

THE STANDARD *Bearer* A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

VOLUME XXII

January 1, 1945 — Grand Rapids, Michigan

NUMBER 7

MEDITATION

Wij Vliegen Daarheen

Aangaande de dagen onzer jaren, daarin zijn zeventig, of, zoo wij zeer sterk zijn tachtig jaren; en het uitnemendste van die is moeite en verdriet; want het wordt snellijk afgesneden, en wij vliegen daarheen.

Psalm 90:10.

Wij vliegen daarheen!

Niet zonder telkens nieuwe verbazing ontdekt hij, die aan den avond van den laatsten dag des jaars even toeft, om een terugblik te werpen op den afgelegden weg, dat zijne ervaring met dit woord der Schrift medegetuigt.

Niet zonder verbazing, want in den dagelijkschen loop des levens valt de vliegende vaart, waarmee we onophoudelijk voortspoeden, niet zoo op.

Eensdeels toch bewegen zich de vleugelen des tijds, waarop we onophoudelijk worden voortgedragen, zoo geruischloos. De tijd is zoo stil. Men merkt niet zijn geweldigen haast. Hij is niet als de wind, dien men wel niet ziet, maar wiens geluid men toch verneemt, en wiens snelheid zich laat waarnemen en afmeten. In een sneltrein zijn we ons bewust van de vaart, waarmee we de mijlpalen voorbij vliegen. Doch de tijd glijdt onmerkbaar voort, en dat we werkelijk met razende snelheid daarhenen vliegen, is geen voorwerp van onze dagelijksche waarneming.

Andersdeels zit de tijd ons ook in merg en been. Wij zijn kinderen des tijds, geboren in den tijd, en met den tijd in ons geheele bestaan. Wij vliegen gaarne. Er is geen tegenstelling, geen conflict tusschen den vliegenden tijd en het zoeken en streven van ons hart. Ook de natuurlijke mensch, het zij nog zoo paradoxaal, de mensch, die buiten dezen tijd geen hope heeft, wien

de vreeze des doods heel zijn leven achtervolgt, wordt innerlijk voortgestuwd, zoodat hij met den vliegenden tijd accoord gaat en meewerkt om tot zijn einde te komen. Het tegenwoordige moment bevredigt hem nimmer. Altijd zoekt hij het in de toekomst. Hij strekt zich naar hetgeen voor ligt, ook al ligt daar niets dan moeite en verdriet, ook al wacht hem uiteindelijk niets anders dan het eeuwig verderf.

Vandaar, dat de duizelingwekkende vaart van den snel vliegenden tijd in den gewonen loop des levens niet zoo opvalt.

Maar, als we oudejaarsavond even stilstaan in onze gedachten, en terug blikken in het verleden, komen we tot de ontdekking, dat we dit Schriftwoord wel metterdaad als werkelijkheid ervaren.

We vliegen daarheen!

Een geheel jaar is weer voorbij, en we kunnen het ons bijna niet voorstellen.

Rusteloos ging de tijd voort, zich om ons ongeduld niet haastend, noch ook toevend om onze haast, en om ons druk-zijn. En nu we staan aan het einde, is het ons alsof het de dag van gisteren was, waarop de menschen elkaar een gelukkig nieuwjaar toewenschten.

Waarlijk, wij vlogen daarheen!

Veel is er geschied, veel en velerlei. Er werd gejuicht en geklaagd, gezongen en geweend, gebeden en ook veel gevloekt, gehoopt en gewanhoopt, feest gevierd en in het klaaghuis vergaderd. Er was blijdschap, omdat er menschen ter wereld geboren waren; en er was smart, omdat onze weg ons grafwaarts voerde achter de baar onzer dierbaren. Er was moeite en verdriet, een zwoegen in ijdelheid, worsteling en strijd zonder overwinning. Er was oorlog, en er kwam aan den oorlog een einde zonder vrede. . . .

En op al die, en duizenden andere ervaring en terugziende op de oudejaarsavond, en de balans opmakend, komen we tot de slotsom, dat ook dit woord in onze ervaring bewaarheid wordt: "het uitnemendste van die is moeite en verdriet!"

Want immers: "het wordt snellijk afgesneden!"

En wij vliegen daarheen!

Zware taal!

Zwaar van diepen weemoed!

Taal, die het zeer korte en beperkte, zoowel als het snelvliegende van ons aardse leven beziet en waardschat uit het oogpunt van de bange woestijn, waarin een gansch geslacht omkomt, vergaat, wegsterft, onder den drukkenden last van Gods toorn!

Een geslacht, dat niet kon ingaan in de ruste Gods, vanwege zijn ongelooft!

Het verkeerde in het Huis, waarover in dien bepaalden dag weliswaar Mozes gesteld was, maar dat toch principieel en wezenlijk het Huis van den Zoon Gods was. En men had de stem van den Zoon Gods gehoord, zooals deze op velerlei wijze en met grooten nadruk tot hen was gekomen, in de wonderen in Egypte, in den donder van Sinai, door Mozes' woord, in het uit de rotsteen vloeende water, in het brood, dat van den hemel regende. . . .

En men had op die stem niet gelet!

Tegen die stem had men gerebelleerd in ongelooft. Eigen goden had men gevolgd. In de lust des vleesches had men uitdrukkelijk terug verlangd naar de vleeschpotten van Egypte. . . .

En God had gezworen in Zijnen toorn: "Indien ze in Mijne rust zullen ingaan". . . .

En nu was de zaak hopeloos; in de woestijn werd dat geslacht terneder gestooten door Gods toorn. Er was geen uitkomst meer. Daar in de woestijn werd het bestaan gekenmerkt door een zwoegen zonder vrucht, een lijden zonder uitkomst, een vergaan zonder hoop, den dood zonder de opstanding. En daarom kon de man Gods het bezingen in de woorden: "Want wij vergaan door Uwen toorn; en door Uwe grimmigheid worden wij verschrikt. Gij stelt onze ongerechtigheden voor U, onze heimelijke zonden in het licht Uws aanschijns. Want al onze dagen gaan heen door Uwe verbolgenheid; wij brengen onze jaren door als eene gedachte. . . .

En zoo bezien,—en wat is ons aardse leven, op zichzelf, en buiten de genade van onzen Heere Jezus Christus beschouwd, anders?—zoo bezien, moet de toon, die dat bestaan bezingen wil, wel zwaar worden. Zoo bezien, als eene openbaring van den toorn van den grooten en vreeselijken God, Die onze heimelijke zonden in het licht Zijns aanschijns stelt, wordt ons bestaan wel benauwend donker!

Aangaande de dagen onzer jaren. . . .

Die dagen onzer jaren, waarop zonder ophouden de groote verbolgenheid Gods drukt. . . .

Daarin zijn zeventig of uiterst tachtig jaren. En dat wil niet zeggen, dat alle menschen, of ook de meesten hunnen aardse weg zoolang kunnen bewandelen. 't Wil ook niet zeggen, dat zeventig of tachtig jaren de gemiddelde maat zou aangeven van de spanne tijds, waarin de mensch op aarde verkeert. Ach nee; de uiterste maat is hier aangegeven. Als alles normaal is,

en er gebeurt niets bijzonders, dan is het mogelijk, dat de sterkste mensch zeventig of tachtig malen oudejaarsavond bereikt.

En nu is het niet de bedoeling van deze woorden, om ons den duur van ons leven te openbaren, of ook om ons aan de korthed van dien duur gedachtig te doen zijn: doch wel om ons op het hart te drukken, dat we vergaan! "Door Uwen toorn vergaat ons kwijnend leven!" Levende sterven wij. Bestaande vergaan wij. Zeventig of tachtig jaren kan de sterke den last der verbolgenheid des Allerhoogsten in zijn aardse bestaan dragen, dan bezwijkt hij.

Stof zijt gij, en tot stof zult gij wederkeeren!

Dat woord was immers niet het oorspronkelijke scheppingswoord Gods. Niet om te sterven, maar om te leven was hij geformeerd. Een plaats was hem gegeven bij den boom des levens in het midden des hofs. Niet om te vergaan, maar om als Gods vriend in de eeuwige zaligheid met zijnen Schepper te leven, was hij geschapen. Daarop was hij aangelegd. Zooals het geslacht, dat wegstierf in de woestijn, zoo woonde ook hij oorspronkelijk in Gods Huis, en ook hij hoorde de stem zijns Gods. Neen, meer nog, hij stond in de ruste Gods. Want God had op den zevenden dag van al Zijne werken gerust, en de mensch ging in de ruste van Gods volbrachte werk in. En eten mocht hij van den boom des levens, om niet maar zeventig of tachtig jaren, maar in eeuwigheid te leven.

Doch hij is der stemme zijns Gods niet gehoorzaam geweest!

Hij hief rebelleerende vuist op tegen den Allerhoogste.

En God bande hem uit de ruste, ver van den boom des levens. En daar behoort dit woord: Stof zijt gij, en tot stof zult gij wederkeeren. 't Is het woord des toorns God.

En omdat dit woord hem achtervolgt, hem in merg en been dringt, daarom moet hij nu in de bange woestijn dezer gevloekte wereld in ijdelheid zeventig of tachtig jaren verkwijnen, ook zoo Gods doel dienend, inplaats van in Gods Huis met Hem in de eeuwige zaligheid te leven!

Aangaande de dagen onzer jaren. . . .

Daarin zijn zeventig of tachtig jaren.

Jaren van verkwijning onder de verbolgenheid Gods!

Ijdelheid der ijdelheden!

Zware taal!

En toch, er is licht!

Licht in de duisternis!

Licht waarin zelfs de weemoed van de zeventig of tachtig jaren in blijdschap wordt veranderd!

Want God had wat beters over ons voorzien!

Hij sprak van een anderen dag! Hij gaf Zijn eer aan geen anderen. Hij verbrak niet Zijn eeuwig ver-

bond. Hij stelde ook des menschen rebellie dienstbaar aan de realizeering van zooveel beter verbond, waarvan Jezus Borg is geworden. Hij begon een ander werk, het werk der verlossing, der vergeving, der rechtvaardiging, der aanneming tot kinderen, der opstanding uit de dooden, des eeuwigen levens in den tabernakel Gods bij de menschen!

En weer ging Hij in de ruste in!

Door den dood Zijns Zoons verzoende Hij de wereld met Zichzelven, hunne zonden hun niet toerekenende; verwierf Hij voor ons eeuwige gerechtigheid, en riep Hij het leven uit den dood, het paradijs uit de woestijn, den hemel uit de hel, door de opstanding van Jezus Christus uit de dooden.

In Hem is de ruste!

En omdat Hij sprak van eenen anderen dag, daarom kan deze bange, zwaarmoedige psalm eindigen met de bede: "Verzadig ons in den morgenstond met Uwe goedertierenheid, zoo zullen wij juichen en verblijd zijn in al onze dagen!"

Zeventig of tachtig jaren. . . .

Ja, maar wie de stem des Zoons van God in Zijn nieuw en eeuwig Huis mag hooren, betreurt niet het korte van dezen vergaanden tijd, maar ziet met verlangen uit naar de ruste!

Licht in de duisternis!

Licht des levens!

Wij vliegen daarheen!

En het wordt snellijk afgesneden!

Daarin ligt zeker ook aangeduid het onophoudelijk voorbijgaande van ons aardse leven en bestaan. Geen oogenblik staan we stil. We worden al vliegend geboren, vliegen van het eerste oogenblik onzes levens voort, en stoppen onderweg nergens. Soms zouden we misschien wel een oogenblik ergens willen toeven, maar van uitstappen is op onze vliegtocht geen sprake. En al vliegende gaan we heen. . . .

Maar bovendien ligt daarin ook uitgedrukt het snelle van onze vaart.

Alles vliegt, en wij vliegen mede!

Dat een jaar voorbijging, wil zeggen, dat onze aardkloot al wentelend haren rondgang om de zon voltooide. Bijna zes honderd millioen mijlen legde ze af, en dat wil zeggen, dat zij, en wij met haar, ongeveer met eene snelheid van veertig duizend mijlen per uur voortvlogen. Doch zoo is het ook met geheel ons leven. We haasten ons. Het kind haast zich om man te worden, de man om een nieuw geslacht voort te brengen, en dan spoedt hij zich naar het einde. En al sneller wordt het tempo van des menschen leven.

Wij vliegen daarheen!

En dat snelle tempo zit ons in 't bloed. We willen het. We ervaren het. We werken er aan mee.

En als we nu dit snelle voorbijgaan bezien uit het oogenpunt van de bange woestijn van den toorn Gods.

van de hopeloosheid van ons gebannen zijn uit de ruste, dan past ook hier de zware taal van den diepen weemoed, van de bange vrees des doods. Want het wordt snellijk afgesneden. . . .

En er is geen hoop!

Naarmate we verder komen in onzen vliegenden vaart, wordt de druk des toorn Gods steeds zwaarder. We vliegen van verbolgenheid tot verbolgenheid. En er is nergens uitkomst. We vliegen, ja, maar midden in den dood!

Laat ons eten en drinken, want morgen sterven wij!
Ijdelheid der ijdelheden!

Doch er is licht!

Er blijft eene ruste over voor het volk van God!

En wie gelooft is reeds in die ruste, de ruste der opstanding van onzen Heere Jezus Christus, de ruste der vergeving der zonden, der vrije gunste Gods, der vrijheid, de ruste van Gods eeuwige woning. Daarom kan deze zwaar weemoedige psalm straks schier jubelend bidden: "En de liefelijkheid des Heeren onzes Gods zij over ons!"

En wie met die ruste in het hart daarheen vliegt, beziet ook dat snelle tempo van zijn aardse leven in een ander licht.

Hij vliegt, ja, maar naar 't eeuwig Vaderhuis!

Naar de ruste van Gods verbond!

Blijde hope!

Zware taal!

't Uitnemendste van die is moeite en verdriet!

't Beste, dat we in deze wereld kunnen verwachten, dat waarop de wereld zich voor een oogenblik beroemt, waarop ze trotsch is, waarin ze haar genot zoekt, haar rijkdom en eer, haar genot en blijdschap, haar vriendschaps- en liefdebanden,—dat is het uitnemendste.

En dat is moeite en verdriet!

Zware taal! Al te sterk, zegt ge misschien? Het leven van onze zeventig of tachtig jaren wordt hier toch al te donker getint? Er is immers ook veel, dat tot blijdschap stemt, veel genot en vreugde in dit anders wel moeitevolle leven?

Maar ga dan nog eens naar de bange woestijn, en ge weet, dat daar heel het leven onder de verbolgenheid Gods ligt. En immers: "het wordt snellijk afgesneden." De dood zit en werkt in al de vreugde en het genot dezer wereld, en de mensch, die daarheen vliegt, weet het maar al te wel. En wat nog veel meer zegt, 't uitnemendste van die werkt u, in de woestijn van Gods toorn, eeuwige verwoesting! Moeite en verdriet!

Maar bezie nu ook deze moeite en verdriet uit het oogenpunt van de ruste, en 't wordt alles anders!

De zeer lichte verdrukking werkt een eeuwig gewicht der heerlijkheid!

Daar geen nacht; geen rouw of gekrijt!

Liefelijkheden des Heeren!

H. H.

The Standard Bearer

Semi-Monthly, except Monthly in July and August

Published by

The Reformed Free Publishing Association
1463 Ardmore St., S. E.

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Communications relative to subscription should be addressed to MR. GERRIT PIPE, 1463 Ardmore St., S. E., Grand Rapids, Michigan. All Announcements, and Obituaries must be sent to the above address and will not be placed unless the regular fee of \$1.00 accompanies the notice.

(Subscription price \$2.50 per year)

Entered as Second Class mail at Grand Rapids, Michigan.

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EDITORIALS

The Liberated Churches In The Netherlands

We stated repeatedly that we cannot agree with the covenant view generally advocated by the liberated churches, nor with the declarations on this matter by the Synod of Sneek-Utrecht; neither would we subscribe, however, to the Conclusions of Utrecht 1905.

That a compromise statement such as the latter would become the occasion of trouble, and might lead to a division in the churches, as soon as one element of the compromise statement was accentuated at the expense of the other, and the attempt was made to enforce the accentuated element and make it binding for the churches, might easily be surmised. That the Synod of Sneek-Utrecht did not foresee the inevitable consequences of their actions, but went right ahead, not only in making certain declarations on the matter of the covenant, but also in attempting rigidly to enforce them, and in deposing officebearers that refused to accept this yoke, is, in the light of the history of the Conclusions of Utrecht 1905, suprising indeed.

These Conclusions are little more than a conglomeration of statements from both sides, those that advocated presupposed regeneration, and those that opposed this view.

The result is that they are self-contradictory.

Let us examine them a little more in detail.

They begin with the statement "that in virtue of the promise of God the seed of the covenant must be considered as regenerated and sanctified in Christ, until, as they grow up, the opposite appears from their doctrine or walk."

Now, even if this statement is considered by itself, it implies a contradiction. By "the seed of the covenant" is meant all the children of believers that are presented for baptism. Of these it is said that they "must be considered as regenerated and sanctified in Christ." The basis for this statement is the promise of God. Now, if this promise of God can indeed serve as a basis for some statement concerning the regeneration of all the children of believers, it is evident: 1. That such a statement should not speak of *considering* them as regenerated, but should definitely declare that they *are* regenerated and sanctified in Christ. For the promise of God is sure, and what is based on the promise is equally certain. If God, therefore, promises us something, we have no right to say: "we will consider it as if it were true." We simply have to accept

God at His Word. 2. That, in that case, we have no right to add: "until the opposite appears." If, on the basis of the promise we may declare of all the children of believing parents that they are regenerated, there is no room for the latter statement. There is no falling away of saints.

The trouble is, of course, that the statement is not true, and that those who adopted it in 1905 were very well aware of it that it is not true. "In virtue of the promise of God" we cannot say anything about all the children of believers, nor is it possible to "consider" them as regenerated, for the simple reason that the Scriptures very emphatically teach us the opposite. Romans 9 is quite sufficient proof for this statement. All are not Israel that are of Israel. The children of the promise are counted for the seed. The authors of the "Conclusions" were so well aware of this that a little further they contradict their own statement by saying: "that further, the judgment of love, according to which the Church considers the seed of the covenant as regenerated, does not at all mean to say that each child is, on that account, truly regenerated, because the Word of God teaches us that not all are Israel that are of Israel, and of Isaac it is said that 'in him shall thy seed be called.'"

If you combine the two statements in one brief sentence, you would put it this way: "We must consider all the children as regenerated, although we know that this is not true."

This is a contradiction in terms.

And the presumption of which it speaks is impossible.

And the contradiction is accentuated if you combine the opening sentence of this declaration of Utrecht 1905 with the closing statement. For then the result is as follows: "In virtue of the promise of God the seed of the covenant must be considered as regenerated, but the proposition that each child is therefore regenerated before baptism cannot be proved either from Scripture or the Confession, while God fulfills His promise in His own sovereign time, before, during, or after baptism."

It is evident, then, that, in regard to the question of the covenant, the Conclusions of Utrecht 1905 were so formulated that each of the contending parties could appeal to them in support of his own view. If, on the one hand, the supporters of the view of presumptive or presupposed regeneration claimed that their conception was the doctrine of the Church, they certainly could quote the first part of the Conclusions to substantiate their claim. If, on the other hand, the opponents of this view claimed that the Church had plainly repudiated the idea that all children of believers must be considered as regenerated from their birth, they could appeal to the last part of the same Conclusions in support of their contention.

In such a compromise there is dynamite.

And all that was necessary to set off the explosion was to accentuate one statement, attempt to enforce it, and eliminate the other.

This is exactly what the Synod of Sneek-Utrecht did.

The explosion followed.

And the result is that the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands were split in two, and that, too, almost entirely along the old well-known line of A and B.

From the above it will be evident at the same time that we cannot subscribe to the decisions of Sneek-Utrecht regarding this matter.

They accentuate the doctrine of presupposed or presumptive regeneration. It is true that they do not altogether remove the contradiction of the Conclusions of 1905. They, too, remind us that "they are not all Israel that are of Israel," and that "this does not at all mean to say that, therefore, each child is truly regenerated." But they forgot to mention that it is "less correct" (minder juist) to say that baptism is administered to the children of believers on the ground of their 'supposed regeneration'." And they do not quote the last sentence of those Conclusions in regard to this matter that repudiates the entire idea of presumptive regeneration.

And against these decisions I have the following objections:

1. It is not the business of the Church to decree presumptions and make them binding for all its officebearers and members. That a synod has the calling finally to decide on matters of doctrine that pertain to the confession of the churches, I do not deny; provided, however it does so in the proper way, and not without taking into consideration the churches themselves. But a *presumption* is no dogma, and can never become a dogma. Why should a church decree what each officebearer and member must *presume*?

2. To presume of all the children of believers that they are regenerated is contrary to Scripture, as even the decisions of 1942 remind us. Only the children of the promise, the elect, are counted for the seed. And they are by no means the same as the children of believers. The error of the presumption of regeneration in all would not be so serious if the carnal, reprobate seed belonged to the great exceptions. But this is not the case. The very opposite appears to be true. Among Israel in the old dispensation, the carnal seed abounds, and the children of the promise are the "remnant according to the election of grace." Nor does it appear different in the new dispensation if one takes a broad view of the Church in the world, and makes a comparison between nominal, baptized Christendom and true believers.

3. The modifying clause "until the opposite an-

pears," is, considered as a binding dogma of the Church, quite meaningless. How could a church possibly enforce such a decree, and discipline those that differ from it? What is the age limit denoted by the "until"? At what age can a child reveal the opposite of regeneration? And what, pray, is "the opposite" of the manifestation of regeneration? Is a life of wanton unbelief and gross sin, that makes a confessing believer worthy of excommunication, meant by this "opposite"? Or does the opposite also appear when a child evinces no positive interest in the things of the kingdom of God, shows no positive signs of regeneration? Dr. A. Kuyper Sr. held, as is well known, that even if someone is converted in his old age, the seed of regeneration may have been in his heart from infancy. Who can tell us what the synod meant by this limiting clause? No one, not even the synod itself. Such vague and ambiguous presumptions should not be legislated into dogmas that are binding for the members and office-bearers of the church.

4. The confessions do not teach such a presumption concerning all the children of believers. It is alleged that presumptive regeneration is plainly taught in our Baptism Form. The trouble with this is, however, that the very positive language of that Form can hardly be interpreted as expressing a mere presumption. Does that Form refer to a presumption when it teaches us that "when we are baptized in the name of the Father, God the Father witnesseth and sealeth unto us, that he doth make an eternal covenant of grace with us, and adopts us for his children and heirs. . . . And when we are baptized in the name of the Son, the Son sealeth unto us, that he doth wash us in his blood from all our sins, incorporating us into the fellowship of his death and resurrection, so that we are freed from all our sins and accounted righteous before God. In like manner, when we are baptized in the name of the Holy Ghost, the Holy Ghost assures us, by this holy sacrament, that he will dwell in us, and sanctify us to be members of Christ," etc? Does it speak the language of a presumption when it confesses that our young children "as they are without their knowledge partakers of the condemnation in Adam, so are they again received unto grace in Christ"? Are the parents asked to subscribe to a presumption by the question: "Whether you acknowledge that—our children—are sanctified in Christ, and therefore, as members of his church ought to be baptized?" And does the whole church give thanks and praise to God for a mere presumption in the following language: "we thank and praise thee, that Thou hast forgiven us and our children, all our sins, through the blood of thy beloved Son Jesus Christ, and received us through thy Holy Spirit as members of thine only begotten Son, and adopted us to be thy children, and sealed and confirmed the same unto us by holy baptism"? To change all this into the

expression of a mere presumption is a strange distortion of the plain meaning of words.

For all these reasons we cannot subscribe to the decisions of 1942.

But how about the view of the liberated churches? Our discussion of this must wait till next time, D. V.
H. H.

THE TRIPLE KNOWLEDGE

An Exposition Of The Heidelberg Catechism

Part Two.

Of Man's Redemption

Lord's Day XVIII

Q. 46. How dost thou understand these words, "he ascended into heaven?"

A. Thus that Christ, in sight of his disciples, was taken up from earth into heaven; and that he continues there for our interest, until he comes again to judge the quick and the dead.

Q. 47. Is not Christ then with us even to the end of the world, as he hath promised?

A. Christ is very man and very God; with respect to his human nature, he is no more on earth; but with respect to his Godhead, majesty, grace and spirit, he is at no time absent from us.

Q. 48. But if his human nature is not present, wherever his Godhead is, are not then these two natures in Christ separated from one another?

A. Not at all; for since his Godhead is illimitable and omnipresent, it must necessarily follow that the same is beyond the limits of the human nature he assumed, and yet is nevertheless in his human nature, and remains personally united to it.

Q. 49. Of what advantage to us is Christ's ascension into heaven?

A. First, that he is our advocate in the presence of his Father in heaven; secondly, that we have our flesh in heaven as a sure pledge that he, as our head, will also take up to himself us, his members; thirdly, that he sends us his Spirit as an earnest, by whose power we "seek the things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God, and not the things on earth."

1.

The Fact Of Christ's Ascension Into Heaven

The remark of Dr. Karl Barth, that Christ's ascen-

sion into heaven is scarcely mentioned in the New Testament, and that it could just as well have been omitted from the "testimony of the forty days," is certainly not in harmony with the abundance of the testimony found in Scripture concerning this stage in the exaltation of the Lord. And when he, virtually repudiating the idea that the ascension of our Lord was also a definite change of place, evaporates that event into the vague notion of its being "a pointing to the revelation, already come to the fore in the resurrection, viz., that Jesus Christ is the bearer of all power in heaven and on earth," he can hardly be said to follow the line of the *Apostolicum*, and surely speaks a language that is quite different from that of our Catechism in the eighteenth Lord's Day. (1).

As far as the testimony of Scripture is concerned, though in the nature of the case, the event itself of the ascension of Christ into heaven, is not as elaborately mentioned as the event of the resurrection, *the fact* of that ascension and its great significance are frequently emphasized in Holy Writ. The event is mentioned in Mark 16:19: So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God." In Luke 24:50, 51 we read: "And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven." The gospel according to John does not speak of the ascension on the fortieth day, but it mentions it repeatedly and definitely. To the murmuring Jews in Capernaum the Saviour says: "Doth this offend you? What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?" John 6:61, 62. To the unbelieving Pharisees in Jerusalem, He spoke these words: "Yet a little while I am with you, and then I go unto him that sent me." John 7:33. His disciples He comforts in the well-known words: "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know." John 14:1-3. And again: "Nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." John 16:7. And after His resurrection, He spoke the remarkable words to the Magdalene: "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." John 20:17.

The most definite testimony concerning the event of the ascension is found in Acts 1:9-11: "And when

he had spoken these words, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."

Besides, apart from these references to the event of the ascension into heaven on the fortieth day after the resurrection, Scripture also mentions the truth of Christ's assumption into and being in heaven, and that not only in connection with His sitting at the right hand of God, still less as a mere sign of His having all power in heaven and on earth, but as having significance in itself, and from the viewpoint of His having entered the holiest of all as our intercessor. The apostle Peter proclaimed to the people that were gathered in Solomon's porch: "Whom the heavens must receive until the times of the restitution of all things." Acts 3:21. Indicating the source of the grace which the Church receives, "according to the measure of the gift of Christ," the apostle Paul, quoting from the sixty-eighth psalm, writes: "Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things." Eph. 4:8-10. "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." I Tim. 3:16. Especially the epistle to the Hebrews speaks of Christ's ascension as the entering into the sanctuary as our great high priest. "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession." Heb. 4:14. "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." Heb. 6:19, 20. "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." Heb. 9:24. And in I Pet. 3:22 we read: "Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him."

This ascension must be conceived as consisting definitely in a change of place. In His human nature Christ departed from the earth, and went into heaven, both in body and soul. After His ascension, He is, according to His human nature, no longer on earth; He is in heaven only.

(1) Karl Barth, the Apostolic Confession, pp. 128, 136.

This view of the ascension of Christ is strongly emphasized in the Catechism. No less than three questions and answers are devoted to the local character of our Lord's ascension into and being in heaven. First, in question and answer forty-six, the article of the Apostolic Confession concerning the ascension is explained; and it emphasizes that Christ entered into heaven before the eyes of His disciples, and remains there until His coming again. Then, in question and answer forty-seven, this local ascension is considered in the light of His promise that He shall be with us even until the end of the world. And, lastly, in question and answer forty-eight, the objection that this definite and local conception of the ascension separates the two natures of the Lord is answered.

That the Catechism emphasizes this local character of Christ's ascension into heaven so strongly, must be explained from the rather sharp controversy of that time, between the Reformed and Lutheran theologians, about the natures of Christ, and about the presence of Christ in the Lord's supper.

As to the relation between the two natures of Christ, the Lutherans held what is known as the doctrine of the *communicatio idiomatum*, the view that in Christ the one nature shared the properties of the other, more particularly so that divine attributes were imparted to the human nature of Christ. And with a view to the Lutheran theory of the bodily presence of Christ in the bread and wine of the Lord's supper, this doctrine of the "communication of properties" was especially applied to the *ubiquity* of Christ's human nature, the attribute according to which Christ, in His human body, can be present in more than one place at the same time. According to some Lutherans, this "communication of properties" took place at the time of the incarnation, but during His earthly sojourn among us the Lord emptied Himself, so that His divine power and glory remained largely concealed behind the likeness of sinful flesh. According to others, this impartation of divine attributes to the human nature belongs to His exaltation only.

By this theory Luther and the Lutherans sought to give an answer to the question, how Christ could, according to His human nature, be in heaven, and yet also be corporeally present in the signs of the Lord's supper. His ascension means, not that He left the earth and is limited to heaven, but that His human nature became ubiquitous.

This view was officially expressed in *The Formula of Concord*, a Lutheran symbol written in 1576, as follows:

"And inasmuch as the divine and human natures are personally united, that is, so as to constitute one *hypostamenon*, we believe, teach, and confess that this hypostatic union is not such a conjunction or combination as that thereby neither nature had any thing

personally—that is, on account of the personal union—common with the other, such as the combination that takes place when two boards are glued together, where neither confers any thing on the other nor receives any thing from the other. But rather, here is the highest communion which God truly has with the man assumed, and from the personal union and highest and ineffable communion, which thence follows, flows all of human that is said and believed of God, and all of divine that is said and believed of the man Christ. And this union and communion of the natures the most ancient doctors of the Church have illustrated by the similitude of glowing iron, and of the union of body and soul in man." (*De Persona Christi*, V).

And further:

"And that majesty, in virtue of the personal union, Christ has always had, but in the state of humiliation he divested himself of it, for which cause he truly grew in age, wisdom and favor with God and men. Wherefore he did not always make use of that majesty, but as often as seemed good to him, until after the resurrection, he fully and forever laid aside the form of a servant, but not the human nature, and was established in the plenary use, manifestation, and revelation of the divine majesty, and in this manner entered into his glory (Phil. 2:6 sqq.). Therefore now not only as God, but also as man, he knows all things, can do all things, is present to all creatures, has under his feet and in his hand all things which are in heaven, in the earth, and under the earth. That this is so, Christ Himself bears witness, saying, (Matt. 28:18; John 13:3): 'All power in heaven and in earth is given unto me.' And Paul saith (Eph. 4:10): 'He ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.' This his power, being everywhere present, he can exercise, nor is anything to him either impossible or unknown," *idem*. XI.

This doctrine is then applied to the Lutheran conception of the Lord's supper, that of consubstantiation, as follows:

"Hence also, and indeed most easily, can he, being present, impart his true body, and his blood in the Holy Supper. Now this is not done according to the mode and attribute of human nature, but according to the mode and attribute of the right hand of God, as Luther, according to the analogy of our Christian faith, as contained in the Catechism, is wont to speak. And this presence of Christ in the Holy Supper is neither physical or earthly, nor Capernaitic; nevertheless it is most true and indeed substantial. For so read the words of the Testament of Christ: '*This is is, is my body,*' etc."

All this is not very clear, especially in view of the fact that the Formula of Concord at the same time strongly repudiates the idea that the two natures of Christ are in any wise fused into one. The Lutherans

appear to seek to establish their doctrine of a communion of properties in Christ on the basis of the *personal union* of the two natures only. However, it is not quite clear, how from this personal union it could possibly follow that divine attributes were bestowed or communicated to the human nature. Nor is it easy to see how the human nature of Christ could really partake of such divine properties as omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, without becoming fused with the divine nature.

Fact is, however, that although later Lutheranism somewhat modified this theory, and although the Formula of Concord already begins to express itself somewhat ambiguously on this matter, at the time when the Heidelberg Catechism was composed the doctrine of the *communicatio idiomatum* was strongly maintained. And according to this theory, the human nature of Christ is now, i.e. after His ascension, ubiquitous.

Now, in opposition to and distinction from this Lutheran doctrine, it must, in the light of Scripture, undoubtedly be maintained that the ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ implies a change of place. He departed from one place, the earth; and he went to another place, heaven.

This it is which the Catechism means to accentuate in the Lord's Day we are now discussing. "In the sight of his disciples he was taken up from the earth into heaven." There he "continues for our interest, until he comes again to judge the quick and the dead." Again, "with respect to his human nature, he is no more on earth." And the objection that this leads to a separation of the two natures of Christ it meets by the argument that "since his Godhead is illimitable and omnipresent, it must necessarily follow that the same is beyond the limits of the human nature he assumed, and yet is nevertheless in his human nature, and remains personally united to it."

And that the ascension of the Saviour is definitely a departure from the earth and an entrance into heaven is the plain teaching of Scripture. To His disciples the Lord said "I go away," John 16:7. The gospel according to Luke records: "He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven," 24:51. And Acts 1:9 is very definite: "And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight."

For forty days the risen Lord had remained on earth, even though the relation between Him and earthly things, as well as His fellowship with His disciples, were radically different from His sojourn among us in the state of His humiliation. Repeatedly, the disciples had seen Him. Often, during those forty days, He had appeared to them, and spoken to them of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. And, in that period between the resurrection and the ascension, the disciples must have lived in constant expectation of

seeing Him again. However, now, on the fortieth day of this wonderful period, He led them out to the mount of Olives, and from thence He was taken up from them in such a manner that they knew He had departed from them into heaven. Often, during those forty days, He had come and gone. He had appeared to them and disappeared again in a manner beyond their comprehension. This time, however, He not merely disappeared: He departed from them, and went into heaven. After this they expected Him no more. They knew that He had gone away from them.

But when all this is duly established, when we have confessed that heaven is a place as well as the earth, and not a mere abstraction; and that the ascension of the Lord means that He departed from the one place and entered into the other, and not a becoming omnipresent of His human nature; we must also warn against the danger of conceiving of the wonder of the ascension in an earthly manner.

We shall have to remind ourselves that the ascension as well as the resurrection of Christ, is a *Wonder*.

We shall have to remember that the ascension of our Lord, although it was, indeed, a personal departure from the earth in the human nature, a moving from one place to another, is not comparable to one's taking a journey from Chicago to New York, from one earthly place to another. Nor is what the apostles observed on Mount Olivet when their Lord was taken up from them, to be compared to what one sees when he visits an airport and watches the taking off of an airplane.

And we dare not forget, when speaking of the event of the ascension of our Saviour as such, that also that last manifestation of the risen Lord to the apostles, when He led them out to the Mount of Olives, was an appearance of Him Who had already passed on into the resurrection-sphere, and Who lived in His incorruptible, "spiritual" body.

What was given the apostles to see on Mount Olivet, of the wonder of the ascension, was sufficient for them to know that their Lord had departed from them, and that He had gone into heaven. But every attempt to draw a picture of the event, representing the Saviour as sailing up into the sky and through the clouds, must be condemned as a misrepresentation of the ascension of our Lord.

H. H.

MINISTERS' CONFERENCE

Official Notice: — The Ministers' Conference of Classis East will meet on Tuesday, January 8, 1946, at 9:30 A. M. in the Fuller Avenue Church.

Program: — "The Man of Sin"—by the Rev. M. Gritters. "The Netherlands Decisions on Common Grace"—by the Rev. J. D. De Jong.

W. Hofman, Sec'y.

THROUGH THE AGES

The Pseudo Isidorian Decretals

As we saw, the papacy, now in the person of Leo III (795-816) again declared by its act of crowning Charles (The Great) emperor, that it lay within its power to give and withhold kingdoms and to appoint and depose its kings, and that, such being its power, it took away from the Eastern emperor, who sat in Constantinople, the crown and bestowed it on Charles. Actually, as was explained, the pope now was subject and vassal of the mighty Charles, but in his own mind, he stood out as Charles' spiritual and temporal lord. And Charles, on the other hand, thought of himself as the temporal and spiritual lord of the pope. Each claimed for himself the supreme judicial power over all things in church and state, conceived of by these two—Charles and the pope—as forming two sides to a Christian commonwealth—the Holy Roman Empire, founded by Charles and which was to endure for one thousand and six years. It ended in 1806 with the abdication of the elective crown by Frances II. But, as was seen, it was Charles and not the pope who made good his claim. After the example of Constantine the Great and Theodocius the Great of the Byzantine empire, which was caesaro-papal in principle and practice, Charles made himself master of the church (and thus also of the pope) regulating all her external and to a large extent also the internal affairs. And the pope did not resist Charles; for Charles, it was explained, was a mighty man and a great benefactor of the papacy. The pope concluded that he could best serve his own carnal interests by allowing Charles to do as he pleased.

Leo died in 816. Now the papacy, taking advantage of the weakness of Charles' successors, again strove to make actual in its reign the principle of the lordship of the papacy over the temporal rulers. Of the next eight popes, the most ambitious in this respect was Gregory IV (827-844). Charles (the Great) died in 814. His son and successor, Louis, was a well-meaning but incapable ruler. He devoted too little time to the affairs of the empire and much time to monkish exercises. On this account and also because of his devotion to the clergy and of the reforms with which he began his reign—he dismissed from the court his father's concubines and his daughters and their lovers—the Germans and the Italians surnamed him the Pious. This lack of energy of the government of Louis gave rise to many abuses. Soon after Louis placed the reigns of government in the hands of his three sons

who soon rebelled against their father and made war upon one another. These political disorders in the Frankish empire afforded the papacy many opportunities to assert its claim to supreme judicial authority in all matters. Accordingly, Gregory IV went to France to settle the disputes between Louis the emperor and his sons. But the pope was ill received by the party faithful to Louis, for the rumor had gotten abroad that he would decide in favor of the sons. He was reminded of his oath of allegiance to the emperor. The bishops holding with the latter assured him that if he care to excommunicate them, he might perhaps depart as excommunicated himself. They even threatened him with deposition. The pope resented these threats on the ground that, being the successor of Peter, he was judge over all and could be judged by none. He maintained, moreover, that, as the espouser of the cause of the rebellious sons, he had justice on his side! But such was the prestige of the papacy, that the unlawful proceedings of the sons of Louis took on the appearance of justification in the eyes of the people, and the emperor was repudiated by the larger part of the army. This rebuff of the pope, this challenge of his authority by the Franks, revealed that the papal idea still was far from being received. What was needed is a code of ecclesiastical laws—a Church Order—of great authority, formed for the sole purpose of setting forth the papal system in all its pretensions and of binding it upon the consciences of men by legitimizing it in the light of the Scriptures. For such a code the popes would have greatest use. They could quote it to justify their claims. It would aid them immeasurably in realizing the papal idea. Marvellous to say, precisely such a code appeared under the false name of Isidor of Seville (died 636) and thus called the "Pseudo-Isidorian Decretals." It is called "Pseudo," fake, false, because upon examination, it has turned out to be the greatest fraud known in the history of church literature. The book, let us call it a Church Order, is formed of three parts, the first of which contains fifty Apostolic Canons and sixty decretals "kerkelijke Adviezen" from pope Clement (died 101) to pope Melchiades (died 314), all of which were forged. The second part of the book includes the fake document of the donation of Constantine. This document, it will be recalled, is in the form of a charter, the authorship of which is unknown, that orders all the dignitaries in the church to be in subjection to the pope and bequeaths upon them all the city of Rome and the whole of Italy with all its provinces and cities. The third part of the book contains the decretals of the popes from Sylvester (died 333) to Gregory II (died 731). Of these, too, thirty are forged, that is fabricated and yet ascribed by their unknown author, who lived and wrote these fabrications in the ninth century to these popes, thus to popes who lived

and reigned in the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries. And the decretals of the first part of the book, were dealt with in a like manner. The spurious among them, though a pure invention of the ninth century, were affixed by their unknown author to the names of the popes of the second and third centuries, thus to the names of popes as far back as Clement of Rome. Now this doing was the next thing to holding the apostle Peter himself responsible for these decretals and their teachings. For, according to Catholic tradition, Peter was the first pope and for several years the companion of Clement. The latter is supposed to have written many books in Peter's name and to have been appointed by him his successor as bishop of Rome, with supervision over all the churches. It means that the unknown author of the Pseudo-Isidor did not recoil from strongly suggesting, to say the least, that the teachings of his inventions originated with the apostle Peter, and that they were transmitted by him to his successors in the papal chair. It becomes more and more plain that the papal system as to its idea and that the efforts on the part of the popes to legitimize this idea and to carry it out, is from the abyss. Today the Pseudo-Isidor is universally pronounced a fraud by Roman Catholics and Protestant historians alike, although at the time of its appearance it was received as genuine. Yet its forgery is conspicuous. To mention a few examples. Roman bishops of the second and third centuries write on relations in church and state that existed centuries later, and they write on these relations in the Latin of the ninth century. Letters—the book contains also several letters—which are said to have originated in the second century, are made up of passages borrowed from documents far later.

In the totality of its decretals and canons the book under consideration is a manual on the doctrine of the Roman Hierarchy as it culminates in the papacy. The priests, in contradistinction to the laity, to which the term "carnales" is applied, form a holy caste, consecrated to God, and the apple of His eye. Constituted by God the judges over all, they are subject to no secular tribunal. Bad priests must be tolerated, if they fall not from the faith, and the laity cannot judge them. Even independent of their personal worth, they must be regarded with reverence as the organs through whom God imparts His grace unto men through the sacraments whose operations are magical. Next considered is the office of bishops, as those to whom Christ gave the power to bind and to loose. Even though unjust, their decisions must be respected. They must be protected against the arbitrary will of the lay rulers and the archbishops. If oppressed by the latter, their refuge is the pope, the judge over all from whom is no appeal. For his authority is sovereign both in state and church and was transferred to him by Constantine the Great. Judge over all, he can be

judged by God only. It is plain that the teachings here are the inviolability and indispensableness of the priesthood. It must not be profaned and harmed nor can it be. And it is indispensable to salvation. And the supreme authority in all matters spiritual and temporal is the papacy. Now all these ideas were current at the time our mysterious book made its appearance, which was in the middle of the ninth century. Hence, it is evident that the aim of the book was not to present to the age new doctrines but to trace them back from the ninth to the second and third centuries—to set back these many centuries the date of their origination, in order that they might have the great authority of antiquity. For, although the germ of the papal system is discoverable in the writings of the ante-Nicene fathers, the idea as such—the headship of the pope over all the churches in Christendom—was, so we saw, first advanced with boldness and clarity and carried out with energy by Leo I (440-461). And, as also has been shown, Zacharias (741-752) was the first pope to crown a lay ruler and thereby to declare the headship of the papacy over all things in the state as well. And it was during the pontificate of this pope that the papacy had come into the possession of the "states of the church", where the popes ruled supreme as temporal potentates. Hence, men could say that the fact of the pope ruling as temporal lord, exercising supreme authority in all matters spiritual and temporal was certainly representative of an idea rather novel. They could say that, at least in the beginning it was not thus. As long as they could say this, the crowned head of the pope could not lie easy. So this thing known as the Pseudo-Isidor was brought into being. Pointing to its decretals, canons, and letters, the popes could now say that all the ideas inhering in the papal system are traceable, through the unbroken succession of popes, to the noble Clement and through Clement even to the apostle Peter. However deserving of criticism the popes of the Middle Ages may be, what cannot be said of them is, that they were lacking ingenuity to devise ways and means for bringing all men under their yoke and for legitimatizing their false position. Herein they were experts; and they also did expertly, amazingly so. The Pseudo-Isidor pays particular attention to the "States of the Church" donated to the papacy by Pepin and Charles the Great. According to the Pseudo-Isidor not only these states but the whole of Italy was given to the pope five centuries previous by Constantine. This donation is universally pronounced fiction.

There still remains the question of the authorship of the book. Historians are agreed that it was written by some ecclesiastic who belonged to the Frankish church, but there is no consensus of opinion among scholars as to the writer. It cannot be shown to have been written under the instigation of the papacy, but

the popes did quote it. The first of them to do so is Nicolas I (858-867). On this account it is hard to believe that the papacy had nothing to do with the appearance of this mysterious book, especially so as by no other instrument was its power so raised and strengthened.

There is a myth, of which we must take passing notice, according to which a woman occupied the papal throne between Leo IV (847) and Benedict III (855). She is named variously Agnas, Gilberta, Joan, Jutta. She was placed in the papal chair as John VIII. That the new pope was a woman was known to no one. According to most of the writers, who speak of her as a real and not as a fabulous person, she was an extraordinary woman before as well as after she attained to the pontifical dignity. She was the daughter of an English missionary. She was famed for her modesty, her address, her engaging behaviour, and gained daily new reputation by her appearance and outward show of extraordinary piety as a teacher of theology in Rome under the name of Joan Anglicus. But in secret she loved illicitly, and her sex was discovered when she gave birth to a child in the open street during a religious procession from the Vatican to the Lateran in Rome in consequence of which she died. It is a strange story, regarded by nearly all modern historians, Protestant as well as Roman Catholic, as a mere fiction, which doubtless it is, and this on the following grounds. It was first mentioned four hundred years later by a French Dominican. If it was known in the ninth and tenth centuries, the bitter enemies of the papacy, of which there were several, would have used it as a damaging argument against that institution. According to historians of that day, no vacancy occurs between Leo and Benedict. But the question remains, how, if the story is fiction, its creation is to be explained. There are several conjectures. One says that the papeess was the widow of pope Leo VI; still another that the myth of the female pope was "satirical allegory on the origin and circulation of the false decretals of Isidor (of which I have spoken in the foregoing); still another that it was an impersonation of the great whore of the Apocalypse, and the popular expression of the belief that the mystery of iniquity was working in the papal court.

G. M. O.

THANK YOU!

As of Dec. 1, 1945, my discharge from the U. S. N. becomes effective. I hereby wish to thank all of you who so willingly gave of your time and effort to make it possible for me to receive the following: The Standard Bearer; The Beacon Lights; The Fuller Courier; the Gifts at Christmas time.

J. E. Landstra

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

Naomi

As was explained, Elimelech and Naomi did wrong in removing to the country of Moab on account of there being a famine in the land. Rather than remain under the rod of God in contrition of heart, as confessing that he, too, deserved God's strokes, and as urging his brethren to repent in order that God might be feared and the plague be lifted, he chose to eat his bread to the full with the heathen. As was explained, the Lord laid His hand upon them also there in Moab. First Elimelech died, and Naomi was left with her two sons. The Lord had spoken, but Naomi failed to be instructed, for she prolonged her residence in Moab and even allowed her sons to take them wives of the women of Moab. These were forbidden marriages. "Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son." Deut. 7:3. That Ruth was won for Christ, does not make Chilion's marrying her right. God was displeased with this marriage, necessarily so as it clashed with His moral will as indicated in His law. And the death of Ruth's husband may be taken as the manifestation of the divine displeasure. It is always wicked to marry unbelievers. The argument that the unbelieving spouse may be an elect, and if so will be brought into the Kingdom of grace through the good confession of the believing mate and that therefore the marriage, though contrary to God's revealed will, is nevertheless pleasing in his sight is as foolish as it is carnal. Whether the unbelieving mate is an elect is known only to God. Then, certainly, it is not God's will that His people marry unbelievers in order to bring them the gospel. This can be done out of wedlock as well as in it. Here the Scripture applies, "The secret things—in this case the election or reprobation of the unbelieving spouse—belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed—here, the will of God to the effect that his people refrain from marrying unbelievers—belong unto us and to our children forever, *that we may do all the words of the law*," may do also that word of the law that prohibits believers to be unequally yoked with unbelievers also in marriage, to be sure. Let all those who contemplate such forbidden marriages, consider that what impells them is not the fervent desire to save an unbeliever but carnal lust. God's people need not be troubled about the salvation of the elect in the sense that they allow the thought to take root in their souls that they must marry unbelievers with a view to saving them, if possible.

Naomi, as was observed, refused to be instructed, when the Lord slew her husband. Though a God-fearing woman—we cannot judge otherwise—she lingered, after the marriage of her sons, ten more years in that heathen land. So the Lord spoke again. He slew her two sons. “And she was left alone of her two sons and her husband.” Then she spiritually discerned that the Lord had testified against her. For we read, “Then she arose with her daughters in law, that she might return from the country of Moab. The sacred narrator adds, “for she had heard in the country of Moab how that the Lord had visited his people in giving them bread.” Doubtless these tidings came to her before the death of her sons. But she had refused to bestir herself in that, though as to the heart of her dispositions a true believer, she was still carnal. Perhaps she had also been restrained by the reluctance of her sons and daughters-in-law to leave Moab. But now a worse calamity befell her in the death of her sons. As applied to her heart by God’s Spirit, it brought her under the conviction of sin, and she resolved to return, having heard also that the plague of the famine had been lifted and that the favor of God again was upon her people. That was an added inducement. The state of Naomi’s mind and heart, at this juncture may be known from the complaint that was drawn out of her by the expression of astonishment on the part of Bethlehem on her return to that city. We read, “So they two went until they came to Bethlehem. And it came to pass, when they were come to Bethlehem, that all the city was moved about them, and they said, Is this Naomi?” To this she replied, “Call me not Naomi (the lovely, the gracious one. Such is the meaning of this name), calle me Mara (the bitter one) : for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the Lord caused me to return empty : why then call me Naomi, seeing the Lord hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me?” She had concluded that the name “Naomi” did not become her, considering her present plight. There was a great hurt in her soul, a piercing pain, galling and cutting, the awareness of which was bitter indeed. So they had better call her “bitter” now.

The sensation of anguish and pain that the Scriptures call bitterness of heart is not peculiar to unjust men. God’s people, too, know bitterness of heart. Hannah, the mother of Samuel, was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the Lord and wept sore—prayed for a man-child, I Sam. 1:10. Hannah, though she prayed in bitterness of soul, was not angry with God. Nor was Naomi angry with God. She was never more spiritual than when she gave expression to that lamentation. “The Lord hath dealt bitterly with me. The Almighty hath afflicted me.” This is an acknowledgment that the calamity that had befallen her in the country of Moab was God’s work. The wicked say that

health and sickness, prosperity and adversity come by chance. Except when God lays His hand upon them. Then in their wrath they curse God and thereby confess, despite themselves, that God is, and that He is the author of their troubles. But Naomi’s lamentation was the language of faith. Consider this expression occurring in it. “The Lord hath testified against me.” That precisely was her great sorrow, and not that she had to bury her kin in Moab, or, as she expressed it, that “I went out full—full of family happiness and of joy in her sons—and the Lord hath caused me to return empty”—empty now of all these. That, too, tore at her heart. How could it be otherwise. But it was not her primary grief. She made mention of it solely because she stood firmly in the faith that it was a divine affliction through which Jehovah had testified against her. It was not necessary that she say what He had testified, as it was evident from the grief that had been her portion in Moab that His testimony to her was to the effect that her migration to that country to escape the rod of God was a grievous sin. That this speech of God was not only manifested in her but sanctified unto her heart as well, so that she received it as truth, truly repented and was now bewailing her sin before God is evident. She brought forth fruit worthy of repentance. Firstly, she forsook Moab, and returned to God and His church, to His sanctuary, priests and altars. Her return was a good work of God in her. This she also acknowledged and gave God the glory. Said she, “I went out full,” that was her evil doing, “but the Lord brought me home again empty.” Had not He had mercy upon her, she would have remained in Moab. Soon after her arrival there, she must have developed a strong liking for that country. Her husband died, and she was lonely, still her thoughts turned not to Canaan, and this though her sons had attained a marriageable age. The result was that they married Moabitish women. From this point of view of nature, what was there to induce her to return after their death? Doubtless she lived well in Moab. She was beloved by her daughters-in-law. The Moabites were friendly. In Moab was buried her kin. In Canaan so far as she could know, her possessions were permanently lost to her so that nothing but poverty and reproaches was awaiting her there. It is plain that, if she was to leave Moab, the Lord would have to bring her home again. And He did so. But He had to resort to the extremest measures to get her out of that country. So rooted was she to its soil. That she finally did leave as a true penitent is also evident from the following. When they were come to Bethlehem all the city was moved about them, and they said, Is this Naomi? What they said—Is this Naomi?—is an exclamation of astonishment. It belongs in the category of expressions that escapes men’s lips when their souls are agitated by what the eye sees as well as by

what the ear hears.

Naomi had been gone for ten years. During that time her appearance had changed. The bitterness of her heart had left its marks upon her person. It had extinguished the light in her countenance and paled her brow. Her head was bowed. It had added years to her life so that she had grown old before her time. They remembered how she had looked at the time of her departure. And they saw that the contrast was startlingly great. Seeing her and knowing her sad story, they were moved about her, and they said, "Is this Naomi?" But they were moved about *her* and the doleful issues of her sin, while they should have been troubled for God's sake about the forbidden way in which she all those years had walked. Their spiritual callousness vexed her soul. She was that spiritually sensitive at the time. If they would weep for her, let them try to understand the character of her grief. The Lord testified against her. God was against her. She had fallen from His grace yet not really. He, who was the light of her countenance, now hid His face from her. For she had sinned and was being crushed by the weight thereof. She wanted God, His witness that she was forgiven. But God kept silence. That was her primary grief. She wanted them to know all that. So she replied to their whisperings. Call me not Naomi. . . . call me Mara. For Jehovah hath testified against me. The Almighty hath afflicted me. So did she justify God and abase self in the hearing of them all. She was spiritually consistent in every part of her reply. She says, I went, me hath God afflicted; not, My husband and sons went and I followed as in duty bound. She utters not a word of accusation against her husband, but speaks as though the conception of the undertaking had originated in her. She makes no mention of the death of her husband and the withering away of her sons except in a kind of veiled speech.

She was in a word, a true penitent. She was not yet praising God and thanking God for the pain of her afflictions, for the sorrow gendered by the memory of the death of her husband and sons. Yet she was disposed to praise, though she wept, and to smile through her tears. For she was truly penitent. The character of her primary grief was such that it worked in her a peacable fruit of righteousness and therefore at bottom it was praise. She soon did praise in love. For the Lord manifested in her that she was forgiven. He gave her "beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for heaviness." To see this we must follow our story a little farther. Naomi with Ruth, her faithful companion, came to Bethlehem. How and where they found shelter against the elements is not stated. The sacred narrator selects only such details from the life of these two as are needful to him for bringing his story to its rightful conclusion. So

he tells us that they came to Bethlehem in the beginning of the barley harvest, and thereupon introduces his readers to Boaz, a kinsman of Naomi's deceased husband. Boaz was a "valient hero" strong and capable in peace and in war like Gideon and Jephthah. And he possessed much wealth and property. Naomi was in dire need, for she was now one of the poor in the land, who lived on the bounty of the rich, according to a right guaranteed them by a divine ordinance in Israel that receives statement at Deut. 24:19-21 in this language, "When thou cuttest down thine harvest in thine field, and hast forgot a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it: for it shall be fore the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow: that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all the works of thine hands. When thou beatest thine olive tree, thou shalt not go over the boughs again: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless and for the widow. When thou gatherest the grapes of thy vineyard, thou shalt not glean it afterward: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow." There were still other restrictions, "Thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thine harvest," Lev. 19:10. But Ruth seems to have been ignorant of these laws. For she seeks and gains permission of her mother-in-law to go to the field and glean ears of corn *after him in whose sight she should find grace*. At least she seems not to have expected the observance of these ordinances by anyone. The Lord directed the feet of Ruth to the field of Boaz. This is the correct way of stating the matter as the Hebrew text reads, "And her lot met her on the field of Boaz." Without knowing it she entered his field. As the day wore on, Boaz appeared on the scene of industry. The exchange of greeting between employer and employees is remarkable. "The Lord be with you," said he to them, to which they replied, "The Lord bless thee." According to the form of the words of these greetings, the master blessed his servants and the servants blessed their master. The master meant to do just that and likewise the servants, If not, they were guilty of taking the Lord's name in vain. But Boaz feared God. And the servants, too, feared God, we like to believe. The fear of God operative in the hearts of master and servants! This is the only solution of the class struggle between capital and labor. Boaz surveyed his people and the labor and also the poor who gleaned in his field. Among the latter he noticed a strange maiden. It was Ruth. Turning to the overseer at his side, he said, "Whose damsel is this?" The overseer replied, "It is the Moabitish damsel, that came back with Naomi, out of the country of Moab." The overseer knew Ruth, for the return of Naomi had been much talked about. And he praised her remarkable industry. "She came and hath continued even from the morning until now, that she

tarried a little in the house." The overseer need tell him no more. If the handmaiden that stood before him was Ruth, the Moabitess, he knew all about her, since it had been fully shown him by others. He knew all that she had done unto Naomi, since the death of the latter's husband. And he showed her such kindness, solely because of her spiritual excellence, that she could return to her mother-in-law with an ephah of barley. Having heard Ruth's report of her experiences of the day in the field of Boaz, Naomi exclaims, "Blessed be he of the Lord, who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead." This exclamation of Naomi is worthy of most careful attention. It shows that she was aware of having come into the possession of certain evidence that God was once more gracious unto her and has pardoned her sin. The Lord made Ruth find a friend in Boaz, the rich relative of her husband. God's goodness manifested itself that conspicuously, that His anger must come to an end not only against her but even against her dear departed ones.

G. M. O.

SION'S ZANGEN

De Verbondspalm

(Psalm 89; Tweede Deel)

Ik zal eeuwig zingen van Gods goedertierenheer!

De aanhef van dezen psalm is uiting van geloovige zielverrukking, van geestelijke extase.

Deze psalm is bij uitstek de verbondspalm: hij vertolkt de liefde en de vriendschap Gods.

We zagen het de vorige maal; we hebben geluisterd naar de hemelsche muziek die ligt in de woorden: "Ik heb een verbond gemaakt met Mijnen Uitverkorene, Ik heb Mijnen Knecht David bevestigd, zeggende: Ik zal Uw zaad tot in eeuwigheid bevestigen, en Uwen troon opbouwen van geslacht tot geslacht. Sela."

En daar zijn wij ook getuigen van. God bouwt nog steeds den troon van den beteren David en dat is Jezus Christus, de Heere. Hij is de Geliefde Gods bij uitnemendheid. David beteekent Geliefde, geliefde van God.

En omdat dat zoo is, waarom "loven de hemelen Uwe wonderen, O Heere! ook is Uwe getrouwheid in de gemeente der heiligen."

Ja, dat de hemelen Gods wonderen loven, dat zal waar zijn. Dat is de eenigste bezigheid der hemeligen, zij het de engelen Gods die in verrukking zingen

volmaakt rechtvaardigen die het aan hunne zielen ervaardhebben, dat zij van den dood overgegaan zijn in het leven, het leven daarboven bij God.

Er staat "wonderen", in het meervoud. Evenwel zijn al de wonderen Gods gegroepeerd rondom dat ééne groote wonder, en dat is Jezus. Dat groote wonder is, dat Jezus Christus, beladen met onze zonde en schuld en doem en vloek, van uit de diepten des eeuwigen doods omhoog gehaald wordt tot in den hemel toe. En dat wonder wordt wonderen, wanneer we zien hoe talloos velen achter Jezus aan opgetrokken worden tot in de hoogste hemelen. Zoo zullen we er iets van zien, dat "Gods getrouwheid is in de gemeente der heiligen." Ge moet maar eens om U heen blikken den volgenden keer, dat ge in het Huis Gods met elkander den Heere dient. Indien het niet was vanwege de getrouwheid Gods dan zouden wij ons bevinden in de vergadering der boosdoeners. Overal waar een mensch zich buigt voor den troon Gods, overal waar een arm zondaar roept en schreeuwt tot God, ziet ge de getrouwheid des Heeren. Trouw is dat ge Uw woord gestand doet. Welnu, in het vorige vers had de Heere beloofd om den troon van David te bouwen van geslacht tot geslacht. En dat bouwen van Davids troon ziet ge in al den waren godsdienst van het volk Gods van alle eeuwen. De idee van den troon is regeering. En het buigen en loven en prijzen van Gods volk is gehoorzaamheid. En die werkt God in het diepe hart. Het is het volbrengen van de belofte aan David. God is de eeuwig Getrouwe. Wij zullen blijven bidden en smeecken en zingen van blijdschap in God, omdat God U doet naderen, ja, wonen in Zijn Huis.

De dichter zal bewijs aanvoeren voor zijn stelling. Luistert! "Want wie mag in den hemel tegen den Heere geschat worden, wie is den Heere gelijk onder de kinderen der sterken?" Die taal zullen we ook beluisteren in dat schoone veertigste hoofdstuk van Jesaja's profetie. "Bij wien dan zult gijlieden Mij vergelijken, dien Ik gelijk zij?" Neen, duizendmaal neen, dat mag niet. Dat de doen ware krankzinnigheid. Eerst God alleen is God. Hij is de geheel andere, de Schepper, de Formeerder van alles. Bij Hem is een vreeselijke majesteit. Tweedens, zelfs de machtigste Engelen Gods in den hemel zijn slechts schepselen. God heeft ze gemaakt en elk oogenblik worden zij gedragen door Zijn almacht. Derdens, al de kracht die zij openbaren is Gods kracht. Nam God Zijn hand weg, zie, zij zouden wegzinken in het niet. Daarom volgt er op: "God is grootelijks geducht in den raad der heiligen, en vreeselijk boven allen die rondom Hem zijn." Het zijn slechts de dwazen, de goddeloozen die het bestaan durven om "zich op te stellen en te zamen te beraadslagen tegen den Heere en tegen Zijn Gezalfde, zeggende: Laat ons hunne banden verscheuren, en hunne

Heere “zal lachen, en de Heere ze zal bespotten”? Dat is de dwaasheid gekroond. God is God. Grootelijks geducht is Hij in den raad der heiligen, die rondom Hem staan. Dat wil zeggen, dat die heiligen tot in hun binnenste hart God kennen als de Groote en Vreeselijke. Daarom stamelen wij op aarde: “God is op ’t hoogst geducht in Zijnen heil’gen raad; en vrees’lijk boven ’t heir, dat om Zijn rijkstroom staat!” Maakt evenwel niet de fout om te denken, dat die vrees vanwege Gods grootheid en vreeselijkheid een slaafsche vrees is. Ik kan hier niet veel bijhalen tot bewijs. Ik kan het echter wel aanvoelen. Ik zal er alleen dit van zeggen: hoe meer ik hoor en lees en ervaar van die verschrikkelijke grootheid en vreeselijkheid van Mijn Vader in den hemel, hoe meer ik hem liefheb en zing: Wanneer zal ik ingaan en voor Uw aangezicht verschijnen? Het is de zucht der liefde Gods in het hart van alle kinderen Gods, dat naar Hem haakt en verlangt en hunkert in het dorstige hart.

De zanger loopt over van lof. Hij herinnert zich het eerder gezongene: God is omringt van Zijn getrouwheid. Hij heeft het bewezen en keert er tot terug: O Heere! God der heirscharen! wie is als Gij grootmachtig, O Heere! en Uwe getrouwheid is rondom U! De bewijzen van Gods trouw staan rondom God in den hemel. Ik zie Adam en Eva. Abel is hen voorgedaan. Ik zie den edelen Henoch en Noach die wandelen met God. Ook is de vriend van God met zijn zoon en kleinzoon rondom den troon van God: zij waren de vreemdelingen en bijwoners op aarde. Doch hier gevoelen zij zich thuis. Ook zien we David en Jesaja en de schreiende Jeremia. En wat zal ik nog meer zeggen? Zal ik het hemelheir opsommen? We zullen U slechts wijzen op het woord, dat de Heilige Geest gebruikt: de heirscharen! Zij zijn de totaliteit van de heiligen Gods, omstuwd van de millioenen van engelen Gods die hun dienaren zijn. Alleen dit moet ge onthouden. Die heirscharen Gods zijn het bewijs van Gods getrouwheid. Indien het niet was vanwege het wonder Gods in Christus, was de hemel ledig. Hij is zelfs der engelen Heer. Die engelen zijn na den val van Lucifer, vastgesteld in hunnen staat. O God, hoe heerlijk zijt ge alom! Uit Uw verheven heiligdom. Aanbiddeijk Opperwezen! Het volk heeft Zijn sterkte van U alleen!

Van het tiende tot het vijftiende vers zal de dichter redenen te zamen brengen om het ons te bewijzen, neen, om het ons te stellen, hoe heerlijk, hoe groot God is. We zullen er wel aan doen om hem op den voet te volgen.

Gij heerscht over de opgeblazenheid der zee; wanneer hare baren zich verheffen, zoo stilt Gij ze.

Ik denk hier direkt aan drie gedeelten van Gods Woord, die ons zullen leeren wat de beteekenis van dit vers zij. Een kind zal het U vertellen, dat de Heilige Geest hier niet spreekt van de zee als schepsel Gods.

Als dat zoo was, dan verstaan we niet hoe God spreekt van de “opgeblazenheid” der zee. Neen, daar zit meer achter. Eerst denk aan de zee van Tiberias. Die zee verhief zich ook, om het hulkje van Jezus en Zijn discipelen te verzwelgen. Duidelijk is daar, dat de duivel die zee gebruikte om Jezus te doen verdrinken. Let er toch op, dat de Heere de wind en de zee *bestraft!* Tweedens, en dat dat brengt ons tot de beteekenis van de zee en de baren der zee, denken we aan Jesaja 57, vers 20 en 21: “Doch de goddeloozen zijn als een voortgedrevene zee, want die kan niet rusten, en hare wateren werpen slijk en modder op; de goddeloozen, zegt mijn God, hebben geen vrede.” Derdens, denken we aan de Openbaring van Johannes. Die apostel zag een vreeselijk gezicht van een beest, dat uit de zee opkwam. We zullen niet stilstaan bij alles wat we daarvan lezen. Doch het woord “opgeblazenheid” vindt daar zijn verklaring. Dat beest is de anti-Christelijke wereldmacht en de grondtrek van dat beest is dit, dat hij in en door den mensch in den Tempel Gods zal zitten en zeggen, dat hij God is. En juist als in de profetie van Jesaja, die zee zijn de goddelooze volken. Let dan ook op Openbaring 17:15: “En hij zeide tot mij: de wateren die gij gezien hebt, daar de hoer zit, zijn volken en scharen, en natiën en tongen.”

Nu zien we het: de opgeblazenheid der zee, mitsgaders de verheffing harer baren zijn de goddelooze volken die zich tegen God verheffen in drieste hoogmoed. En hier is onze troost en sterkte: God heerscht er over en stilt ze, op zijn tijd. Dat kunnen we bij den aanvang nu al reeds zien. Denkt hier aan de Axis volken. Ik wil het eerlijk bekennen, dat ik bang was toen dat drietal zich verhief tegen God en tegen Zijn Gezalfde en met groote woorden sprak van verdrukking en bloed en dood. Doch God sprak en waar zijn zij? Hitler is weg, Mussolini is opgehangen en Japan is vreeselijk vernederd. Het zal jaren duren vooraleer die drie volken weer ietwat beteekenen. En zoo doet God door alle eeuwen heen. Hij is het die volken verhoogt en vernedert. Heere der heirscharen is Zijn naam. En straks komt de openbaring van Zijn absolute heerschappij en stilling der baren der zee, wanneer we aankomen aan de stranden der eeuwigheid. Dan zal er een groote stilte zijn. Jezus sprak op het meer van Tiberias en er kwam een groote stilte. Die stilte is een type van de stilte waar Paulus van spreekt in Rom. 3:19: “opdat alle mond gestopt worde en de geheele wereld voor God verdoemelijk zij.”

Indien er iemand was die dacht, dat mijn verklaring van die opgeblazene zee en de verheffing der baren een vergezochte was, die zal bekennen, dat het verband voor zulk een verklaring pleit. Let op het volgende vers: “Gij hebt Rahab verbrijzeld als eenen verslagene, Gij hebt Uwe vijanden verstrooid met den arm Uwer sterkte.”

Rahab is Egypte.

Moet ik nog meer zeggen?

Wie denkt hier niet aan het wonder van de Schelfzee? En de tien plagen die voorafgingen? Hoe is Egypte toen verbrijzeld. Denkt slechts aan één van die plagen en gij zult de vreeselijkste verbrijzeling zien die ons op aarde overkomen kan. Alle eerstgeborenen werden door God verworgd. De worgengel ging van huis tot huis en straks weerklinkt er een geweën, zooals er nooit eerder op aarde geweest is. De harten van Rahab werden verbrijzeld in het verlies hunner lievelingen. Ja, God is "eind'loos in vermogen!"

De hemel is Uwe, ook is de aarde Uwe; de wereld en hare volheid, die hebt Gij gegrond.

Dat is het volgende vers. Hoe zwaar zijn die woorden. Probeert eens daar iets van te zeggen. Het is een van die waarheden die bijna niet door ons beleefd kunnen worden. Let er op: alles is van God; er is niets van U bij. Uw kind en zielsbeminde, Uw ziel en lichaam, Uw tijd en gaven, Uw ruimte en aanzijn; het is alles van God. Probeert eens daaruit te leven! Waarom was er die strijd van 1939-1945? Het ging om de "have's" en "have not's". Het eene stel volkeren leefde in grooten overvloed der dingen en waren gierig. Het andere stel was afgunstig en wilde stelen. Beide groepen van volkeren waren te bestraffen. Beide stellen van natiën hebben nooit gezien, dat God alles bezit. En wanneer Hij de dingen onder ons bereik brengt zijn wij slechts rentmeesters. Ook zullen we moeten uitzien rondom ons of er armoede is. En mededeelen van Gods goed. Zijn is de hemel, de aarde, de wereld, hare volheid. Wat een ontzaglijke waarheid. Alles is van God. En alles wat ik heb moet ik straks verantwoorden. Ik ben zelfs niet eens bezitter van mij eigen lichaam en ziel. Wat een jammerlijke dwaas was dan die man die zeide: Ik ben de meester van mijn lot; ik ben de kapitein van mijn ziel! Hij weet nu wel beter. Doch te laat.

Doch God is groot en grootmachtig!

Het Noorden en het Zuiden, die hebt Gij geschapen; Tabor en Hermon juichen in Uwen Naam!

Ja, en wij verzamelen onze legers en strijden de oorlogen en noemen de veldslagen naar de bergen en rivieren. Dwazen die wij zijn. Dat noord en zuid zijn schepselen Gods en de bergen klappen de handen te zamen, want Zijne goedertierenheid is in der eeuwigheid.

Gij, o God, hebt een arm met macht, Uwe hand is sterk, Uwe rechterhand is hoog!

Daarvan hebben we vaak gezongen: Uw rechterhand is hoog; Uw troon blijft onbewogen, van recht en van gericht zijn vasten steun ontleenen; en waarheid en gena gaan voor Uw aanschijn henen.

De heerlijkste commentaar op die woorden zien we op Golgotha. Als wij zingen van des Heeren sterke rechterhand, dan moeten we altijd denken aan Jezus, zooals Hij uit den eeuwiggen dood werd opgehaald. De

Heilige Geest gebruikt daar een opsomming van krachttermen voor. Luistert maar: "en welke de uitnemende grootheid Zijner kracht zij aan ons die gelooven, naar de werking der sterkte Zijner macht, die Hij gewrocht heeft in Christus, als Hij Hem uit de dooden heeft opgewekt en Hem heeft gezet tot Zijne rechterhand in den hemel." Efeze 1:19, 20.

Gena en waarheid werden in verband gezet met recht en sterkte.

Tezamen zijn zij Jezus in den troon. En gij met Hem. Amen.

G. V.

IN HIS FEAR

The Man Of God

This particular rubric under the general heading: "In His Fear," deals primarily with the education and training of the seed of the covenant.

In Reformed circles we often emphasize that the training of the covenant seed is the primary task of the Christian Home, the Christian School, and the Christian Church. However, there is also a personal and mutual training by the covenant seed themselves, especially as our children grow older. They are not merely trained by others, they also train and must train themselves. In as far as they are trained by others they must willingly cooperate, favorably respond and react, they must be active themselves. If they are not, you can not even begin to train and educate the covenant seed. This becomes all the more apparent as our children grow older. After all they are not dead pieces of wood or metal which is shaped and molded at will by others, but they are rational-moral, volitional creatures. And as we train our children, they on their part must take a cooperative interest. It is even a vital part of our training to inculcate this into our children. That's why we should never lose sight of the fundamental relationship of authority and obedience in the training of the covenant seed. They must be taught that we expect and demand favorable reaction to the instruction given, whether it is by precept, teaching or example.

On the other hand, as I have intimated already, our children, especially in the time of adolescence, must actively practice and be engaged in self-training. It would be interesting to elaborate on this specific phase of covenant training. However, for the present we will not enter into this particular subject.

In this article, and also in the sequence of this

article, we have in mind first of all the Church and its covenant seed, and the training, instruction and education of the covenant youth of the Church Institute. In this connection we expect to touch upon a few matters which are of general interest to all of us. My predecessor who, for a few months, had charge of this particular rubric, emphasized especially the training and education by the Christian School, and also brought out what is meant by training the child in the fear of the Lord. Hence, we thought it proper to also say something about the task of the Church in this matter. For this reason matters like the following will be treated: Whom does the Church train, instruct, educate; What is meant by this; How do we try to accomplish this; Could we, perhaps, improve upon our method? etc. etc.

In this article we will deal first of all with the expression "The Man of God." Immediately questions like these arise: "Who is the man of God, where can he be found, how must he be treated?"

Naturally, in order to find an answer to these questions we must and will resort to Scripture. The Bible often speaks of "The man of God." Particularly in the Old Testament we meet several times with this expression. And as a rule this particular designation is applied to prophets. I am thinking now e.g. of the prophet Elijah who was addressed by three different captains of the army of the King Ahaziah as "Man of God." (see II Kings 1). And in that connection "Man of God" means undoubtedly: "A man appointed by God, a man sent by God and formed by God for a very definite and specific task." God's own prophet, ordained and authorized to speak and act in the name of God.

However, it is not in that sense that I am writing about "The man of God." We also meet with this expression in the New Testament, I have particularly in mind now II Tim. 3:17. The entire text in its proper setting reads: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." — Whereas at present we plan to say something about "The man of God," this text is for us the point of procedure. In connection with our subject and in the light of II Tim. 3, we first will attempt to answer the question: "Who is the man of God?"

The "man of God" is the man who is *exclusively of God*. He is God's man in a very unique sense of the word. The man of God is he who from all eternity is chosen by God to be God's peculiar possession, to be redeemed by Him, to share in His own covenant life, and to live eternally to the honor and praise and glory of God Triune. In other words 'the man of God' is the elect child of God. Hence, the designation 'man of God,

is applicable to all God's children, without any exception whatsoever.

But this elect child of God must be redeemed because by nature he is one with the fallen race in Adam, totally depraved and lying in the midst of death. And his redemption, objectively, is God's work through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ, God's Son, the Mediator of God and Man. And because redemption is solely the work of God, the elect sinner is also from the viewpoint of redemption "the man of God." But even that is not all, the elect sinner redeemed by Christ must be made actual partaker of that redemption. And also this is solely the work of God. God regenerates His elect child, implants into him the new, heavenly life which is from above, a gift of God's grace. And after God regenerates His elect child He also calls him out of the darkness of sin into the light of His grace, of His Son, into the light of life and fellowship with God. The Lord gives His child faith which is the living tie whereby he is united to his blessed Redeemer and in Him a living member of the body of Christ, a friend and confidant of God. And, too, God justifies him in Christ, by faith, in the day of final redemption. God also sanctifies him, and presently God glorifies him and makes him share in heavenly perfection in the glory of his Redeemer. — That is really "*The Man of God*." He is 'man of God' in every way, in every respect, and from every viewpoint. He is chosen, redeemed, saved, glorified by God, and God makes him inherit the eternal perfection of covenant fellowship with Him.

Do you now fully understand as to who is "The Man of God?" He is the elect, the christian, the believer. And it is this 'man of God' that must be trained, educated by the Church. This is the holy, official calling of the Church through the office. Indeed, a glorious task but also a great responsibility.

But if this is part of the task of the Church, and it is by no means a task of minor importance, the question may well be raised: "Where can this man of God be found?" The Church must know this in order to be able to train him and "Thoroughly furnish him unto all good works," as it is expressed in II Timothy 3:17. It stands to reason if this man of God is found everywhere in general and nowhere in particular, the Church cannot very well reach him and train him and furnish him. It would become an impossible task. The Church would not know where to find him, how to reach him and how to go about his training. However, God has not placed the Church before such an impossible task. True, 'the man of God' may be found everywhere in the sense that the elect are scattered over the face of the earth and that out of every tribe, nation and tongue there are those that shall be saved. But it is not true that 'the man of God' is found everywhere in the sense that we never know where to look

for him and that we are never sure whether we deal with him. No, according to God's own Word "The man of God" is found in the generations of God's people. And that of course narrows down the circle considerably. The man of God is found in the Church. It has pleased God that the generations of His people should be saved and that His covenant of grace should run through the bedding of the natural seed of His people. And the generations of God's people bring forth the spiritual seed, the elect, the children of God, the true believers. That does not mean that none can be brought in from the outside (if that were true there would not be such a thing as mission work), but whenever this happens, through the irresistible operation of the Spirit and the preaching of the Word, these 'outsiders' are brought 'inside', within the sphere of the Church and the covenant. And thus also they and their children, and their generations, are brought within the sphere of the covenant in its historical manifestation.

Hence, the 'man of God,' and we are thinking here first of all of the true spiritual seed as they have as yet not come to years of discretion, is found in the Church.

Does the foregoing now imply that we claim that all children in the Church, born out of the generations of God's people, are true, *spiritual* seed? Or, to put it somewhat differently, do we *presuppose* that all children of believers are regenerated? Not at all. Both Scripture and experience clearly teach us that not all *is* Israel that is *of* Israel. Also reprobation is found among the children of believers.

How then, you ask, must we approach this matter, must the Church select, 'pick out' the elect, the spiritual seed, the man of God, and train, instruct, furnish that man of God? This is impossible, and it would be sheer presumption on the part of the Church to thus, arbitrarily, select 'the man of God' out of her own midst. No, but it is the solemn duty of the Church to treat, instruct, educate *all* her natural seed as though every individual child in her midst were 'a man of God.'

Perhaps you say: "But the Church will never be able to furnish the carnal seed unto all good works, will never be able to educate the reprobate into becoming 'a man of God.' This is perfectly correct. Neither does God demand that of the Church. But God does demand that the Church treat, instruct, train every covenant child as 'the man of God.' In other words the Church may not proceed from the exception (which will come to manifestation in due time), the Church may not have the negative approach, but she must proceed from the rule, and the organic conception, that our covenant children are God's children, elect, redeemed by Him. — That is the positive approach.

This is an all important point the Church must

ever keep in mind in her training of the covenant youth. She may not treat the covenant children as though they are heathens, or as objects of mission work and evangelization. In her preaching, teaching, training, the Church must ever be conscious of the fact that she is dealing with "The man of God." And this *man of God* must be furnished unto all good works. What this implies more particularly we hope to explain in a subsequent article.

J. D.

FROM HOLY WRIT

A few remarks of an introductory nature may not be considered out of order. Remarks pertaining to the general set-up of this rubrick.

Our editor of the Standard Bearer has requested, that those contributing to this department could write exegetical studies. These should be of a consecutive nature. In attempting to meet with this requirement the undersigned has agreed with the Rev. H. Veldman to also write on the first section of the Epistle to the Ephesians. The Rev. Veldman would write on the first 6 verses, and I would continue from thereon.

Naturally, each would then be free to write according to his own mode of procedure and method. Those who have followed the articles of Rev. Veldman rather closely will have noticed that he followed the analytical method. He has written an article on each of the verses, and carefully analyzed each phrase and concept. That was his privilege.

It appears to us that with the analytical method it is more difficult to bring the unity of thought to the foreground that underlies each element of thought in this section. We say this, not because we would affirm that it is an easy matter to bring this unity of the apostle's thought, as presented in this epistle, to the foreground. This will ever remain a difficult task, whatever the method of treatment. Yet we feel confident that the synthetic treatment of this passage will show us more of the building and less of the component parts that are used in the making and structure of the building, than is the case with mere careful analysis of each verse and clause.

The Rev. H. Veldman has, according to agreement, called attention to the verses 1-6 of chapter 1 of Ephesians. Our interest in continuing the discussion of this Scripture passage is particularly to the verses 3-6. We need not enter into any details as to what our esteemed colaborer has written. His articles on these verses are in our possession, and are written in

clear and concise language, speak for themselves and are not in need of further illucidation.

In the course of our discussion in this article and those to follow, we will, of course, have opportunity to refer to these verses and to the explanations given by the afore-mentioned author. Indeed, the proper understanding of the verses 7-14, in no little way, hinges on the correct understanding and exegesis of the verses 3-6.

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Permit us to call your attention to the fact that we wish to discuss the verses 7-14 by dividing it into two sections. The former of these will be the verses 7-10; the latter the verses 11-14.

We will first call attention to the verses 7-10. These verses read as follows: "In Whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace; wherein He hath abounded (which He hath made to abound) toward us in all wisdom and prudence; having made known unto us the Mystery of His will, according to His good-pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself: That in the (unto a) dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one (sum up) all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; *even* in Him (in Him, I say)".

The above quotation forcibly and clearly places two matters, two benefits of grace on the foreground. The one benefit is: *That the Church of the New Testament Dispensation, as a living, spiritual organism in Christ Jesus, has in the Beloved (Son of God) the Redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.* The other benefit is: That to this Church, who thus has been redeemed, *God has caused to abound all wisdom and prudence, by revealing the Mystery of His will to them.* The former of these propositions we find clearly stated in verse 7; the latter in verse 8.

In attempting to understand the implication of each of these benefits we wish to call attention to the following:

1. What each of these benefits imply. We will ask, what it means that "we have the redemption through the blood (of the Beloved) and the forgiveness of sins." We will also investigate what the apostle understands by "all wisdom and prudence" and that it now has been "caused to abound to us."

2. What the relationship is between these two benefits. Are they connected in any way in the plan and purpose of God? Does the one necessarily have to become the possession of the church with the other? If so, are they on a par with each other, in correlative position, or is the one subservient to the other? We might ask, how are the two related in the light of the justice of God, and, how are they related in the ex-

perience of the Church? To these and similar questions we hope to call attention in this short series of articles.

Let us begin with the former of the two questions just enumerated.

The text that we have in mind first of all is verse 7. It reads: "In whom we have the redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of transgressions". This phrase calls for rather careful analysis. It is pregnant with theology.

The first question is: What is the meaning of: "The redemption through His blood". The term "redemption" really means: That which has been brought about by paying a "ransom" price, release by ransom. In olden times a slave could be set at liberty, either by paying a great price of money to his owner himself, or by another who paid the price for him. Hence, redemption touches the question of becoming a free man, a son in contradistinction from a bondman, a slave. This is very suggestive in this connection in our text. For the "we" who have obtained this redemption, are, according to chapter 2:3, children of wrath even as the others. All are fallen men, subject to the penalty of sin and death, and therefore, to the wrath of God. We are all in the moral and spiritual bondage of corruption and death. We have not the right to serve God, to love Him, to dwell before His face in holiness, to live the spotless life of the sons of God in His tabernacle and in His communion. That is *the* slavery of sin. When the apostle here speaks of "redemption" he means therefore: that act of God's grace whereby He has paid the price, brought about the release by ransom, so that we are no longer slaves, but free-born sons. By virtue of this ransom by paying the price we receive the right to the friendship and love of God.

"Redemption" is therefore a legal act of God changing our status in relationship to the law of God and to "all things". It is the cornerstone, the immoveable Rock upon which all God's dealings with the church rest. This is something to ever bear in mind when beholding the "blessings in heavenly places".

This redemption is designated in the text as being *the* redemption. It is singled out by the writer as standing in a class all by itself. That it stands thus by itself is due to three reasons. The first is, that He who brings about the "redemption", who pays the price of release is the "Beloved". He is God's own Son, the Only Begotten Son in the flesh, in Whom all God's good-pleasure is. Secondly, because those who He redeems are under *the* debt of guilt. They are under the guilt of sin, are guilty before the living God! And, lastly, this is *the* redemption because of the "ransom" that is brought. The ransom price in this case is not the blood of goats and bullocks (Hebrews 9:12-14) nor corruptible things as silver and gold (I Peter 1:18) but by the "blood of Him, that is, of the

Beloved". The "blood" stands for the life of the "Soul". Man becomes a living soul. As to the physical side of man he lives a life of flesh and blood. And the life is in the blood, but not in the flesh. Thus it is with the animals, and thus also with man. And whereas Christ took upon Himself our flesh and blood (Hebrews 2:14) He could in deepest obedience of love give His life as a ransom price for sin. The meritorious cause of the freedom that we have is alone this "blood" of the Beloved, the "blood of the New Covenant". The cross of our Lord Jesus Christ is thus the way to the right to sonship; it is the establishment of the love of God for us. Redemption is basic in the work of God; it underlies all God's dealings with us.

This brings us to the second part of this text, "the forgiveness of transgressions". In this connection there are two matters that merit our attention. The one is: What is the meaning of this phrase; the other: what is its relationship to "the redemption in His blood".

"Transgressions" is the term the apostle employs in the original and not "sins", as in Colossians 1:14. Not that there is an essential difference between these two terms, that each would designate a different reality in fallen and depraved man. Both refer to man as he is a moral slave; both refer to man in slavery as he stands in relationship to God and His holy law. They differ only in the imagery employed. The term "sins" looks at man's "missing the mark" of living in perfect love toward God and the keeping of His commandments, while "transgression" refers to this same offence as an overstepping of the path marked out by God. We should not overlook the fact, that the apostle in both Colossians 1:14 and here in Eph. 1:7 speaks in the plural. He says "transgressions", not "transgression". The implication being, that the apostle has not only in mind sin viewed as one whole, but rather in its *many offences*. Two matters are thus brought to the foreground. Firstly, that each individual sin is in the sight of God the *transgression* of His holy will. Secondly, that in *our life* each transgression counts, it weighs heavy on the balances of God's justice, cries for vengeance. They all point an accusing finger at us, condemning us to death and hell! By them we are marked and branded as slaves of iniquity, sold under sin!

With this in mind we are in a position to ask: What is *forgiveness* of transgression? The term "forgiveness" literally means: To let go, to permit to depart. In connection with our transgressions it means: not to *impute* our transgressions to us.

Thus understood the question cannot be suppressed, as to what the difference is between "redemption" and "forgiveness of transgressions". Grammatically it is possible to view forgiveness as being identical with

have the following: "In whom we have the redemption through His blood, namely, the forgiveness of our transgressions". However, it can hardly be considered correct to thus construe the sense. In the first place it may be remarked, that "redemption" is quite a different act than "forgiveness". The former is brought about by the blood of Christ once and for all on the accursed tree. It is the laying of the Cornerstone of the building of Salvation. This is not the case with "forgiveness". Forgiveness is a benefit of God's grace that we daily receive. And in the text it is therefore not so immediately connected with the "blood" of Christ as is our "redemption". In close connection with the foregoing remarks, it should not escape our attention that the idea of redemption and of forgiveness are not identical. Forgiveness is: not imputing sins; not condemning on account of actual transgressions. Redemption is the making possible this forgiveness—possible so that the justice of God may stand and the just demand of the law met. Forgiveness is therefore rooted in redemption.

We may, therefore, conclude that both the "redemption in Christ's blood" and the "forgiveness of sins" are related as follows:

1. Both are acts of God's love and grace for us. Fact is that this is emphatically stated in the latter part of this verse. As such they are aspects of the same love of God for us.

2. "Redemption" is the love of God in Christ's work of obedience and death on the cross *for us*; "forgiveness" is the application of this work by the same love of God through the testimony of the gospel and of the Holy Spirit *in our hearts*, giving us a good conscience toward God.

3. Hence it is alone in the forgiveness of sins, that we taste and receive the work of redemption, the right to eternal life and glory, to a life of sanctification and of a walk in the good works of *gratitude*. Surely the church possesses in Christ's redemptive labors also the gift of holiness of sanctification, but this is not here mentioned; it is implied, however, in the basic work of Christ on the cross, and in the forgiveness of sins.

The legal element in the work of God is placed on the foreground; and that not without good reason.

But to this we hope to call attention in subsequent articles.

G. L.

CLASSIS EAST

of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet in regular session, D. V. Wednesday morning January 9, at 9:00 in the First Prot. Ref. Church.

PERISCOPE

FAST DEVELOPMENT

The fast development of all things toward the end of time, thus keeping pace with the prediction of our Lord: "Behold I come QUICKLY", is to be seen on all sides in our fast living and fast developing age. We have freshly before us the fast development of the science of warfare. Think of the fast developing science of government, where the very so-called democratic governments of yesteryear are already employing the governing methods of the so-called Dictatorships of a conquered enemy. Think also of the fast development in the line of industry and traveling facilities, such as the automobile and airplane. But we were very much impressed by the fast development of communication and thus of communion, in the field of radio, when we read some interesting data about that invention.

Many of our youth will look up surprised to learn that the radio is celebrating its twenty fifth anniversary this month. It was just 25 years ago that the first radio broadcast was made, and still it has developed in this period from the crystal set and ear-phone type, to the great 100 million dollar industry it is today, with receiving sets in over 90 percent of the homes of America.

It seems but yesterday that we as school children, were bitten by the radio "bug", which we assembled in our attics, and breathlessly twisting a couple of dials in the attempt to hear some distant station call, and in great excitement erecting antennas on the housetop.

It was at Detroit, Michigan that the first broadcast was made 25 years ago over station WWJ. Shortly after that station KDKA at Pittsburgh made the first broadcast of the election returns of the Harding-Cox election. And at the end of the year 1922 there were over 600 stations throughout the United States broadcasting this and that, and radio sets were selling in great quantities.

It was not long but that nearly everyone possessed the old fashioned simple crystal set, which was able to pick up broadcasts of 25 miles away and nearer. Finally the two and three-tube "loud speaker" set became the latest and the head phones and house-top antenna became a thing of the past. When radio stations joined by telephone in nationwide network in 1926, the radio industry boomed.

This radio industry is still young therefore, and we are just beginning to see some of the future developments along this line, such as the development of tele-

vision and facsimile. But look at the tremendous development wrought within 25 short years. The whole world and all people in the world have become neighbors, able to communicate with each other through the ether waves which God has created for us in the air. A remarkably fast development. And how we become accustomed to these wonders of God's creation. Only a few short years ago many good men condemned having a radio set in the home, for it was an instrument of the devil. Today it is being used by those very men and it is being used to good advantage to propagate the truth and bring the gospel to those shut in.

But it is also used by the Devil and the world on such a scale that the world and its most ungodly practices are being brought right within the home also of God's elect. With its next step of television it will bring into your home the words not only but the very pictures and plays of Hollywood with all their obscenity and immorality and ungodliness. It brings within your homes the things that formerly could only be seen and heard in the theater and picture shows of the world and from which you have taught your children to stay. And because the world can be brought right within your home, a word of warning is certainly in place that we use also this marvellous invention, only in the fear of the Lord and with spiritual discretion. The sinful world is developing very fast, keeping tempo with the fast development of science and invention. This fast development tells us: "Behold I (Christ) come quickly and my reward is with me". Let us be sober and watch unto prayer.

CORRUPT UNION LABOR

More than at any time before in the history of the United States, the labor unions are restless and authorizing strikes which put men out of work by the hundred thousands. The corruption of the labor unions was revealed a few years back at the time of the so-called sit-down strikes, when unionized labor would not vacate the plant they were working in, but would stay in the shop though refusing to work. They would literally "take over" the plants from the owners and would not allow anyone else to run them either. That was plain stealing of course. And all those being members of such unions were robbers plain and simple.

Today the corruption of labor unions is revealed again, though in a different garb than in the days of the sit-down strike. However the principle is the same. Again the union is appropriating to itself rights which it does not possess. I am not discussing their 30 percent wage increase demands now. But the union wants management to open its books so that the union can and shall determine how much profit the management may make and how much in

wages can and must be paid out to labor. We believe this to be all wrong. Perhaps the books of the company would show huge profits and then again perhaps they would not. But the right to open and examine the books of another certainly is no business of the employee.

But there is greater evil in the union labor demands. In respect to the coming steel strike, the union breaks its pledged contract which runs until October, 1946, merely upon the fact that conditions today do not warrant holding itself to its contract. We would ask the union: "Knowing that conditions change, why did you sign a contract then until October?" Certainly this violates the principle given us in Psalm 15 where we read of those who are blessed and who will dwell in the tabernacle of the Lord: "He that sweareth to his own hurt and changeth not". It has been said that one must judge of any organization on the basis of its officially adopted constitution. True. But also on the basis of its joint actions. And the actions of the unions are corrupt to the core and membership in such unions cannot be tolerated by the members of the union of Christ and the believers, n.l. the church.

CONSISTENCY! THOU ART A JEWEL

The United States government has in the past years upheld and supported the rights of organized labor to bargain collectively with management. It even protests by law, labor's rights in this. At the same time the United States government has repeatedly stated its strongest opposition to the oppression by foreign governments of minority groups such as the Jews, and others. It speaks in horror of "racial discrimination". It shouts from the housetops that it believes in the *equal rights of all men*, regardless of color, race or creed. Just yesterday I read an article by Mrs. Roosevelt in which she tries to prove that the Jews in the past have always been the most loyal type Americans and should never be discriminated against. But note the following. Today we see the American government upholding the labor unions in their un-American practices of forbidding good American citizens to work. When the labor union says: "Strike"! then everyone in the factory must lay down their job, regardless whether they want to work or not. The "minority group" called Christians, are not allowed, even for conscience sake, to work. They are forbidden to enter the factory premises by the pickets. Yes, they are not even allowed to work, when union goes back to work, unless they join the union first. That is the closed shop which is upheld by our own government.

Where then are the equal rights of all men so highly extolled by our government? In the light of the fore-

going, how can this country still talk about the "terrible oppression of the minorities" such as was practiced against the Jews? Our own government upholds this terrible oppression of the minority group of Christians who for conscience sake cannot and will not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. There is but one court of appeal for that minority group of Christians, and that is as James tells us in his epistle, chapter 5 verse 4, the Lord Sabaoth.

Even "civic righteousness" which is so carefully upheld by the Christian Reformed brethren, is trodden under foot. For the minority group of Christians cannot take their case civilly to court, for even the Supreme Court of the United States has upheld this oppression of the righteous. It upholds "collective bargaining" and the "closed shop". Where then is the second table of the law, which teaches: "Love your neighbor as yourself?" Labor does not even allow its fellow-laborer to have and hold a job. Is that "civic righteousness" and love to the neighbor? Not at all. Labor hates labor also, when it comes to the issue of righteousness. But Uncle Sam upholds this all. O consistency, thou art a jewel. May our Christian laborers shun the modern labor movement in the name of truth and righteousness. And be spiritually isolated from all the world.

"TOO BAD", SAYS UNION

The following clipping from the Grand Rapids Press may be of interest to all our people. It is a news item from Holland, Michigan. "A union official Wednesday described the proposed liquidation of Holland Motor Express, Inc., as "too bad" but added, "There's nothing we can do about it".

The comment was made by Jacob Dertien, business agent of local 406 of the AFL Teamsters union, which, he said, had had frequent trouble with the local trucking firm. Dertien said the union had not been notified of the contemplated shutdown as announced Tuesday by John Cooper, the president of the firm.

Cooper said his decision to go out of business followed a strike by his drivers in protest to non-union drivers of Standard Grocers Co. Inc. of Holland, Muskegon and Grand Rapids, hauling their own supplies from the motor express terminal here."

Comment is superfluous. Labor union can see plainly that it is forcing itself out of jobs, and the longer it strikes the poorer it gets.

THINKING ABOUT MISSIONS

Yes, we are thinking about mission activity. Our mission committee is busy thinking about mission activities for our Protestant Reformed Churches. The mission activities of our Churches is at present about

nil. Our radio work of course is mostly in the hands of societies, except that recently in the East it has been taken over by the consistory of the Fuller Ave. Church. But outside of that, we have no mission work going on at all, as far as we know. This is not a healthy situation. So our mission committee is studying the advisability of recommending foreign mission work. There are various possibilities in this line. We can support the efforts of the Christian Reformed Churches in their China field or elsewhere. Or we could help support the efforts of the Orthodox Presbyterian Churches in their foreign mission endeavors. Or we can begin the establishment of our own Foreign Mission field. This all is commendable.

We would like to present to our readers, however, also the cause of our home mission work. We are a bit afraid that this phase of mission activity has been neglected. In the history of our churches we have had but one missionary in the field. And his labors were blessed. Attempts have been made to get another man. Thus far unsuccessfully. Yet there has not been much zeal in our midst for this cause. For many, many months now no attempt has been made to call a missionary. Nor did our Synod deem it necessary to send out a man to the camps during the war years to witness to the truth. It is perhaps time that we look away from the field we have been looking at, namely, the Christian Reformed Church people, and look beyond. And is there not a large home field right in our own country? There is a vast unchurched group in our country, not to speak of the field of churches that are apostating from the truth. Lest that field be neglected we would urge that not only our mission committee be thinking about foreign mission endeavor, but that all our people and our societies also join in thinking and speaking about and discussing our whole mission setup. And let us hear about the fruits of these discussions. Send them in to us. Tell us what you think about along these lines. And in the meantime: "Pray the Lord of the harvest, for laborers". For the harvest is great but the laborers are few.

L. V.

Changeless is Jehovah's mercy
Unto those who fear His Name,
From eternity abiding
To eternity the same.

All the faithful to His covenant
Shall behold His righteousness;
He will be their strength and refuge,
And their children's children bless.

IN MEMORIAM

The Ladies Aid Society of the First Prot. Ref. Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan, wishes to express their sincere sympathy in the death of a faithful member,

MRS. RENA ZUIDEMA

who was taken into her rest October 20, 1945.

May the Lord comfort the bereaved in the knowledge that she has entered into that rest which Christ has prepared for His own.

Mrs. H. Hoeksema, Pres.

Mrs. A. Van Tuinen, Sec'y.

IN MEMORIAM

It has pleased the Lord to take out of our midst, unto Himself, our brother elder,

C. N. KUNZ

who passed away suddenly at the age of 60 years, December 10, 1945.

We express herewith our heartfelt sympathy with the bereaved family, and may our covenant God give us courage and strength to continue in the work of the Lord, which our departed brother loved with all his heart.

The Consistory of the
Creston Prot. Ref. Church, Grand Rapids, Mich.

John D. De Jong, Pres.

P. Vanden Engel, Clerk.

IN MEMORIAM

The Ladies Society of the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church herewith wishes to express its sympathy with one of its members, Mrs. T. Miedema, in the loss of her

MOTHER

who passed away in the Netherlands.

May the faith that she has gone before into the Father's house with its many mansions, be of comfort to her and all the relatives.

Ladies Society of Hudsonville, Michigan

Rev. Bernard Kok, Pres.

Mrs. John B. Lubbers, Sec'y.