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MEDITATION

Christus Is Opgestaan

Maar nu, Christus is opgewekt uit de dooden, en is de eersteling geworden, dergenen, die ontslapen zijn.

I Cor. 15:20.

De Heer is waarlijk opgestaan!

Hij is opgewekt uit de dooden als de eersteling!

Daarvan zijn vele getrouwe getuigen, en op hun getuigenis moeten alle aanvallen der tegenstanders schipbreuk lijden.

Daar is het getuigenis van Maria Magdalena en de andere vrouwen, die vroeg in den morgen van den derden dag zich grafwaarts begaven, om het lichaam van haren Heiland eenen laatsten dienst te bewijzen.

Aan de opstanding der dooden dachten ze zeker niet. Het woord des Heeren, dat Hij meermalen tot haar gesproken had, aangaande zijn overgeleverd worden in de handen der zondaren, Zijn lijden en sterven, en Zijn opstanding ten derden dage, waren ze zeker niet indachtig. Hadden ze daaraan gedacht, ze hadden zich zeker in dien vroegen morgen niet begeven naar den hof van Jozef van Arimathea, maar zouden reeds op weg geweest zijn naar Galilea, waarhenen Hij haar, naar Zijn woord, immers voor zou gaan. Het kruis was voor haar het droeve, donkere einde. . . .

Doch ziet, zoekende Jezus, Die gestorven was, vinden ze den opgestanen Heiland!

Ze zien Hem!

Eerst Maria, die eerst met de vrouwen twijfelmoedig was over den zwaren steen, die voor het graf gewenteld was; maar die, toen ze van verre reeds zagen, dat de steen van het graf gewenteld was, over het opene graf even twijfelmoedig was geworden, en aanstonds besluitende; dat men het lichaam van Jezus gestolen had, niet verder de andere vrouwen naar het graf ver-

gezelde, maar zich haastte om hare ontdekking en hare conclusie den discipelen te vertellen. Ze was toch naar het graf terug gekeerd, want ze was diep ontroerd over het verlies van haren Heer, en kon niet rusten eer ze Zijn lichaam de laatste eer bewezen had. En daar had ze Hem gezien, met Hem gesproken, Hem, dien ze eerst niet kende, in het noemen van haren naam herkend. . . .

Daarna ook de andere vrouwen.

Zij waren met Maria niet aanstonds terug gekeerd, maar hadden zich naar het opene graf gespoed, hadden de ledige plaats gezien en het wonder der linnen doeken, hadden daar in het graf een gezicht van engelen gezien, die haar het eerste opstandings-evangelie verkondigden: "Hij is hier niet, want Hij is opgestaan!" En als zij zich verbaasd en verheugd met groote blijdschap van het graf haastten, om hare ervaring den discipelen te verkondigen, ontmoetten ze den Heiland op haren weg, Dien ze aanbaden. . . .

En ook van Simon was Hij gezien.

Deze had zich met Johannes naar het graf begeven, nadat ze het rapport van Maria gehoord hadden. Ook zij waren in het graf gegaan, en hadden het wonder van de linnen doeken aanschouwd. En kort daarna had Petrus, die immers daaraan bijzondere behoefte had, en voor wien de Heiland een persoonlijke boodschap bij de engelen in het graf had achter gelaten, hem gezien.

De Heer is waarlijk opgestaan, en is van Simon gezien!

Later in den middag, toen Jeruzalem reeds vervuld was met allerlei geruchten, werd Hij gezien van de twee discipelen, die van de oude Godstad naar Emmaus wandelden, en op den weg zich verdiepten in allerlei vragen aangaande Jezus van Nazareth, die immers een profeet was, machtig in woorden en werken, van Wien ze verwacht hadden, dat Hij Degene was, Die Israel verlossen zou; Die echter door de leiders was veroordeeld en gedood. En nu zochten ze naar een antwoord op de vraag aangaande dat kruis, doch tevergeefs. En bovendien was het thans de derde dag, en gingen er allerlei geruchten in Jeruzalem. Men zeide zelfs, dat

Hij opgestaan was! En toen had Jezus zich bij hen gevoegd, schoon ze meenden, dat Hij een vreemdeling was, had gevraagd naar het onderwerp hunner ernstige discussie, en had hun uitgelegd, hoe Mozes en al de profeten juist van dat kruis, dat zij niet verstonden, geprofeteerd hadden, en aangetoond, dat de Christus alzoo moest lijden, om in Zijne heerlijkheid in te gaan. En hunne harten waren brandende geweest. De weg naar Emmaus was hun veel te kort. Hij was bij hen ingekomen, en in het breken des broods hadden ze Hem herkend!

De Heer is opgestaan!

Om die boodschap den overigen discipelen te brengen waren ze nog dienzelfden avond naar Jeruzalem terug gekeerd, om echter te worden begroet met de blijde mare: "De Heer is waarlijk opgestaan, en is van Simon gezien." En terwijl ze met elkander de ervaringen van dien dag bespraken, stond de Heiland Zelf plotseling in hun midden. Ze waren echter verschrikt geworden, en meenden, dat ze een geest zagen. Want, in weerwil van het feit, dat ze reeds overtuigd waren, dat Hij was opgewekt, was de Opgestane hun nog vreemd. Maar van de werkelijkheid Zijner opstanding had de Heiland hen overtuigd door in hun bijzijn en voor aller oogen te eten!

Hij is opgestaan!

Mijn Heer en Mijn God! Zoo had een week later Thomas, voor wien het bange kruis het einde was, die liever maar met den Heiland gestorven was, die gansch geen licht zag, en die zich van het gezelschap der overige discipelen had afgescheiden; die ook het woord zijner medeapostelen niet had willen gelooven, en die hun de plechtige, schoon dwaze, verzekering had gegeven, dat hij niet gelooven wilde, tenzij hij den Opgestanen zou kunnen voelen en tasten,—zoo had deze discipel in verwoering uitgeroepen, toen de Heiland nogmaals in het midden der discipelen was verschenen, en zijnen ongeloofigen discipel had uitgenoodigd, om Zijn vinger te leggen in de teekenen der nagelen, en zijne hand in het teeken van de speerwonde. . . .

De Heer is waarlijk opgestaan!

Daarvan waren zeven der apostelen nogmaals getuige geweest, nadat ze op Zijn woord zich naar Galilei hadden begeven, en Hij hun Zich bekend maakte door de wondervolle vischvangst, hen er tevens aan herinnerende, dat ze visschers der menschen zouden worden.

Daarvan waren meer dan vijf honderd broederen op eenmaal getuige geweest, toen ze met Hem vergaderd waren op een berg in Galilea.

Daarvan was ook Jakobus, de broeder des Heeren, getuige geweest.

Dat leefde in de harten der apostelen, toen ze terug keerden van den Olijfberg, waar Hij was opgenomen geworden, en eene wolk Hem had weg genomen uit hun gezicht,

En ten laatste van allen had ook Paulus Hem gezien, en had hij zijne plaats ingenomen onder de getuigen der opstanding.

Christus is opgewekt uit de dooden!

Machtige werkelijkheid!

Wonder der genade!

Licht in de duisternis!

Hij stond op! De dood heerscht niet meer over Hem! Door de duisternis des doods heen brak het licht der onsterfelijkheid door!

Want immers Zijne verrijzenis uit de dooden is wel waarlijk *opstanding*!

Neen, ze is geen terugkeer in dit leven, in de gelijkheid des zondigen vleesches, in het beeld des aardschen, in het zwakke, verderfelijke, oneerbare, sterfelijke van onze tegenwoordige existentie, die immers niet anders is dan een gestadige dood. Hij ging door het graf heen.

Ze is ook geen terugkeer naar het leven, dat de eerste mensch Adam genoot in den staat der rechtheid in het eerste paradijs. Want de eerste mensch was uit de aarde aardsch: de onverderfelijkheid had hij niet bereikt, buiten het bereik des doods stond hij niet.

De opstanding van Jezus ligt op een hooger vlak!

Toen Hij opstond, deed het verderfelijke de onverderfelijkheid aan, het sterfelijke de onsterfelijkheid, werd de dood finaal verslonden tot overwinning. Hetgeen in zwakheid gezaaid werd, werd in kracht opgewekt; hetgeen door oneer gekenmerkt was aan deze zijde des grafs, kwam in heerlijkheid te voorschijn aan de overzij; wat hier zich bewoog in de sfeer van het verderfelijke, werd in onverderfelijkheid opgewekt. Het natuurlijke werd, door het graf heen, geestelijk. Het beeld des aardschen, dat ook Hij had aangenomen en gedragen, werd met het beeld des hemelschen verwisseld. Het leven en de onsterfelijkheid zijn door de opstanding van Jezus Christus uit de dooden aan het licht gebracht!

Ja, waarlijk, de Heer is opgestaan. De opstanding is werkelijkheid!

Maar even zeker is, dat Zijne verrijzenis wel waarlijk *opstanding* is: Hij is voor eeuwig buiten alle bereik des doods!

Hij leeft!

En ook van het wonderlijke, het anderzijdsche, het dood-verslindende van de opstanding des Heeren waren de discipelen overtuigd geworden. O, zeker, ook dit begrepen ze niet terstond. De idee van de opstanding ten derden dage verstonden ze niet. Als Hij plotseling in hun midden verscheen, werden ze verschrikt, en meenden ze, dat ze een geest zagen. Maria Magdalena wilde ongetwijfeld de vroegere gemeenschap weer aanknoopen, en moest het hooren: "Raak mij niet aan!" Thomas wilde voelen en tasten, en verstond het nog niet, dat het zaliger was om niet te zien, en nogtans te gelooven. Bij de zee van Tiberias wilden ze Hem eigen-

lijk gaarne vragen, wie Hij was, schoon ze wisten, dat Hij de Heere was. En op den berg in Galilea waren er sommigen, die twijfelden. . . .

Doch langzamerhand werden ze, niet alleen van de werkelijkheid, maar ook van het hoogere en geheel andere der opstanding verzekerd.

Vele dingen werkten daartoe mede, en dienden de openbaring van den opgestanen Heer.

Daar was reeds het feit, dat niemand getuige geweest was van het eigenlijke moment der opstanding. Er was eene aardbeving geweest, een engel was gekomen en had den steen van het graf gewenteld, de wachters waren verschrikt op de vlucht geslagen. Het graf was open ter inspectie voor de discipelen. Maar niemand was getuige geweest van de opstanding zelve. Niemand kon zeggen, hoe en wanneer Jezus uit het graf verreezen was, behalve dan, dat het naar Zijn eigen woord den derde dage geschied was. Dan was daar "de plaats, waar Jezus gelegen had," en de linnen doeken!

Bovendien waren de verschijningen zelf wonderlijk.

O, die veertig dagen van de openbaring van den opgestanen Christus waren wonderlijke dagen voor de discipelen! Het oude verkeer met hunnen Meester was afgebroken, werd niet weer hersteld. Hij verscheen aan hen, nu in dezen vorm, dan in dien, sprak met hen, en verdween weer even mysterieus als Hij gekomen was!

Hij leefde, doch niet meer in hunne levenssfeer.

En van de overzijde van het graf, de hemelsche zijde, kwam Hij tot hen, om hen van Zijne opstanding te verzekeren.

Om hun als het ware toe te roepen: "Ik ben de opstanding en het leven!"

En: "Ik leef, en gij zult leven."

Goddelijk wonder!

Rijke genade!

De opstanding des Heilands toch is het hart des evangelies.

Indien Christus niet opgewekt is, is alles tevergeefs. Dan is er in de duisternis van onze zonde en van onzen dood geen enkele lichtstraal. Dan is het kruis het einde, en dan is Christus tevergeefs gestorven.

Dan is er geen opstanding uit de dooden!

Dan is ons geloof ijdel!

Dan kwam er uit den hemel geen antwoord op het "Volbracht" van Christus aan het kruis. Dan is er geen vergeving van zonden. Dan werd de offerande der verzoening niet gebracht. Dan is er geen rechtvaardigmaking, geen uitweg, geen leven uit den dood, geen hope. Dan zijn wij, die in dit leven op Christus hopen, zeker de ellendigste van alle menschen. Dan is het motto der ijdele en goddelooze wereld verreweg het wijst en verkieselijkst: "Laat ons eten en drinken, want morgen sterven wij!"

Maar nu!

Christus is opgewekt uit de dooden!

En die opwekking van Christus is eene daad Gods. En die daad Gods is Zijne openbaring aan ons, Zijn Woord tot ons. En door dat woord der opstanding van Jezus Christus kennen wij Hem als den God onzer volkomene zaligheid, als God, Die de dooden levend maakt. Zooals Hij in de schepping Zich doet kennen als den Almachtige, Die de dingen roept, die niet zijn, alsof ze waren, zoo openbaart Hij Zich in de opstanding van Jezus Christus uit de dooden als den God onzer volkomene verlossing, die het licht uit de duisternis, de gerechtigheid uit de zonde, het leven uit den dood, de eeuwige heerlijkheid uit de diepte der hel roept. Ziende op den opgewekten Christus door het geloof, zingen we blijmoediglijk:

"Hij kan, en wil, en zal in nood,
Zelfs bij het naad'ren van den dood,
Volkomen uitkomst geven."

Want immers, het is Christus, Die opgewekt is!

En Christus is de Eersteling!

Hij staat niet alleen. Hij is geen enkeling. Hij is maar geen mensch onder de menschen. Zijne opstanding is niet een op zichzelf staand feit, iets, waarvan het historieblad getuigt, dat het in het verleden geschied is, dat nooit eerder gezien of gehoord werd, en dat wel nimmer weer geschieden zal. Neen, Hij is de Christus, de Gezalfde des Heeren, de Uitverkorene aller uitverkorenen, het Hoofd Zijne kerk, Hem door den Vader gegeven voor de grondlegging der wereld. Aan die Kerk is Hij onlosmakelijk verbonden door Gods eeuwig decreet, en zij aan Hem. Die Kerk is met Hem lotgemeen. Sterft Hij, dan sterft die Kerk in Hem. Voldoet Hij aan het recht Gods, dan is er voor die Kerk genoeg gedaan. Wordt Hij door den dood heen gerechtvaardigd, dan is Zijne Kerk gerechtvaardigd. Staat Hij uit de dooden op, dan staat die Kerk met Hem uit de dooden op.

Daarom is er eene eeuwige gerechtigheid voor allen, die in Hem zijn!

Hij werd overgeleverd voor onze zonden; Hij werd opgewekt voor onze rechtvaardigmaking. Zijne opstanding is Gods antwoord op Zijn eigen, aan het kruis uitgeroepen woord: "Het is volbracht!" Het is Gods Woord, dat onze zonden zijn uitgedelgd, en dat we in Christus voor eeuwig gerechtvaardigd zijn.

Daarom is er eene opstanding uit de dooden!

Buiten Hem is er geene opstanding, is er niets anders dan de dood, de eeuwige dood. Maar Hij is de opstanding en het leven. Hij is de Eersteling dergenen, die ontslapen zijn, het Begin der opstanding. Met zijne opstanding is de opstanding een voldongen feit geworden.

Thans reeds hooren we Zijn Woord, en leven, want Hij leeft in ons.

Straks wordt de dood verslonden tot overwinning!

Rijke, opgestane Heiland!

H. H.

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EDITORIALS

The Text of a Complaint

The second main point of the "Complaint" against Dr. Clark concerns, in the words of the complainants, "his view of the relation of the faculty of knowledge, the intellectual faculty, to other faculties of the soul." I have reread the material the complainants offer on this point, and also its refutation in "The Answer." I think that the points of difference between Dr. Clark and his accusers may, in the main, be summarized as follows:

1. The complainants hold to the trichotomous division or distinction of the human soul into its faculties, and apply this also to God. In the human soul they distinguish between *intellect*, *emotion*, and *will*. Dr. Clark prefers the dichotomous distinction of *intellect* and *will*, refuses to speak of emotion as a separate faculty, and considers the emotions as aspects of the intellect and will. And he, too, applies this distinction to God. This seems evident from the "Complaint," p. 7: "Any statement of the relation between the intellectual and the other spiritual faculties must needs be concerned with God as well as with man. Although comparatively little was said in the course of Dr. Clark's examination about what might be called divine psychology, there is enough evidence in the transcript of the examination to outline his position. Dr. Clark should certainly not be accused of dividing the nature of God, or even of man, into discrete parts which might be labeled 'intellect', 'emotion', and 'volition', or by other terms. However, since he is willing, at least, for the sake of argument, to use such words as indicating different faculties there is certainly meaning in what has been said on the subject. First of all, Dr. Clark specifically states (p. 16) that the statement of the Westminster Confession that 'God is without. . . passions' means that God is lacking in feeling and emotion. Although he objects to a definition of feeling or emotion which would make those words mean anything different from 'passions', he does not make provision for any other faculty in God's nature which would be non-intellectual and non-volitional. Secondly, to round out the picture, Dr. Clark apparently does assume that God has both intellectual and volitional faculties, for he talks about the decretive and perceptive will of God, as well as about God's knowledge."

"The Answer" makes plain that Dr. Clark does not deny the reality of emotions in God, but gives them a different connotation from that of the complainants,

and assigns to them a position different from that which the latter assign to them, in relation to God's intellect and will. The complainants make of the emotions in God a separate faculty, next to, and on a level with intellect and will. Dr. Clark gives them a subordinate position, and explains them as aspects or functions of God's intellect and will. From "The Answer" we quote: "Dr. Clark never made any 'forthright denial of anything that might be called emotion in God.' Love or wrath 'might be called an emotion.' Dr. Clark did not deny love and wrath to God. He holds that while some people might call God's love and wrath emotions, it is better to classify them as volitions. In this Dr. Clark is in accord with a large section of theology and of literary usage." p. 27.

It would seem, then, that the chief point of difference between the complainants and Dr. Clark may be stated thus, that the former hold to the trichotomous, the latter to the dichotomous distinction as applied to human and "divine psychology." (I must not be held responsible for the latter term).

2. While the complainants place the intellect, emotions, and will, both in man and in God, on a level (they even leave the impression of teaching a certain primacy of the emotions), Dr. Clark certainly assigns to the emotions a subordinate position, and, according to the complainants, teaches the primacy of the intellect. The latter position the complainants hold to be a serious error, contrary to the best Reformed tradition. I quote from the "Complaint": "While Dr. Clark is 'willing to admit that the intellect and volition and emotion are equally essential to a human being', he maintains that they have different functions' and 'that the intellect is the supreme function.' " p. 7. And again: "What, in the first place, is the Reformed teaching about the aspects of God's nature, or, if you will, the faculties which reside in God? (How easy it would be to deduce from statements like "faculties in God" that the complainants deny the simplicity of God! We do not make the deduction, of course, although we would neither be responsible for the terms, H.H.). That God has knowledge and will is agreed by all. The questions that must concern us are two: does God have what may be properly called 'emotions'? and, what is the relation between God's faculties? If we assign to the word 'emotion' an *a priori* definition which in the nature of the case identifies emotion with 'passions', it would obviously be denying our standards to say that God has emotions (Westminster Confession, II, 1). God does not change, there is no shadow of turning in him, he is not a man that he should repent, he is immutable. Certainly, also, God does not share certain of the qualities which we call 'emotions', such as fear, longing, and surprise. If we are to speak of feeling or emotions in God at all, we must confine ourselves to his attributes which are sometimes summed up under the word 'bene-

volence': love, goodness, mercy, and grace. Even here we must be careful to defend the immutable self-determination of God. But the question still remains, can these be identified with, or associated with, the idea of 'emotion' or 'feeling'? Obviously, we define those words in their narrow but perfectly colloquial sense as something which arouses the will and thus determines action. In fine, is there any quality or faculty in God which is neither intellectual nor volitional, and which underlies or accompanies volitional activity? That question, in similar words, Dr. Clark studiously avoided answering." pp. 7, 8.

It is interesting for more than one reason to notice how Dr. Clark "studiously avoided answering" this particular question in his examination. In "The Answer" the transcript of the examination on this point is quoted as follows: "Q. When the Confession of Faith says: 'God is without body, parts or passions', does it mean that God is lacking in feeling or emotion? A. It does. Q. I'll define the meaning of emotions: I mean—affections in the sense of principal activity with reference to objections. Now I'll repeat the question, if you wish. A. Go ahead. Q. The Confession says: 'God is without body, parts, or passions.' Does it mean that God is lacking in feeling or emotion? A. Go ahead. Q. And by feeling or emotion I mean—in the sense of principal activity with reference to objects. A. I forget which way to answer that—yes or no. Q. The Confession of Faith says: 'God is without body or parts. A. The answer is yes, but I protest against the awful English in your statement, the word emotion—never mind that English. Q. You mean that God has never acted upon anything aside from himself? A. I don't understand you. Q. What I would like to know is this: We can call these feelings or emotions in God, and I would define them as analogous to our feelings and emotions and affections in the sense that they are active principles, active with reference to objects. For example: God is angry with the wicked. God loves His people eternally, would you deny that A. That is right, right; what you say is right. Q. That is what the Confession means? A. No, what—not what it means right there—not what the Confession means."

If the transcript of this part of the examination is correct, the insinuation that Dr. Clark "studiously avoided answering" is not true. However, one wonders whether the questioner himself was not somewhat vague and confused in his own mind. And certain it is that the last question was answered correctly by Dr. Clark: when the Westminster Confession states that there are no passions in God, it certainly has no reference to God's wrath against the wicked, and to His love to His elect.

Because of lack of space, and because of fear that more of this material might make our readers too

dizzy at present, I must reserve my own opinion of this point of the controversy for the next issue.

H. H.

“Being Crafty, I Caught You With Guile”

The Roosevelt Park Men's Society sent me the following communication:

“Esteemed Editor:

“The English Men's Society of the Roosevelt Park Protestant Reformed Church has experienced considerable difficulty in arriving at a satisfactory interpretation of the latter part of II Cor. 12:16, namely: ‘. . . nevertheless, being crafty, I caught you with guile.’

“They would very much appreciate reading your interpretation of this portion of Scripture as soon as you can conveniently do so.

Respectfully yours,

The Roosevelt Park Men's Society.
Geo. Ten Elshof, Sec'y.”

Answer.

In the light of the context, it would appear evident that the apostle is defending himself against a slanderous accusation by his opponents, the accusation in this case being that he preached the gospel for mercenary purposes. Under the pretext of his being interested in the salvation of men, he meant to acquire filthy lucre. He answers that he never burdened them, the Corinthians, while he labored among them; that he will not be burdensome to them when he will come to them the third time, and that, on the contrary, he will gladly spend and be spent for their sake, even though “the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved.” vs. 15.

However, the evil adversaries in Corinth would say: “No, it is true, he is not directly and personally burdensome to the people when he is among them. He is too sly for that. He is crafty. He catches them unawares. What he does not do directly, he does through his helpers. These take your money and through them Paul indirectly gains his mercenary end.” These words of the opponents the apostle somewhat sarcastically adopts as his own. They therefore should be read as follows: “Be it so, very well (they say), personally I did not burden you: but being crafty, I caught you with guile, and took my share of filthy lucre from you through others.” And the apostle then continues to disprove this accusation. vss. 17, 18.

H. H.

Bread For The Righteous

The South Holland Men's Society asked for an explanation of Ps. 37:25. We read there: “I have been young, and now I am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.”

I suppose that the Men's Society of South Holland had really no difficulty to understand the meaning of these words as such. They are very plain. They simply state that the poet in his days (and he had lived long) had never seen the righteous begging bread. And these words need no interpretation. The difficulty in the South Holland Men's Society must have arisen when they compared this statement with reality, when they tried to find the realization of them in actual conditions. And even in Israel at the time of Jesus and the apostles there were beggars. Lazarus in the parable is an outstanding illustration.

I think we must remember the following:

1. Under normal conditions, and when Israel walked in the way of the Lord's precepts, there were no poor in the land of Canaan. This was the promise of God. See Deut. 15:4, 5. The righteous, therefore, would not be forsaken, nor his seed begging bread in normal conditions. The text means literally that the poet had seen the realization of this promise in the days of his life.

2. If the Church in the world understands her calling, the text may be applied to present day conditions also. In normal conditions there is no need for the righteous, even though they be poor, in any church to go begging for bread. The Lord usually gives plenty to any church to provide for all.

3. This does not mean, of course, that under no conditions the righteous ever suffer hunger and want. Think of times of persecution for Christ's sake. Think of the time of antichrist, when those that refuse to receive the mark of the beast, can neither buy nor sell. Besides, if ever the righteous go begging for bread, this may be a testimony against the church, as it was a testimony against Israel in the old dispensation.

H. H.

NOTICE

Classis East will meet in regular session Wednesday, April 4 at 9:00 at the First Protestant Reformed Church, at Grand Rapids, Michigan. The consistories will please remember that this is the last meeting of Classis before the next Synod meets.

D. Jonker, S. C.

The Triple Knowledge

An Exposition Of The Heidelberg Catechism

Part Two.

Of Man's Redemption

Lord's Day XIV

3.

Very God and Righteous Man.

The early Church, after a long period of controversy about the truth concerning the incarnated Word, finally expressed the faith of the orthodox believers in the *Symbol of Chalcedon*, in the year 451, as follows:

"We, then, following the holy Fathers, all with one consent, teach men to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood; truly God and truly man, of a reasonable soul and body; consubstantial with the Father according to the Godhead, and consubstantial with us according to the Manhood; in all things like unto us, without sin; begotten before all ages of the Father according to the Godhead, and in these latter days, for us and for our salvation, born of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, according to the Manhood; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures, *inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably*; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person and one Subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, and only begotten, God, the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ, as the prophets from the beginning have declared concerning him, and the Lord Jesus Christ himself has taught us, and the Creed of the holy Fathers has handed down to us."

Briefly expressed, the Church here formulated the doctrine, which since that time has remained unchanged, that the two natures of Christ subsist in unity of divine Person, without mixture, without change, without division, without separation. About each of these chief elements in the doctrine concerning Immanuel, God with us, we will make a few remarks.

First of all, then, it must be emphasized that Christ is *one* Person, not two persons. In the incarnation of the Son of God, it was not a human person that was united with the second Person of the Trinity, but a human nature, body and soul, which the Son of God assumed. This truth has sometimes been expressed by

stating that in the incarnation the Person of the Son assumed an *impersonal* human nature. This is, perhaps, hardly correct. Better it would seem to express the matter thus, that the human nature of Christ became and is personal only through its assumption by the Person of the Son of God, it has no personal subsistence of its own, but it is personal because the Son of God took up His abode in it. Hence, both the personality of the human nature of the Saviour and its union with the divine nature have their ground in the Person of the Son of God.

It is difficult to conceive of and to define what is meant by person. It has usually been defined as an individual subsistence in a rational, moral nature. Only a rational, moral being can be a person. There may be many individual trees, but a tree is not a person. There may be an endless variety of the species *horse*, but no individual horse is a person. God is personal, for He reveals Himself as having intellect and will. And so, those creatures are persons that are endowed with a rational, volitional nature, like angels and men. This description, however, is rather an answer to the question: what is a person? It does not define what is that mysterious something within us that we call our person, or ego. My *person* is that which I know to be the subject of all my actions, and, besides, of whose identity I remain conscious and assured no matter what radical changes my *nature* may undergo. It is not my nature, my body or my soul, my brain, my eye, my ear, my mouth, my feet, that acts, thinks, sees, hears, speaks, runs, but my person: *I* act, *I* think, *I* see and hear and speak and run, in and through my nature. And from childhood to old age, from the cradle to the grave, my nature undergoes many and great changes; yet, my person remains the same. I know that I am still the same person that once was nursed at my mother's breasts. And even through death my person remains the same, retains its identity. It is *I* that die, and will be raised again in Christ at the last day.

Now, in Christ this person is the Son of God, the second Person of the Holy Trinity. In and through the human nature of Jesus it is the Son of God that is the subject of all His actions and all His experiences. It is He that is born in Bethlehem, as to His human nature, that grows up in the home of Joseph and Mary in Nazareth, that converses with the doctors of the law in the temple when He is twelve years old, that is baptized and enters upon His public ministry when He was about thirty years of age. The Person of the Son of God, Who is in the bosom of the Father as to His divine nature, appeared in the form of a servant in the human nature, tabernacled among us, spoke to us, performed His mighty works among us. The Person of the Son of God as to and in His human nature is captured in Gethsemane, condemned by the Sanhedrin.

delivered over unto death by the Roman governor. The Son of God suffers death, is raised from the dead, exalted at the right hand of God, and received a name that is above every name,—all in His human nature. Always He is the same Person, “not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, and only begotten, the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ.” Were He two persons, He would not be Immanuel, the union of God with us would not be established in Him, His death would have no other significance than any human death, atonement would not have been made through Him, and He could not be the object of our adoration and worship: we could not address Him as: “my Lord and my God.”

The union of the two natures in Christ, therefore, is in and through the Person. Hence, the Church confesses that this union is without mixture or fusion. The two natures in Christ are not merged, blended, or fused into one nature. Christ is not a theanthropos, a God-man. Such a view would be Pantheistic. For Pantheism identifies the essence of God with the essence of the creature. It fuses the Creator and the creature into one vague All. God is the world, and the world is God. The world spirit is the spirit of God, that comes to highest expression and self-consciousness in man. It obliterates the line of demarcation between God and man, the Infinite and the finite. According to this proud philosophy, the incarnation is only the natural development of the human race: in Christ God reached self-consciousness. Hence, He could identify Himself with the Father. He was divine because He was truly human. This Pantheistic view, which in the course of history frequently lifted up its proud head in one form or another, is the destruction of all true religion. If the divine essence is not distinct from the essence of the creature, if the Personality of God and that of man are merged, if my life, my thoughts and my desires, are nothing but little ripples on the swelling tide of the universal Spirit-ocean,—then there is neither religion nor morality. Then God is the one Universal Subject in all, and there is no fellowship between Him and us, no responsibility, no sin and no redemption. Then He does not exist, has no being, in distinction from us, we cannot speak to Him, believe in Him, trust in Him, enter into His covenant fellowship. Hence, it is important that the confession of Chalcedon be maintained with regard to the nature of Christ: they are united in the Person of the Son *unconfusedly*. The Son of God, Who is co-equal with the Father and the Holy Ghost, God of God, Light of Light, assumed the real and complete human nature, body and soul, but so that the two natures remain for ever distinct. God and man are most intimately united in Him, yet so that the two are never fused into one substance or nature.

In close connection with the preceding stands the

second limitation, or negative qualification of the union of the two natures in Christ by the council of Chalcedon: *unchangeably*. Neither the divine nor the human nature was essentially changed through the incarnation. The Son of God did not *leave* the bosom of the Father to become man: He *is*, according to the divine nature, in the bosom of the Father, while, according to the human nature, He lies in the manger of Bethlehem, grows up in Nazareth, walks among us in the form of a servant, dies on the cross, is raised and exalted. For the divine nature is immutable. Nor did the Son of God put aside the divine virtues. The Infinite was not changed into the finite, but assumed the finite; the Eternal did not empty Himself of eternity, but assumed the temporal; the Lord of all did not cease to be Lord, but assumed the form of a servant. Nor did the human nature in any sense change into the divine, or assume divine attributes. In His human nature Christ was finite, temporal, limited in power, knowledge, wisdom and understanding, dependent and changeable. In it He lived our life, thought human thoughts, had human desires, and spoke our language. Yea, He even assumed our weakened human nature from the virgin Mary. His was not the original human nature, as Adam possessed it in the state of rectitude, but the flesh and blood of the children, subject to suffering and death. The only exception to this was His sinlessness. For He came in the likeness of sinful flesh: not in sinful flesh, but yet in its likeness. Rom. 8:3. And it behooved Him in all things to be made like unto His brethren, and we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but one who was in all points tempted even as we are, yet without sin. Heb. 2:17; 4:15. He is eternally very God; He became truly man in time. He *is* eternally in the form of God; in the fulness of time He also assumed the form of a servant. And thus He could speak that mysterious word to Nicodemus: “And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which *is* in heaven.” John 3:13.

This already implies that the two natures, the human and the divine, subsist in Christ *indivisibly*. Yet, the early fathers considered it necessary also to express this negative qualification to bar another erroneous view from entering into the Church. For the heresy had already been taught that Christ assumed only a partial human nature, that the natures of Christ were divided into parts, and that parts of these natures were joined in the incarnation. He was *really* human in as far as He assumed the human nature, but He was not *completely* human: the divine Spirit or nature inhabited a human body and a human soul, but not a human spirit or mind. The highest in man, his spirit or mind, was replaced by the divine Spirit. It is my experience that some such conception is often

met with in those that believe the incarnation of Christ. Upon questioning catechumens, I frequently discovered that they had the notion that the divine nature inhabited a human body, took the place of the human soul. It must, therefore, be constantly made clear and emphasized that the whole, infinite divine nature was joined indivisibly to the whole human nature, body and soul. Christ is very God, and completely man.

And yet, although each of the natures in Christ retains its own distinct qualities, and the two natures neither are merged or fused into each other, nor supplement each other, they are united in the divine Person of the Son of God *inseparably*. Although the human nature in Christ never partook of the divine, through the intimate union of the two natures in the Person of Christ, there was a constant inner connection between His human nature and the divine, between His human mind and the mind of God, His human power and the power of the Almighty, instructing Him from within, making Him obedient unto death, sanctifying Him, and sustaining Him even in His deepest afflictions. That is why He is the perfect revelation of the Father in human nature. And that is the reason why He could endure the terrible moment of the pouring out of all the vials of God's wrath without being crushed.

Beautifully this distinction and union of the two natures in Christ is expressed in the *Confessio Belgica*, Art. XIX: "We believe that by this conception, the person of the Son is inseparably united with the human nature; so that there are not two Sons of God, nor two persons, but two natures united in one single person: yet, that each nature retains its own distinct properties. As then the divine nature hath always remained uncreated, without beginning of days or end of life, filling heaven and earth: so also hath the human nature not lost its properties, but remained a creature, having beginning of days, being a finite nature, and retaining all the properties of a real body. And though he hath by His resurrection given immortality to the same, nevertheless He hath not changed the reality of His human nature; forasmuch as our salvation and resurrection also depend on the reality of His body. But these two natures are so closely united in one person, that they were not separated even by His death. Therefore that which He, when dying, commended into the hands of His Father, was a real human spirit, departing from His body. But in the meantime the divine nature always remained united with the human, even when He lay in the grave. And the Godhead did not cease to be in Him, any more than it did when He was an infant, though it did not so clearly manifest itself for a while. Wherefore we confess that He is very God and very Man: very God by His power to conquer death; and very man that He might die for us

according to the infirmity of His flesh."

This union of the human nature to the divine in the Person of the Son already postulates the sinlessness of His human nature. For God can have no fellowship with sin. In a corrupt human nature the Son of God could not have dwelled. He was the Holy Child Jesus. He was separate from sinners. "For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." Heb. 7:26.

This sinlessness of Christ implies especially three elements. It means, first of all, that He was without original guilt. We are born in original guilt and condemnation: the sin of Adam is imputed to us, we being reckoned in Adam forensically. But Christ does not fall under this imputation *because He is not a human person, but the Person of the Son of God*. Although as to His nature He is out of Adam, as to His Person He was not reckoned in Adam. Guilt is imputed to the *person*. And as Christ was a divine, not a human person, the guilt of Adam's sin could not be imputed to Him. Personally He did not lie under the wrath of God and under the condemnation of the human race. He was separate from sinners. Secondly, the sinlessness of Christ implies that He was not depraved, that His nature was without corruption, that He assumed a holy human nature. Being without original guilt, He was entitled to a sinless human nature, for He was personally not subject to the sentence of death. And this sinless human nature He assumed, not from a holy virgin, who herself was immaculately conceived, but because the Son of God formed His own human nature through the conception by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the virgin Mary. "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." Luke 1:35. And, lastly, this implies that Christ never had any actual sin, that His whole existence, from the manger to the cross was without spot or blemish. He was tempted in all things even as we are, yet without sin. Heb. 4:15.

And in this connection it must be maintained that there was not the slightest possibility that Christ should fall into sin. The first Adam was lapsible, the last Adam was not. And this impossibility was due, not to the holiness of His human nature alone, for Adam also was righteous and holy, yet he fell; but, subjectively, to God's decree that in Him all things should be made perfect; and, subjectively, to the union of the human nature to the divine in the Person of the Son. To maintain that also for Christ there was a possibility of falling into sin, is to deny God's immutable decree that He should be made perfect as the Captain of our salvation; and is tantamount to the statement that the Person of the Son could become dis-

obedient to the Father in human flesh. And this is absurd. Hence, it must be maintained that Christ could not sin. This does not render the reality of His temptations less real. He was tempted in all things even as we are, yet without sin. The trial or test of anything does not become less real because it is certain from the outset that it will not and cannot break. The strain put upon the obedience of Christ in His sufferings and death is nonetheless real and heavy, because it was *a priori* established that He could never be crushed under the strain. Also in this respect Christ was separate from sinners. He could never fall. In Him the realization of God's everlasting covenant is assured from the beginning, because He is the Word become flesh!

Thus He is our Mediator, Who is able to bring the perfect sacrifice for our sins, and to deliver us from all the dominion of sin and death. At first sight, the words of the Catechism in question and answer 36 leave a somewhat strange impression, as if only by the holy conception and birth of Christ our sins are covered in the sight of God, and that, too, only our original sins: "What profit dost thou receive by Christ's holy conception and nativity? That he is our Mediator; and with innocence and perfect holiness, covers in the sight of God my sins, wherein I was conceived and brought forth." Ursinus, in his *Schatboek* offers no further explanation of these words. The meaning cannot be, of course, that by Christ's holy birth my original sins are blotted out. However, if His holy conception and birth are brought into connection with His perfect sacrifice on the cross, all is plain. Because He had no original sin, because He was free from the guilt of Adam's sin, and from the defilement of the human nature, He could offer Himself up to God, a Lamb without spot or blemish, and perform that perfect act of obedience that constitutes the perfect *Yes* over against the *No* of the entire human race, and thus blot out the guilt of all our sins, even of the sins in which we are conceived and born. The Son of God in the flesh is the perfect High Priest, that is able to save to the uttermost all that through Him go to God. By one sacrifice He has for ever perfected all His own!

H. H.

A recent article in *The Banner*, signed A. H., reminded me once more that when a small frog cannot be a big frog in our pond, he changes his tune and is welcome in our neighbor's pond.

H. H.

Almost the only similarity between Calvin and modern Calvinism is in the sound of the two names.

H. H.

The Reactions of Unbelief to Samson

In this essay, we analyze the reactions of the Philistines to Samson's attacks upon them, and with them the responses of Samson's own brethren. The import of these reactions and responses can be grasped only in the light of the following considerations. Samson, as was said, 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 a man of ordinary build. This explains 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. What man, though he were many times as big a man as the giant Goliath, could have done the things that he did, meeting and vanquishing, in battle, as a lone hero, an army of Philistines whose number ran into the thousands, bearing away on his shoulders the doors of the gates of Gaza, the doors and their two posts. As was said, the only possible explanation of his prowess was that God wrought wonderfully in him and through him. Thus Samson was a wonder of God both to the Philistines and to Israel. No one had ever seen and 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 that in Samson they stood face to face with Jehovah.

The first indication of Samson's being the outstretched arm of Jehovah for the liberation of Israel, was his rending asunder, with no effort to speak of, the jaws of that rapacious beast that roared against him on the road to Timnah. Doubtless he had told his young wife all about that incident in connection with his divulging to her the answer to his riddle; told her that the eater in his parable was a lion that with no effort at all he had dispatched by the power of his own hands. If she told her countrymen, the treatment that they afforded Samson on his marriage feast in the matter of his riddle takes on a new significance. Hearing of the incident, it must have occurred to them that no man could do that miracle—and a miracle it was—except Israel's God be with him, that thus this God—the God of wonder-working power, whose fame had gone forth through all the earth, had again risen to scatter His enemies and was thus serving them notice to cease oppressing His people or look forward to being destroyed by the strokes of the Almighty. But the Philistines would not be instructed. They mocked God by making sport of Samson, His servant, and by retaining their hold on God's people. They refused to perceive that the Lord had spoken to them.

Then the Lord spoke to them again. Once more He put His Spirit upon Samson; under the prompting of the Spirit, Samson went down to Ashkelon and slew thirty men of them. Those slain must have been together when surprised by Samson. They may have been thirty groom's men, gracing a nuptial party. That they were unable to stand before a lone Hebrew was truly astounding. The fame of Samson must have resounded through the land. Why did the authorities among the Philistines take no action? The slaying of thirty Ashkelonites for their clothing by a Hebrew was no small matter. Why did the Philistine princes not advance charges of murder and highway robbery against the man? Why did they refrain from notifying the men of Judah that, unless they track the criminal down and make him atone for his crimes, there would be severe reprisals? Why did the Philistines ignore the affair and leave the deed unpunished? What could have been the reason for this inaction? The Philistine lords were afraid. For the Lord had laid this stroke upon their hearts. They understood that, whereas they had dominion over Israel, they were being attacked not by a criminal to be charged with murder and robbery, but by a servant of Jehovah raised up to deliver His people. Yet, they repented not but hardened their hearts and retained their hold on God's people. Holding the truth in unrighteousness, they chose to regard the slaying in Ashkelon as the work of a Hebrew stung by a personal insult and out for personal revenge; they looked upon the occurrence as a private affair between Samson and some Philistines, thus as an affair that did not concern them at all and about which they were obliged to do nothing. It means that they refused to see any connection between the occurrence and their oppressing God's people. It means, in a word, that they refused to discern that they had been smitten by the rod of God's anger, by the outstretched arm of Jehovah.

So the Lord struck again, this time, much harder by far than before. Samson set fire to their standing corn. The damage done was great. As was said, the destruction of all that grain was a calamity of the first magnitude. Also this evil had been wrought by Samson, the lone hero, as assisted by no one. What other man with no hands but his own could have constituted three hundred jackals, wild beasts of the forest, his army in the way that it was done by him? And how remarkable that all those beasts to the very last pair had run, swift as the wind, through the standing grain of the foe! That plainly was the doing of the Lord, a visitation of Israel's God. It formed the unmistakable evidence that once more they had been smitten by the rod of His anger. But did they now repent and release their hold on God's people? To the contrary. Now again they hardened their hearts and thus refused to give God the glory. They ended with

the catastrophe in Samson, insisted that it had been wrought by a mere man in a carnal rage that had been kindled by another injury done to his person. To their question, "Who hath done this?" they answered, "Samson, the son-in-law of the Timnite, because he hath taken his wife, and given her to his companion." Thus they insisted that in the ruin of their fields of grain, they had to do not with the anger of God but with the spite and malice, with the rage, of a mere man, with the injured feeling of a mere mortal. Thus, the situation was not one with which they could not cope. All they had to do is to appease the anger of a mere man. This could easily be done by punishing the Timnite. And they thought it wise to take recourse to the extremest measures in dealing with that miscreant, the father-in-law of Samson. In that way they would show Samson that they were as indignant about the vile treatment that had been afforded him in the matter of his wife as was he. In that way they would show him that they were as strong in their denunciation of the foul deed as any righteous man could be and that they were willing to go to any length to make amends. With the culprit having been made to atone for his sins, Samson, they reasoned, would cause them no more trouble. But in their hearts they knew different, knew that it was Israel's God with whom they had to do. But in their perversity, they were unwilling to face the truth about themselves, unwilling to confess that they were being smitten not by Samson but by Samson as an agent of the Almighty and not because of the treachery of the Timnite but because of their own evil treatment of God's people. Such a confession, backed up by fruits worthy of a true repentance, would not be to their material advantage. So, passing by themselves, shutting their eyes to their own abominations as the basic reason of their present troubles, they turned to the Timnite. The blame was all his. Coming up to Timnah, they burned Samson's wife and her father. And they hoped that they had satisfied Samson's hostility.

But to their dismay and consternation, Samson remained hostile. "And Samson said to them, Though ye have done this, be assured that I will be avenged of you, and after that I will cease." There is this in his reply. They must not imagine that he would cease to make war upon them, just because they had put to death his wife and her father. For his conflict was not personal but national. His great grievance was not the treachery practised against his person by a lone Timnite but the great wrong done his people by them all. They were oppressing his brethren. And for this wrong, done also to him, he being a Hebrew, he must be avenged of them all. This necessity had been laid upon him by his God. Hence, the death of the lone Timnite could not appease his anger. For all deserved to die for a sin that was national. And it was on ac-

count of this sin—the sin of oppressing his brethren—that he was waging war against them—waging that war as the servant of his God, raised up, sustained and inspired by Jehovah. Had he been desirous of personal vengeance on his wife's family, he could have inflicted it himself. But this must not be taken to mean that the injuries done to his person left him unaffected, and had no bearing on his hostile attitude toward the enemy in general. Such a view militates against his telling them that *he* would be avenged of them all. His telling them this must mean that he smote them also on account of the sins committed directly against his person only. But, as already has been explained, the basic reason of his attacking them was that they had dominion over his people. The injuries done to his person formed only the immediate instigating circumstances of the conflict, so that, in waging war with his foe, he was identifying himself with his people and was regarding all the injuries done to his brethren as injuries done to himself. That he must be avenged of them must not be taken to mean that he warred that warfare in love of self and not in love of God. Being a true believer his love of self was at bottom love of God; and his avenging himself was at bottom his avenging his God and the cause of his God.

But the Philistines would not understand. So the Lord again struck. Samson smote them hip and thigh with a great slaughter. No figures are given. But the number of slain must have run into the thousands. The Philistines, whom he smote, in all likelihood, were those who had burned the Timnite. The expression, "He smote them hip and thigh calls for some comment. The English equivalent for the Hebrew word rendered hip is shank. In man, the *shank* is the part between the knee and the ankle. The thigh is the segment of the leg between the knee and the trunk. In the mind of the Hebrews it was especially the shank and the thigh that represented the strength and stability of the body. "God", says the psalmist, "takes no delight in the shank of a man." Ps. 47:10. The phrase is therefore equivalent to, "He smote them upper and lower leg," i.e., overturned, hewed them down completely, he, the solitary warrior of Israel's God and they an army whose number was great. The Lord had wrought wonderfully in him and through him. A miracle again had been performed. The Lord had once more exhibited his power through His servant, this time to a degree so astounding as to render utterly senseless the denial that the Lord was with the man and that in him the Philistines had to do very actually with God. Yet both Philistines and Israelites continued unbelieving. As to the Philistines, that latest exploit of Samson compelled them to face the real issue which thus far they had been unwilling to do. When they had heard of the slaying of the thirty Ashkelonites, they acted as if nothing had taken place. When he had set fire to their

standing corn, they chose to ascribe the deed to a desire for personal vengeance on his part, to regard it as an outburst of anger that had been kindled by the treatment afforded him by the Timnite. But it would be sheer folly to interpret the slaying of thousands of their number as a private quarrel between himself and at best a few Philistines. It had become too plain that the Hebrew had designs upon them all, that his real grievance was the oppression of his brethren at their hands. Besides, it was time that they bestired themselves, take action against the man, or the Hebrews, as inspired by his audacity and by his great successes in his combat with them, and as encouraged by their reverses and inaction, might conclude that the time was at hand for them to break asunder the bands of their oppressors and to cast away their cords from them. They must act instantly, lest the rebellion that now slumbered in the bosom of the oppressed awaken and the oppressors find themselves fighting for their very existence. For the lesson of history was that the Hebrews, once aroused, were fierce men in combat, warriors invincible. Let them then be up and doing. delayed action might prove disastrous. But their problem was exactly Samson. They stood in awe of the man. They marvelled at his strength. And they knew in their hearts that the only explanation of his wonderful achievements as a lone warrior was that his God wrought wonderfully in him. But this they would admit neither to themselves nor to one another. For God hardened their hearts. And therefore God was not in all their thoughts, in all their conscious deliberations. However strong, Samson was still a mortal man certainly. There must be a limit to his power. It must be that he could be overpowered and rendered helpless and impotent in bonds. So they reasoned among themselves, though they had come into the possession of the most conclusive evidence that no man or combination of men could overpower and render him impotent in bonds against his will, in that, being of the party of his God, God was His strength and the source of his power. Had he not just recently smote them with a great slaughter? But such is the amazing blindness and stubbornness of the unbelief of the wicked.

Samson could be overpowered. He would be helpless in bonds. And they wanted the Hebrew not dead but alive in bonds. It would be soothing to their wounded pride, somewhat compensate them for the deep humiliation that they had suffered at his hands, could they hold him in derision, bury him with maledictions, shout their curses and mockery in his ears, with him alive and in bonds, helpless at their feet, under their heel, utterly powerless to avenge himself. They could always attend to his death afterwards. But how were they to get him in their power? Who would bind him? Supposing the accumulative strength of an army of ten

thousand was greater than his, how could all that strength be put to use at once in binding the man? Only a limited number of hands could take part in the performance of the task. How with the terrific strength of the man could they hope to be successful? They knew not. But rid themselves of him they must at all costs. "Then the Philistines went up, and pitched in Judah, and spread themselves in Lehi." Beholding the maneuverings of the Philistines, the men of Judah were sorely afraid. They concluded that the Philistines had come with warlike purposes against them. "And the men of Judah said, Why are ye come up against us?" Let us not fail to grasp the thrust of that terrible question, for a terrible question it was. "Why, o Philistines, are ye come up against us? 'What is our offence? Have we not faithfully served thee all these years? Have we once given thee cause for complaint?' The Philistines were pleased. It was the very question they wanted to hear and also had purposely solicited by their suddenly appearing on the soil of Judah with an army. The question pleased them immensely. It was revealing. The Hebrews were the same docile slaves. Samson had little influence with them. How fortunate for the Philistines. The cowardice of the Hebrews could stand them in good stead. Perhaps they might even prove willing to bind Samson for them. It would be the solution to their problem. So they replied, "To bind Samson are we come up, to do to him as he hath done to us." Hearing, the men of Judah were relieved. They had feared that the Philistines were holding them accountable for what Samson did to them. But let them not lay his sins to their charge. They were as much against the man as were the Philistines. They, too, decried his works. They deplored that he was a Hebrew. Curse the man and his deeds. They stood ready to help the Philistines rid the earth of him. Indeed! The Philistines had already gathered that much from their anxious inquiring, "Why are ye come up against us?" They would now show the Philistines how they were disposed to Israel's deliverer. Right there and then they resolved to bind him and to deliver him in bonds to the adversary. The Philistines, with malicious cunning, had probably demanded this as the price of peace. For either Samson would resist their efforts and smite them, which would be gain to the Philistines, or he would be captured and given over to them, in which case they would fill them with wrath toward each other. "Then three thousand men of Judah went to the top of the rock Etam, and said to Samson, Knowest thou not that the Philistines are rulers over us? What is this that thou hast done unto us."

Their very act of proceeding to Etam with an army of no less than 3000 men—3000 against the one—would testify, cry out, against them in the day of judgment. The doing indicated that they knew the might of Sam-

son to be colossal, knew that the only possible explanation of the strength such as that with which he had been endowed, was that he was sent of God. Thus it was in deliberate defiance of God, in willing ignorance of what was known of God and of his servant Samson in Israel, that they proceeded to Etam to bind the man. It was in that same ignorance that they justified themselves in their doing and condemned Samson. Didn't the man know that the Philistines had dominion over them? Assuredly he knew. But he behaved, they meant to tell him, as if he were totally ignorant of the fact. He, ignorant of this fact? It was his great grievance against the Philistines. It formed the very reason of his attacking them. To free his brethren from that dominion the Lord had raised him up! This they well knew. The evidence was there, conclusive and uncontrovertable. Yet they insisted on interpreting his warfare with the Philistines as a private quarrel. The man was not called of God. But he was a miserable upstart, a disturber of the peace, always seeking and making trouble for himself and involving not only himself but all his brethren, the whole tribe of Judah. And they indignantly ask, "What is this that thou hast done unto us?" "Thou hast in thy folly provoked against us the fierce wrath of the Philistines! Miserable man! Thou wretch! It were better for thee and for thy countrymen that thou were in bonds and not free, dead instead of alive." Come we will "bind thee, that we may deliver thee into the hands of the Philistines", that thou mayest reap the fruit of thy folly and that we perish not at the hands of those whom thou hast so needlessly and without cause provoked against us. "To bind thee are we come down." And what had Samson to say to them in reply? Only this, for he was a man of few words, "As they did unto me, so have I done unto them." And though he could have smote them then and there as he had smitten the Philistines with a great slaughter, he forbears. For they are his brethren. He could not smite such whom he had been sent to deliver. For their sakes he would bear their reproach. And for their sakes he would allow them to bind him. So he willingly delivered himself into their hands. For also now he sought occasion against the Philistines for the sake of his brethren,—the Philistines, who at Lehi were awaiting the outcome of that perilous expedition against the dreaded Hebrew. As to Samson, he had but one request, "Swear unto me," he said unto them, "that ye will not fall upon me yourselves." They were willing to oblige him in this one thing. There was no need of them putting him to death with their own hands. Besides, the Philistines, they knew, wanted the man not dead but alive and in bonds. And they must please their masters. But there must be an added reason why they refrained from laying violent hands on the man. They knew his strength and they were afraid. Should he assert him-

self in his full strength, they would all be dead men. It must have therefore been a great relief to them, to hear him say, "Swear to me that ye will not fall upon me yourselves." The man was thus of a mind to be docile and tractable, and to allow them to bind him with their chords. They were only too eager to pacify him. So they spake unto him saying, "No; but we will bind thee fast, and deliver thee into their hand: but surely we will not kill thee." "And they bound him with two new chords, and brought him up from the rocks." What a spectacle! Judah is not ashamed to drag its hero forward, bound with strong chords.

G. M. O.

Van De Rechters

(PSALM 82)

Daar is een soort menschen die zulk een hoogheerlijk ambt bekleden, dat als zij gesproken hebben men eenvoudig de hand op den mond te leggen heeft. Om dit duidelijk aan te toonen gedenke men aan de drie vertakkingen van het Amerikaansche gouvernement. Eerst is er het Congress, dat de wetten uitvaardigt; dan is er de uitvoerende macht die in den President zetelt: hij moet de wetten uitvoeren; en, eindelijk, is daar het hoogste gerechtshof, hetwelk uitmaakt of een zekere wet al dan niet deugt. En als dat hoogste gerechtshof gesproken heeft zwijgt men. Dat is het einde van alle tegenspreken.

Men gevoelt daar iets van als men om de eene of andere reden gedagvaard wordt en in het gerechtshof moet verschijnen. Men kan het aanvoelen, dat de rechter bekleed is met een zekere majesteit. In dit land noemt men hem: "Your Honor"; in het oude vaderland spreekt men hem aan door Edelachtbare.

Ziet ge, alle zaken kunnen niet wachten tot den oordeelsdag. Vele, zeer vele zaken moeten hier alvast behandeld worden. En zoo brengt men duistere zaken voor den rechter. En die rechter moet in den naam van God recht doen.

Als we dit even indenken gaan ons de rillingen over den rug. Wat groote verantwoording rust tot op een rechter! Hij zit daar op zijn rechterstoel in de plaats van God en wee hem als hij onrecht spreekt. Hij, de rechter, is een vooruitgrijpen van den oordeelsdag. En als God mag hij het aangezicht des menschen niet aannemen. Of de beklaagde arm of rijk is, invloedrijk of nietsbeduidend onder de menschen: het maakt niets uit. Hij heeft slechts één ding voor zijn aandacht te houden en dat ééne is dit: WAT IS RECHT; IK MOET DE WAARHEID SPREKEN!

Want, let wel, de psalm begint: "God staat in de vergadering Godes". O ja, God is overal, doch Hij is niet overal gelijk. In den hemel is God heerlijker dan op de aarde. In de hel is God ook, doch hoe geheel anders vertoont Hij zich daar dan in den hemel. Zoo ook hier: de vergadering Godes is een geheel bijzondere vergadering. Gezien het verband van deze woorden, is deze vergadering de plaats waar recht gesproken moet worden. Het is het gerechtshof waar hier sprake van is. En daar is God met Zijn gestrengheid, Zijn onkreukbare gerechtigheid. Wee de rechter, die in de nabijheid Gods in het gerechtshof de leugenspreekt.

"Hij oordeelt in het midden der goden". Hebt ge gezien, dat het woord "goden" met een kleine letter geschreven is? Nu moet ge weten, dat dit niet zoo is in de Hebreeuwsche taal. Daar staat hetzelfde woord, hetwelk voor den Heere God gebezigd wordt. Die kleine letter is *verklaring* van de Bijbel-vertalers. Dit is evenwel niet de eenige plaats waar de rechters der aarde goden genoemd worden. Het zelfde gebruik vindt ge ook in de volgende plaatsen: Exod. 21:6; 22:8, 28 en Joh. 10:34, 35. Bovendien zeide de Heere immers tot Mozes, dat Hij Mozes gezet had tot een God over Farao en Aaron zou zijn profeet zijn. Zoo zien we, dat de rechters der aarde, als 't ware, mondstukken van God behooren te zijn. Zij moeten zoo rechtvaardig zijn in hun oordeel als God rechtvaardig is. Wat een verantwoordelijkheid!

Beide uit het eerste en het zesde vers blijkt, dat we hier te doen hebben met een gerechtshof in Israel en niet onder de heidenen. In het eerste vers staat, dat God staat in de *vergadering* Godes en in het zesde vers zegt God van deze rechters, dat Hij hen *kinderen des Allerhoogsten* noemde. Deze rechters hebben daarom een dubbele openbaring. God staat ook in de vergadering der heidenen, als dat volk moet spreken in hunne rechtbanken, doch hoeveel te meer daar waar Zijn bijzondere openbaring alles verlicht!

En dat nu is het opzet van vers een. God waarschuwt deze rechters in Israel. Hij herinnert hen er aan, dat Hij, dat is, God, vlak bij hen staat als de zaak der weduwen en weezen voor hen komt.

En wat soort menschen waren deze rechters in Israel? Dat hooren we in het volgende vers. Daar staat: "Hoelang zult gijlieden onrecht oordeelen, en het aangezicht der goddeloozen aannemen?"

Als dat geschiedt, dan wordt het benauid op aarde. Als men geen recht meer kan krijgen bij hen wiens naam rechter is, dan is er geen ontkomen meer op aarde. En, past op, murmureert niet! Als zij gesproken hebben mogen we niets meer zeggen. Anders komt de bedreiging met het "contempt of court".

Onrecht oordeelen is een verschrikkelijk ding. Er is niets waar de Heere Zich meer over vertoort. Het beteekent dat men eenvoudig het licht duisternis noemt;

het goede noemde men kwaad en het kromme heette men recht.

En waarom, waarom toch?

De tweede clausule van dit tweede vers geeft het antwoord: "en het aangezicht der goddeloozen aan-nemen?"

Nu kunnen er vele redenen wezen waarom men het aangezicht der goddeloozen aannam. Doch alle die redenen zijn gruwelijk. Soms zag zulk een kwade rechter zijn vriend in het bankje der beklagden. En toen het op rechtspreken aankwam zag hij niets dan zijn vriend. Hij vroeg niet: Wat hebt gij gedaan? En: hetgeen gij deed, was het goed? Neen, hij zag zijn vriend en wilde zijn vriend niet verdoemen. Daarom moest het recht dan maar verkracht worden. Soms zag die rechter tusschen het aangezicht van den beklagde en zijn eigen aangezicht het geschenk verblindt het oordeel. Ik kan toch niet den man verdoemen die mij zulke schatten schonk? En men werd omgekocht. En het recht struikelde op de straten. Soms is het eenvoudig luiheid en vadsigheid. Men wilde zich de moeite niet getroosten om de zaken te onderzoeken en lichtvaardiglijk sprak men zoogenaamd recht. Doch het was krom. En de arme en nooddruftige werd vertrapt tegen alle recht en billijkheid in.

Zoo ging het ten tijde van dezen Asaf.

Doch God stond te midden van de goden in al hun geknoei. Hij getuigt ervan door Zijn knecht Asaf. We weten niet welke Asaf het geweest is. 't Zal wel niet dezelfde zijn die leefde ten tijde van David, want toen struikelen het recht zeker niet op de straten. David was een oprecht koning in Israel. Dat bewees hij toen Nathan zeide: Gij zijt die man! Toen is hij berouw met stof en asch tot God gegaan en voor geheel Israel in de schuld gekomen. Doch gedurende welken tijd het dan ook geweest mag zijn, die kwade rechters hebben dezen psalm ontvangen als een berisping, als een beschuldiging, als een vreeselijke waarschuwing.

Positief vinden we deze waarschuwing in het derde en vierde vers: "Doet recht den arme en den wees, rechtvaardigt den verdrukten en den arme, verlost den arme en den behoeftige, rukt hem uit der goddeloozen hand". Och, als den schatrijke en den sterke onrecht aangedaan wordt is het ook goddeloos en zullen die rechters hun rechtvaardige straf niet ontgaan. Doch veel erger wordt het als het den arme geldt. Tot driemaal toe wordt den verongelijkte gekenschetst door armoede; eigenlijk viermalen, want er staat ook nog eenmaal de behoeftige, hetwelk ons dezelfde idee geeft. En het is waar: een arm mensch is er slecht aan toe als hij door den goddelooze aangevallen wordt. Hij kan zich geen voorspraak koopen en zijn getuigen zijn weinige. Wie bekommert zich nu ook om den arme en ellendige? Ik denk, dat er daarom ook van den wees gesproken wordt. Een wees heeft geen vader en moe-

der meer die het voor hem op zouden nemen. Arm, zwak, zonder vrienden staat hij daar. En de goddelooze staat klaar om hem te verscheuren.

Doch, wacht nog wat: er is een gerechtshof in Israel. We zullen het voor den rechter brengen. Hij zij immers op de plaats van God?

Ziet ge niet, hoe hachelijk het wordt als de rechter het vuile aangezicht van den goddelooze aanneemt?

En zoo stond het er bij in Israel, want vers vijf zegt ons het volgende: "Zij weten niets en verstaan niets, zij wandelen steeds in duisternis; dies wankelen alle fundamenten der aarde."

Het hart van dit vers is de zin: "zij wandelen steeds in duisternis". Duisternis is beeldspraak voor alles wat vuil, zondig, onrechtvaardig en kwaad is. En een mensch zijn wandel is zijn leven vanuit het hart. Zie daar het beeld, dat God van deze rechters geeft. Men zag iets monsterachtigs als men die menschen in de rechterstoel zag plaats nemen en den valschen mond opendoen. Monsterachtig, want zij openbaarden juist het tegenovergestelde van een waarachtigen rechter voor het aangezicht Gods. Duister was het hart en duister het verstand en daarom wisten zij niets en verstonden zij niets. Dat wil zeggen, niets goeds, niets lieflijks, niets rechts.

En het resultaat?

Het resultaat was, dat alle fundamenten der aarde wankelden. Ja, dat is duidelijk. Ik vraag U: hoe zal men bouwen, werken, samenleven, allerlei werk doen, als er geen recht gesproken wordt? Dan wordt de samenleving een groote chaos! Zoo was het in Israel ten tijde van dezen Asaf.

En o wee!

De volgende twee verzen kondigen een oordeel aan, dat zeer billijk en recht is. Er staat: "Ik (en dat is God! heb wel gezegd: Gij zijt goden, en gij zijt allen kinderen des Allerhoogsten; nochtans zult gij sterven als een mensch, en als een van de Vorsten zult gij vallen."

Gelukkig: er komt een einde aan het verkrachten van het recht. O zeker, de rechters zijn goden, zij zijn vorsten in Juda en wij moeten hen gehoorzamen en den nek krommen onder hun juk. Doch dit is ook waar: er komt een tijd, dat God zal zeggen: Uw naam was wel god onder de menschen en gij zijt allen Mijn mondstuk geweest op aarde. Evenwel waart gij niet dan bloot mensch. Welnu de tijd is aangebroken, dat gij voor Mijn rechtbank zult verschijnen. Als Vorsten zult gij vallen. Uw naam was kind des Allerhoogsten, doch dat heeft U geen vrijbrief gekregen om goddeloosheid op aarde te bedrijven en dat nog wel in Mijn lieflijken naam. Zelfs als kind des Allerhoogsten zal Ik U in het verderf werpen.

Zoo kunt ge de moeilijkheid verklaren, dat deze vuile zondaren kinderen Gods genaamd werden. De naam van den rijken man was zelfs in de hel nog *kind*

Abrahams! En zegt Jezus niet, dat sommige der kinderen des Koninkrijks buiten geworpen zullen worden?

Wat blijft er dan nog over? De goddelooze rechters hebben het recht verkracht op aarde. De arme en behoeftige, de wees en de ellendige hebben geschreid in hun bittere verdrukking vanwege het groote onrecht, dat hen aangedaan werd. Wordt dat dan nooit gewroken?

Het laatste vers zal Uw en mijn ongeduldige vragen beantwoorden. Er staat ten slotte: "Sta op, o God! oordeel het aardrijk, want Gij bezit alle natiën".

Dat vers, mijn broeder, is het roepen om het laatste oordeel. Niet alsof God niet alle dagen geoordeeld heeft. O neen. Leest dan maar weer eens het eerste vers. Daar hebben we toch gezien, dat God staat te midden van Godes vergadering? God oordeelt altijd. Hij spreekt eeuwiglijk rechte, billijke woorden.

Doch hier zit het hem: Dat oordeel Gods wordt pas geopenbaard in den dag der dagen. Dan zal hemel en aarde, engel en duivel, rechtvaardige en onrechtvaardige het vreeselijke, doch ook lieflijke oordeel Gods zien.

Daar wordt om geroepen in het laatste vers.

En weet ge nu wie het hardste geroepen heeft om dat eindelijke oordeel? Ik zal het U zeggen: Jezus van Nazareth heeft dat gedaan. Want als er een ooit geleden heeft van het goddelooze oordeel, dan is het Jezus geweest. Hij is de arme geweest bij uitnemendheid, de behoeftige, de ellendige, de verdrukte. En Hij is vertrappt. Judas sprak eindelijk de waarheid: Ik heb vergoten het Onschuldige Bloed! Doch de zoogenaamde rechters zelden: Gij moogt toezien!

Jezus van Nazareth is voor vele rechters geweest: het Sanhedrin, Pilatus en Herodus. En het eindelijke vonnis was: Des doods schuldig! Het grootste onrecht der eeuwen.

Daarom: Sta op, o God! Oordeel het aardrijk! Het Bloed van Uwen Zoon ligt nog ongewroken op Hoofdschedelplaats.

En Hij zal komen. En dan zal men het oordeel zien der waarheid.

Dan zullen de onrechtvaardige rechters zich krommen in angst en smart, mitsgaders alle goddeloozen.

En dan zullen, o wonder van genade, alle gekenden huppelen van zielevreugd.

Wonder van genade?

O ja, want zij kwamen in den hemel, omdat de Onschuldige schuldig verklaard is voor 't heiligst recht en naar dat zelfde recht diep schuldigen rechtvaardigheid ontvingen als de gave der genade.

Wij zien het maar doorgronden het niet.

Daar zal voorts niets anders overblijven dan te aanbidden, te aanbidden.

Common Grace in Schilder's Passion Trilogy

Whereas the Passion Trilogy of Dr. Schilder has had and still enjoys wide publicity, we need not dwell at length to acquaint the readers with its nature and content. A few remarks will suffice.

In it the author considers and contemplates the suffering of Christ's death in its threefold stages. Volume I treats of Christ's *entering into* His suffering and brings the discussion up to Christ's being taken captive in Gethsemane; in Volume II the author considers Christ's *passing through* His suffering. This volume brings the discussion up to His being condemned by Pilate to be crucified; and, finally, Volume III treats of Christ's crucifixion, death and burial.

In this article, as the title shows, we are interested in examining, determining Dr. Schilder's conception of "Common Grace" as this appears in the pages of these three volumes.

The brilliant essays contained in these volumes do not purport to be scientific treatises on dogmatic subjects; in vain does one look for a dogmatic system of doctrine. But that is neither their aim or nature. There is, however, a certain sequence of thought attempted and discernable. The author repeatedly refers to other essays in this Trilogy; the underlying organic unity of the Suffering of Christ is repeatedly emphasized.

But doctrine, pure and simple, we do not find. At best we receive glimpses of the author's conception of certain doctrinal phases of Reformed Theology. Dr. Schilder has definite doctrinal presuppositions and biases from which he proceeds in contemplating Christ's suffering.

One of these presuppositions is what is commonly denominated "Common Grace". Hence we come upon passages in which he attempts to demonstrate the bearing that this truth (as he understands it) has upon the Passion of Christ, either in a given case, or in the place that Common Grace occupies in relationship to Christ and the whole history of the world.

With such passages we meet in each of these three books.

In Volume I, chapter 13, pages 220, 221, the author treats John 13:5-15 under the heading, "Christ Washing His Disciples's Feet". The point in this act of Christ, the author emphasizes, is not merely an example to mankind, how they out of their native strength and good-will should behave toward each other. It is far more not only, but also different. Christ here demonstrates that only by the power of His obedience, (the Lord's Supper) His exaltation, sending of the Spirit at Pentecost (Regenerating Spirit) is there any power

of love and service. For, according to the author, the native love of mankind is, "that which proceeds from Common Grace and is taken up in the circle-process-activity (Cirkelgangs-proces) of our *natural* life, wherein love and hate, sympathy and antipathy, inclination and repulsion, wedding-day and day-of-battle constantly interchange and balance each other without end, without end, without end. . . ." Here the author suggests the "Vanity of vanities" of which the book of Ecclesiastes speaks. This latter is the "Vicious Circle" of all human activity "under the sun". Christ's washing of His disciple's feet is, however, the "*straight line*" of the saving-hitsory (heiligs-geschiedenis) that will reach its Consummation in the "*last day*".

Here Common Grace is viewed by the author in contrast with Saving Grace, and, its poverty is shown. This is the ever-recurring theme of the author on "Common Grace" near to the cross "Common Grace" is not strong but weak; it cannot solve one of the world's problems, nor can it heal its ills.

In keeping with this view Schilder writes, Vol. II, pages 41-46, that the history of the world, and of mankind, nature and history apart from Christ's Mediatorial work, apart from God's special revelation and saving grace, is in the throes of a very *vicious* circle, an endless cycle of ever-recurring woes. This is the teaching of the book of Ecclesiastes. We have, in the case of the Highpriest's servant's striking of Jesus' face, a particular instance of this universal evil and "*vicious circle*". And thus this particular act of this servant of Annas demonstrates the poverty of Common Grace and General revelation! Christ's rebuking this servant is His drawing of the straight line of redemptive history.

As can be expected, the author also sees in the Sanhedrin and the false witnesses accusing Jesus a personification of the "vicious circle". The title of the chapter treating this particular phase of Christ's suffering is: "The vicious circle judges Jesus". One wonders whether this is meant to be taken seriously, or whether this is meant to be characterization; it may also be merely a flowery term employed for literary effect. Vol. II, pages 60-81.

Should it be taken seriously, we would here have the presentation that it was the weakness of Common Grace and of general revelation judging Christ! Certainly a paradox, but is it Scriptural, or merely human fancy?!

However this may be, the author again finds the "Vicious Circle" of Common Grace in the successive beasts coming up out of the sea as seen by Daniel in the night visions. This is not only indicated, according to the author, in the fact that the one beast always devours the preceding one, but also in the "restlessness of the sea". In Daniel 7:13 in the vision of the Son of Man, the "vicious circle" is conquered, and the straight

line of David's throne is seen realized in the Christ. And in Caiaphas' hall Christ, while being condemned by the "vicious circle" conquers the vicious circle! Vol. II, pages 119-130.

There is another aspect of "Common Grace" which the author elucidates upon in other connections of the suffering of Christ. Here the idea of the "vicious circle" is not so apparent. There are two factors emphasized here. 1. The fact that *in this world* revelation is never fully adequate. That which is revealed is always greater than the revelation of it. 2. The reality that we are "not yet" in the full revelation of God's wrath. The author also speaks in this connection of the "not yet" of the full revelation of grace. And grace also is always much greater than is revealed!

To begin with the first of these "factors", we notice that the author treats of this in Vol. III, pages 3-6. He here treats of the "curse" in general the curse of the law under the Mosaic institution. He tries to show how man cannot really apply the full implication of the curse and how this became evident under the written law, the Word of God. He employs an illustration to clarify this point. The earth is surrounded by the fog-atmosphere (damp-kring) and the rays of the sun are thus moderated. On other planets this is not so. Thus man lives in the "damp-kring van Gemeene Gratie" and the full rays of God's wrath do not strike him down, although they do penetrate unto him. When Dr. Schilder would state this in plain terms he states this as follows: 1. That the law, as Word of God, can never *express* His will to punish perfectly (volkomen). 2. That, here on earth, the law never allows itself to be isolated from the dispensation and purpose of the grace of God.

One again wonders just how serious this must be taken. For the author writes on page 7, "Hell—that is *that* place where God maintains the will of His punitive justice in full depth, and where no semblance of common grace moderates the unbroken rays of His wrath." (waar geen schijn meer van gemeene gratie ooit tegenhoudt de ongebroken uitstraling van Zijn toorn). Is common grace then not real grace according to this remark? Merely "schijn"?

As we noticed above, there is also a second factor. It is the factor of the "not yet". In connection with the agonizing cry of Christ on the cross taken from Psalm 22, "My God, my God. . . .", Schilder makes the observation that all that takes place in history of the suffering of being foresaken of God is "not yet" the full measure of the wrath of God. For God's children the "foresakeness" is purely subjective, it is really divine pedagogy of love; for the wicked here then cannot "yet" suffer the complete foresakeness, neither can the wicked in hell—not until after the resurrection unto damnation. Antichrist cannot be punished as much here, as the one receiving the least stripes

in hell! Of course, on Calvary Christ suffered the full measure. Vol. III, 381-383.

In this connection we can also call attention to an observation in these volumes concerning the "Sign of Cain." In Vol. I, pages 418-421 the author is contemplating the meaning of Jesus' restoration of Malchus' ear in Gethsemany. He thinks to find here, among three other matters of importance, that Christ here *applies* and *fulfills* the sign of Cain instead of the vengeance of Abel's blood. (Gen. 4) He applies it in not killing this Malchus and fulfills it in the positive work on the cross. This "Kainsteeken" is common grace. Christ applies the common grace rule.

Many questions and difficulties present themselves in this presentation. Cain is called the reprobate seed of the serpent on the one hand, killing Abel, the Church. Cain receives a Common Grace sign, and Christ fulfills it here and the sign to the reprobate speaks better things than Abel's blood?!

But this is not meant to be a critique. Then we would have designed our treatment differently. Neither will the space allotted us allow for any adequate criticism. We feel, therefore, that we may conclude this article with the following remarks:

1. It is very much to be doubted whether one is able to construe an organic system of thought, a conception of the whole from the data thus given above. The conception of "Common Grace" is not proven here, it is rather assumed as being axiomatically true. But we are allowed at best only glimpses of it as applied to "history" and to the life of the individual.

2. There are, however, certain impressions that I received in this study that I here submit: a. That "Common Grace" is here viewed by Dr. Schilder more negatively than positively. We do not anywhere see common grace extolled as a Calvinistic outbudding of the human race. Common Grace is poor (Vicious Circle); it merely is "not yet" full wrath! Nowhere does the author speak of it as a positive attitude of favor toward the wicked. b. What Dr. Kuyper in his Stone-lectures calls the positive development in the human race Egypt-Babylon-Medes and Persians-Greece Rome, Schilder calls the "Vanity of Vanities", the vicious circle of the preacher. The great virtues of the heathen, so extolled by Dr. Kuyper, and by many Common Grace enthusiasts of today, Schilder calls "Vicious Circle," in the place of justice there is unrighteousness.

3. Finally, I'm not too certain that Dr. Schilder today would still subscribe to all he wrote on this subject 15-16 years ago. When one reads his "Heidelberg Catechism" (1940) we see quite a different conception, for instance, of "God's wrath" Vol. II, pages 86-102. Here he no longer speaks of a "Gemeene-Gratie-Dampkring". Schilder, himself, wrote in De Reformatie, "Hoeksema heeft misschien dingen geschreven warmee

hij het niet meer eens is; ik ook". This was in 1940.

I believe that the reader will do well to bear these facts in mind in evaluating this data.

G. L.

The Firstborn of Every Creature

(COLOSINIANS 1:15)

If we are to arrive at the correct conception of the above Word of God, we will have to read it, not only in the light of the text in which it occurs but also in the light of the whole passage. Scripture is always its own interpreter. We must let it speak also in this connection. The whole passage in this connection is contained in the verses 13 to 20, "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son: Who is the image of the invisible God, *the firstborn of every creature*: For 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: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven."

It will be evident, in the first place, that the apostle is speaking here about the Christ, the Son of God, Whom he calls, in the 13th verse, "his dear Son" or as it is literally, "the Son of his love". It is this Son of God therefore Who is "the image of the invisible God, *the firstborn of every creature*". In the second place, it is evident that he is speaking about the Son of God from a particular point of view, viz., as the one through Whom the Father realizes His purpose and accomplishes all His good pleasure.

It will be necessary in our discussion that we bear in mind this particular viewpoint of the Son of God if we are to understand what is meant by the term "Firstborn of every creature". To approach the term in any other way can only lead to great confusion because of the many questions that will arise and the result of our study will be at best a product of some philosophy concerning Him, which will avail us nothing at all as far as understanding the Word of God in this connection is concerned. And the latter must certainly be our purpose. We are not interested in

merely discovering some truths but in ascertaining that particular truth which Scripture holds before us as the Word of God in this connection.

To establish this particular point of view of the Father's good pleasure as realized in Christ, we would call attention to the following:

1. That the apostle presents all that is contained in the passages 13-20 as a work of the Father through the Son of His love. It is the Father who has made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, vs. 12; Who has also delivered us from the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son, vs. 13; Who in Christ, His dear Son, hath given us redemption through His blood even the forgiveness of sins, vs. 14.

2. That it is the Father to Whom we must give thanks, according to vs. 12, because He is the One Who has accomplished all these things for us.

3. That, according to vs. 19 all this work of the Father is explained as the result of His good pleasure with a view to this Son through Whom He accomplishes all these things.

4. That this good pleasure of the Father with a view to His dear Son consists in this, "That in all things he (the Son of God) might have the pre-eminence", vs. 18, "that in him should all fulness dwell", vs. 19, and "by him to reconcile all things unto himself", vs. 20.

There can be no doubt but what vs. 20 gives us the purpose of this whole work of God, when it declares, in the light of vs. 19, "For it pleased the Father. . . . by Him to reconcile all things unto himself". Not only does this appear from the whole context in this connection, but this is confirmed when we find this same truth presented in Ephesians 1, where it is in so many words declared to be the eternal good pleasure and purpose of God. Having made plain that it was according as He had chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world and predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, that God redeems and blesses His people, the apostle shows us the purpose of it all when he declares to us in the verses 19 and 20, "Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth". When this purpose of God shall be fully realized, we shall dwell with all the elect, redeemed saints and holy angels in a new heaven and earth in which all things shall be united under the one Lord and Head, Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father's love, to the everlasting praise and glory of God the Father.

Now, it is in the light of this eternal purpose and good pleasure of God the Father that the term, *First-*

born of every creature, must be explained. Bearing this in mind we can arrive at some definite conclusions in respect to this term.

We have already stated above that this *Firstborn* is the Christ, the Son of God. That it is truly the eternal Son of God is evident from the fact that not only were all things made by Him and for Him but that He is also *before* all things, vs. 17. The apostle John speaks of Him in this sense as the *Logos*, the Word of God. He says, "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 any thing made that was made". John 1:1-3. At the same time however, it will also be clear that it is not the Son of God as such that is meant here. It is not merely the *Logos* as John speaks of Him in the verses quoted above, but the *Logos* as He speaks of Him in verse 14 of that same chapter when he says, "And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. . . ." That this *Firstborn* could not very well signify the Son of God as the second Person of the Trinity, is evident from the term itself. For He is called the *Firstborn of every creature*. In the first place, as the second Person in the One Divine Essence, He is not born but begotten. He is as such the *Only-begotten* and not the *Firstborn*. In the second place, He is not merely called the *Firstborn* but the *Firstborn of every creature*. As the Son of God in the Divine Nature He cannot be classed with the creature for He is God, co-eternal with the Father and the Holy Ghost. It is therefore the Son of God as He came into the flesh, the Mediator, Jesus Christ, Who is the *Firstborn of every creature*. As the Christ He belongs with the Creature. He was a real man, like unto us in all things, sin excepted. Through the incarnation the *Only-begotten* Son of God became the *Firstborn son of Mary*. "And she brought forth her firstborn son", Luke 2:7. And this firstborn son of Mary is also the *Firstborn of every creature*. That it is the Son of God as the Mediator is established also in the passage in which these words appear. He is the one through Whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins; He is the Head of the Church, through the blood of His cross God has made peace and in Him He reconciles all things to Himself.

In respect to the question, how and in what sense this Mediator is the *Firstborn of all creatures*, we may observe in the first place that this is not to be understood in a temporal or historic sense. This fact is so self-evident that it requires no elucidation. The term must undoubtedly be understood in the light of the purpose of God with a view to the Christ as He has determined it in His eternal counsel before the world was. In this whole passage, as well as in the parallel passage in Ephesians 1, the apostle is revealing to us the mystery of God's will and purpose with a view to

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all things as concentrating in Christ and as culminated, perfected and united in Him. That purpose of God with a view to uniting all things in Christ is logically first in the counsel of God. From all eternity God has that one great purpose in mind. And with a view to realizing that purpose He has ordained all things as a means. We are well aware of the fact that this view is contrary to the popular view which makes of the Christ a second or afterthought of God, an emergency measure on the part of God. According to this popular view, it was not the original purpose of God to send His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh. God had an entirely different purpose. However sin came into the world and frustrated this original purpose of God and therefore the Lord by means of the Christ makes the best of the situation and attempts through Him to salvage some of His original intention. Contrary to this view, we maintain that it was the original and *only* purpose of God's eternal good pleasure to unite all things in Christ, according to the teaching of Scripture not only in this passage but also throughout. To establish this fact, we may observe in the second place that Christ, in this same connection, is called the *Firstborn from the dead*. Christ is the first purpose of God in the new creation. In that new creation, which God has purposed in His eternal good pleasure, Christ is also the beginning. Only in and through Him as the *Firstborn of the dead* can and shall that new creation be realized. All things follow upon Him and follow with a view to Him. And in Him they shall all be united in order that in Him all the fulness may dwell, to the praise and glory of God the Father.

Finally, therefore, we may say that He is the Firstborn of all creatures because He is the Firstborn from the dead. As such He must be the Firstborn of all creation in the counsel of God. Because He stands as the first purpose of God with a view to the new creation in which all things will be united in Him, He must of necessity also stand as the first purpose of God with a view to creation and all that is involved as a means to the realization of that eternal purpose of God. Therefore, when that purpose of God shall be finally realized, we shall see all things reconciled unto God in Christ, the image of the invisible God, the Firstborn of every creature.

H. D. W.

NOTICE

In the past years Mr. R. Schaafsma had Standard Bearers bound for Ministers and subscribers, so if you usually received one will you contact Mrs. R. Schaafsma as to color, whether black or maroon, and where to send them. This notice is for Volume 20.

Mrs. R. Schaafsma,
1011 Hazen St., S. E., Grand Rapids.

Pacifism, from the Latin *pax* (peace) and *ficus* (to make), an "ism" which has asserted itself more and more since the turn of the century, is the doctrine that opposes war as inherently wrong, works for peace between the nations, and in many cases, with or without reservations, advocates the refusal on the part of the individual to actively participate in any given conflict between one's own country and another. I say "in many cases", because there is a form of pacifism that would not subscribe to the last part of the above definition and does not advocate the right of the individual to refuse active participation in any war. I added "with or without reservation" in view of the fact, that we must differentiate between those who condemn participation in any war, regardless of circumstances, and those who believe that an individual should refuse to take part only if he is sincerely convinced that a given war is an unjust one. Both, of course, assume the erroneous position that active participation in war is invariably a matter of individual responsibility.

Since the First World War the doctrine of pacifism has narrowed considerably. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say, that pacifism, since that first global conflict, has branched out into numerous types and shades. Its general tendency, however, as a specific philosophy and attitude, has been to become more and more absolute, extreme and individualistic. Whereas pacifism in its earlier form maintained that very *few* wars are worth fighting, the same "ism" today is inclining more and more toward the absolute stand, that *all* wars stand condemned and that it is always wrong to take human life. While a few decades ago pacifism was solely a political question, concerning itself about keeping the nation as a whole out of war, it later became for many people an individual matter.

Prior to and during the First World War the word "Pacifism" was used to describe the general doctrine that the abolition of war is both desirable and possible. Men did not refuse flatly to heed their country's call to arms, but rather advocated joint action toward the eventual extermination of this evil from human society. The radical stand was not taken that all war, irrespective of circumstances, is evil; but the more conservative position was assumed, that very few wars are worth fighting, that the evils of war are nearly always greater than might appear at first, and that therefore the abolition of war in any form must be sought. This type of pacifism, then and today, does not repudiate all force without reservation. In fact, force was advocated. War, it taught, can be eliminated

only by collective effort and peace can and should be forced and enforced. Such was pacifism in the early part of this century, in the days of Woodrow Wilson, e.g., who himself was often described as a pacifist, especially by his opponents, in spite of the fact that at the time America entered World War I he did ask for "force to the uttermost."

This early form of pacifism was born largely out of opposition to the extreme militarism of some European and Asiatic peoples. According to the latter, war is in itself good, inevitable and desirable. Peace is not only an empty dream, but also an evil one. Lasting peace is as undesirable as it is impossible of realization. Militarism glorifies war; makes war its business; views war as a necessary and healthy expression of life itself. This philosophy is well exemplified by what the now deflated Mussolini once wrote "Fascism believes neither in the possibility nor the utility of perpetual peace. . . . It repudiates pacifism as an evil born of a renunciation of all struggle and an act of cowardice in the face of sacrifice. War alone brings up to its highest tension all human energy and puts the stamp of nobility upon the peoples who have the courage to meet it. . . . For fascism the growth of empire, that is, the expansion of the nation, is an essential manifestation of vitality, and its opposite a sign of decadence. . . . Peoples which are rising are always imperialistic." It is in opposition to such proud glorification of war that pacifism came to reject entirely the view that war is both inevitable and desirable in itself.

It stands to reason, that from a mere natural point of view, much can be said in favor of this form of pacifism. It strives for peace rather than war. It does not set the individual at variance with his own government as later pacifism does. It does not make the blanket denial that no government has the right to wage war, nor does it repudiate force altogether. It simply sets itself against war, and what man does not hate war as one dreads a fatal disease?

This does not mean, however, that pacifism also in this form, did and does not rest on altogether false premises, viewed now in the light of the Word of God. It is pure humanism. It does not consider God, but seeks only the welfare of mere man. When it preaches that war is not inevitable and that its abolition is entirely possible in this world of sin it militates against all Scripture clearly teaches on this point. It plainly reveals that it does not apprehend what real peace is. That peace is the fruit of love, that it is spiritual harmony of thought and desire, purpose and method, all rooted in the love of God in Christ, pacifism does and will not see. It rules out the element of sin altogether. It simply rejects the terrible truth, that all men are enmity against God, that enmity against God is enmity against one another, and that therefore there can be no peace in a world of sin. Besides, pacifism ignores the

plain predictions of God's own Word, that there will be wars and rumors of wars until the end of time and God Himself stamps out all that is of sin in the day of His appearance. And certainly, the pacifist has no eye for either the need or the divine beauty of God's righteous judgments against an ungodly world. It would continue in its way of sin and rebellion against God and have peace nevertheless.

Since World War I pacifism gradually came to have a far narrower meaning, until today it represents largely the doctrine of non-resistance or non-violence; the doctrine that all use of arms even for defense is unjustifiable; the doctrine of complete repudiation of all force as either a social or political instrument; and the right of the individual to refuse to take up arms and actively participate in any given war. The position is clearly stated by a certain A. J. Muste, Executive Secretary of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, "To work and fight for the military victory of this state means to hope that Americans may be able to destroy, maim, kill more cleverly, scientifically and effectively than Germans or Japanese. I do not feel any desire to lift a finger to bring about such a victory and I will not knowingly and of my own will lift a finger to bring it about."

Actually it may be said also of this doctrine, that it presents nothing new. Most of its basic principles will be found to permeate even the most ancient pagan religions. Return good for evil, cultivate humility, refrain from assertiveness, and justice will have its way in the end. From the beginning of its history the Quaker faith is best known for its pacifistic leanings. Hence, the pacifism of today as described in the preceding paragraph may be more drastic, more absolute and individualistic in form, essentially and principally it is nothing new.

Politically pacifism is based on certain broad assumptions which are common to all its exponents. The worst evil, they feel, which can befall human society, is war. Evils accruing from defeat or passive submission to an invader may be great, but not as great as those resulting from war. To adopt violence as an instrument against violence, they say, is to produce the very condition we are seeking so zealously to avoid. The use of violence against us, they teach, is usually prompted by the fear, that we ourselves might resort to violence. Therefore the best preventive is to make it entirely clear to the foe that we have no such intention. "Treat others well, and others will treat you well." An invader will not likely indulge in cruelty and butchery if not resisted. How shall we appraise this reasoning? Much of what they say is true, perhaps. The Netherlands might have fared much better had they decided against meeting the Nazi aggressor with force. However: (1) It may be seriously questioned whether it is really true, that the evil of war is in-

variably greater than that of defeat and passive submission. That depends greatly on how individuals and nations may feel about their honor and self respect. (2) Besides, from the viewpoint of actual life, such pacifism will defeat itself. "Treat others well, and they will treat you well", certainly will not apply in all cases. Moreover, pacifism also has its ways of antagonizing the invader. Yes, it may escape the immediate horrors that usually attend invasion. However, prolonged moral resistance, the "non-violent non-cooperation" policy of a Gandhi, civil disobedience along with other elusive methods of frustrating the invader's government will ultimately excite resentment and forcible suppression as well as violence. Much depends on who is the nation against which the "non-violent non-cooperation" is practiced. It is quite safe to assume, that if Gandhi had attempted his methods against the Nazi or Jap his head would have rolled in the dust long before this. Then, too, there is always the inevitable presence of minorities who refuse to accept the non-violence creed. A ten percent or less offering an invader violent opposition would certainly bring down on the entire nation the ire and vengeance of the invader. Even from a purely natural point of view pacifism asks too much of too many for too long.

Those who urge pacifism on Christian and religious grounds like to appeal to such modernistic doctrines as the universal Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of man. God is the Father of all men, also our enemies. Therefore they should be made to see their faults, not ruthlessly destroyed. Especially do these Christian pacifists like to appeal to the teachings of Christ, particularly the Sermon on the Mount, which to them is little more than a repudiation of what they prefer to call the eye-for-an-eye philosophy of the O. T. These people forget, that Jesus is preaching to the subjects of the Kingdom of Heaven; that He means to teach them that they must act from the principle of true love and righteousness; but surely does not intend to teach, that in the New Dispensation there is no such thing as sword-power which God has given to divinely appointed magistrates, and that this sword-power does not imply the right to declare and wage war.

In addition to the objections already adduced against the political and religious assumptions of pacifism, I would urge all the arguments presented above against the position of the more conservative pacifists. The former, too, is pure humanism. It, too, reveals plainly that it does not understand the true meaning of peace. It also rules out the element of sin altogether. And it, too, ignores all God Himself predicts in His Word about wars and rumors of wars to the end of time. To all of which we still desire to add: (1) That pacifism errs in as far as it takes the position that all war is a priori evil and contrary to the living God, and that all taking of human life is necessarily murder.

The O. T. is full of wars commanded by God Himself (2) That pacifism therefore certainly is mistaken when it flatly assumes that the government has no right at any time to wage war. Scripture clearly grants the magistrate this right. (3) That pacifism errs seriously when it maintains the individual's right to oppose its government and refuse to participate actively in any given war. This position is dangerous and revolutionary. It denies the plain teaching of Scripture, that as long as the government exercises its authority in its own domain, the individual citizen is obliged to obey. In principle it is anarchy. On the basis of such pacifism one can as well refuse to work in defense factories, pay taxes or do anything that in any way tends to support a war in which the nation is involved. Such a standpoint would certainly be consistent, would be carrying a principle to its logical conclusion, but such consistency should also be more than sufficient to prove the pacifistic position untenable.

One could hardly consider the subject treated without at least a reference to the form of pacifism adopted by the Christian Reformed Church in recent years, when it officially adopted a "Testimony" wherein it maintains, that we must distinguish between just and unjust wars, that no Christian can be justified in participating in a given war when convinced that his country is fighting for a wrong cause, and that the only course open to such a Christian is that of passive resistance and refusal to bear arms in that particular war.

Space does not permit an exhaustive discussion of this position. It should be obvious, however, that this standpoint principally adopts the position of pacifism. The one may feel, that all wars as such are wrong and unjust; the other may maintain a distinction between just and unjust wars; both leave the question of active participation in the given war to the individual conscience. And who will say, that the Christian Reformed brethren have any more right to their form of pacifism and doctrine of passive resistance than the more drastic pacifists have to theirs?

I will refrain from further comment. For a truly masterful refutation of this entire position I refer you to the article of our editor-in-chief in Vol. 16 of our Standard Bearer, "As to the Christian's Participation in War."

There is one sense in which pacifism is wonderful and exceedingly blessed. That is the Scriptural sense. A "pacifist" is a "peacemaker", according to the literal meaning of the word. Taking the word in that strictly literal sense Jesus is the Great Pacifist of all time, Who in His own blood merits for us eternal peace, Who

by His Spirit realizes that peace in the hearts of all the elect, and Who thus "makes peace" forever between the living God and an innumerable host of elect. In Him we also become true "pacifists", who hate all sin, hunger after all righteousness, seek peace and ensue it. And doing this we are blessed forever, according to the word of the Lord Jesus: "Blessed are the peacemakers (pacifists), for they shall be called the children of God."

R. V.

Contribution

Dear Editor:

At the day of my redemption as I stood justified before God in Grace through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; for so great a salvation I asked, "Lord, what wilt thou have me do". And the voice in the vision replied, "Go fight the evil in labor, for what they do in labor, they do unto Me". I answered, I have not the education nor ability to do so great a thing. The voice replied, "I will be with you alway".

Since that day I have sought to carry out the commission and have trusted the covenant.

I immediately joined the C.L.A. whereupon I was expelled from the A.F. of L. I thought that the C.L.A. was a Christian organization. However, I soon learned that I was not at home. I found the same spirit of rebellion in its set-up of organization as is in the A.F. of L.

These organizations are inspired into existence by the rebellious spirit "to establish justice". It's the same spirit that prompted the children of Israel to rise up against the prophets. They repeatedly rose up against Moses in the wilderness for want of things, they even despised their freedom in the wilderness and desired the bondage of Egypt rather than to serve and trust the God who delivered them from oppression. Yes, so great was their passion for want, that they threatened to stone Moses. There are many such uprisings recorded in the Old Testament. In the New Testament we have that same spirit that lead to the crucifixion of Christ.

God wills it that His people live in love. Love God above all, and your neighbor as yourself is the commandment. But the heart of natural man rebels against it. As we see Jesus walking upon this earth doing good, we can also see the rebellious mob girding itself for action. They reasoned among themselves concerning the great injustice of Jesus turning water into wine and cheating the wine merchant out of those sales. The great multitude that He fed cheated the dealers in

food out of that business. Was it just for a man to heal the afflicted free of charge denying the professionals there just business? No; it was no more just in those God-forsaken days for Jesus to do those things than it is today for a man to work for less than the scale of wages that the union specifies: or for competition to sell goods below the market value demanded by the business combines. Such things rob us out of our just business and we have the rights of enterprise. don't we? So argues the world, and they soon council among themselves to stamp out such competition and to "establish justice".

The C. L. A. has this same spirit. In my own personal experience as a board member we have had many men come into the board-meetings and say, "I demand that justice be done; Mr. so and so is working for so much per hour. Another says, Mr. so and so works all day Saturday and even overtime without getting time and one-half and I demand that justice be done". A Mr. X came in and said "My employer owes me so many dollars for back wages and I demand that the C. L. A. collect it so that justice may be done". Another Mr. Y says, Mr. W is a member of this organization isn't he? What does the C. L. A. mean by having such a man a member, he underbid me by so much on that job. Do you call that justice?" And so we can quote ever so many cases that have been placed before us in our C. L. A. local wherein the membership (many church members) demand that we, the C. L. A. establish justice. Some of these cases we have brought to the attention of the National C. L. A. and they instructed us that it was our duty to see to it that justice be established. This in itself explains the steadfastness of the C. L. A. in its need for the strike weapon; to establish justice. The C. L. A. looks upon itself as a court to judge another, to condemn one and to exonerate the other, to justify one and to place the guilt upon the other and demand and see to it that justice be established. Herein the C. L. A. stands as condemned before God as do the other worldly organizations.

For in Christ we are freemen, we are at liberty in Him to do good. We have the freedom to relieve the needy in labor, business and capital, and our freedom and liberty is not to be used maliciously. If a man has bargained for employment, or another has sold his goods, what Godly right has another to set himself up as judge over the bargain, and demand that he do otherwise? Is there no other justice than the dollar in Christian living? Is it the Christian calling to make money, or is it the Christian calling to relieve the needy and to put on the righteousness of God in so doing?

The righteousness of God demands that I love my neighbor as myself. It was in love that Christ turned water into wine, fed the multitude, healed the sick and afflicted. It was none other than contempt for

this love that the mob (organization of self-righteous man) sought to destroy. And there is one thing we can say, that today we are surrounded with these mob conspiracies in labor, business and capital, and the voice of freedom in enterprise is used for maliciousness.

Years ago enterprise was conducted on the free market. The farmer raised his crop and sold it for a price governed by that market. Business price structure was also governed by that same market price as established by freedom. Labor sought employment also by that same value. Our forefathers left their fatherland for the U. S. A. because they sought to be freemen in enterprise. It was to them a way of life in which they could place their faith and trust in the living God. They knew that in free enterprise the earth would be replenished and that with a constant free market enterprise the wealth of the nation would constantly be redistributed. That the poor had an equal chance as did the wealthy in economics, was to them of great inspiration. God has rewarded them for their faith and trust, He has blessed them with many blessings. That was not enough, the capitalist merged with other capitalists; business organized business; and labor organized labor, all for profits which seeks now to devour every vestige of freedom for which they died. Of such is the God-forsaken world. But where is the Christian world? Has it been devoured in a sinful passion for want of things? Or is it lack of fundamental principles in freedom that keeps us apart? I have every reason to believe that if and when an organization is established as a free organization, for the purpose to propagate freedom in our social order, that thousands of Christians will support its movement. To that end, I solicit the aid of the Standard Bearer and every freedom loving Christian.

Frank Rottier.

IN MEMORIAM

The Consistory of the Protestant Reformed Church at Hull, Iowa, herewith wishes to express its sincere sympathy to deacon J. Karsemeyer and his family in the loss of their son and brother:

HENRY KARSEMEYER, ACRM

who was killed in service with the navy.

May the God of all grace comfort and sustain them by His Word and Spirit and cause them to believe and trust that the Lord knoweth them that are His and dealeth faithfully and just.

The Consistory,

A. Cammenga, Pres.

E. Vander Werff, Secr.

IN MEMORIAM

On February 13, 1945, after a lingering illness of almost a year, it pleased the Lord to take unto Himself our dear Husband, Father, Grandfather,

MR. RALPH SCHAAFSMA—age 55 years

As a answer to Jesus prayer.

Father I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me; for thou lovest me before the foundation of the world.

Mrs. R. Schaafsma
Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Kuiper
Mr. and Mrs. Arnold Schaafsma
Mr. and Mrs. John Vanden Berg
Mr. and Mrs. John Schaafsma
Mr. and Mrs. Robert Jelsma
Mr. and Mrs. Frederick Schaafsma
Clarence Schaafsma
Nine grandchildren..

ANNIVERSARY

Den 10den Maart, 1945, mochten onze geliefde ouders

JELLE REINDERT VANDER WAL

en

KLASKE VANDER WAL, geb. Visser

hunne 45 jarige echtvereeniging gedenken. Dat de Heere die hun tot liefde nabij was hun ook verder wil leiden, is de wensch en bede van hunne dankbare kinderen.

M. Gaastra

S. Gaastra—Vander Wal
en 4 kleinkinderen.

1015 Ohio St.

Redlands, California.

MINISTERS' CONFERENCE

The Protestant Reformed Ministers' Conference will meet Tuesday, April 3 at 9:30 A.M., in the First Protestant Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan. Program:—"The Inherently Modernistic World View of Common Grace"—J. A. Heys. "The Idea of Conscience in the Epistles of Paul"—H. Hoeksema.

Report of Classis West — Convened March 7, 1945 at Sioux Center, Iowa

The Rev. P. De Boer conducted the usual opening exercises. It appeared from the credentials that all the churches were represented.

Rev. L. Doezeema takes the chair as president of the day, and Rev. P. De Boer serves as secretary.

The president extends a word of welcome particularly the two new ministers now serving in Classis West, Rev. C. Hanco and Rev. L. Vermeer, and also to the deputies ad examina, the Reverends B. Kok, A. Petter and M. Schipper.

The church visitors for the middle West present their report, informing the Classis that love and unity prevail in the churches they visited, as also love for the truth. The church visitors for the far West report that they have carried out their mandate, visiting the churches in California and Montana, and that they found everything in good order in these churches.

The sermon committee presents its report that they have carried out the work assigned to them by the previous Classis. They have mimeographed and compiled in book form a number of English and Dutch sermons, which are available to the consistories for reading services. The Classis accepts this report and decides to place these books on sale to the consistory members for the cost price of \$2.50 per set, each set including two volumes.

The consistory of Sioux Center asks Classis to examine Candidate James Van Weelden, who has accepted the call extended to him by their congregation. The Classis decides to comply with this request and proceeds to examine him according to the following schedule:

Rev. C. Hanco examines him on the first three loci of Dogmatics for 25 min.

Rev. L. Vermeer examines him on the last three loci of Dogmatics for 25 min.

Rev. P. De Boer examines on Knowledge of Scripture for 15 minutes.

Rev. S. Cammenga examines on Knowledge of the Confessions for 15 minutes.

Rev. J. Blankespoor examines on Controvers for 15 minutes.

Rev. G. Vos concludes with an examination on Practica for 15 minutes.

Thereupon the Candidate is given a half hour to preach his classical sermon on the passage of Scripture taken from I Cor. 1:27-29.

The chair appoints the Revs. C. Hanco J. Blankespoor and the elder H. P. Van Dyken to examine the credentials of Candidate Van Weelden.

Upon receiving the advice of the deputies ad examina, the Classis decides to express that Candidate James Van Weelden has shown the necessary qualifications for the ministry of the Word and Sacraments in our churches, and advises the consistory of Sioux Center to proceed with the ordination. Candidate Van Weelden is informed of our decision, and the assembly sings "Des Heeren Zegen Op U Daal".

The requests for subsidies from the various churches are given into the hands of a committee for further investigation, upon which they report their findings to Classis. The committee consists of the Revs. Vis, Vos and Gritters, and the elders H. A. Kimm and A. Katje.

A request from Oskaloosa for remuneration of certain recently incurred expenses is also given into the hands of this committee.

The committee advises Classis to grant the requests for subsidies as presented by the various consistories.

The request of Oskaloosa is rejected on the grounds that their request falls under no particular rule now in vogue in our churches, and also that Oskaloosa has presented no proof that she is in need of this aid.

Classis approbates the letter of Testimonial of the Rev. M. Gritters, who has accepted the call to our Oak Lawn church. It is also decided to give him a letter of transfer to Classis East.

Since Rev. Gritters is leaving our Classis Rev. C. Hanco has been chosen to take his place as Stated Clerk of Classis West. And the Rev. G. Vos has been chosen to fill his vacancy in the Classical Committee.

The Chair expresses the appreciation of Classis West to Rev. M. Gritters for his faithful services as Stated Clerk of the Classis and now wishes him God's

blessing in his new field of labor. Rev. Gritter responds with a word of thanks and wishes the Classis God's continued blessing.

The Rev. A. Cammenga of Hull was appointed as moderator for Sioux Center during their vacancy.

The following are delegated by the Classis to the next Synod:

Ministers:

Primi	Secundi
G. Vos	L. Vermeer
C. Hanco	P. Vis
L. Doezeema	A. Cammenga
J. Blankespoor	P. De Boer

Elders:

Primi	Secundi
J. Docter	H. Kuiper
C. Vander Molen	J. Broek
W. De Vries	G. Rijken
F. Hoekstra	J. Kuiper

Since Mr. F. LaGrange has not been remunerated for his services in regard to the finances of Classis West, it is decided to notify him of a former decision of Classis that he should be remunerated for this work annually, and that Classis desires to carry out this decision accordingly.

Pella thanks the Classis for the aid extended to her during her vacancy in the past year.

The questions of Article 41 are satisfactorily answered. Oskaloosa asks advice concerning the matter of Catechism books for young people who are not yet ready for the commonly used "Essentials of Reformed Doctrine". They are informed that they can contact Rev. A. Cammenga, who has prepared a "Primer of Reformed Doctrine".

Since both Oskaloosa and Rock Valley invite the Classis to hold its fall meeting in their church, Classis decides to accept the invitation of Rock Valley. The next meeting to be held on the first Wednesday of September, D. V.

After the minutes are approved the president makes a few fitting closing remarks, whereupon the Rev. J. Vander Breggen returns thanks to God for His guidance.

C. HANKO, Stated Clerk.