. It must not be supposed that Samson thought that these men were capable of dealing honestly with him. He was aware certainly that they were Philistines and that he was a Hebrew. He expected foul play. For he was seeking occasion.

We shall now observe the ways of worldly and unprincipled men and find that these ways are not pleasant to contemplate. In determining from the sacred narrative just what took place on that marriage-feast—the text is somewhat ambiguous here—we must take as our clue verse 17 (of chapter 14), "And she—the young wife of Samson—wept before him seven days, while the feast lasted. . . ." This is what happened. As soon as the riddle was set forth for consideration, Samson's wife at once began to harass him for the solution. Refusal drove her to take recourse to the argument of tears even before the end of the day. She told him that his reticence was to her plain evidence that he hated her and loved her not. She complained that, in keeping from her that which he would not tell her countrymen, he distinguished her not from them but placed her on the same footing with them. Her implied argument was that, being his wife and by her love having been brought over entirely to his interests, she was entitled to better treatment. His saying that it must be plain to her that her conclusions were groundless, seeing that he had told not even his father and mother, failed to impress her. Day by day she renewed the assault but with no effect. "And Samson's wife wept before him, and said, Thou dost but hate me and love me not: thou hast put forth the riddle unto the children of my people and hast not told it to me. And he said unto her, Behold, I have not told it to my father and mother—who, it seems, were present on the feast—and shall I tell it to thee? And she wept before him seven days. . . ." On the seventh day the woman was approached by her countrymen. For the first three days they had labored with the riddle without being

able to find the solution. This doubtless is the meaning of the notice, "And they could not in three days expound the riddle." This was to be expected. Samson's problem is paradoxical. It conceals a deep truth, yet, its words are used in their natural sense. It is so transparent as to be obscure. It is not liable to the objection that it can refer only to a historical occurrence that no one could know so that Samson must be charged with taking unfair advantage of his guests. The incident was not unnatural. What these guests did on the next three days is not reported. Doubtless they had ploughed with Samson's heifer without, however, taking recourse to threats. But on the seventh day, when they found that the wife's importunities could accomplish nothing they resorted to threats against her. "And it came to pass on the seventh day, that they said unto Samson's wife, Entice thy husband, that he may declare unto us the riddle, lest we burn thee and thy father's house with fire: have ye called us to take what we have?" In this way do these unscrupulous men justify their threat. They accuse her of having conspired with her husband to impoverish them through trickery. This she had not. But as far as they could know, she might be standing with her husband as a dutiful wife. If she were holding with her husband—something that was unlikely—this threat upon her life and upon the life of her family would not fail to bring her to terms. So they must have reasoned. Thus threatened, the woman's entreaties took on such violence that he told her; and she hastened with the answer to her people. Was she driven solely by fear or by fear mingled with unwillingness to allow Samson to triumph over her people? In all likelihood the latter. For she was a woman of the daughters of the Philistines. It was the seventh day. Soon the sun would go down. Thus the time was nearly spent. So these Philistines, brazenly, rushed into Samson's presence and said to him, "What is sweeter than honey? and what is stronger than a lion?" That was the solution to the riddle. And it was well put. But, though the woman may not have told Samson how she had been threatened by these men, they well knew that it would be as plain as day to him, that they had ploughed with his heifer, had gotten the answer from her. They might as well have told him this outright. But they didn't. They ignored their foul deed and spoke up to him with a boldness that becomes not such men as were they but honest men only. In this way did they mock and contempt him, the Hebrew, and all that he represented. Nor did they waive their right to those garments. They insisted that he pay them their reward. He was resolved to do just that, but in a way that would cause them to curse themselves for ever having trifled with the man. They had given him the occasion that he had sought. He could now make a commencement of the warfare that he must war as

a called servant of God instructed to deliver Israel. "If ye had not plowed with my heifer, ye had not found out my riddle." Little did they realize the import of this parting word to them. The Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he went down to Ashkelon, and slew thirty men of them, and took their spoil, and gave change of garments unto them which had expounded the riddle." We will have more to say about this in the article that will follow. The deed must be justified and it can be certainly if rightly viewed and correctly interpreted.

G. M. O.

Montanism

Its beginning and spread. Montanism originated in Asia Minor, in a little village of Phrygia. It was started about the middle of the second century by one montanus, who was a mutilated priest of Sybele, that is, before his conversion. This account, however, comes from his enemies and has very little value. The movement spread to Rome and North Africa. It caused considerable commotion in the church for reasons to be given presently. His followers were known by several names. They were called Montanists, Phrygians, and Pricilians. They called themselves "spiritual Christians" in distinction from the carnal Christians.

The tenets and traits of Montanism. Montanus or Montanism accepted all the fundamental doctrines of the Christian church and adhered very closely to the rules of faith of the church. This was acknowledged even by its opponents. Tertullian in the last stretch of his career, affiliated himself with the sect though he never formally broke with the church. Montanism took a firm stand against Gnostic heresy and would have nothing of it.

Its tenets. It insisted upon the continuation of revelation beyond the death of the last apostle, so that according to the Montanists, the canon did not close. This of course is the official stand of the Roman church, but Rome teaches that the organ of continual revelation is the special office, that is, the clergy and in particular the pope. Montanism rejected the special office and insisted that all believers are pastors, teachers, and prophets. Montanism also went under the name of "New Prophecy", "continuous Revelation". It was on the above cited point (all believers pastors) that Montanism clashed with the church.

So then Montanism maintained in the erroneous sense the universal priesthood of all Christians. Thus it failed to distinguish between the office of all believers and the special office. All believers have the anointing and were pastors. To this doctrine they failed

to adhere in practice. In practice all were not pastors but only a few, those endowed by the Holy Spirit. In practice they drew a line between pastor and flock, between teachers and those taught. According to the Montanists, Christ calls not through His Church but directly by the Spirit.

So they rejected the outward calling and ordination and the episcopal succession of the Roman Church. All they recognized is what we term the inward calling. Anyone with an inward call was allowed to preach, and these preachers comprised the class of spiritual Christians. They were the true Montanists. Thus according to this sect, the reason that one is not a minister is because he is carnal. Hence, not to be a minister was to be a spiritually disqualified Christian. This, it is plain, amounts to a virtual denial of the universal priesthood of all believers.

The traits of Montanism. The first trait of Montanism was its premillennialism. They held fast to a speedy return of Christ in His glory. They prayed for Christ's coming. This as such, is as it should be. John on Patmos ended his writing with a prayer: "Come quickly Lord Jesus". In the Montanists, however, this longing for Christ was contaminated by a sickly craving that was seen in them as a shunning of this life and its earthly tasks and an unnatural desire for the end of the world.

The Montanists not only prayed for, but also predicted to the very year a speedy return of Christ. The failure of their prediction to materialize lost for them many adherents. It was this hoping and praying for the return of Christ that distinguished them from the great mass of Christians of that day. On the other hand it is true that the abatement of hope in the near approach of Christ went hand in hand with worldliness. The Montanist's prophecy busied itself solely with the return of Christ in the coming judgment. Closely related to this crave for the judgment day was their crave for sobriety. Montanism forbade all ornamental clothing for women, and required virgins to be veiled. It advocated many fasts as necessary to the coming of Christ. It forbade second marriage as adultery and even looked askance at first marriage. Another characteristic of Montanism was its religious ecstasy. Montanus would fall into somnambulist ecstasies. In their public meetings scenes took place similar to the scenes in the meetings of the Quakers. There would be screaming and rolling on the ground at times. By the mass of Christians such behavior was viewed as being out of the devil.

A final trait was severity in Church discipline. It condemned the worldliness and the looseness of discipline in the Roman Church. It held the impossibility of a second repentance and refused to receive those who apostatized during the persecution of the church.

This is Montanism. It was not a healthy move-

ment. Its denial of the special office and its doctrine of continuation of revelation were symptomatic of spiritual abnormality. The spirit pervading the movement is characterized by rationalism and results in it. The new revelation and this new inner light is placed above Scripture and is finally opposed to Scripture resulting in the denial of the Scriptures. Here the movement touches Gnosticism. About the sixth century Montanism as a sect disappeared.

But its conceptions and extremes lived on as a hidden leaven in the bosom of the church and reappeared in new combinations in Novatianism, Donatism, Spiritualism, Franciscism, Anabaptism, Quakerism, and Pietism. The Montanists had many sympathizers because of their earnestness in Chiliastic hopes. Yet the Christian church officially turned against them. Constantine and his successors repeatedly enacted laws against them.

G. M. O.

O Heder Israels

(Psalm 80; tweede deel)

We hebben gezien in onze voorgaande verhandeling over dezen psalm, dat wereld rondom hen over het volk Gods gekomen was. Doch Asaf wist, dat God er achter zat: God had hen geslagen en geen mensch. De mensch was slechts instrument. Daarom is dit een gebed tot God gericht en vraagt Asaf om het oor van den Almachtige. Ook is er opklimming in het bidden. Dat zagen we bij de vergelijking van de verzen 4, 8 en 20. Van een bidden wordt het een roepen en het roepen verandert in het aanloopen van God als een waterstroom. We letten er op, dat in vers 4 God aangeroepen wordt als God; in vers 8 heet het: "O God der heirscharen; en in vers 20: "O Heere, God der heirscharen!" In die laatste benaming van God beluisteren wij den drang des verbonds: Asaf grijpt God aan in de schoonste en heerlijkste relatie die er bestaat of ooit bestond tusschen God en mensch, een relatie die in den heerlijksten Godsnaam schuilt: *Heere, Jehovah, Ik zal zijn die Ik zijn zal, de Onveranderlijke!*

Nu gaan we verder. Hij is gekomen tot het tweede stadium, waar zijn bidden roepen wordt.

In dat roepen gaat hij den Heere vertellen wat Hij in oude dagen gedaan heeft ten overstaan van Israel. Zij zijn maar niet per ongeluk te voorschijn gekomen in de geschiedenis der volken. O neen. God heeft hen geplant en geen mensch. "Gij hebt (o God!) een wijnstok uit Egypte overgebracht, hebt de heidenen verdreven en hebt denzelven geplant!" Hier hebt ge het. God was gekomen in de oude tijden. Hij had

gedacht aan Zijn genade; Zijn trouw aan Israel nooit geknecht. Eerst was Hij neergekomen om in de harten der vaderen het verlangen naar God te schenken. Toen was er een groot geschrei gekomen bij de tichelsteen en op dat geschrei had de Heere Mozes geroepen om hem Israel te doen uitleiden uit het slaafsche Egypte. En Israel moest ruimte hebben voor het holle zijns voets. Daarom had God de heidenen uit Kanaän verdreven door Zijn knecht Jozua. En van toen af aan had Israel dat Kanaän vervuld gelijk een plante. God had Israel geplant in het land aan de vaderen beloofd. Er moest toch een type zijn van den hemel? Zelfs nu spreken we van het eeuwige Kanaän der ruste en van de tale Kanaäns. En voor een kleinen tijd hadden zij het land vervuld. De bergen waren voor een kleinen tijd bedekt geweest met de schaduwen van het volk Gods. Een betrekkelijk korten tijd, want dit is slechts waar geweest ten tijde van David en Salomo. Ge kunt het bewijs vinden in Jesaja 63:18. "Uw heilig volk heeft het maar een weinig tijds bezeten. . . ." Daar ging het over het erfdeel en dat is Kanaän.

En voor dien kleinen tijd scheen het alsof alles heerlijk zou zijn en hun vrede eeuwig. Poetisch wordt het schoon gezegd in vers 12. "Hij schoot zijn ranken uit tot aan de zee, en zijne scheuten tot aan de rivier." Die zee is de Middellandsche Zee en die rivier is de Eufraat. En zoo was het geweest. In de dagen van David en Salomo waren de Israelieten sterker dan al hun naburen en van de zee tot aan de rivier betaalden de heidenen cijns.

Doch hoe was het nu anders geworden in de dagen van Asaf? Luistert naar dien Godsman: hij zal het U vertellen. "Waarom hebt Gij zijne muren doorgebroken, zoodat allen die den weg voorbijgaan, hem plukken?" Wilt ge kommentaar op die woorden, dan moet ge maar de Koningen en de Kronieken lezen. En ik verzeker U, dat als ge dan lezen zult van de invallen in Israel en het verstoren van zijn godsdienst, het verbranden van zijn tempel en het ontheiligen van zijn lieflijkste plaatsen, zult ge smart ervaren. Dan zult ge treuren in Uw hart gelijk het volk Gods van dien dag. Ge zult moe worden van de doorbroken muur en van het plukken der kinderen Gods.

Daar komt bij, dat de Heere het goddelooze volk gebruikte voor dit vreeselijk werk. Ik zeide "goddelooze volk," en terecht. De Heilige Geest vergelijkt de verwoestende drommen bij "het zwijn uit het woud". Het volle vers luidt als volgt: "Het zwijn uit het woud heeft hem uitgewroet, en het wild des velds heeft hem afgeweid." En zoo is het gegaan. Kunt ge het U voorstellen hoe Nebuchadnezar te werk gegaan is toen hij Israel verbande? De Babyloniërs waren de zwijnen gelijk. Vraag het aan hen die een "invasion" bijgewoond hebben. Alle vuile en wreede hartstochten worden botgevierd als men de arme slachtoffers buit maakt en hen uit het land drijft. Vraagt het aan de

“slave labor” in Duitschland hoe het er naar toeging in de bezette gebieden van den vijand. Het zwijn vroet uit. Ja, vraagt het aan de oude menschen, de zwakken, de zieken, de vrouwen, de kindertjes, en vooral aan de zwangere vrouwen in die dagen! Ze worden uitgewroet en afgeweid. Zaagt ge wel eens een afgeweid stuk lands?

En zoo was het gegaan met Israel. Nog hijgend van de lange, bange reis staan ze bij de rivieren van Babel, terwijl ze snikkend luisteren naar het sarrend, trijterend vragen van de beulen: Kom aan, zijn ons eens een Hebreeuwsch liedeken! Kunt ge Asaf begrijpen in zijn smartelijke taal? Kunt ge er in komen als hij spreekt van afweiding en uitwroeting?

O, Asaf weet wel, dat al die dingen over het historische Israel gekomen zijn vanwege de zonden. Mozes had van Godswege eeuwen van te voren gewaarschuwd. Hij had al de vloeken Gods opgeschreven. Israel had zwaar gezondigd. Afgoderij en beeldendienst, stugheid en wreedheid en onverschilligheid waren de orde van den dag en van het jaar geweest. En God was zeer lankmoedig geweest. Ook is het waar, dat deze straf van uitwroeting en afweiding nog niet eens beantwoordde aan de misdaad. “Hij straft ons, naar onze zonden niet!” Als God ons zou straffen naar onze zonden, dan moesten wij oogenblikkelijk verdrinken, met lichaam en ziel, met duivelen en goddeloozen, in den tweeden dood.

Maar we zullen bidden om genade. En als het lijden om der zonde wil erg wordt, zullen we smeeken, den Heere aanloopen als een waterstroom. Dat doet Asaf. “O God der heirscharen! keer toch weder; aanschouw uit den hemel en zie, en bezoek dezen wijnstok en den stam dien Uwe rechterhand geplant heeft.” Beide het roepen om wederkeering en om bezoeking toont aan, dat de Heere Israel verlaten had voor tijd en wijle. En dan bedoelen wij niet, dat de Heere hen verliet wezenlijk, want dat kan niet. God is overal en, eerbiedig gezegd, God kan nergens van wegloopen. Hij moet altijd vlak bij en zelfs in alle dingen zijn, anders zouden zij niet eens kunnen bestaan. Doch we bedoelen er dit mee: God is wel overal, doch Hij is overal verschillend. Hij had Israel verlaten met Zijn lieflijke aanwezigheid en nabijheid. Er staat toch immers geschreven dat “Bij den goedertierene houdt Gij U goedertieren, bij den oprechten man houdt Gij U oprecht. Bij den reine houdt Gij U rein, *maar bij den verkeerde bewijst Gij U een worstelaar!*” En dit laatste had Israel ondervonden. Zij waren historisch verkeerd geworden. En toen, om een ander woord der Heilige Schrift aan te halen, “is Hij hun in een vijand verkeerd, Hij Zelf heeft tegen hen gestreden.” Zie Psalm 18:26, 27 en Jesaja 63:10. En, let wel, deze laatste woorden staan in een oorzakelijk verband. God was hun in een vijand verkeerd, omdat zij “wederspannig geworden waren, zij hadden Zijn Heiligen Geest

smarten aangedaan.” Om die reden was God hun verkeerd, weggelopen, een worstelaar geworden. Daarom ging Israel in ballingschap. En daarom begint Gods volk dan weer zonde te belijden, Hem aanlopende als een waterstroom, of Hij hen vergeven wil.

Maar hoe kan dat? De ziel die gezondigd heeft moet toch immers sterven? En ik haal dien tekst niet eens goed aan. Hij moet niet alleen sterven, doch de ziel die zondigt zal sterven, eeuwig sterven met lichaam en ziel in de hel! Hoe kan God, die een vijand wordt van Zijn volk, dan wederkeeren? Want daar vraagt Asaf om. “Keer toch weder!” God kan toch Zichzelf niet verloochenen? Hoe komt Israel toch ooit Babel weer uit?

Het antwoord zit in het woord dat nu volgt. Ik heb het volle vers niet afgeschreven toen ik de smeekbede van Asaf neerschreef. Hier luidt het ten volle: “O God der heirscharen! keer toch weder; aanschouw uit den hemel en zie, en bezoek dezen wijnstok, en den stam die Uwe rechterhand geplant heeft, (en nu komt het:) en dat, *om den Zoon dien Gij U gesterkt hebt!*” Daar hebt ge het motief van de verlossingen Israels. Asaf weet het en daarom grijpt hij God aan in dien Zoon.

Hij zegt van dien door God gesterkten Zoon: “Hij is met vuur verbrand, Hij is afgehouden; zij komen om van het schelden Uws aangezichts. Uwe hand zij over den man Uwer rechterhand, over des menschen Zoon dien Gij U gesterkt hebt!”

Nu is er geen twijfel aan, dat we het hier te doen hebben met een Messiaansche profetie.

Ik weet wel, dat het eerst van toepassing is op Israel, op het volk Gods der Oude Bedeeling. Keer op keer kunt ge het lezen, dat Israel zich vergelijkt bij een kind van God, een Zoon dien Hij Zich gesterkt heeft. Leest nu eens wat er staat in Hosea 11:1. Ik zal het afschrijven: “Als Israel een kind was, toen heb Ik hem liefgehad, en Ik heb Mijnen Zoon uit Egypte geroepen.” Een ieder zal toestemmen, dat dit allereerst van toepassing is op Israel toen zij door Mozes en Aaron geleid werden uit het diensthuis van Egypte. Ja, maar leest nu eens Matth. 2:14, 15: “Hij (dat is, Jozef) dan opgestaan zijnde, nam het kind en zijne moeder tot zich in den nacht, en vertrok naar Egypte, en was aldaar tot den dood van Herodes; opdat vervuld zoude worden hetgeen van den Heere gesproken is door den Profeet, zeggende: Uit Egypte heb Ik Mijnen Zoon geroepen.”

Dus beide Israel en Jezus zijn de Zoon Gods. Hoe zit dat?

Eerst, Israel is Jezus naar het vleesch. De eeuwige Goddelijke Zoon heeft in de volheid des tijds het vleesch en bloed van Israel aangenomen, uit de schoot van Maria. Dat is duidelijk.

Tweedens, Israel op Zijn beurt is zoon Gods, want hij is vrucht van de wondere geboorte van Izak. Er

is een eenheid, een gelijkheid des zoonschaps tusschen Jezus en Israel, omdat zij beiden zijn het product van de wondere geboorte.

Zoon zien we, derdens, dat toen God Israel door Mozes uit Egypte riep Hij daadwerkelijk Zijn Zoon uit Egypte riep. Jezus was in Israel's lendenen.

En daarom nu, om den wille van dien Zoon, dien God Zich van eeuwigheid af gesterkt had, smeekt Asaf: Keer weder, o Heere der heirscharen en verlos ons.

O ja, die Zoon was met vuur verbrand ten tijde van Asaf. Hij was afgehouden en omkomende vanwege het schelden Gods.

Doch ziet ge ook, dat in die woorden de vreese-lijke vervulling van het kruis van Golgotha schuilt? Asaf zegt: Heere zie toch hoe Uwe Zoon, Israel lijdt! Hij is toch het wonderkind?

Doch wij zien Jezus aan het kruis en hooren Hem roepen: Wat hitte doet Mij branden! (Psalm 22) Hij kwam om van het schelden des aangezichts Gods toen Hij een vloek werd voor de gemeente.

Daarom bidden wij ook psalm 80 (die we hier behandelen). Evenwel, heeft die psalm voor ons een diepere beteekenis nu. Als wij nu zeggen: O Heere, los om den wille van den Zoon dien Gij U gesterkt hebt en die met vuur verbrand is, omgekomen vanwege het schelden Uws aangezichts, dan zeggen wij ook: "waar Hij gebonden werd, opdat Hij ons zou ontbinden; . . . heeft . . . de vervloeking (denkt aan dat schelden waarvan Asaf spreekt) . . . van ons op Zich geladen. . . (en) riep met luider stem: Mijn God, Mijn God, waarom hebt Gij mij verlaten. . ."

Wat een pleitgrond! Heere, keer weder, vergeef, breng ons terug naar het hemelsch Kanaän! Ja, Heere, en doe het om den Zoon dien Gij U gesterkt hebt. Wat een pleitgrond! Zulk een gebed wordt altoos verhoord.

God is weergekomen en heeft Asaf en alle ware Israelieten naar den hemel gebracht om den Messias' wil.

Neen, Asaf heeft gelijk, als hij zegt: Zoo zullen wij van U niet terugkeeren; behoud ons in het leven, zoo zullen wij Uwen naam aanroepen! Ja, hij heeft gelijk. Als ge om Jezus' wil verhoort en verlost wordt en God tot U naakt, zoo zult ge zekerlijk met het aangezicht naar den hemel blijven loopen uw gansche leven op aarde! Als de Heere uw leven behoudt, dan is het goed, want dan zegt ge en zingt ge tot in eeuwigheid: Heere, Uwe naam is lieflijk!

Ge zult dat blijven doen totdat geen maan meer schijnt.

En dan zult ge het doen in den hemel der heerlijkheid totdat de dorpelen der deur zich bewegen en het heilig Huis vervuld wordt met rook.

Het is de rook van 's Heeren heerlijkheid!

G. V.

News From Manhattan, Mont.

Sadness indeed filled the hearts of us as congregation when we were informed by our former pastor, Rev. H. De Wolf, that he felt called to leave Manhattan and go to the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan.

On Sunday, August 27, 1944, the Rev. De Wolf preached his farewell sermon based on the passage from 2 Corinthians 13:11: "Finally, brethren, farewell." On Wednesday morning of the same week he and his family left us for their new field of labor.

After their departure the consistory faced the problem of again obtaining a pastor. After extending a call to two of the Lord's servants who did not feel that the Lord called them to Manhattan, a third call was extended, and this time to Rev. C. Hanko of Oak Lawn, Illinois.

After sincere and prayerful consideration of the call, he informed us that he felt it to be the Lord's will that he accept the call extended to him, and that he would come over and minister to the flock here in Manhattan.

It was indeed with thanks in our hearts unto the Lord that we received the glad news.

However we must not fail to mention that for almost four months we might have in our midst Candidate J. W. Van Weelden, who diligently labored among us, performing such pastoral work as preaching the Word, instructing in the Catechism, and leading the societies. He even had occasion to conduct a funeral service for a young girl who met with a sudden, accidental death.

It is but fitting that we express a word of appreciation to Candidate and Mrs. Van Weelden, as also to our counselor, Rev. M. Gritters, for the work they faithfull performed among us.

On Sunday, January 7, Rev. M. Gritters preached the Word of Life to us, and on Wednesday, January 10, at about 7:00 P. M. our pastor, Rev. C. Hanko and family arrived safely in our midst.

On Friday evening the congregation came together to welcome our pastor and family. We met in our church building at 8:00 and a nice program was rendered under the pleasant and able leadership of our beloved counselor. We might indeed experience an evening of joy and fellowship, the fellowship of saints and the joy of brotherhood, for although we were total strangers to each other, we might at the same time feel that there is a tie that binds us together.

So after songs, speeches of the different societies and refreshments which were served by the Ladies aid, and after greetings were exchanged we might return homeward with happy hearts and with thanks to our God,

On Sunday morning, January 14, Rev. Gritters preached for us on Ezekiel 9:11, after which he installed our new pastor, and our pastor pronounced the benediction. In the afternoon our pastor preached his inaugural sermon, based on Ephesians 1:2, "Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ."

So now we are again Pastor and Flock.

Thanks be to God that we might again receive a pastor so soon who may by the grace of God lead us in the green pastures of His Word.

Our wish and prayer is that the Lord may richly bless him and his family and cause his labors to be blessed in our midst, and that we as congregation and pastor may receive the blessing of the Lord, to His honor and glory. To God be all the praise.

The Consistory,

H. P. Van Dyken, Clerk.

Gog and Magog

"And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison. And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever." (Rev. 20:7-10).

Gog and Magog are then: 1) The nations which are in the four quarters of the earth". 2) They are a great horde of people, "as the sand of the sea". 3) When Satan is loosed out of his prison he will go forth to deceive these nations to gather them together to battle against the beloved city and the camp of the saints. 4) This deceptive work will succeed for "they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about." 5) Their end is sudden and their defeat total, for "fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them". These briefly are the facts that must be taken in consideration in a study of Gog and Magog.

However, also the significant chapters of Ezekiel 38 and 39 must be taken into consideration. Evidently Rev. 20 with its reference to Gog and Magog is built upon the prophetic vision of Ezekiel. In that passage Ezekiel speaks of: 1) Gog, the land of Magog, the

chief prince (or prince of Rosh, R.V.) of Meshech and Tubal. Gog of the land of Magog, together with Persia, Ethiopia, Libya, Gomer and Togarmah will come up against Israel. Again it is a vast horde of peoples, primarily from the north but assisted by peoples from the far south. 2) They shall come up against the holy city to despoil her utterly. The Lord sends them up, as the rod of his anger (38:4, etc.) 3) This shall take place in the latter days (38:16). It is the last enemy that comes up against Israel, after which Israel dwells secure. 4) The Lord suddenly destroys them as they are gathered together to battle against Israel. By pestilence, hailstones, fire and brimstone, they shall utterly be destroyed. 5) This is his fury upon the wicked hordes (38:19), and that the Lord may be sanctified in Israel before their eyes (38:16). 6) After this, Israel dwells secure, (39:29).

Whether or no we must seek a nearer historical fulfillment of the prophecy of Ezekiel in the history of Israel during the Old Testamental period, e.g. in the onslaught of Antiochus Epiphanes and the Seleucidae, we cannot now discuss. We are primarily interested in the Gog and Magog of Rev. 20 as they are still to come. Undoubtedly also Ezekiel's vision finds its primary and final fulfillment in the future awakening of Gog and Magog.

Who Are Gog and Magog?

Our first answer to this question is that in Rev. 20, Gog and Magog are called "nations". They are "peoples", "Gentiles"; a vast horde, for their number is as the sand of the sea, Rev. 20:8. The latter is also implied in the statement that they went up on the *breadth of the earth*. Similarly in Ezekiel 38 and 39 comes with a great multitude of people.

In the second place, Rev. 20 tells us that they are the peoples that live "in the four quarters of the earth". Hendricksen in his *More Than Conquerors* claims that this simply means 'the whole world'. As proof he refers to Rev. 7:1, Judg. 20:2, I Sam. 14:38, but a careful examination of these passages to our mind gives no support for the contention. Besides, the word translated "quarters" is literally "corners", and is also used for "angles". Again, it seems to us that if John meant to say "all nations of the earth" he could very easily have done so. The fact that John particularly specifies particular nations, those nations in the four quarters of the earth, implies that he means the distant nations. Finally, also in Ezekiel Gog and Magog are: on the one hand the more distant nations (some in Asia Minor, if not further, and others far south, e.g. Ethiopia); while on the other hand they are nations that before played no part in the history of Israel. Assyria, Greece and Rome are not among them, nor is Egypt, nor Ammon, Moab or the Philis-

tines. They are nations therefore with which hitherto Israel had no dealings. Now they arise against Israel *en masse*, in a mass.

In view of all this we seem compelled to take Gog and Magog here to represent peoples distant from God's people and the cause of Christianity. *Morally* distant, to be sure; but also physically, geographically, it seems to us. "Peripheral" nations they have been called. Nations that are outside the pale of Christendom. Nations that have had little contact with nominal Christendom, that have been as it were asleep and that shall finally awake and arise *en masse* against Christendom. We naturally dare not mention definite nations, but we cannot help but think of China, Japan, India, Mohammedan Africa, etc. Some dare to say that Rosh refers to Russia. As the day draws near that this final onslaught is to come, the prophecy will undoubtedly become very clear to the believing church. For the present we dare not say which people it will be, though we naturally think of the above mentioned peoples.

Their Deception.

Notice that in Rev. 20 these nations shall be deceived by Satan to come up to battle against the beloved city and the camp of the saints, when Satan for a little season shall be loosed from his prison. According to vs. 2 and 3 of Rev. 20, Satan is bound during the thousand years so "that he should deceive the nations no more". This binding of Satan must not be understood in the absolute sense, as though Satan had no power during the period of his confinement. It is evident from the text that Satan's binding is in a relative, limited sense. He can still do much, he may still go about as a roaring lion or as an angel of light, but he cannot deceive the nations, especially he cannot so seduce them that they come up in a mass against the camp of the saints. In the Old Testament period the Devil could do this, under the providence of God. As a matter of fact all the nations of the world, with the exception of Israel, were, as nations, under the dominion of Satan and entirely heathen. Besides, Satan seduced Egypt as a nation to seek to destroy Israel; and in Israel's later history so did Babylon. In the New Testament period the Devil is *in this respect* limited. Christianity sweeps through the earth, it becomes the state religion under Constantine, and goes on conquering. We may even speak of nominally Christian nations. It is true there remain nations that are not Christianized, but these are asleep. They play no important role in the history of the world. Satan cannot seduce them to battle against Christendom to destroy it from the earth.

Yet, for a little season he shall be loosed. Then he shall go forth and seduce, successfully, those outlying nations to do battle against the camp of the saints.

That will be the last battle of all history.

We should note that in the presentation of Revelation 20 this deception of the nations is by Satan. However, it is under God's providence and control, for it only takes place when Satan is loosed. Besides, it is at God's appointed time and for a short season. In Ezekiel's vision, it is the Lord Himself who "puts hooks into thy jaws" and "brings thee forth". Evidently, the purpose of Satan and of Gog and Magog is to destroy Christendom and with it the cause of the Lord. But, not Satan and Gog and Magog attain their purpose, but the Lord attains His. His purpose is twofold: 1) To make these nations worthy of their utter destruction by fulfilling the measure of their iniquity. 2) To chastise his apostatizing church which is spiritually Sodom and Gomorrah, the great whore, but in whose midst is the living church of God. Micah 4:11, 12.

The Nature of the Battle.

The question arises, How must we conceive of this battle? As a spiritual battle, or as a battle with steel and iron? This question can hardly be answered unless we answer the question also, What is meant by the beloved city and the camp of the saints?

Naturally as far as the symbolism of the vision is concerned, the beloved city is Jerusalem. However, to conclude from this that Jerusalem will be rebuilt and that the saints will be gathered together there in an earthly millenium is impossible. According to the premillennial view the saints during a literal thousand years will inhabit Jerusalem, and that in glorified bodies. Now, of course, it is hard to conceive that the heathen would attempt either by battle of steel or by heathen propaganda to fight against glorified saints. We must not forget that the book of Revelation bears a *symbolic* nature. In harmony with this the beloved city and the camp of the saints is the church of God. Part of this church is in heaven, the other part on earth. The church on earth, the church visible, will indeed as Jerusalem of old, be an apostate church. Christendom will be nominal more than ever before, for according to previous visions she has become spiritually Sodom and Gomorrah. But as in the Old Testament the enemy looked upon Jerusalem as the camp of the saints even in its deepest degradation, so the heathen nations shall view the Christian nations in whose midst will be the living church of God as the beloved city. Parallel visions in chapters 16:12-16 and in 17:12-17 demand this view. In this light we do not hesitate also to believe that this final battle will be one of iron and steel. At least this encompassing host will come up to destroy nominal Christendom, in the midst of which are the living quarters. This will be the last battle, Armageddon.

But be of good cheer. In the midst of hopeless

odds, the Lord will come. By his immediate judgment from heaven, the final coming of Christ, this enemy and all enemies of the church will be destroyed. The Devil shall be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone for ever and ever. The church shall dwell secure forever in the new heavens and on the new earth. To this Ezekiel points and also John in Revelation when he says, "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them."

P. D. B.

Contribution

Esteemed Editor:

Once again from the prolific pen of Mr. Gritter we note a contribution which purposes to enervate certain propositions as set forth by a Mr. Van Putten of Holland, Michigan. This contribution is marked by its customary clarity and courteous presentation which, no doubt, have served to always make his contributions acceptable to your venerable publication.

It was to be expected that Mr. Gritter would attempt a refutation of the thoughts presented by Mr. Van Putten. We have seen him rise on many occasions to the defense of that organization which is apparently so dear to his heart. But sometimes that is regrettable as, for example, when he took offense at the *constructive criticism* of his organization as it was presented by the editor of a certain young people's paper of his own denomination! But, be that as it may, it is not my purpose to speak in behalf of either party at this time. My reason for writing is simply to acquaint Mr. Gritter with his, shall we say, opponent? For, judged by the standards of some, Mr. Van Putten is a peculiar fellow!

Mr. Gritters, if you have met a man whose God comes before all things; whose meat and drink it is to do the will of his Heavenly Father; who will count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ; who will suffer the loss of all things and count them but dung that he may win Christ—you have met your adversary!

Mr. Gritter, if you have met a man who when he prays "give us our daily bread," truly in childlike faith expects it *alone* from Father and returns his thanks to the Throne of Grace and refuses to thank his own cunning or ingenuity for he knows that in himself he is but a sinful creature of the dust whose breath is in his nostrils; who does not look to man

or the combined efforts of men and organizations for his material sustenance; who is willing to walk the way His God has ordained for him and patiently awaits the justice of God which shall be revealed in due time and does not strive to thwart, hinder or alter even the ways which he does not understand—you have met your opponent!

Mr. Gritter, if you have met a man who has borne loved ones to the grave; who has passed through poverty; who has suffered abuse for the sake of his convictions and who still through it all can say: "Thy will be done," you have met the man against whom you venture to raise your pen!

Truly, he is a peculiar fellow who would share his last morsel of bread with his enemy; who will deprive himself in order that you may not want; who will rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep; a father to the orphaned and a helper of those who are distressed; who, at the expense and ridicule of his own good name, will stand by and protect those who have fallen in sin; who will come whenever and wherever called, be it to pray over your sick children or to perform or assist in some menial task which you are not capable of performing alone—such as one is he!

You will also find that at his hands you will be treated with Christian courtesy. He will strive to instruct with meekness those who oppose themselves but—his weapons are *terrible*! They are sharper than any two-edged sword. His logic will not be such as will be understood by the natural man whose God is his belly and who minds earthly things. He will not rail or heap vile imprecations on those who oppose him. His heart will be filled with tender pity and sympathy for those whom he seeks to convert from the error of their ways, but his determination to maintain the truth is unshakable!

There he is, Mr. Gritter, and may your contact with such an one be profitable for your own instruction.

Fraternally,
G. T. E.

Classical Appointments

Since Rev. Vermeer has accepted the call to Pella, Iowa, the following Classical appointments has been granted:—Feb. 25, W. Hofman; March 4, B. Kok; March 11, R. Veldman; March 18, M. Schipper; March 25, H. Veldman.

Per Classical Committee:
Rev. A. Petter, Sec'y.