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MEDITATION

Deze Beloften

Dewijl wij dan deze beloften hebben, geliefden! laat ons onszelven reinigen van alle besmettingen des vleesch en des geestes, voleindigende de heiligmaking in de vreeze Gods.

II Cor 7:1

Deze beloften!

Dewijl wij deze beloften hebben.

Zoo laat ons onszelven reinigen, de heiligmaking voleindigen in de ware vreeze des Heeren.

Het eene behoort bij het andere, het hebben van de beloften, en dat wel met nadruk van *deze* beloften, en het reinigen van onszelven, om aldus onze heiligmaking te voleindigen. Deze twee zijn onafscheidelijk aan elkander verbonden.

Immers, zoals in *alle* verbonden, zoo zijn er ook in Gods Verbond, wel geen twee partijen (hoe zou toch een nietig mensch partij zijn in betrekking tot den levenden God?), maar toch twee *deelen* begrepen, een deel van den het Verbond realizeerende Verbonds-God, en een deel,—niet van den nog in dat Verbond op te nemen mensch,—maar van den reeds in dat Verbond werkelijk opgenomen, en aldus door den God des Verbonds begenadigden bondeling.

Deze twee deelen mogen, maar kunnen ook nimmer gescheiden worden.

Ze mogen ook nimmer worden voorgesteld alsof het twee, elkander aanvullende, deelen waren, twee deelen, die synergistisch elkander ontmoeten, en door de ontmoeting waarvan nu eerst Gods Verbond tot stand komt. Ook mag de verhouding niet zoo worden voorgesteld, dat het tweede deel, ons deel, eene voorwaarde is, waaraan wij moeten voldoen, zal God Zijn Verbond met ons oprichten, en ons al de weldaden

des Verbonds doen deelachtig worden. Dan kwam immers dat Verbond met ons nimmer tot stand.

Neen, het Verbond is Godes, Zijns alleen.

En Hij is in de realizeering van Zijn Verbond volkomen souverein. Hij is Zijn eigen partij. En Hij maakt van Zijn partij, wie Hij wil.

Immers is Gods deel in dit Verbond, dat Hij alleen, maar dan ook werkelijk *alleen*, alles doet, wat tot de realizeering des Verbonds noodig is. Want immers, “als wij gedoopt worden in den naam des Vaders, zoo betuigt en verzegelt ons God de Vader, dat Hij met ons een eeuwig verbond der genade opricht, ons tot Zijne kinderen en erfgenamen aanneemt, en daarom van alle goed ons verzorgen, en alle kwaad van ons weren, of ten onzen beste keeren wil. En als wij in den naam des Zoons gedoopt worden, zoo betuigt en verzegelt ons de Zoon, dat Hij ons wacht in Zijn bloed van alle onze zonden, ons in de gemeenschap Zijns doods en Zijner wederopstanding inlijvende, alzoo dat wij van onze zonden bevrijd en rechtvaardig voor God gerekend worden. Desgelijks als wij gedoopt worden in den naam des Heiligen Geestes, zoo verzekert ons de Heilige Geest, door dit heilig Sacrament, dat Hij in ons wonen, en ons tot lidmaten van Christus heiligen wil, ons toeëigenende hetgeen wij in Christus hebben, namelijk de afwassching onzer zonden, en de dagelijkse vernieuwing onzes levens, totdat wij eindelijk onder de gemeente der uitverkorenen in het eeuwige leven onbevlekt zullen gesteld worden.”

Dat is Gods deel des Verbonds.

Dewijl wij dan deze beloften hebben!

En deze beloften zijn immers beloften *Gods!*

En daarom zijn deze beloften dan ook geen onzekere, voorwaardelijke, van des menschen wil afhankelijke toezeggingen; of ook algemeene aanbiedingen van genade en zaligheid aan allen zonder onderscheid. Ach, aan wie zou toch de Heere God iets aanbieden in den zin, dat de werkelijke schenking er van zou afhangen van des menschen toestemming of inwilliging? Hoe zou toch de alleen Souvereine iets beloven, dat Hij Zelf niet tot het einde toe alleen ver-

vult? Of, hoe zou de Getrouwe, de Amen, de Waarachtige, Die niet liegen kan, het objectieve recht op al de weldaden des heils kunnen schenken aan hen, aan wie Hij niet bedoelt dat recht ook te verwerkelijken?

Neen, Gods beloften zijn eeuwig Ja en Amen.

Zijn belofte is Zijn goddelijk Woord, Zijn heilige eed, gezworen bij niemand minder dan Zichzelven, dat Hij Zijn Verbond zal oprichten, dat Hij den erfgenamen der belofte al Zijn heil zal doen toekomen, niet op eenige voorwaarde, maar onvoorwaardelijk; niet omdat deze erfgenamen die beloften aannemen en inwilligen, maar zóó, dat ook die aanneming en die inwilliging door Zijne souvereine genade alleen tot stand komt.

Dat is het deel van den God des Verbonds.

En als God Zijn deel, dat wil dus zeggen geheel het Verbond, aan ons en in ons heeft gerealiseerd, dan hebben wij "deze beloften."

Want ook het hebben dezer beloften wil immers maar niet zeggen, dat wij ergens eene algemeene aanbieding des heils, of eene voorwaardelijke toezegging, hebben gehoord, en dat wij nu weten, dat wij gebruik mogen maken van eene door God aangekondigde rechtschenking aan alle menschen, of ook aan alle "kinderen des vleesches," maar dat God Zelf door Zijn evangelie tot ons persoonlijk heeft gesproken, ons bij name heeft genoemd en geroepen uit de duisternis tot Zijn wonderbaar licht, ons het geloof in het hart heeft gewrocht, en door dat geloof ons die beloften heeft geschonken, zoodat ze in ons, voorzoover ze in deze bedeeing kunnen worden gerealiseerd, zijn verwerkelijkt, vervuld; en, voorzoover deze beloften op hare volkomene en uiteindelijke vervulling wachten, ze in ons worden eene kracht der levende hope door de opstanding van Jezus Christus uit de dooden.

Dewijl wij dan deze beloften hebben. . . .

O, en de beloften, en de vervulling der beloften, en de schenking der beloften, en het hebben der beloften,—het moet altegader worden toegeschreven aan de genadige beschikking van den God des Verbonds.

Het is Zijn deel!

Maar dan volgt ook ons deel!

Niet om aan Gods deel ook maar iets toe te voegen. Neen, maar om als Gods redelijk-zedelijke schepselen, Zijne geliefde kinderen, nu Zijn deel met bewustheid tot openbaring te brengen, Zijn Verbond te houden, van Zijn partij te zijn in het midden der wereld.

Ons deel is de vrucht, de openbaring in en door ons van Zijn deel.

Immers is ons deel "eene nieuwe gehoorzaamheid, namelijk, dat wij dezen eenigen God, Vader, Zoon, en Heilige Geest, aanhangen, betrouwen, en liefhebben van ganscher harte, van ganscher ziele, van ganschen gemoede en met alle krachten. . . .

De wereld verlaten, onze oude natuur dooden. . . .

En in een nieuw, godzalig leven wandelen."

Dewijl wij dan deze beloften hebben,—omdat God

Zijn deel in ons heeft vervuld. . . .

Zoo laat ons onszelven reinigen. . . .

De heiligmaking voleindigende!

Ons deel!

Deze beloften!

Maar dan ook met nadruk juist *deze* beloften.

Dat de beloften Gods ons verplichten, maar ook, dat het hebben dier beloften een grond kan zijn en is voor de vermaning om onszelven te reinigen, ja zelfs, dat deze beloften in ons een drang worden om onze heiligmaking te volmaken in de vreeze Gods,—dat ligt immers geheel en al aan het karakter en den inhoud van *deze* beloften.

Och, als de beloften Gods niets anders inhielden, dan dat we straks naar een schoonen hemel gaan, naar eene stad met paarden poorten en gouden straten, naar een uitwendig schoon en heerlijk land, "waar doorn noch distel groeien," en "waar 't hart geen angst, geen kommer kent, noch pijn," ze zouden niet met innerlijke noodwendigheid ons dringen om onszelven te reinigen van alle besmetting des geestes en des vleesches, en de heiligmaking te voleindigen in de vreeze Gods.

Zeker, in den hemel is het schoon.

De beloften Gods geven ons uitzicht op eenen nieuwen hemel, en eene nieuwe aarde, God maakt straks alle dingen nieuw.

En in die nieuwe schepping zullen de vorige dingen niet meer worden gedacht. Daar is alles schoon, heerlijk, vol van hemelsche glorie, harmonie, pracht. Daar groeit doorn noch distel. Daar is de dood niet meer, noch rouw, noch gekrijt. Daar zal God alle tranen van de oogten afwisschen.

Zeker, ook in uitwendigen zin is het Vaderhuis schoon.

En toch, indien Gods beloften niet meer inhielden, zouden ze geen grond of drang in ons kunnen zijn tot het vervullen van ons "deel" in Gods Verbond. Dan zou zeker eene nieuwe gedaante, een nieuw kleed wel gewenscht zijn, om ons in harmonie te brengen met die nieuwe en rijke omgeving; we zouden ons misschien wat nieuwe gewoonten en nieuwe manieren moeten aanwennen, die bij onze nieuwe, schoone woning passen. Maar onszelven reinigen van geestelijk-zedelijke besmettingen, en de heiligmaking voleindigen,—neen, dat zou uit de verwachting eener nieuwe, uitwendig schoone omgeving niet met noodwendigheid volgen.

Doch we hebben *deze* beloften!

En van deze beloften had Gods Woord gesproken in de laatste verzen van het vorige hoofdstuk: "Want gij zijt de tempel des levenden Gods; gelijkerwijs God gezegd heeft: Ik zal in hen wonen, en Ik zal onder hen wandelen; en Ik zal hun God zijn, en zij zullen Mij tot een volk zijn. . . . En Ik zal U tot een Vader zijn,

en Gij zult Mij tot zonen en dochteren zijn, zegt de Heere, de Almachtige."

Dat zijn de beloften!

Dat is Gods Verbond!

Hij wil bij ons wonen, onder ons wandelen, als kinderen ons in Zijn huis opnemen, tot ons spreken als een vriend met zijn vriend. Hij opent Zijn hart voor ons, Hij openbaart Zijne geheimen aan ons, Hij doet ons Zijn liefde smaken, Zijn aangezicht aanschouwen, Hem kennen, zooals wij ook gekend zijn. Want Gods Verbond is een levende betrekking van eeuwige vriendschap, niet slechts een verbintenis, verdrag, of overeenkomst. En als God Zijn Verbond met ons bevestigt, dan doet Hij ons ingaan in Zijne tente, opdat we naar de mate van het schepsel Zijn eigen drie-eenig Verbondsleven zouden smaken, en daarin erkennen, dat de Heere goed is.

Deze beloften!

Ik zal in hen wonen, en Ik zal onder hen wandelen!

En als we deze beloften hebben, als ze ons levend deel geworden zijn, als ze in ons hart zijn gegrift, zoodat we ze in beginsel deelachtig zijn, en in beginsel Gods verborgen omgang gevonden hebben, en zoodat we onder den drang dezer beloften met verlangen uitzien naar de vervulling er van, de uiteindelijke vervulling, dan is het voorwerp onzer hope, ja, wel een schoone hemel, een rijke woning, eene nieuwe schepping, zonder doorn of distel, zonder zonde en dood, zonder rouw of gekrijt, zonder lijden en smart; maar dan concentreert zich toch al die pracht en heerlijkheid, al die rijkdom en schoonheid, al dat geluk en die zaligheid, in den levenden God Zelf. . . .

Dan is die schoone hemel een *Vaderhuis*, een tabernakel Gods bij de menschen!

Dan zingen we, door den innerlijken drang dezer beloften, die we hebben, gedreven:

't Hijgend hert, de jacht ontkomen,
Schreeuwt niet sterker naar 't genot,
Van de frissche waterstroomen,
Dan mijn ziel verlangt naar God!
Ja, mijn ziel dorst naar den Heer;
God des levens! ach, wanneer,
Zal ik naad'ren voor Uw oogen,
In Uw huis Uw naam verhoogen?

Dewijl wij dan deze beloften hebben.
Deze beloften!

Gods deel. . . ons deel!

Ja, dan is het wel duidelijk, dat deze twee onafscheidelijk aan elkander zijn verbonden.

Verbonden, ja, als weldaad en verplichting, maar dan als verplichting, die liefdedienst is geworden. Verbonden als onweerstandelijke genade en de openbaring

er van in ons, als wortel en vrucht, als oorzaak en gevolg.

Door den drang *dezer* beloften immers wordt er in ons geboren het machtig verlangen naar God, naar den te zijn. En zoo wordt dan ons deel in Gods verbond, dat we den Heere onzen God liefhebben en vertrouwen en aanhangen van ganscher harte en met al onze krachten, onze oude natuur dooden, de wereld verlaten, en in een nieuw godzalig leven wandelen.

Dewijl wij dan deze beloften hebben,—door Gods deel. . . .

Zoo laat ons onszelf reinigen van alle besmettingen des vleesches en des geestes, voleindigende in de vreeze Gods,— ons deel.

Besmettingen des vleesches en des geestes: dat zijn de overblijfselen der zonde in ons, in ons verstand en in onzen wil, in de leden van het lichaam dezes doods. En die overblijfselen der zonde, die "besmettingen," werken nog altijd na, en worden alzoo "bewegingen der zonde, die in onze leden zijn." En als we Gods beloften in beginsel bezitten, en wandelen in de levende hope op de uiteindelijke vervulling dezer beloften, in de begeerte naar God, om Hem te zien en Zijne liefelikheden te aanschouwen in Zijnen tempel, en we verstaan, dat zonder de heiligmaking niemand den Heere zien kan, dan worden ons die bewegingen der zonde in onze leden tot smart en rouw, en dan haten we ze met een volkomenen haat; maar dan nemen ze ons toch dikwijls nog gevangen, verleiden ze ons, geven we onszelf aan haar over, liggen we ten onder. . . .

En daarom hebben we altijd weer behoefte aan het Woord Gods, dat ons toeroept: Laat ons onszelf reinigen!

En, och neen, dat wil niet zeggen, dat wij ook maar één smetje der zonde van onze natuur kunnen afwassen, of dat wij met den Heere meewerken tot onze geestelijke heiligmaking. Onze innerlijke vernieuwing is Gods deel in Zijn verbond. En bovendien gaat die oude natuur immers met ons mee naar het graf!

Maar het wil wel zeggen, dat we "onze oude natuur dooden," dat we den ouden mensch afleggen, dat we de zonde haten en vlieden, de wereld verlaten, en in een nieuw, godzalig leven wandelen.

Het wil wel zeggen, dat we Gods deel, de heiligmaking, VOLEINDIGEN, en vol-EINDIGEN, door in ons leven tot openbaring te brengen, wat God de Heilige Geest in ons werkt. Werkt uws zelfs zaligheid, want God is het, Die in u werkt!

In de waarachtige vreeze Gods, het verlangen om Hem welbehagelijk te zijn!

Soli Deo Gloria!

H. H.

Zie toe, dat gij niet wanhopig wordt. Wanhoop

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EDITORIALS

The Liberated Churches In The Netherlands

In our discussion of the decisions of the Synod of the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands, we will, for the moment, pass by those that concern the problem of "common grace", in order to focus our attention at once upon the declarations concerning the doctrine of the covenant of grace.

We do this, not because we are not vitally interested in the former, but because they received little attention in the Netherlands; while the latter became the bone of contention, and the cause of the dissension and schism.

Let us consider these decisions point by point.

The first point declares:

"The covenant of grace is of such fundamental significance for the life of faith that the preaching as well as all other work of the Church must proceed from it, and that, in presentation or practice, everything must be avoided that minimizes the significance of God's covenant."

Now, there will be few, if any, Reformed believers that will deny the truth of this statement. Nor is there any difference of opinion on this score between the "synodical" churches of the Netherlands and the "liberated" churches. The fact that it is exactly on the doctrine concerning the covenant that the controversy there hinges, and that it is because of certain declarations made by synod in regard to that doctrine that many churches dissented and separated themselves, is sufficient proof that both sides agree that the doctrine of the covenant is important for the faith and life of the Church.

But notice, too, that no doctrinal truth is expressed in this first declaration at all. It speaks about the significance of a certain doctrine, that of the covenant of grace; it prescribes that it must have a central, fundamental place in the preaching and in the work of the Church; it warns against minimizing the significance of this doctrine; but it offers no doctrinal definition or declaration.

It expresses no opinion concerning the covenant of grace itself. No definition of any kind is offered.

Rather does it seem to proceed from the presupposition that there is general agreement on this most fundamental point.

And in view of the fact that this statement is rather a practical exhortation to the Reformed

Churches represented by the synod to hold the doctrine of the covenant of grace in esteem, the presupposition on which it is based would necessarily have to be that the doctrine of the covenant of grace is an accepted dogma, defined in the Reformed Confessions.

This appears to have been the tacit assumption on the part of the synod, all the more, because also the subsequent points adopted under this head fail to define the doctrine of the covenant.

And let me add that this lack of definition of the covenant itself also characterized the free discussions on this point prior to 1939 in papers and pamphlets.

There was a good deal of discussion and controversy centering around this doctrine. But the discussion always concerned itself with secondary questions, questions that can really be successfully answered only after the idea and meaning of the covenant have been definitely established. The questions concerned, not the covenant, but rather the "parts" or "parties" in the covenant, the seed of the covenant, the problem as to who are in the covenant. The discussion usually concentrated around the Form for the Administration of Baptism to the little children of believers, and around the question concerning the ground of infant baptism, and the spiritual state and condition of the baptized infants. Is the covenant established only with the elect, or with Abraham and all his seed? Are the children baptized on the basis of their presupposed regeneration, or on the basis of the promise of the covenant? Ever since 1892, when the churches of the "Afscheiding" and those of the "Doleantie" synodically united, and especially again in the years immediately preceding 1939 and the synod of Sneek, these questions were being warmly discussed. But always it was tacitly assumed that the doctrine of the doctrine was well established, and was in no need of further definition.

I consider this a fundamental error.

For it simply is not true that there is an officially established and adopted doctrine of the covenant, formulated in the "Three Forms of Unity," the Heidelberg Catechism, the Netherland Confession, and the Canons of Dordrecht.

As to the Heidelberg Catechism, it mentions the covenant of grace in answer 74, where it states that infants "as well as the adult are included in the covenant and church of God"; and in answer 82, which denies that the table of the Lord is to be opened to those who "by confession and life declare themselves unbelieving and ungodly," because "by this, the covenant of God would be profaned." These expressions again do, indeed, presuppose a doctrine of the covenant, but they do in no wise define it.

The Netherland Confession declares that "we detest the error of the Anabaptists, who are not content

with the one only baptism they have once received, and moreover condemn the baptism of the infants, whom we believe ought to be baptized and sealed with the sign of the covenant". . . . Here, again, the doctrine of the covenant is mentioned, and that, too, in connection with infant baptism; but just what is meant by the covenant is not expressed.

And the same is true of the Canons of Dordrecht. Here once more the covenant is mentioned in connection with the salvation of infants in the seventeenth article of the first head of doctrine as follows: "Since we are to judge of the will of God from His Word, which testifies that the children of believers are holy, not by nature, but in virtue of the covenant of grace, godly parents have no reason to doubt of the election and salvation of their children, whom it pleaseth God to call out of this life in their infancy." It might be possible, perhaps, from this statement to deduce an answer to the question just what our fathers understood by the assertion that the children of believers are holy, and "sanctified in Christ," in view of the fact than on this holiness they base the assertion that we have no reason to doubt their election and salvation. But here, too, a definition of the covenant is wholly wanting.

As far as the Reformed Confessions are concerned, therefore, we may say that they mention the doctrine of the covenant, usually in connection with infant baptism and the question of the salvation of the children of believers; but it cannot be maintained that there is an officially established dogma of the covenant.

The Netherland Synod, therefore, would have done well to have defined this doctrine, before it made any declaration concerning its importance, and issued an exhortation to all the churches to the effect that this doctrine must be given a central place in the preaching and activity of the Church.

This is all the more urgent, in view of the fact that such a doctrine as "the covenant of works" is not even mentioned in the Reformed Standards.

Fact is that this doctrine belongs, dogmenhistorically, to a period subsequent to the period when our confessions were formulated.

Not until the Westminster Confession was composed and adopted, i.e. in the middle of the seventeenth century, do we find mention, officially, of the "covenant of works."

The covenant idea was applied, first, to the relation between God and His people in Christ; and, considerably later, to the relation between God and Adam in the state of rectitude.

Our Confessions do not speak of it, nor even suggest it.

And this is all the more striking, because our Reformed fathers from the time when these confess-

ions were adopted were, generally speaking, creationists. They believed that each individual soul is separately created in every individual child that is born. It would seem, then, that they were in sore need of the doctrine of "the covenant of works," according to which Adam was the federal head of the entire human race, in order to explain the doctrine of original sin and guilt.

But what an important place this "doctrine of the covenant of works" is given in present day Reformed preaching and teaching! It is clearly and definitely described. It is said to consist in a promise, a condition, and a penalty: the promise was eternal life, the condition was obedience to the probationary command, the penalty death. When the synod of 1942 in the Netherlands exhorted the churches to give a central place to the covenant of grace in the teaching and work of the Church, did it also have in mind this closely related theory of "the covenant of works?" If so, what right did it have to elevate this extra-confessional theory to a dogma? But it, evidently, did no such thing. It considered it sufficient to speak of the "covenant of grace" as if this were a clearly defined and officially adopted dogma.

More elaborately, as might be expected, our Form for the Administration of Baptism speaks of the covenant of grace. It describes it as "an eternal covenant of grace," emphasizes that "in all covenants, there are contained two parts," and defines our "part" in the covenant as an obligation "unto new obedience, namely that we cleave to this one God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; that we trust in him, and love him with all our hearts, with all our souls, with all our mind, and with all our strength; that we forsake the world, crucify our old nature, and walk in a new and holy life"; declares that we must never despair of God's mercy if we should fall into sin, nor continue therein, "since baptism is a seal and undoubted testimony that we have an eternal covenant of grace with God." And it teaches us that children are entitled to the sign and seal of baptism "as heirs of the kingdom of God and of his covenant."

All this is, indeed, important. And yet, even here, it is not stated just what is meant by the idea of the covenant of grace.

Nor can it be said that there is perfect agreement among Reformed theologians on the doctrine of the covenant.

Usually, it is true, it is described as an "agreement," or as a "pact". Generally, the covenant is not considered as an end in itself, but as a way of salvation, a means to an end. Yet, even on this point they do not all speak the same language. Some call it an agreement, others an alliance, still others a way of salvation. Bavinck, in a certain place, is bold to call the covenant the very essence of religion. Kuyper declares that to

make a covenant is an act of friendship. Heyns finds the essence of the covenant in the promise "I will be your God". Besides, there is difference of opinion with regard to the question whether we should speak of "parts" or of "parties" in the covenant; whether the covenant is established with Christ, with the elect, with "Abraham and his seed," or with the "offending sinner", whether the covenant is unilateral, bilateral, or both; and whether the *pactum salutis* is to be identified with the covenant of grace or to be considered as its basis in eternity.

In the light of all this, there is a good deal of room for the question: just what did the Synod of 1942 mean when it exhorted all the churches to give the "covenant of grace" a central place in the preaching and work of the Church, and warned against minimizing this important truth?

Before they proceeded to express themselves on secondary questions that are related to the doctrine of the covenant, the delegates to synod should have faced this question squarely.

Not, indeed, as if it is my opinion that they should have given a definite answer to the question. Even if they could have reached agreement on this point among themselves, they would, by offering an official, synodical interpretation of the doctrine of the covenant, only have imposed another opinion on the churches.

And we have enough official "opinions".

Our Reformed Standards are sufficient as a basis of unity for the Reformed churches. We are in no need of "Three Points" or other official declarations by hierarchial synods. They limit one's freedom within the Confession too much, and cause dissension and schism. 1924 here, and 1942 in the Netherlands are glaring illustrations of this fact.

No, but the Synod of 1942 in the Netherlands should have confronted this fundamental question concerning the idea of the covenant, in order that their eyes might have been opened to the fact that they were not prepared to make any definite declarations on this point whatsoever, and that they could far better, and much more safely, to be sure, as the outcome has proved, leave the matter to the free discussion by theologians and laymen, for a long time to come.

I most definitely cannot agree with the covenant view now presented and strongly emphasized by the "liberated" churches.

Nor do I agree with the "Conclusions of Utrecht" or with the declarations made by the Netherland Synod of 1942.

But I deplore that they had the courage to make any doctrinal declarations, or express official synodical "opinions" about matters that were not ripe for such dogmatical decisions.

In my opinion, the Netherland Synod acted very rashly in this matter.

And this opinion is based, not only on the ground that matters were not ready for a synodical *dictum*, but also on other grounds.

However, before we discuss these, we must continue our consideration of the doctrinal decisions on matters relating to the covenant of grace.

H. H.

The Triple Knowledge

An Exposition Of The Heidelberg Catechism

Part Two.

Of Man's Redemption

LORD'S DAY XVII

2.

The Idea of Christ's Resurrection.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ on the third day is of central significance for the economy of salvation.

Even in the brief answer of the Heidelberg Catechism concerning this glorious truth, though it views Christ's resurrection entirely from the aspect of our profit, this is expressed. For, according to the Catechism, the resurrection is, principally, the victory over, the swallowing up of death; it is the realization of our righteousness, the righteousness of which He makes us partakers; it is the power of a new life for all that are His; and it is the sure pledge, while it is the beginning, of our glorious resurrection.

But to this we may add that the resurrection on the third day is the beginning of the new creation of God, the regeneration of all things; and of the eternal perfection of God's covenant of friendship, of the tabernacle of God with men in heavenly glory.

In the light of the resurrection of our Lord, we begin to understand God's eternal purpose with respect to all things.

For that resurrection has cosmological significance.

The idea of the resurrection on the third day is that it is the glorious revelation of the firstborn of every creature, and that, too, as the first begotten of the dead. The risen Lord is the image of the invisible God in its highest possible, glorious, heavenly realization.

To understand this tremendous significance of Christ's resurrection, we must, first of all, try to establish the meaning of the resurrection as such; and,

secondly, ask and answer the question: Who is He that was raised from the dead on the third day?

In answer to the first question, concerning the meaning of the resurrection, we must insist, first of all, that it was *real*. The resurrection of Christ was *resurrection of the body*. It was not a mere glorification of the spirit; nor was it a new creation. The empty grave, the place where the Lord lay, the linen clothes, and the brief resurrection message from the angel's mouth,—all these are sufficient evidence of this truth. "He is not here, for he is risen,"—such was the gospel of the resurrection that was proclaimed by the heavenly messenger to the women that visited the grave in the early morning of that marvellous third day. What took place in the resurrection of Christ dare not be divorced from that empty grave, cannot be correctly explained without taking cognizance of the fact that the body of the Lord was in the grave no more. His body had been stored away in the sepulchre of Joseph, carefully embalmed, though in haste, wrapped in linen clothes; but on the third day it was there no more, because He was raised. The resurrection of Christ, therefore, was bodily resurrection. God's holy One did not see corruption in Hades: His body was snatched from the power of corruption and death by the resurrection. The human spirit of Christ, which, at the moment of His death, He had committed into the hands of the Father, united with a very real, even though altogether different (different as to form and condition) body. Besides, even though the body, through the wonder of the resurrection, was changed, it was *essentially* the same body in which He had been crucified, and that had been stored away in the grave of Joseph's garden. In other words, the wonder of the resurrection was performed upon that body, in which our Saviour had walked among us in "the days of His flesh." That this is true is evidenced by the fact that the disciples recognized Him when He appeared to them during those wonderful forty days between His resurrection and ascension; and, moreover, by the fact that He bore the signs of His suffering and crucifixion even in His resurrection body. Not a resurrection apart from the grave, and apart from the body that was buried, does Scripture teach, but very clearly, a resurrection of and in the body. Thus we must conceive of the reality of the resurrection on the third day.

On the other hand, however, as was mentioned in the preceding chapter, after due emphasis has been given to the reality of the bodily resurrection, it is no less important that we try to conceive, in as far as this is possible in the light of Scripture, of the complete "otherness" of the resurrection of our Lord.

For Christ's resurrection is not a return to the old: it is something strictly and absolutely new. It

is the revelation of the last Adam, of the second man, the Lord from heaven. It is the realization of the image of the heavenly.

Needless to say, the resurrection on the third day was not a return to us. In the incarnation, the Son of God had assumed the likeness of sinful flesh, though without sin. In that likeness of sinful flesh, He was of the earth earthy, and lived our earthly life, and moved about in all our earthly relationships, had earthly needs, could hunger and thirst and grow weary. He came eating and drinking. He was born as a child, increased in stature and power of soul and body, grew up as a child, into adolescence and manhood. Moreover, he was subject to suffering, sorrow, death. He was tempted in all things even as we are. All that the Word of God teaches us concerning that which is buried of man at his death, is true of Christ in His human nature in "the likeness of sinful flesh": "It is sown in corruption, . . . in dishonour, . . . in weakness, . . . It is sown a natural body." But through the resurrection He became entirely other. All that belongs to the likeness of *sinful* flesh is removed. No longer is He subject to corruption, sorrow, suffering, death. And He is become immortal, not in the sense in which philosophy is wont to speak of the "immortality of the soul," but in the far deeper and richer sense, that death has no more dominion over Him, that He has entered into "eternal life" in the qualitative sense of that Scriptural term. He is above death. Death can no longer reach Him. He is the Resurrection and the Life, the Living One. But even this does not fully describe the wonder of the resurrection. For through that resurrection also the image of the earthly was removed, to be replaced by, or changed into the image of the heavenly. Christ assumed, in His incarnation, the image of the earthy: He was of the earth earthy; but through His resurrection He became revealed as the Lord from heaven! And all the apostle writes, in the same chapter from which we quoted above (I Cor. 15:42ff.), about that which is raised in the resurrection of the dead, is true, first of all, centrally, principally of Christ: "It is raised in incorruption, . . . in glory, . . . in power, . . . it is raised a spiritual body."

But, and it is necessary that this, too, be said, Christ's resurrection was not only no return to His former state in the likeness of sinful flesh, the Risen Lord also far transcends in glory and power the first man Adam in his original state of rectitude, and any state that first man Adam might have attained, or might not have attained. From what is said above about the resurrection of Christ this is already sufficiently evident. Adam, also in his state of rectitude, was of the earth earthy. Moreover, although he was not under the actual dominion of death, he was not immortal, but most emphatically mortal: he could die. But with the

resurrection of Christ, death is completely swallowed up in victory, and this corruptible has put on incorruption, this mortal has put on immortality. And in the Risen One the image of the invisible God has been raised to its highest possible perfection, on the plane of heavenly glory. Yet, it is not superfluous that it be expressly stated: the risen Lord is not for a moment to be compared to the first man Adam, even in his state of original righteousness; nor dare it be said that Adam could have attained to the state of glory that is now realized in the resurrection of the Son of God. On the contrary, it is necessary that this be emphatically stated, in order to prevent the notion that, in the resurrection of Christ from the dead, God repaired what was spoiled and marred by the first man Adam; or that through the amazingly deep and marvellous way of the death and resurrection of the Son of God, nothing higher was attained than what might have been accomplished through the first man had he only remained obedient.

Salvation is no repair work!

Nor does God devise the awful way of the death of the Son of God without a view to something higher and far more glorious than could possibly have been attained through the first man Adam.

Through sin and grace, through the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, God realizes His counsel. That counsel was not frustrated or thwarted through the temptation and fall of the first man in Paradise. On the contrary sin and death are strictly subservient to the realization of that counsel.

The first world was, indeed, good on its own plane, but it was not the final realization of the counsel of God with respect to all things. And the counsel of God will not be fully realized until the new heavens and the new earth are formed, the New Jerusalem shall come down out of heaven from God, and the tabernacle of God shall be with men!

Of that world the risen Lord is the Firstborn!

The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is the realization and revelation of the Firstborn of every creature!

That is the idea of Christ's resurrection.

We find this truth most clearly and directly expressed in that profound and marvellous passage of Scripture that may be found in the first chapter of the epistle to the Colossians, verses fifteen to twenty: "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 all fulness should 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."

Glorious, all-embracing conception!

Here is a "world-and-life-view," a truly divine philosophy, if you please, as you could never expect to arise in the heart of man!

But here, too, you have a supra-lapsarian presentation of the counsel and eternal purpose of God, the equal of which is, perhaps, nowhere to be found in Scripture!

Christ is the Firstborn of every creature, and that, too, as the Firstborn from the dead, and as the Head of the Church!

What does it mean?

You understand at once, that this passage does not speak of the Son of God in the divine nature, but of the incarnated Son of God. In His divine nature He is not born, but eternally begotten of God. Moreover, all other attempts to explain this term to the contrary, the phrase "firstborn of every creature" certainly ranks Him with the creature, and it would be sacrilege to classify the Son of God as such with creation. Besides, as the Christ He is the image, the visible image, of the invisible God, in His divine nature He is the essential, personal, itself invisible, image of the Father. Again, only as the incarnated Son of God He is the firstborn of the dead, and the Head of the Church. Hence, the Word become flesh, the Head of the Church, the Risen Christ, is the firstborn of every creature!

But what does this mean?

Especially two truths are implied in the notion of firstborn. First of all, it expresses the idea of priority in time in relation to the brethren that follow, and, as such, of being the preparer of the way into existence for these brethren; and, secondly, it implies the notion of preeminence, of lordship over the brethren.

Now, in what sense can this be applied to Christ, and that, too, as the firstborn of the dead?

Certainly not in the sense that Christ is the firstborn of every creature historically, in time. Historically, He is not the first but the second man, not the first, but the last Adam. In time, Adam is first, and he may be called the firstborn of every creature in relation to the first creation.

But Christ is the firstborn of every creature, of all that was formed in the beginning, and of all that ever exists in time, in heaven and in earth, angels and principalities and powers, good and evil, sin and death; and of the everlasting world of the new creation, in the counsel of God, in the divine conception, will and purpose!

History is infra-lapsarian, of course. The his-

torical order of things is: creation, the fall, the incarnation, the cross, the resurrection, the outpouring of the Spirit, the salvation of the church, the parousia and the new heavens and earth in which the tabernacle of God shall be with men.

But just as surely, God's counsel is supra-lapsarian.

What is last in the realization of God's purpose, is first in order in the counsel of God.

When you build a house, you first dig for the foundation, then the foundation is laid, thereupon the superstructure is raised, the house is finished and furnished; and lastly, you make it your dwelling place, your home. But when you planned it, you first purposed to live in a home, you conceived of your needs and comforts, of room for your furniture and utensils, accordingly you planned your rooms, their size and relative position, the size of the house that would be required, and, finally, the depth and strength of the foundations that must bear the house was planned. What is first in the realization, was last in the plan, and vice versa.

The same is true of God's counsel.

Only, you must always remember that, when we speak of order in the eternal purpose of God, of first and last in God's counsel, we are not, and may not think of succession in time. God's counsel does not belong to time. It belongs to eternity. And eternity is not time. We do things in the order of time, first one part, then another, until the whole is finished. And even in our plans and purposes there is time-order. We conceive, first of one thing, then of another. And we reason step by step. Not so with the eternal counsel of God. There is no time order, no succession of moments in the divine decree. The decreeing God is eternal. And the decree of God is the decreeing God. Hence, when we speak of order, of first and last in the counsel of God, we are thinking of a logical order in and between the different moments of the divine conception of all things. We ask: what is purpose and what is means, what has the preeminence and what is subordinate?

In that sense, the risen Lord is the Firstborn of every creature!

H. H.

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THROUGH THE AGES

The Change in Public Worship in the Nicene Age

The matter to be dealt with in this and the following essay is the mighty change by which the Christian public worship, or culture, was effected in the period under consideration (311-590). This change was from simplicity to multiplicity and complexity and from a non-splendrous to a splendrous appearance. The former was effected by the increase in the number of church festivals and by the introduction of a number of customs and ceremonies; the latter by the change in the legal and social position of Christianity with reference to the temporal power. Both, it is worthy of notice, went hand in hand with the development of the hierarchy.

In the time of the apostles public worship was simple. Its several parts were as follows: (1) The preaching of the gospel of which the centre was the crucified and risen Christ. Of this primitive Christian preaching several examples are preserved in the Acts of the Apostles. The Epistles also are to be regarded as sermons addressed to believers and designed to perfect and edify the church which is the body of Christ. (2) The reading of portions from the Scriptures with exposition and application. (3) Prayer, in its various forms of petition, intercession and thanksgiving. (4) Song, which is a form of prayer. (5) Confession of Faith, the first of which was the testimony of Peter, that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God. (6) The administration of the sacraments. (7) Blessing and the Benediction. As will be seen, the only ceremony contained in this worship are the sacraments of baptism and of the Lord's Supper. It was thus a worship that was characterized by utmost simplicity. And so it had to be. For, with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the symbolical-typical cultus of the Old Testament Dispensation had waxed old and vanished away and the church must now serve God in spirit and in truth. And for a service of this character God's believing people are also spiritually qualified. Yet in the Nicene age, the church exchanged this biblical simplicity of her worship for a richly colored but unscriptural multiplicity, in its way as brilliant as the court-life of high civil rulers and as imposing as the episcopal hierarchy.

We may begin here with the sacrament of baptism. As to the true meaning of baptism, it was soon corrupted. Baptism came to be regarded negatively as the means of the forgiveness of original sin and of

actual sins committed before baptism and positively as the means of the infusion of a grace that restored the free will weakened in Adam. And several ceremonies were connected with baptism. The candidate was freed from the devil by adjuration; breathed upon in token of the communication of the Spirit; his ears were touched for the opening of his spiritual understanding; the sign of the cross was made upon his forehead and breast, and this marked him as the soldier of the cross; he was given salt, as the emblem of the divine word; and he received a new name. But this was not all. With his face toward the west, he renounced Satan; facing the east, he vowed to be faithful to Christ, and confessed his faith in the triune God. He was then baptized and twice anointed with the consecrated oil, whereupon the veil which covered his head, in token of his spiritual majority, was removed, and he was clothed in white garments, bespeaking the state of regeneration, purity, and freedom. These ceremonies only tended to obscure the true meaning of baptism. Baptism was followed by confirmation, which consisted in the anointing of the forehead, the nose, the ear, and the breast with the consecrated oil; and in the laying on of hands of the clergyman. The matters signified was the consecration of the whole man to spiritual priesthood and the communication of the Holy Spirit for the Christian calling.

As to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, in process of time it became transformed into the doctrine of the *sacrifice of the mass*. According to this doctrine, the bread of Holy Communion, as it lies upon the altar, is a sacrifice, and as such an unbloody repetition of the atoning sacrifice of Christ by the priest for the salvation of the living and the dead, so that the body of Christ is truly and literally offered upon many altars at the same time. The true significance of the Lord's supper as a means of grace for the sealing of God's promises and for the strengthening of faith of His people retired behind this sacrifice, which is brought by the priest. In the Roman churches the congregation of the faithful, instead of eating the Lord's supper, are mere spectators of this sacrificial act. And all the germs of this perverted innovation are discoverable in the writings of the church Fathers. The sacrifice of the mass became the centre of public worship. After the performance of the ceremonies connected with it, there was little time for preaching.

To this excessive ceremony was joined a splendrous liturgical vesture, after the example of the Jewish priesthood. The vestments in the Latin church are the following: A linen cloth which the priest wore about his neck; a white linen robe which hangs from the neck to the feet; a linen girdle for holding in place this robe; a napkin which hangs on the left arm of the priest; a linen vestment hanging from

both shoulders; a mass vestment that covers the whole body; an overgarment of costly material; a breastcloth worn by bishops and arch-bishops and perhaps corresponding to the breast-plate of the Jewish highpriest; a head dress after the type of the Jewish mitre. The color of these garments was at first white but gradually five colors came into use.

Then there is the excess into which the church began to run with respect to the church year. The apostolic church observed no annual festivals; but in the second century we meet with the general observance of Easter and Pentecost, and in the fourth century the Christmas festival was added. But with these three feast cycles the ancient church was not content, and, so early as the fourth century the number was increased by the addition of the feasts of Mary, of the apostles, of martyrs, and of saints. By degrees the number became so large that finally every day of the church year became sacred to the memory of a particular martyr or saint. Soon these festivals became the occasion for the sensual excess that characterized the pagan feasts, such as public parades, splendour of dress, banquetings, and drinking revels. But this abuse of the festivals did not go uncensured. "Such things," says Gregory Nazianzen, "we will leave to the Greeks, who worship their gods with the belly; but we, who adore the eternal Word, will find our only satisfaction in the word and the divine law, and in the contemplation of the holy object of our feast." After Pope Gregory I, the Catholic church even went so far as to christianize the heathen forms of worship and festivals, and therefore must be held co-responsible for the paganizing of Christianity in the Middle age. This doing of the church accounts for many customs (of pagan origin) of the Christmas season, like the giving of presents, the lighting of candles, and the erection of Christmas trees.

To these festivals were joined a multitude of subordinate feasts, the chief of which was the festivals of the holy Virgin Mary, revered as queen of the army of saints. It may be granted that the Gospels pay to Mary a high respect on account of her inner connection with the holy mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God. Elizabeth greeted her as the "mother of the Lord" and the angel as the "highly favored" and the "blessed among women". There are grounds in the gospel narratives for esteeming her as a model of female purity, love, and piety. But the Catholic church especially after the middle of the fourth century, went far beyond this. The "mother of the Lord" was transformed into a mother of God, queen of heaven, and a sinlessly holy co-redeemer. She was acquitted first of actual sin and afterwards of original, and the veneration of Mary degenerated into the worship of Mary. The Alexandrians could scarcely find words enough to describe her glory. She was the crown of virginity,

the indestructible temple of God, the dwelling place of the Holy Trinity, the paradise of the second Adam, the bridge from God to man, the loom of the incarnation, the septre of orthodoxy; through her the trinity is glorified, the devils and demons are put to flight, the nations converted, and the fallen creature raised to heaven. In the fifth century began the invocation of Mary and from that time numerous churches and altars were erected to her. Images of her were worshipped and are reported to have performed many miracles. She was held to participate in all the power in heaven and on earth. In the Middle ages she became the centre of worship and art and the symbol of power and glory. The gospel narratives certainly give no support to this Mariolatry. They even warn against it. On more than one occasion Christ put her in a class with all the other female disciples and subordinated the natural kinship of mother and son to the spiritual kinship of the doing of the will of His Father.

This pagan worship of Mary fastened itself on the public worship in a number of "Festivals of Mary" that ran parallel with the festivals of the birth, resurrection, and ascension of Christ. There was (1) The Annunciation of Mary in memory of the announcement of the birth of Christ by the archangel Gabriel; (2) The purification of Mary commemorating the purification of the Virgin forty days after the birth of Jesus; (3) The Ascension of Mary, in memory of what was believed to be her translation like Enoch's and Elijah's. In the Middle Age yet other feasts of Mary arose; the Nativity of Mary, after 650; the Presentation of Mary, after the ninth century; for it was believed that after the birth of Christ Mary spent the next eleven years in the temple in ascetic discipline; and the feast of the Immaculate Conception, in commemoration of what was believed to have been the sinless conception of Mary.

As to the system of saint-worship, it was developed at the same time with the worship of Mary. The saints selected for worship formed a peculiar class, a spiritual aristocracy of the church. All baptized and converted Christians were not called saints and worshipped as such. Yet, in the New Testament Scriptures, the expression *saint* is used of all true believers. Almost all the Catholic saints are of the higher clergy and belong to the monastic life. At the head of this class stands Mary. Then come the apostles and evangelists who were killed on account of their good confession, the martyrs of the first three centuries; the patriarchs and the prophets of the Old Testament including John the Baptist, and lastly the outstanding hermits and monks, missionaries, theologians, bishops and in general all those who distinguished themselves in virtue, the measure of which was ascetic self-denial. The angels, too, were wor-

shipped. It is God's will that his believing people be esteemed and that their memory be honored after their decease. He, Himself, has them graved in the palms of his hand, and they are ever before him. In the first three centuries, Christ was worshipped and the saints loved and honored as disciples of Christ. But in the Nicene age, the church began to invoke the saints as our intercessors before the throne of grace. Churches and chapels came to be built over their graves in which people laid their sick that they might be healed and on whose walls they hung sacred gifts of silver and gold; and the graves of the martyrs were more splendidly adorned than the palaces of kings.

It is hard to see in this saint worship ought but the hero-worship of the pagans, a reintroduction of polytheism and monotheism. Nor need this incite wonder. The great mass of members of the church came fresh from heathendom without true conversion. Many of them, doubtless, were truly converted but not thoroughly so and therefore clung to their old notions and customs. But the fault lay not alone with the half converted masses of people but with the eminent theologians and preachers of Nicene and post-Nicene age as well. The worship of the saints found vindication and encouragement in them. Ephraim Syrus prayed to the departed saints, in general, in this sense; "Remember me, ye heirs of God, ye brethern of Christ, pray to the Saviour for me, that I through Christ may be delivered from him who assaults me from day to day." Gregory of Nazianzen addressed to Athanasius, who had but recently died, this prayer: "Look graciously down upon us, and dispose this people to be perfect worshippers of the perfect Trinity; and when the times are quiet, preserve us—when they are troubled, remove us, and take us to thee in thy fellowship." Chrysostom exhorts his hearers to beseech the saints for their protection: "For they have great boldness not merely during their life but also after death, yes, much greater after death. For they now bear the stigmata of Christ, and when they show these, they can persuade the King to do anything." Ambrose of Milan promoted the worship of saints. There is this passage: "May Peter, who so successfully weeps for himself, weep also for us, and turn upon us the friendly look of Christ." "The angels, who are appointed to guard us, must be invoked for us; the martyrs, to whom intercession we have claim by the pledge of their bodies, must be invoked. They who have washed away their sins by their own blood, may pray for our sins. For they are martyrs of God, our highpriests, spectators of our life and our acts. We need not blush to use them as intercessors for our weakness; for they also knew the infirmity of the body when they gained the victory over it." According to Leo the Great and Pope Gregory the Great, the merits and intercessions

of the saints are on a level with the merits of Christ as a ground for the acceptance of our prayers.

This saint-worship expressed itself in a series of religious festivals. The Most important saints' days are the following: (1) The feast of Peter and Paul; (2) the feast of John, the apostle and Evangelist; (3) The feast of Stephen and of John the Baptist; (4) The feast of All Saints; (5) The feast of the Archangel Michael.

G. M. O.

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

The War Against Benjamin

It will be recalled that a heinous sin had been committed at Gibeah, Benjamin. A wayfaring Levite with his concubine had retreated for the night into the shelter of the home of a resident of this city. When it was dark, "sons of wickedness" assaulted the house and shamefully avowed their pederastic purposes. The Levite they would compel to co-operate with them in committing that lustful abomination at which Paul strikes in Romans I and that formed the curse of heathendom. Sparing himself, the Levite led forth his concubine and the wantons were satisfied. They abused her all night till daybreak so that she died. The Levite cut the corpse into twelve pieces and sent them in every direction accompanied by the necessary message. The tactics of the Levite had its effect. There was a great wave of popular indignation. All were agreed that the criminals should be made to atone for their crime, the result being that "all the children of Israel went forth from Dan to Beersheba, with the land of Gilead unto the Lord at Mizpah. The Levite also was at hand and told his hideous story. The people of Israel now took action. 40,000 men of the tribes marched against Gibeah. Besides, messengers were sent throughout the tribe of Benjamin, who demanded to know, "What wickedness is this that is done among you." They demanded, as was said, that the Benjamites disown the deed by surrendering the guilty. Instead of complying the Benjamites were defiant and prepared for war. Their reactions show that they were indifferent to the crime that had been perpetrated at Gibeah and that they were too proud to allow themselves to be told to root it out. Rather than hearken unto the voice of their brethern, they ran the risk of war, and thus shielded the sinners in Gibeah. As was remarked, the reaction of this tribe, shows to what a

pass conditions—political, social, and spiritual—had come in the nation.

The Benjamites had cast the die for war and it was war that they now had. We must follow the progress of this conflict which turned out most disastrously for the tribes and ended in the near extermination of Benjamin. The children of Israel went up to the sanctuary to ask counsel of the Lord. They wanted to know which of the tribes should take the lead in this war against the brother tribe. They received as an answer that Judah should go up first. So the following morning the 40,000 encamped against the city of Gibeah. The Benjamites went forth out of the city and in the ensuing battle killed and wounded twenty two thousand Israelites. That was a defeat as terrible as it was unexpected. It caused the children of Israel to consider. They went up and wept before the Lord until even, asking counsel of Him whether they again should do battle with the Benjamites. And again they received answer that they should. Encouraged, they reorganized their scattered forces in the same place where they had suffered defeat the previous day. But once more they were smitten. When the battle was over, eighteen thousand of their number lay wounded or dead upon the battle field. Humbled and crestfallen, they again repaired to Bethel, where they spent the day in weeping, fasting, and offering peace and burnt offerings. Also they asked whether the war against Benjamin should be continued. "Go up," was the Lord's answer, "for tomorrow I will deliver them into thine hand." The men of Israel now made use of a stratagem. Though the text here is ambiguous at places, the main features of the battle that now took place stand out clearly. The Israelites posted a part of their forces—there were in all ten thousand men chosen out of all Israel—in wait, concealed in the meadows of Gibeah for the purpose of attacking the city by surprise. Other divisions openly marched against Gibeah as at other times, while still others took up a position at Ball-tamar. The Benjamites, encouraged by their former successes, went forth to battle, and thus left their city unprotected. This was the purpose of the stratagem of the men of Israel. The Benjamites advanced along two highways—one leading to Bethel, the other to "Gibeah-in-the-field"—and slew thirty men with such ease that they said, "They are smitten before us as at the first." But they knew not that the reason of their initial success was, that the men of Israel offered scarcely any resistance but voluntarily retreated to thereby allure them farther and farther away from the heights and the city. When the men of Israel reached Ball-tamar, they came to a halt and were joined by the other divisions, awaiting their coming. The troops concealed in the meadows now rushed upon the defenseless city and smote all its inhabitants. Further, ac-

cording to plan, they caused a great pillar of smoke to rise out of the city, such as could not be mistaken. This was the appointed sign for the divisions at Baaltamar to join battle with the pursuing Benjamites. The latter were amazed by this sudden surge of courage on the part of the adversary. But seeing the pillar of smoke, they understood. They had been tricked. Evil was upon them. Gone was their will to resist. Turning their backs upon the men of Israel, they fled into the wilderness, but were overtaken by the battle. Passing in their flight through the cities that laid in their course, they were attacked by the inhabitants of these cities, who arose and slew the fugitives in their midst. Thus were the Benjamites inclosed round about. Not only was the hostile army at their heels, but they met with enemies everywhere. Only the wilderness offered safety. But before they could arrive there, many of them were cut off. Still the pursuit continued, unrelentlessly. In this way they were driven until they found themselves in the wilderness east of Gibeah. Already eighteen thousand of their twenty six thousand and seven hundred had fallen. But the thirst for their blood continued unabated. So, with the pursuers still hard at their heels, they turned and fled to a place called Gidom, arriving there with their ranks reduced by seven thousand more, slain in the highways. Still the carnage continued. Again turning upon the Benjamites, the men of Israel smote them men and beasts, of every city, and all that came to hand. And they set on fire every city they came to, ch. 20:21. This notice seems to imply that nearly the whole tribe of Benjamin—men, women, and children—was exterminated. What lends support to this view is the notice of the escape of the six hundred men, who saved themselves by turning and fleeing to the wilderness unto the rock Rimmon, in which they abode four month, and that for this remnant there were no wives to be had from their own tribe. It was thus a war amazing in its toll of life. The figures are these: Israelites 40,030; Benjamites, 25,100. Total, 65,130. This number does not include the slain women and children of the tribe of Benjamin. So had the nation been overtaken by a catastrophe of the first magnitude.

We must now try and understand this terrible history. The time of the occurrence of these events is indicated by the notice that "the ark of the covenant of God was there—in Bethel—in those days," and that Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, stood before it." Phinehas for many years was a contemporary of Joshua, so that the war against Benjamin must have taken place shortly after the death of Joshua and not long after the cessation of military operations for the conquest of Canaan of which we read in the second chapter of the book of the judges. This is also deducible from the fact that

the ark was still in Bethel and that the exodus from Egypt was still living in the memory of the people, Ch. 19:30. That the terrible events with which we now deal—the crime at Gibeah, the refusal of Benjamin to root out the evil, the resultant war against this tribe with its great toll of life which certainly must be regarded as divine judgment overtaking the nation—should have taken place in that early period, may, at first glance, gender surprise. For it was the period concerning which it is said, Josh. 24:31, and Judg. 2:7: “And the people served Jehovah all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that Jehovah, which he did for Israel.” What is more, the highpriest—Phinehas—by whom the nation was headed in that period, distinguished himself by great zeal. It was he who slew the sinning Israelite in the territory of Moab and by this act stayed the plague from the children of Israel, while he was zealous for the Lord among them, wherefore the Lord gave him the covenant of peace, Num. 24:7-12. In the war against Median, by whom Israel had been seduced into heathen practices, he was sent with the thousand of every tribe with the holy instruments, and with the trumpets to blow in his hand, Num. 31:6. It was again Phinehas, who was sent with the ten princes by the tribes to admonish the two and a half transjordanic tribes. These tribes, we learn from Joshua 22, had built themselves an altar, and the children of Israel this side of the Jordan thought it was intended for idolatrous purposes. They came together at Shiloh and thought to take action against the supposed sinners. But first this embassy was sent. The address which Phinehas made to the supposed apostates was in the spirit of the action determined against Benjamin.

It was in that period of religious zeal and covenant fidelity that the nation was scourged by that catastrophic war with Benjamin. Why should the hand of God have rested so heavily upon the nation in such a period? The question is pertinent in view of the fact that, according to God's promise to Israel, national well-being and covenant fidelity had to go hand in hand. But the nation of this period served the Lord and reaped a national calamity. The only explanation of this is, that, though the people of Israel were still serving the Lord and were not prostrating themselves before the shrines of Idols, their hearts were not right with God. The first chapters of the book of the Judges reveal that this was actually the case. They reveal, do these chapters, that, despite its conformity to the precepts of the law, the nation was lacking in true zeal and love for the cause of God. For the facts of the matter are these. The people of Israel of the period of the war with Benjamin had subdued under the leadership of Joshua the Canaanites, that is, had so crippled their military might that they had neither the courage nor the man-power to initiate

another war with Israel. They were a conquered people, who kept themselves to their strongholds, prepared to defend their cities within whose walls they had entrenched themselves. Thus the task that remained to the nine and a half tribes east of the Jordan was to prosecute the conquest by freeing their respective allotments from the remnants of these heathen tribes. But the task was evaded. In violation of the command of God (Duet. 7:1ff), the tribes concluded a covenant with the Canaanites and, according to the articles of this covenant, spared their lives and allowed them to continue in the possession of their cities on the condition that they pay them tribute. What is worse, they condoned their pagan religion, and permitted them to continue in the public worship of their idols. We learn all this from the complaint of the angel of the Lord contained in the second chapter. The angel did not accuse them of joining the heathen in their pagan worship and of making marriages with them. It was not until after the passing of the old generation that the people of Israel fell into these gross sins. That Israel, after concluding a covenant with the heathen for a time refrained from worshipping their idols must be ascribed doubtless to the restraining influence of the older generation that had not yet wholly died out.

This failure on the part of the tribes to complete the conquest of Canaan was a serious offence and alone would account for the revelation of divine displeasure through the disaster that overtook the nation in its war with Benjamin. But the people of Israel in the period under consideration were censurable for still other reasons. Doubtless it was in this same period that Micah already had erected his spurious sanctuary and nothing was done about it. Dan, as we saw, founded shortly thereafter an idolatrous worship in northern Canaan in order not to lose his tribe consciousness, and the people of Israel took no action. And Benjamin refused to punish the sinners in Gibeah. After the death of Joshua the nation gradually ceased to exercise faith in Jehovah; its trust was in the arm of flesh, in military power. This accounts for the cessation of military operations for the completion of the conquest of Canaan after the death of Joshua. It accounts for the military expedition of Dan against that insignificant colony of Zidonians in northern Canaan. It explains the courage of the men of Israel to take action against the tribe of Benjamin. If need be, they could oppose to Benjamin's 28,000 and army of 400,000. It is plain that the nation deserved that stroke. The nation was carnal. Its indignation at hearing of the crime perpetrated in Gibeah was carnal. Had it been spiritual the men of Israel first would have turned to themselves and repented of and confessed their own sins. And before taking action against Benjamin, they first would have offered the required

burnt and peace offering, and thereby confessed that they too were undone sinners as ill-deserving as their brethren yet spared solely for the sake of the blood of their sacrifice. But they had no need of the atonement for they were righteous in their own sight. The sinners among them were the Benjamites. Such was their frame of heart and mind in which they commenced that war. Therefore the battle at first was turned against them so that 40,000 of their number were destroyed down to the ground. This was the Lord's doing. And they wept before the Lord and sacrificed burnt offerings and peace offerings. Then He delivered Benjamin into their hand. For Benjamin had committed a great sin.

G. M. O.

SION'S ZANGEN

Sion, De Geboorteplaats Der Volkeren

De kinderen van Korach zijn zeer bemind door den Heere. Hun vader behoorde tot het vreeselijke drietal, dat zich verzette tegen Mozes en Aaron, zoodat zij levend ter helle zonken. Hun zonen, evenwel, mogen zich baden in het licht van Gods vriendelijk aangezicht. Keer op keer lezen we, dat psalmen gemaakt zijn "voor de kinderen van Korach", zoodat zij die psalmen mochten zingen als Israel's voorzangers. Benijdenswaardige positie!

Dit lied der kinderen van Korach is een schoon lied, hetwelk de heerlijkheid bezingt der volkeren die in Sion geboren worden.

Het eerste vers mag zóó gelezen worden: Gods gebronde stad is op de bergen der heiligheid.

Het gaat eerst over Sion.

Sion is eerst een berg, waarop Jeruzalem gebouwd is.

Dan ook, omdat in Jeruzalem het een en al de tempel Gods was en het huis van David, is Sion de plaats waar de Heere met Zijn volk woont. Als zoodanig, is Sion het groote wonder van Gods genade. Sion is een mirakel.

Stelt het U voor: de aarde moest met al haar bewoners eigenlijk tot in alle eeuwigheid verdoemd worden. God moest eigenlijk nooit aan de aarde denken. Dat hebben onze vaders gevoeld toen zij de psalmen op rijm gezet hebben. Luistert naar hen als ze zingen van Psalm 130:3. "Zoo Gij in 't recht wilt treden. O Heer, en gadeslaan onze ongerechtigheden."

ach, wie zal dan bestaan?" Daar hebt ge het! Zoo staat de zaak er bij met de aarde en haar bewoners.

En de oorzaak is de zonde. En Gods gerechtigheid, heiligheid en waarheid. De mensch verstoutte zich en sloeg God in't aangezicht. Dat is de zonde van Eva en Adam. En rechtens moest daar op volgen: eeuwige verdoemenis.

Doch wat geschiedde er?

Ja, ook wel eeuwige verdoemenis, doch óók eeuwige genade en vrede en ongekende verhooging tot in de hoogste hemelen!

Er kwam eeuwige verdoemenis voor de verworpenen.

Er kwam ook eeuwige verdoemenis voor de duivelen.

Maar voor het bundelken der gedenken kwam er een openbaring van liefde en genade die onuitsprekelijk is.

Die openbaring van liefde en genade mag ik gaarne noemen: de aanraking Gods. God boog Zich van uit den hemel en raakte de aarde liefkoozend aan.

En die aanraking Gods is Sion.

Typisch vindt ge die aanraking in Jeruzalem, de stad des grooten Konings. Wilt ge in nauwgezetheid precies weten waar God Jeruzalem aanraakte, dan moeten we U meenemen naar het binnenste heiligdom en dan zullen we in aanbidding staren op het verzoendeksel, gesprengd met het bloed van het onschuldige dier.

En wanneer we spreken van de vervulling der typen, dan behooren we te fluisteren, te vreezen en te beven: het is zóó ontzaglijk groot! De vervulling van Sion is het kruis van Golgotha. Daar hebt ge de Goddelijke aanraking, de streeling des Vaders; maar het kost Jezus, de groote Onschuldige Zijn hartebloed.

Sion, de openbaring van onbegrijpelijke liefde: "die ook Zijn eeniggeboren Zoon niet heeft gespaard, maar heeft Hem voor ons allen overgegeven!" Kunt ge er bij?

Dat is Sion.

En dat Sion heeft vrucht gehad. En gij allen zijt die vrucht. Eerst Christus en dan die van Christus zijn. Jesaja heeft het gezien. Hij zeide, dat Jezus zaad zou zien "om den arbeid Zijner ziel."

Zoo is er dan ook een tempel om die ark met zijn verzoendeksel. Vanwege de vreeselijke en toch ook zoo wonder liefelijke aanraking Gods op Golgotha, is er plaats gekomen voor hen die in zichzelf verdoemelijk en goddeloos zijn. Er komt een tempel om Golgotha en in dien tempel woont God met Zijn volk tot in alle eeuwigheid. Hallelujah!

Zoo kunnen we Psalm 87 ook wel eenigzins verstaan. Gaat nu met mij naar dat eerste vers.

Zijn grondslag is op de bergen der heiligheid.

Dat wil zeggen, dat Sion's grondvesten van God zijn en door Hem gefundeerd op de bergen van Zijn

Eigen heiligheid.

Het wil zeggen, dat ge het gerust bekijken kunt! Aan het einde (onmogelijke idee! hoe zal er ooit een einde komen aan de arbeid van het beschouwen van Sion?) aan het einde zult ge zeggen: alles aan dit Sion is heilig, dat is, afgezonderd van het kwade en toegeweid aan God, aan de Heilige God. Alles is schoon, lieflijk, bevallig, schitterend schoon en aantrekkelijk in Sion!

En vanwege de feiten die ik U boven aanhaalde, blijkt de Heere met ongekende liefde neer op dit Zijn Sion. Het wil zeggen, dat de Heere gaarne de aarde aanraakt. Hij bemint de poorten van dit Sion meer dan alle woningen Jakobs. Hij mag gaarne neerzien op U die dit leest. Hij heeft genot van al de woningen Jakobs. Waar ook Zijn volk tot aanzijn komt, daar woont de liefde Gods. Evenwel, de Heere bemint de openbaring van Zijn Zoon aan het vreeselijke Kruis boven U alleen.

O, we zullen dit vreemde vers beter begrijpen in den hemel.

In den hemel is alles geconcentreerd om het Lam. Dat Lam is in het midden van den troon. En de Drieëenige God zit op dien troon. Dus is dat Lam het binnenste van God; dat Lam is Zijn hart. Nooit te voren heeft God Zich zóó schoon en lieflijk geopenbaard als toen Hij Zijn hart liet zien in den bloedenden, lijdenden en stervenden Christus.

Hij bemint de poorten van Sion boven alle woningen Jakobs.

We zien er iets van.

Ja, o ja, "zeer heerlijke dingen worden van U gesproken, o stad Gods! Sela."

Wilt ge iets daarvan hooren?

Luistert dan naar de stamelende, brekende stem van Uw eigen hart, het welk een echo is, gewekt door den Geest van Christus, van het Woord, het heilig Woord van God. Luistert naar de klanken die het Kruis van Golgotha U aanbrengen, U aanvoeren door de wind des Heiligen Geestes, en ge zult een muziek hooren die hemelsch is. Ziet naar de tafereelen van de Hoofdschedelplaats, en ge zult jubelen: Hier weidt mijn ziel met een verwonderend oog!

Zeer heerlijke dingen! komt aan, laat er ons iets van zeggen.

Die stad fluistert mij toe in diepen nacht van schrijdend verdriet: Uwe zonden, die de hel verdiend hebben, zijn geheel en al vergeven! Waar gij eigenlijk in verband met alle goddeloozen en duivelen weg zoudt moeten zinken in de poel van vuur en sulfur, moogt ge nu naar den hemel. Engelen worden U dienaars; volmaakt rechtvaardigen Uw gezellen! God heeft U lief met een eeuwige liefde en daarom wordt ge getrokken met liefdekoorden: het einde is een plaats vóór den troon. Inplaats van het bange en nare feit, dat Uw hart een woonplaats der duivelen en onreine

geesten zou zijn, is er voor U bereid, dat Jezus in Uw hart gaat wonen. In plaats dan dat ge zoudt begeeren, zondiglijk begeeren, het kwade en het verfoeilijke, zal de Geest van Christus er voor zorgen, dat ge gaat verlangen naar God! Is er iets, dat lieflijker is dan het hunkeren naar God?

Heerlijke dingen!

Wat is het eigenlijk? Vertaal het bovengenoemde in theologische klanken en dan zijn die heerlijke dingen dit: de trouw van God, Zijn liefde en genade, Zijn gaarne vergeven, Zijn hart voor U!

Zeer heerlijke dingen worden van U gesproken, o stad Gods!

Roept het Selah er over uit: we moeten mediteerend rusten van het aanschouwen van zooveel schoons! Selah, mijn hart, zwijg stil in groote bewondering!

Zeer heerlijke dingen!

Vertaalt het in de taal der geschiedenis en ge zult het met mij zien: Rahab kent God! Is het niet heerlijk?

Rahab beteekent: de trotsche, de hoovaardige. Historisch is het Egypte.

Welnu: de heerlijkheid van Gods werk op Golgotha is dit: de hoovaardige en trotsche zondaren hebben zich tot God gewend en zijn voor Hem neergevallen, al zingende: 't Hijgend hert der jacht ontkomen schreeuwt niet sterkend naar 't genot van de frische waterstroomen, dan onze ziel verlangt naar God! Zij kennen God. En het in liefde kennen van God is dat ge U met alles wat ge hebt heenwendt tot Hem met groot verlangen.

Heerlijk, want het is de trekking van God die Zijn voorwerp van eeuwige liefde vindt en tot Zich buigt.

Doch we zullen ook vermelden van Babel.

Babel is de wereld, het wereldgezinde hart, de mensch maakt van den tegenwoordige tijd en de dingen van de aarde, los van God.

Doch het van God gekende Babel, vrucht van de verkiezing tot zaligheid, wendt zich tot God en wordt behouden.

En zoo vergaat het de Filistijn, de Tyriër en den Moor.

De Filistijn is de wreede vijand van Gods arme volk. Doch het van God beminde Filistia zal zich buigen voor Hem neer en dan zullen ze het den anderen van Zijn koninkrijk vertellen: we hebben Hem lief.

De Tyriër is de ingezetene van koophandel, nijverheid en groot-industrie. Zij zijn het rijke volk. Doch zij zullen de versmaadheid van Christus grootere rijkdom achten dan al hun eerdere schatten. Zóó werkt de kracht van Sion en Sion's God.

En dan die arme Moor die achteraan komt. Dat is Cham. Dat zijn de dommen, de onopgevoeden, de achterlijken. We zien o zoo velen van dat volk in Sion, bij het kruis, voor den troon in den hemel.

Die arme Moor! Hij wordt zóó ontzettend ver-

acht. Wie wil nu toch met het onedele te doen hebben? Wie wil omgang hebben met hoeren en tollenaars, met dronkaards en dieven, met het geboefte. Wij gaan liever om met het weldenkende deel!

Doch Jezus wandelde het liefst in het verachte Naftali en Zebulon. Hij vertoefde gaarne bij het meer van Galilea. Visschers waren zijn gezellen. Straks weent een arme, vuile, zondige vrouw in Simon's huis. De schaamte is oorzaak, dat we niet één woord van haar in den bijbel hebben. Maar Jezus (en dat is de Goddelijke kracht van Sion) draait Zich om en glimlacht tegen een hoer.

Ja, de van zonde zwarte Moor komt ook in Sion. Hij mag ook naar den hemel.

Trekt Uw neus niet op voor de armen, de minder begaafden, de ellendigen, de zondigen, het minder geachte in Uw midden. Veel van dezulken heeft God liefgehad. Ik denk, dat als het er op aan komt, de Heere zeer veel geprezen zal worden, als dezulken óók binnen komen.

En waarom?

Het geheim zit hier: "deze is aldaar geboren!"

Daar zit alles in. De Rahabiet, Babel-bewoner, Filistijn, Tyriër en die arme Moor-man zijn vlak bij Golgotha geboren. Het Bloed, dat beter dingen spreekt dan het bloed van Abel, heeft zijn vrucht gehad. Dat bloed vaagde de trotschheid, de wereldgezindheid, de wreedheid, de geldgierigheid en de dommigheid weg. En bracht daarvoor in de plaats alle Christelijke deugd. (En voor allen heeft dat bloed vergeving der zonden, vrede met God en ingang in het hemelsche Jeruzalem gekocht.)

Als er sprake is van Sion, dan zal God zeggen: Sion is dit: deze en die is daarin geboren! Deze en die! In het Hebreeuwsch staat er: Een man en een man! En dan wordt van de drie woorden voor *man* het woord gebruikt, dat ons den mensch laat zien in zijn grootheid. Dus de Heere ziet hen in de heerlijkgemaakte kerk. Doch de Heere zegt van dat schoone volk: zij zijn geboren in Sion. Dat wil zeggen: het is alles geschied door Mijn aanraking; en die aanraking is het bloed van Golgotha, of ook: de eeuwige, onbegrijpelijke liefde Gods.

Als straks de volken voor God verschijnen, dan zal God rekening houden met Zijn wonderwerk in Sion. Komen ze dan aan, dan zegt God: deze is aldaar in Sion geboren. Hij is mijn werk in Christus. En ze zullen beginnen vroolijk te zijn.

O ja, dan zullen ze vroolijk zijn. Ik hoor van zangers en speellieden. 'k Zal eeuwig zingen van Gods goedertierenheer!

We zingen als alle nooden vervuld zijn. Als ge vol, zalig zijt. Dat zalige is in God. God zal alles en in allen zijn. Gods fonteynen in U.

Wat wondere, lieflijke, hemelsche gedachte!

G. V.

IN HIS FEAR

Our School Issue

It's Necessity

Our own Christian school is necessary, first of all, in the light of the history of our Protestant Reformed Churches. We must remember that the origin of the latter is inseparably connected with the theory of Common Grace.

Common Grace is that theory which would teach us that concord, agreement between the church and the world is possible in all things earthly and civil. It is the bridge which spans the gulf which otherwise exists between the Church and the world. It speaks of a restraining operation of the grace of God upon the hearts of men, checking evil and sin, not only in the sphere of their external deportment but also within their own hearts and lives. This theory also speaks of a positive operation of the spirit of God upon the hearts of men rendering them able to do in things civil that which is good before God. The theory of Common-Grace lauds Athens and speaks of the children of darkness and of the world as putting the children of the light, the children of God, to shame; it wipes out all lines of demarcation between the Church and the World; it nullifies the antithesis, destroys our distinctiveness and defends and nurtures a worldly-mindedness which is the death of the church of God in the midst of the world.

It is because of this issue of Common Grace that we today constitute the Protestant Reformed Churches. It is true, of course, that also the error of Arminianism was involved. The Three Points are indeed a mixture of Common Grace and Arminianism. But we are all aware of the fact, that *practically* the issue of worldly-mindedness lay at the root of the conflict. We know that years before 1924 this spirit of broad-mindedness was already present and working in the churches. The Jansen controverse merely served to accelerate the issue and uncover the tremendous difference of thought and conception which existed. And it is because we held to the view that God's people are a distinctive people, with a distinctive calling, that we today are compelled to stand alone. It is this principle which constitutes the heart and fibre of our churches—it alone is our hope and right of existence. This, in brief, explains the birth of our Protestant Reformed Churches.

Now it is true, is it not, that the school is exactly that sphere where the teaching of Common-Grace is most prevalent and dangerous. I need not dwell at

this time on the purpose of the school in the Reformed system. The purpose of all instruction within the church, such as catechetical instruction, is to prepare the seed of the church to assume their place within the church and be able to partake of the means of grace, the preaching of the Word and the holy sacraments. This explains why in this instruction all emphasis is laid upon doctrine and the holy Scriptures. The school, however, prepares the same child or children for their place in the midst of the world. The Christian School and the theory of Common Grace are mutually exclusive. The one is the denial of the other. Christianity is distinctive; Common Grace embraces the world. It is therefore of the utmost significance that we teach our children in such a way that, in the world, they may be a distinctive people, an wholly other people, walking in the world but as not of the world. Our history, therefore, our beginning and existence as Protestant Reformed Churches demands of us that also the instruction of our children in the school be distinctive. If we ignore this matter the cause which we represent is doomed. What can it profit us if we as churches maintain the pure preaching of the Word but permit our children to absorb the doctrine of Common Grace in the school? What doth it profit us if we be distinctive on the Lord's Day but reject that principle during the week? The peculiar nature of the origin and existence of our churches demands therefore our own school.

Secondly, our own school, proclaiming to our children that our God is one God, is necessary because the continuance of God's covenant in the world is inseparably connected with the truth that Jehovah is God alone, and the knowledge and strict maintenance of that truth. We read in Deut. 4:1, 2: "Now hearken therefore O Israel, unto the statutes and unto the judgments, which I teach you, for to do them, that ye may live, and go in and possess the land which the Lord God of your fathers giveth you. Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish aught from it, that ye may keep the commandment of the Lord your God which I command you". Notice in this passage, that we read in verse 2 that we are not to add unto the word which Moses commands us, and in verse 1 we read that we must hearken unto these commandments and do them in order that we may live and go in and possess the land which the Lord of our fathers giveth us.

If we apply this passage to Israel of the Old Dispensation we may observe, first, that the significance of Canaan lay in the fact that it was the land of God's fellowship, to be sure in a typical sense, with his people. The heart of Canaan in the days of old must be sought in the temple on Mt. Moriah. In that land the Lord exercised communion with his people; He forgave them their sins through the typical blood

of His Son; He walked with them and He talked with them; He dwelt in their hearts so that they tasted His love and mercy; He blessed them and was to them the God of their salvation. It is for this reason that the land of Canaan could also be such a terrible land. God's fellowship with his own is possible only on the basis of His holiness and righteousness. When Israel therefore refused to walk in the ways of their God, turned their backs upon Him and their faces to the idols of the nations round about them, this land would become a land of drought and famine, a land in which they would be harassed and tormented by the heathen nations round about them. Israel must therefore hearken to the commandments of their God and do them if they are to live and possess this land which the God of their fathers had given them.

The same truth applies to us. This passage from the book of Deuteronomy certainly refers to the entering of ourselves and our children into the heavenly city, the heavenly Canaan, and therefore to our continuance as God's covenant people. This is true not only subjectively. To be sure, the truth as we love and proclaim it is indispensable as far as my salvation is concerned. I cannot taste the assurance of life eternal unless I stand on the principle of the sovereign grace of our God. But this is also true objectively. If Israel of old did not hearken to the commandments of the Lord and neglected to do them they would not go in and possess the land which the Lord of their fathers gave them. And if we neglect our calling with respect to the instruction of our children; if we fail to hold before them the blessed truth that God is one, but allow them to drift along with the tide of Common Grace; if we fail, according to Deut. 4:2, to teach them the Word of God in all its purity and add to or diminish aught from the Word of the Lord, we too will fall short of the land which the Lord God of our fathers giveth us, and ultimately our name and place will disappear from the ranks of those with whom the Lord establishes His covenant in the line of continued generations. God realizes His covenant only in the sphere of the truth. Certainly, we as churches cannot hope to continue to exist, ultimately, in this way.

Its Practical Enforcement

Now the question is not whether our children must have Protestant Reformed instruction. There is no difference of opinion among us on this point. None among us is satisfied with the instruction as given in our schools today. Neither is it the question among us whether we must have Protestant Reformed schools for our children. On this, too, we agree. But the question is whether we should strive to have our own schools now. Have we come to such a time?

On this point much has been said and who am I

to add to previous discussion except for the purpose of discussing the matter here? However, I would observe that as yet we have no schools of our own. In the meantime another generation is being trained in a Christian Reformed atmosphere and in Christian Reformed teaching. This is alarming. The instruction of a child is a very grave matter. What has been done for that child in its childhood can never be undone. We might learn a lesson from the Roman Catholic Church's understanding of the importance of the instruction of the youth. Any evasion of this issue or postponement of distinctive Protestant Reformed education for our children simply means that another generation will pass which was not instructed in the fundamental truths of the Word of God.

Secondly, if we have the calling to improve our present day Christian schools what are we doing about it? Let us frankly ask ourselves this question and answer it. If it be unethical to turn our backs upon the Christian schools of today because we should attempt to improve them, what are we doing along that line?

Thirdly, our schools of today are certainly Christian Reformed. It is, of course, true that our schools are not church schools in the sense that they are under the direct influence and control of the church. Our school system is private, not parochial. This does not alter the fact, however, that the schools of today are Christian Reformed. An article in the Banner some time ago from the pen of President Schultze of Calvin College should remove any doubt from our minds on this point. Apart from the fact that a very few schools of today have Protestant Reformed members on their teaching staffs, we may certainly say that the teaching staffs of the present schools are Christian Reformed. Besides, the Union of Christian Schools is definitely Christian Reformed and their literature bears the Christian Reformed stamp.

Finally, what can we do? The issue whether our children are to be instructed in the distinctive teachings of the Word of God was settled in 1924 and 1926. I repeat, our schools are not church schools. We are aware of that. But it is also a fact that our schools are controlled by the parents. These parents are members of a church. As members of a certain church they are obliged to uphold the doctrine of their church. It would be rather unethical on our part to expect anything else of them. These parents are preponderantly Christian Reformed. In 1924 the Three Points were officially adopted by the Christian Reformed Churches. In 1926 our protest was officially rejected by those churches in their synodical gathering held at Englewood, Chicago. In 1926, therefore, we stood officially on our own. May God give us the grace that we also stand on our own as far as the instruction of our

children is concerned. Then we may be assured of the continued blessing of the God of our salvation and the continued realization of His covenant also with the children whom the Lord has given us.

Herman Veldman

(From the speech delivered by the Rev. Herman Veldman at the recent conference of our Protestant Reformed ministers).

PERISCOPE

The Conference

The Conference

Since the complete proceedings of the Conference between the ministers and students of the Reformed Church in the U. S. and the ministers and students of the Protestant Reformed Churches will be published, we intend to give only a brief resume of the meetings. Our own Churches were well represented by all the ministers, except one, and all the students, plus several consistory members and visitors from our various Churches. The Reformed Church in the U. S. also had a sizable representation of ministers and an especially large number of lay members present. The average attendance throughout the two days of meetings was around 100. The largest audience was present on Wednesday evening to hear the lecture of the Rev. H. Hoeksema. On this occasion the Hull auditorium, in which all the meetings were held, was filled to capacity.

The Conference was officially opened on Wednesday morning, October 10, by the Rev. H. Hoeksema, who had been appointed Moderator by the committee in charge of arrangements. After the opening prayer the Moderator read from the fourth chapter of Paul's epistle to the Ephesians. In his opening remarks, based upon the portion read, the chairman pointed out that the basis of our gathering was the unity of the wonder of grace, for there was nothing from an external point of view that would bring us together. Proceeding, he briefly developed this idea of unity by pointing out that it was not the work of man but is an inherently existing unity in the Body of Christ through His Spirit. Hence, it is an exclusive union which cannot be established by amalgamation of organizations but has already been established by Christ, in Himself. Because that essential underlying unity is in Christ through His Spirit the standard of the Word of God must be applied to determine where that

union and communion may be found in this world. Hence, the purpose of the Conference is to determine whether that unity exists among us, the speaker said. This can only be determined by applying that standard—the Word of God. Upon the basis of that standard we had come together to discuss the Truth, to edify one another and work towards the realization of the purpose which Paul expresses in the passage read: the unity of faith. The moderator closed his opening remarks with a plea that brotherly love continue and rule. Thus the Conference was off to a good start.

After a few matters of business had been dispensed with the Rev. G. Lubbers presented his paper on the subject: "The Relation between Justification and Sanctification". In development he called attention to the issues involved, the dogmatic-historical construction of the terms and the Scriptural presentation of this truth. Very ably the speaker pointed out that Scripture and the Confessions teach that there is a faith relationship between justification and sanctification and that though they are distinct operations of grace they are both out of and by faith. The first morning session closed with a discussion of the address.

Dinners, suppers, and refreshments at recess periods, were served in the basement of the Hull Church to all members and visitors. These periods afforded a splendid opportunity for making new, and re-newing old, acquaintances. Some used a portion of this time to visit our other Churches in the vicinity and one noon hour was spent visiting Western Christian High School in Hull where one of our ministers had been asked to lead chapel devotions. Right here we should pay special compliments to our hosts, the Hull Congregation, for their splendid services and meals which added greatly to the success of our gatherings. Congratulations to all those who aided in performing a large task! Well done!

The Rev. W. E. Korn, of the Reformed Church in the U. S., delivered an address during the Wednesday afternoon meeting. His topic was: "The Blessed Assurance of the Elect". The speaker developed this thought as it is found in Romans 8:29-30. This comprehensive passage was well worked out and applied as the blessed assurance that the people of God have for time and eternity. Once again a spirited discussion followed the address.

The Wednesday evening session was taken up with the public lecture of the Rev. H. Hoeksema, who spoke on the theme: "The Idea of the Covenant". True to form the speaker divided his subject into three points: The Covenant Relation, The Covenant Basis and the Covenant Realization. For almost two hours he held a large audience interested as the truth of God's Word was developed and applied in relation to the subject. Since the hour was late only a brief period of dis-

cussion followed.

Our first speaker on Thursday was the Rev. R. Grossman of the Reformed Church in the U. S. His assigned topic was: "Imputation". In his exposition the speaker pointed out that everything the believer is and has is imputed unto him of God. He defined imputation as the act of ascribing vicariously. In developing his theme the speaker called attention to: God as the One who ascribes or accepts that which is ascribed; Man unto whose benefit or advantage this ascription is; Christ who accomplishes all requirements of imputation; Righteousness, Satisfaction and Holiness as the benefits achieved and applied in imputation. Discussion of this material followed a recess period during which a picture was taken of the members and visitors of the Conference.

During the Thursday afternoon session the Rev. G. M. Ophof spoke on the topic: "The Fundamental Principles of Reformed Church Polity". Our professor very clearly pointed out that the principles which must be maintained and which underly true Reformed Church polity are: 1. The Kingship of Christ; 2. The Divine Authority of the Officebearers; 3. The Autonomy of the Local Congregation; 4. The Priesthood of Believers; 5. The Limited Authority of Classis and Synod. It was revealed that these principles are thoroughly Scriptural and hence are to be maintained and practiced by that Church which wishes to be Reformed in its Church Polity. A brief discussion closed the afternoon session of the second day.

At the final meeting of the Conference on Thursday evening the Rev. D. E. Bosma, of the Reformed Church in the U. S., delivered a public lecture. He spoke on the subject; "The Confession". The Rev. Bosma pointed out that Confession is to say with the Word of God what God says of Himself and all things. Anything which cannot be found and proven from God's Word cannot be confessed by a child of God but must be denied. The Church is always called upon to confess the Truth and must ever testify in the midst of the world of sin and judgement, the speaker said. Since it was necessary for the moderator to leave immediately after this address, the Rev. G. Vos. led the discussion of this paper. Rev. Vos also closed the Conference meetings with appropriate remarks. He thanked all members for their cooperation and all others who were in any way responsible for the success of our gatherings. The meeting was closed with singing and prayer of thanksgiving.

During the first session of the Conference a committee had been appointed to make arrangements for another meeting of the Conference. This committee reported of Thursday and brought the following recommendations which were adopted by the Conference: 1. That another Conference meeting be held on Wednesday and Thursday of the week prior to the

September 1946 meeting of Classis West, in Hull, Iowa; 2. That the committee appointed choose a theme and assign subjects for lecture and discussion; 3. That the brethren R. Steube, E. Buehrer, of the Reformed Church in the U. S., and H. Hoeksema, H. Veldman and L. Doezeema be appointed as speakers and J. Howerzyl be appointed as general alternate; 4. That the expenses be defrayed by offerings from both denominations.

The Conference also decided to publish 1000 copies of the speeches and accompanying discussions to sell at fifty cents each. The discussions were recorded by our two competent secretaries the Revs. Grossman and Van Weelden, who will also compile the material for publication. We would urge all of our readers to purchase a copy when they become available.

What was accomplished? This question is undoubtedly left in your mind. It should be remembered that this was an unofficial gathering and hence, nothing official was intended or purposed nor resultant. We believe, nevertheless, that many worthwhile results are obtained from our gatherings. Very likely our Editor will discuss these in his department but we wish to pen our own impressions. In the first place, we have become better acquainted as men and brethren, which is always necessary to any successful union. Secondly, a great deal of light has been shed upon the positions of the two denominations regarding the Truth of God's Word and especially as it relates to the questions discussed. Although there are points of difference, mainly of emphasis, both groups revealed that they are always ready and willing to submit in love to the criterion of the truth—the Word of God. Finally, therefore, we believe that the Conference moved definitely in the direction of finding that unity of faith concerning which the moderator spoke in his opening remarks. Personally, we believe that continuing in the spirit of truth and love that marked the proceedings of the Conference, the expression of unity in the faith through Church union is a definite future possibility.

We close with sincere thanks and hearty congratulations to the committee in charge of arrangements the Revs. W. E. Korn and G. Vos. We left Hull and our meetings with earnest prayer that God would bring forth fruit from our feeble efforts to His glory. May that be our prayer to the King of His Church until we meet again!

W. H.

Morren maakt de vracht niet lichter,
Geloof alleen vermindert haar.
Neem uw kruis op, wat het zijn moog'

FROM HOLY WRIT

Eph. 1:1-2:—"Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ."

The time and place of the writing of Paul's epistle to the Ephesians is approximately the same as of the epistles to the Colossians, Philippians, and Philemon—this is generally accepted. These epistles were written during Paul's imprisonment at Rome.

Of interest is a comparison between the epistle to the Ephesians and that to the Colossians. A careful reading of them will reveal many points of similarity. The difference between them, however, must be borne in mind. Both epistles set forth the glory of the exalted Christ. But, while the apostle in his epistle to the Colossians describes the glory of the Church of God as being in Christ, in his epistle to the Ephesians he dwells upon the glory of Christ as being in His Church. In the epistle to the Colossians the glory of the Christ is set forth; the epistle to the Ephesians emphasizes the riches of His Church, who is His body. And the two epistles together, therefore, present a glorious unity.

In verses 1-2, which we discuss in this article, we have the apostle's customary salutation to the church whom he addresses.

Paul introduces himself here as "an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God." Paul was an apostle. An apostle, according to the literal meaning of the word, refers to one that "was sent". He was sent by another to carry out a definite commission or mandate. Hence, this word implies, first of all, that a person was sent to perform a definite task. Secondly, he was appointed, received authority to perform that task. And, finally, he was qualified, enabled to perform that work.

The requirements of the apostleship, according to Holy Writ, are three-fold. First of all, an apostle must be called directly by the Christ Himself. This appears from the fact that the apostles always introduce themselves as called by Jesus Christ. Besides, the calling of the twelve by Jesus Himself is recorded in Holy Writ. Secondly, an apostle must be an eye-witness of the resurrected Lord, and also, in particular, of Christ's walk among us while He was in the flesh. This appears from Acts 1:21-22. And, thirdly, only he could be an apostle who was infallibly inspired by the Holy Spirit in his speaking and writing. I need not, in this article, quote from the Scriptures to verify this statement.

The necessity for this three-fold requirement of the apostleship is not difficult to understand. Fact is, their task was a unique task. They stood in a wholly unique relation to the Church of God. They were called to lay the foundation whereof Christ is the chief cornerstone, upon which the body of Christ rests, a foundation which could not possibly arise in the mind of mere man. This foundation must be God's Word, not a human word, the infallible testimony of God Himself, completely dependable and trustworthy, which would speak with Divine certainty. The Scriptures must be the Word of God, the only testimony of truth in the midst of this world which lieth in darkness and in the lie.

Notice that Paul is an apostle of Jesus Christ. We need not dwell at length on the name, Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ, as is evident from the names, Jesus and Christ, is the Divinely appointed and qualified Head of Zion, glorified at the Father's right hand, through the bitter and shameful death of the cross, Who saves His people from all the power of sin and death and leads them into everlasting glory. That Paul is an apostle of such a Sender surely implies that his work bears the same saving character as that of our Saviour. Paul is Jesus' apostle because the Jesus sent him. Jesus called him while he was on his way to Damascus and also at Damascus through a certain Ananias. But he is also Christ's apostle because he was spiritually set aside and qualified unto the apostleship by Jesus Christ through His Spirit. Yea, for three years Paul was instructed by the Spirit of Christ Jesus. And also now he speaks, in this epistle, as Christ's ambassador, through the Spirit of Christ Jesus.

Moreover, Paul is an apostle by the will of God. This means that the will of God is the all-determining cause of Paul's apostleship. The will of God is God's eternal and sovereign good-pleasure, the cause of all things, the counsel of His good-pleasure. The text would not teach that Paul is an apostle and of Jesus Christ and by the will of God, but that he is an apostle of Jesus Christ, through the will of God, in the sense that the will of God not only determined his apostleship but also that he should be an apostle of, by Jesus Christ. God therefore willed apostleship of Paul. God determined and realized Paul's qualifications for the office. And God willed that he should be an apostle of Jesus Christ. For it was by the will of God that Jesus Christ suffered and died, rose again, was glorified at the right hand of power, and called Paul unto his exalted office.

Paul is an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God "to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus." It must be evident that Paul, in this text, is not addressing two groups of people in the church at Ephesus, saints and believers. On the other hand, these words must not be understood mere-

ly as repetition. The term "believers" explains the term "saints". God's people are saints because they are believers, united with the Christ through faith. Their holiness is rooted in this faith.

Paul in this text is not addressing a certain element in the church at Ephesus, the particularly pious element which had already advanced a considerable distance on the way of sanctification. Neither is it true that the content of this salutation is meant for everyone there, head of head. Paul here is addressing the church, the entire church at Ephesus, young as well as old, children as well as adults. Only, he is calling them by their spiritual name, or rather by the name which expresses the essence of the "church" at Ephesus. Even as a tomato plant bears the name of its essence in its kernel, so the entire Church of God in general and every church in particular bears the name of its spiritual kernel, the elect people of God. This is also true in this text. Paul is speaking to the entire church at Ephesus. They all bear the name of saints. But they bear this name because of their spiritual kernel. Consequently, grace and peace are enjoyed only by the people of the living God.

God's people here are called "saint and faithful (believers) in Christ Jesus". They are saints, holy. The word implies that God's people are a peculiar people, separated from sin and dedicated to the Lord. God's people *are* saints. Holiness characterizes them essentially. They are saints because they are faithful, or believers, in Christ Jesus. We are faithful believers in Christ Jesus because, by faith, we are in Him, engrafted into Him, spiritually united with Him, one plant and body with Him.

Paul directs the salutation of this text to this people of God at Ephesus, and to the people of God throughout the ages. This lies in the nature of the case. This salutation is intended only for the people of God. It is true that all men may and must be commanded to repent and forsake their evil way. One can never excuse himself when he walks in sin. But the salutation of the apostle, "Grace be to you, and peace" is surely applicable only to the saints and believers in Christ Jesus. It is quite impossible to declare that the grace and peace of God is upon the wicked. It rests only upon the people of the living God.

"Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ." The concept "grace" in Scripture is a very rich concept. The word "grace" means literally "beauty, attractiveness". Today this concept is generally understood as merely referring to an attitude of God, unmerited on our part, and then as extending to all men. However, God Himself is the God of all grace. This signifies, objectively, that the Lord is the God of all beauty, and, subjectively, that He is eternally attracted to Himself. God is also the God of all grace for His people. Without at this time

entering into details here, we may safely assert that the term "grace" in this text refers to the sum-total of all the blessings of God which the Lord bestows upon His people, whereby they become holy and attractive even as God Himself is holy. The gifts of justification, love, hope, faith, peace, etc., are implied in this term.

We also read of "peace". The gift of peace must not be separated from that of grace. Peace is included in grace, is one of the gifts of grace. That Paul mentions this one gift of grace, after he already had mentioned grace in his salutation, is because the church of God needs particularly the blessing of peace. Peace is that gift of grace whereby we have peace of heart and soul with God and therefore with all things. It gives us the assurance that all is well between God's people and God, and also that, whatever may betide, all things work together for our good.

The source of this grace and peace is "God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ". What the apostle means to say here we may express thusly: Grace be to you, and peace from God, our Father, and grace be to you and peace from the Lord Jesus Christ. God, the Father, is the Triune God in this text. Jesus Christ is referred to as the Mediator, the glorified Head of the elect, according to the human nature. The text does not direct us to two sources of our spiritual blessings, God and Christ. God, the Father, is the source. Jesus Christ is the medium through Whom God, the Father, blesses us. God is the source. For that reason He is called our Father, because the idea of "Father" is primarily that of source. But God, our Father, blesses us through Jesus Christ, our Lord, Who suffered and died for us, rose again and was glorified, Himself received the Spirit beyond measure, and through and out of Whom we receive the blessings of grace and peace.

Finally, what is the implication of this salutation? Does the apostle here merely express a personal wish? We must bear in mind that he is an apostle by the will of God and that he therefore declares the will of God. First of all, Paul here declares a fact. It is God Who declares through him that His grace and peace are upon His people. And, secondly, these words also express the apostle's prayer, which at the same time constitutes for us an urgent admonition. We possess this grace and peace only in principle and we walk in them only in principle. Therefore the apostle prays that the Church of God may ever receive grace and peace, grow in these graces, and consciously walk in them.

H. V.

Stedfastness and Our Young Peoples' Societies *

Considered in this light, as a gift of grace, our stedfastness consists in the fact that we are rooted in Christ. Christ is the sure ground of our stedfastness. He Himself was stedfast in the covenant of God, and He endured even to the extreme. All the powers of darkness were ever gathered against Him, but He remained the faithful witness, the stedfast representative of the party of the living God in the world. The reproach and fury of men were heaped upon Him, but He never wavered or deviated from the path of God's covenant. The wrath of God was poured over His head for our sins and iniquity and for the righteousness of God, yet He willingly descended into the depth of death and hell for the sake of God's everlasting covenant. He is the faithful witness. And He overcame. He has the victory. God raised Him from the dead. And He is stedfast for ever. Death and all the powers of darkness have no dominion over Him, cannot even touch Him any more. He is exalted at the right hand of God, clothed with all power and authority, also with the authority and power to lead the sons of God, for whom He died and rose again, to everlasting glory. And He received the promise of the Spirit, and through that Spirit He dwells in us, and bestows upon us all the spiritual blessings of salvation. He gives us the true faith, and keeps it, so that it can never be lost. And by that faith, which He bestows on us, and which is preserved and constantly maintained by Him we are stedfast, and can nevermore be moved from the ground of our confidence.

Does this mean, then, that we become wholly passive, and that put forth no effort whatever to remain stedfast in God's covenant, and to cultivate this spiritual virtue? Are we like bricks, like "stocks and blocks," or like trees that remain stedfastly rooted in the soil without anyconscious effort on their part? God forbid! No gifts of grace ever violate our rational, moral nature. No gift of grace ever renders us passively indifferent. On the contrary, grace always renders us consciously and willingly active. Repentance is a gift of grace, and the result is that we repent, and we cultivate repentance through the Word of God. Faith is the gift of God, but so that we now believe, and we seek the Word of God for the increase and strengthening of our faith. Hope is wrought in our hearts by the grace of the God of our salvation, but so that we perform the act of hope, and seek to confirm and quicken it through the Word of God. And so, we are rooted in Christ, and our stedfastness is in Him. He preserves us, and no one can ever pluck us out of His hand, but the result of this grace of spiritual



the forces of opposition use every means which God has given us, and which He has promised us to use Himself, to cultivate and strengthen that stedfastness, that we may be able to stand and to withstand in the evil day. The relation, therefore, is not such that the knowledge of our being for ever stedfast in Christ renders us careless and passive; but rather such that our principal stedfastness in Christ renders us anxious and eager to become more stedfast, to use the God-given means unto the cultivation of that stedfastness, and to put on the whole armour of God, with prayer and supplication that we may hold fast that which we have and overcome in the battle of faith!

And this means that we will turn to the Word of God, and study it, that we may increase in its knowledge, in the knowledge of faith. Even as by the gift of faith we are rooted in Christ and are principally stedfast in Him, so we must know Christ in all His fulness in order that we may be consciously stedfast in the truth, that our mind may appropriate and be convinced of the truth, that our will may confide and be established in the truth, that all our desires may be motivated by the love of the truth as it is in Christ Jesus our Lord. To be rooted in Christ we must know Him. To do the will of Christ we must have knowledge of that will. To follow after Christ we must know the way of Christ. To realize the calling wherewith we are called we must understand that calling. And we must know the fulness of Christ with regard to all our inner life, and with application to all our walk and conversation, in every department of life, personally and in the home, with respect to marriage and divorce, with regard to our calling in church and society and state, in order that we may discern the way clearly, and stedfastly walk therein. To be stedfast, and to cultivate the spiritual virtue of stedfastness, we must "continue stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine, and ever increase in the knowledge of the Word of God. Then we shall be able to distinguish light and darkness, the truth from the lie, the lust of the flesh from the way of God's commandments. We shall be stedfast and unmoveable, not being tossed about with every wind of doctrine, but always abounding in the work of the Lord!

It is here that our Young People's Societies may be co-instrumental in the cultivation of the spiritual virtue of stedfastness. They are societies of young people. And young people are in the springtime of life. This implies many things. It also means that, from a natural viewpoint they are not yet mature. And the same is true with respect to their spiritual life. They are Christian young people, more particularly, Protestant Reformed Christians. But also their spiritual life is still immature. They must be formed. They must become stable in their conscious convictions. They must become prepared to stand, and to fight the battle of faith in the midst of the world. And that

world entices them, seeks to lead them astray. Especially to the young people the temptations of the world are often especially adapted and made to appeal. Hence, they must be filled with the knowledge of Christ, and that, too, with application to their whole life in the world. And unto this end also our Young People's Societies may serve as an important means. Of course, it should be remembered that they are societies. As such they belong to the sphere of the church as an organism. They do not belong to the Church institute, with its ministry of the Word. The latter is and remains *the* means whereby it pleases God to build His Church, and to establish the saints in the faith. Its place can never be taken by our societies. One cannot with impunity neglect the preaching of the Word, and catechetical instruction, and let the society take their place. Moreover, for that very reason, our societies must be under the supervision of the Church as an institute, and always they should conform to its instruction. Nevertheless, in the sphere of the organism of the Church, they have an important place, and may serve a significant purpose, that of the mutual edification of the saints and their building up in the truth of the Word of God.

It stands to reason, however, that unto this end our Young People's Societies must themselves continue in the apostles' doctrine. They must not degradate into social clubs, must not seek their purpose in an evening of entertainment. Nor must they copy the superficial testimonial meetings and prayer meetings of the Christian Endeavor, or imitate such wild movements as the "Youth For Christ Movement" of our day. They must find their chief calling in the study of the Word of God according to our Protestant Reformed Faith. And they must endeavor to let the light of that Word shine upon every aspect and department of life, and in that light evaluate and judge all that is contrary to that Word in doctrine and life. And they must exhort one another to maintain the good confession, and to walk worthy of the calling wherewith God has called us. In that way, but in that way alone, if all the members cooperate according to their ability, can our Young Peoples' Societies be a means for the cultivation of the spiritual virtue of stedfastness, and help to prepare their members to take their stand and remain firm in the covenant of our God.

The times are deeply serious. More and more difficult it will become to remain faithful. The effort to become more rooted in the truth of Christ is, therefore, very important. And let us all heed the exhortation of the Word of God: Be ye therefore stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not vain in the Lord!

H. H.

* Address delivered at the Convention of Protestant Reformed Young Peoples' Societies, Aug. 30, 1945.