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MEDITATION

Inzien In De Volmaakte Wet

Want zoo iemand een hoorder is des Woords en niet een dader, die is een man gelijk, welke zijn aangeboren aangezicht, bemerkt in eenen spiegel; Want hij heeft zichzelf bemerkt, en is weggegaan, en heeft terstond vergeten, hoedanig hij was. Maar die inzien in de volmaakte wet, die der vrijheid is, en daarbij blijft, deze, geen vergetelijk hoorder geworden zijnde, maar een dader des werks, deze, zeg ik, zal gelukkig zijn in dit zijn doen.

Jak.1:23-25.

Doet dat!

Zijt daders des Woords!

Dat is de boodschap, de zeer ernstige vermaning, die in het verband door Jakobus tot de "twaalf stammen," die in de verstrooiing zijn, wordt gericht.

En niet alleen ontvangt deze vermaning allen nadruk in het verband, maar heel de brief van Jakobus laat hetzelfde geluid hooren: zijt daders, en niet alleen hoorders des Woords, opdat gij vrienden Gods moogt zijn in het midden van eene booze en vijandige wereld!

En toch staat de Jakobus brief in dit opzicht niet alleen, zooals wel eens ten onrechte wordt beweerd. Allereerst toch zij opgemerkt, dat Jakobus geen tegenstelling maakt tusschen hooren en doen, noch ook tusschen gelooven en doen, maar de twee onlosmakelijk aan elkander verbindt: hoort en doet, gelooft en werkt, en toon uw geloof uit de werken. En, in de tweede plaats, mag er op gewezen, dat hetzelfde geluid in heel de Schrift wordt gehoord. Immers gaan niet zij het koninkrijk der hemelen in, die daar zeggen Heere! Heere! maar zij, die doen den wil des Vaders, die in de hemelen is.

Zijt daders des Woords!

Hoe zou het anders kunnen? Het Woord is immers

het Woord van den levenden God, den oppersten Potentat der potentaten, de Heer van Hemel en aarde. En hoe zou Zijn Woord ooit de bedoeling kunnen hebben, om door ons te worden ontvangen of gehoord, zooals iemand luistert naar een verhaal, dat hij misschien wel gaarne hoort, maar dat hem persoonlijk toch niet aangaat; of naar een krantenbericht, dat misschien wel van groot gewicht is, en waarvoor hij den berichtgever dankbaar is, maar dat hem in zijn persoonlijk bestaan toch ten slotte niet raakt; of naar eene philosophische, of ook theologische bespiegeling of verhandeling, die wel interesseert, maar die toch ten slotte open is en blijft voor discussie, en waardoor niemand in het diepst van zijn hart zoo getroffen is, dat het hem nu een kwestie van leven of dood wordt, om haar in praktijk te brengen, en zijn leven naar haar te richten; of ook zelfs naar een "mooie preek," die een gehoor een uur of zoo aangenaam bezig houdt, maar die ten slotte niemand in heilige verbijstering zich op de borst doet slaan of doet vragen: "wat moeten wij doen, mannen broeders?"

Zijt hoorders, ja; maar van het Woord Gods, en juist daarom daders!

Want immers, die het Woord hoort en niet doet, is een man gelijk, die zijn huis op het zand gebouwd heeft. En de slagregen is nedergevallen, en de waterstroomen zijn gekomen, en de winden hebben gewaaid, en zijn tegen hetzelfde huis aangeslagen, en het is gevallen, en zijn val was groot. . . .

Zijt daders des Woords!

Want, die het Woord hoort en doet, is een man gelijk, die zijn huis op een rots gebouwd heeft.

En de slagregen is nedergevallen, en de waterstroomen zijn gekomen, en de winden hebben gewaaid, en zijn tegen hetzelfde huis aangeslagen, en het is niet gevallen, want het was op een steenrots gegrond.

Doet dat!

Want, tenzij ge een dader des Woords zijt, zijt ge, naar de voorstelling van Gods Woord hier in Jakobus, een man gelijk, die zijn aangeboren aangezicht in een spiegel aanschouwt, en terstond weggegaan is, en onmiddellijk vergeten heeft, hoedanig hij was. . . .

Doet dat! Want gij kunt dat Woord wel vergeten, maar het vergeet u nimmer!

En gelukkig is hij, die inziet in de volmaakte wet, en daarbij blijft!

Hij toch is geen vergetelijk hoorder, maar een dader des werks!

En hij is gelukkig in zijn doen!

De volmaakte wet!

Gods wet is volmaakt, bekeerende de ziel!

Daarom omschrijft dan ook het Schriftwoord hier die volmaakte wet als de wet der vrijheid, dat wil zeggen, de wet, die waarlijk vrijmaakt, en de dader in waarachtige vrijheid doet leven.

En vrijheid is volkomen, geestelijk harmonie met den wil Gods.

Immers bestaat ware vrijheid, voor het schepsel, dat onder de wet is, nooit in bandeloosheid. Nooit is het schepsel zichzelf eene wet. Het is geformeerd door den wil Gods. En die wil Gods bepaalt het, omringt het van alle zijden, is de sfeer, waarin het bestaat, zich beweegt, leeft. En zijne vrijheid is juist, dat het die wet ook in zijn binnenste draagt, en met geheel zijne natuur in overeenstemming is met de wetskring, waarin het door Zijn Schepper is gezet. Zoo is het voor den mensch, geschapen als redelijk-zedelijk creatuur, geformeerd om den wil Gods te kennen, te willen, en met eene vrije keuze der liefde te doen. Voor hem is de wet: "Gij zult mij liefhebben, met uw gansche hart, met geheel uwe ziel, en alle uwe krachten!" En waarachtige vrijheid voor dien mensch is, dat hij zich, met verstand en wil en al zijn begeeren, in innerlijke overeenstemming weet met die wet der liefde Gods.

Echter, ofschoon die wet der liefde wel waarlijk voor den mensch, die zich binnen haar kring beweegt, de wet der vrijheid is, is zij toch niet in staat *den zondaar vrij te maken*.

De zondaar toch is gebonden.

Hij is niet anders dan een slaaf der zonde. Weliswaar, is hij een gewillige slaaf. Hij is, niet van buiten af, maar van binnen uit gebonden. Hij dient wel de zonde, omdat hij de duisternis liefheeft, en omdat de ongerechtigheid de keuze zijner ziel is; maar hij kan toch niets anders liefhebben, en hij is niet bij machte zijne keuze op de gerechtigheid Gods te zetten.

En nu is het eigenaardige van de wet Gods, dat ze dien zondaar juist tot die slavernij der zonde veroordeelt. Ze kan hem nooit vrijmaken. Nimmer kan ze iets anders doen dan blijven eischen: doe dat! En daarbij schenkt ze wel leven aan hem, die van dat woord der wet dader is; maar ze vervloekt ook een iegelijk, die daarin niet blijft. Den zondaar veroordeelt ze tot den dood. En die dood houdt juist in, dat de overtreders nu in banden der zonde is geklonken.

Het zal dan ook duidelijk zijn, dat "de volmaakte

wet, die der vrijheid is" op iets anders ziet dan op de wet als gebod, dat van buiten af op den zondaar aankomt, eischend en belovend en vervloekend, maar nooit reddend, en machteloos om vrij te maken.

Hetgeen der wet onmogelijk was, dewijl zij door het vleesch krachteloos was!

De wet der vrijheid is het woord der waarheid, waardoor de God der volkomene zaligheid in Christus u gebaard heeft ten leven.

Het is de wet, het Woord Gods, zooals het tot ons komt in Christus Jezus, den Geliefde. In Hem is de wet weer eene wet der vrijheid geworden, eene wet, die vrijmaakt, en die in vrijheid doet wandelen. In Hem heeft God immers Zelf gedaan, wat der wet onmogelijk was: Hij heeft *de zonde* in het vleesch veroordeeld, haar de macht en het recht ontnomen om over den mensch, in de menschenlijke natuur te heerschen. Want *voor* de zonde is Hij gekomen. *Voor* de zonde kwam Hij onder de wet, om *voor* de zonde, dat is, met betrekking tot de zonde, in verband met de zonde, te leven en te sterven, te gehoorzamen tot den dood, ja, den dood des kruises; en alzoo *voor* de zonde aan den eisch van Gods recht te voldoen. In Hem is vrijheid van vloek en dood, van verdoemenis en oordeel, van de slavernij der zonde. In Hem is vergeving en verlossing en het eeuwige leven. In Hem is het recht en de macht, om ons te verlossen van de overheersching der zonde, en te doen ingaan in de vrijheid der heerlijkheid der kinderen Gods.

De wet der vrijheid is het Woord Gods in Hem!

Het is het Woord, dat tot ons komt als de openbaring van den God onzer zaligheid in Christus, vervat in de Schrift.

Het Woord is het, dat de Geest van Christus Zelf tot ons richt, om ons vrij te maken van de wet der zonde en des doods, en te baren ten leven!

Die volmaakte wet in Christus openbaart en ontdekt ons aan de gevangenschap, waarin we van nature liggen: zij spreekt van gerechtigheid en zonde en oordeel en dood, en toont ons ons natuurlijk aangezicht.

Dat Woord der waarheid spreekt tot ons van de vrijheid, die daar is in Christus Jezus: vrijheid van schuld en verdoemenis; vrijheid ook van de overheerschende macht van zonde en dood; de vrijheid van het eeuwige leven uit loutere genade.

Die wet der vrijheid openbaart ons het leven en wandelen in de vrijheid, naar den wille Gods, als vrienden Gods in het midden der wereld, en roept ons altijd weer toe: "wandelt als kinderen des lights!"

Van haar zingt, wie haar kent, met recht:

Des Heeren wet nochtans
Verspreidt volmaakter glans,
Dewijl zij 't hart bekeert.
't Is Gods getuigenis,
Dat eeuwig zeker is,

En slechten wijsheid leert.
 Wat Gods bevel ons zegt
 Vertoont ons 't heiligst recht,
 En kan geen kwaad gedoogen.
 Zijn wil, die 't hart verheugt,
 Eischt zuiverheid en deugd,
 Verlicht de duister' oogen.

Inzien in de volmaakte wet!

De wet der vrijheid wordt hier vergeleken bij eenen spiegel.

En in dien spiegel is er een tweeërlei inzien, of liever, een inzien van tweeërlei soort menschen, van de vergetelijke hoorder des Woords, en van de dader des werks.

Hij, die slechts hoorder is, en niet een dader des werks, wordt vergeleken bij iemand, die wel metterdaad voor den spiegel komt te staan: hij gaat naar de kerk, hij zit onder de verkondiging des Woords.

Hij bemerkt ook even zijn aangezicht. Hij verstaat wel, wat door den verkondiger van het Woord der waarheid wordt gezegd, en ziet ook even, dat dit Woord hem persoonlijk bedoelt.

Misschien mogen we het beeld, dat hier gebezigd wordt, ook nog even verder toepassen, en als Jakobus spreekt van den man, die zijn "aangeboren aangezicht bemerkt" dit zoo verstaan, dat deze hoorder des Woords ook zijn eigen, natuurlijk beeld in de verkondiging des Woords ontwaart, als het getuigt van zonde en schuld en verdorvenheid en dood.

Maar hij gaat heen.

Hij blijft voor den spiegel niet staan.

Hij vergeet terstond hoedanig hij was.

Hij komt uit de kerk, en zegt, dat het kostelijk weer is, of dat we noodig regen moesten hebben, of dat hij pas een nieuw huis gebouwd, of een nieuwe boerderij gekocht, of een andere positie gekregen heeft; of misschien, dat domine mooi gepreekt heeft, of dat hij er niet veel aan heeft gehad, of dat hij het met de preek niet heelemaal eens is; of, indien hij wat erg leerstellig is aangelegd, weet hij de preek in bijzonderheden uit te pluizen en naar de zuivere Protestantsche Gereformeerde maatstaf te beoordeelen. . . .

Maar hij staat niet meer voor den spiegel.

Hij heeft wel gehoord, maar niet het Woord van den levenden God tot hem persoonlijk gericht.

Met vreeze en beving, om zijne eigene zaligheid uit te werken, is hij niet vervuld.

Hij wordt geen dader des Woords!

Maar wie inzien in de volmaakte wet, en daarbij blijft!

Let op dien man!

Ziet hem voor den spiegel der volmaakte wet staan, als aan den grond genageld. Hij buigt zich voorover, naar den spiegel toe. Hij tuurt maar in den spiegel.

Wat hij daar ziet gaat hem persoonlijk aan, neemt hem geheel en al in beslag. Nergens anders dan bij dien spiegel is zijne belangstelling. Voor niets anders heeft hij oog of oor. En hij blijft daarbij. Hij kan van voor dien spiegel niet weer weg. Hoe langer hij tuurt, hoe meer hij zijn eigen beeld ziet, in al het afschuwelijke van zijne verdorvenheid en verdoemelijkheid; maar hoe meer hij ook het licht ziet van de waarachtige vrijheid, die in Christus Jezus is, het beeld van den Christus Zelf, in al de heerlijkheid en volheid van Zijn heil.

En hoe langer hij tuurt, hoe meer ziet hij.

En hoe meer hij ziet, hoe meer hij verlangt te zien. Steeds meer wil hij uit dien spiegel leeren van zonde, van verlossing, van dankbaarheid.

Voor den spiegel der volmaakte wet, die der vrijheid is, blijft hij staan. Zijn leven lang.

Hij is door het Woord der waarheid in beslag genomen.

Door dat Woord werd hij gebaard ten leven.

En het maakt hem waarlijk vrij!

Dader des werks!

Dat is hij, die inzien in de volmaakte wet, en daarbij blijft.

Och neen, geen dader des werks in den zin, dat hij nu groote dingen doet, groot en machtig naar de maatstaf der wereld, dat hij nu profeteert en duivelen uitwerpt.

Maar wel zoo, dat hij het Woord der waarheid gehoorzaam is, en naar de wet des Geestes des levens begint te wandelen.

Dader des Woords is hij, die, als dat Woord spreekt van zonde en oordeel, zich in stof en asch verootmoedigt voor zijnen God, en met den tollenaar van de gelijkenis uitroept: "O God, wees mij zondaar genadig!" Dader des Woords is hij, die, als dat Woord de gerechtigheid Gods, die uit het geloof van Jezus Christus is, verkondigt, al zijne eigene gerechtigheden wegwerpt als een onrein kleed, om zich geheel en al op den Christus Gods te verlaten voor tijd en eeuwigheid. Dader des Woords is hij, die, als dat Woord oproept tot bekeering, en tot een verlaten van den weg der zonde, om in het licht te wandelen, den strijd des geloofs aanbindt, de wereld verlaat, zijne oude natuur doodt, en in een nieuw godzalig leven wandelt voor Gods aangezicht.

En in dat zijn doen is hij gelukzalig.

Zalig nu, want alzoo smaakt hij de blijdschap der vrijheid, die in Christus Jezus is. En "in het houden van die is grooten loon!"

Zalig in hope, want alzoo ziet hij uit naar den dag der volkomene verlossing.

En die hope beschaamt nimmer!

H. H.

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CONTENTS

MEDITATION —

INZIEN IN DE VOLMAAKTE WET.....433

Rev. H. Hoeksema

EDITORIALS —

AS TO SUFFERING.....436

THE IDEA OF CONSCIENCE IN THE EPISTLES OF
PUL438

THE IDEA OF THE COVENANT.....439

Rev. H. Hoeksema

THE CALLING OF THE MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL.....444

JOB SEES GOD WITH HIS EYE.....446

Rev. G. M. Ophoff

WONDERE VEILIGHEID.....449

Rev. G. Vos

OUR BAPTISM FORM.....451

Rev. C. Hanko

FROM HOLY WRIT.....453

Rev. G. Lubbers

PERISCOPE456

Rev. B. Kok

FIELD DAY — Due to the lack of co-operation and poor attendance the board of the R.F.P.A. will not hold its annual field day this year. THE BOARD.

EDITORIALS

As To Suffering

(Continued)

2. A second reason, why we must answer the question of Mr. Van Putten with an unqualified affirmative, meaning that all our suffering and sorrow, and not only that which is directly caused by persecution for Christ's sake, tend to our salvation, is that all things come unto us, not by chance, but by the hand of our heavenly Father. This means:

a. That the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from before the foundation of the world, so planned all things, that they concentrate around Christ and His Church, and are conducive to the salvation of the elect. Nothing is excluded from this eternal counsel of our Father in Christ. All the suffering and evil of this present time are included in His eternal purpose, and not only the suffering that is inflicted upon us directly because we are believers in this world.

b. That, in time, He centrally revealed His great love to His people, that motivated Him in His eternal purpose of salvation, in the death of His Son. This means "that He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all." And the apostle concludes from this: "how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" God is for us, nothing can be against us.

c. That He is in all things, sustaining them and continuing them in their existence, as "by His hand." And that He directs them all, so that they cannot move or stir, but by His will. This, too, includes all things, the anorganic and the organic creation, the brute and the rational creature, both good and evil. But if it is the hand of our heavenly Father that moves and directs them to the end He purposed, it follows that they serve the purpose of our eternal glory.

This is, indeed, the plain teaching of our Heidelberg Catechism in Lord's Day X: "What dost thou understand by the providence of God? The almighty and everywhere present power of God; whereby, as it were by his hand, he upholds and governs heaven, and earth, and all creatures; so that herbs and grass, rain and drought, fruitful and barren years, meat and drink, health and sickness, riches and poverty, yea, and all things, come, not by chance, but by His fatherly hand."

What advantage is it to us to know that God has created, and by His providence doth still uphold all things? That we may be patient in adversity;

thankful in prosperity; and that in all things which may hereafter befall us, we place our firm trust in our faithful God and Father, that nothing shall separate us from His love: since all things are so in His hand that without His will they cannot so much as move."

Surely, the Catechism does not only have in mind the sufferings that are directly the result of the hatred of the world against the Church. It speaks of the most common things: drought, barren years, sickness, poverty.

And thus it teaches also in Lord's Day IX: "that he will make whatever evils he sends upon me, in this valley of tears, turn out to my advantage; for he is able to do it, being almighty God, and willing, being a faithful Father."

But again I say, the brethren in Holland know all these things as well as I do. And, therefore, I can hardly believe that there can be any doubt or dispute about this truth.

3. If it is objected that the general sufferings of this present time, which believers endure together with unbelievers, are the direct result of sin, and, therefore, punishments which we must bear, so that they cannot be a means to our salvation, nor have significance for eternal glory, the answer is plain. Christ bore the punishment for all our sins. There is no punishment for sin left for those that are in Christ, neither in eternity, nor in time. For believers, punishment has been changed into chastisement, and the two differ in this:

a. That punishment is the expression and maintenance of God's justice against sin and the sinner; the motive of punishment is just and holy wrath. Chastisement is the expression of fatherly love.

b. That in punishment there is no hope: he that is punished for his sin must needs perish; satisfaction of God's justice is the purpose, and that means death. But chastisement has its purpose in correction, sanctification, our eternal good.

Thus Scripture teaches us in Heb. 12:6 ff. "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. . . . For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."

And this is implied in the teaching of our Catechism in question 42: "Since then Christ died for us, why must we also die? Our death is not a satisfaction for our sins, but only an abolishing of sin, and a passage

into eternal life." Surely, death works for our advantage and salvation.

4. Moreover, that the suffering of this present time in general, works unto our salvation, and has significance with respect to eternal glory, follows from the fact, that God always gives grace according to the way. It is, of course, not the suffering as such that is a means unto salvation, and that has a sanctifying influence on the children of God. That is never the case, not even with that form of suffering that we endure for Christ's sake in this world. But according to the way, God gives grace. He gives strength to bear the burden, faith to cling to Him in all our tribulation, patience to endure and to give God the glory. It is God's own work in us that is cast into the crucible of affliction. And He preserves His work by His grace. Hence it is that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience (or the approved state), and experience hope.

5. Finally, it seems hardly necessary to point out that this is the direct teaching of Scripture everywhere. It is true that behind the scene of Job's sufferings, there stands Satan, claiming that Job serves God only because of his prosperity, and challenging the Almighty to cast him into the fire of tribulation. Fact is, nevertheless, that Job's affliction is not to be explained as suffering for Christ's sake in the direct sense of persecution by the world. The hand of God is heavy on him. Nevertheless, God is glorified in his suffering, and he learns patience through tribulation. When Asaph complains that the wicked prosper, and that his own punishment awaits him every morning, he is not thinking merely of suffering for Christ's sake in the narrow sense of that word. And does not the Word of God in Rom. 8:28 include whatever may befall the children of God without exception, when it teaches us that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to his purpose"?

Once more, it is difficult for me to believe that there are brethren in Holland that deny all this.

But on the supposition that there are, and that they actually do deny that all the suffering of the people of God tends to their salvation, and has meaning for their eternal glory, they face a serious question.

For it is not sufficient to deny this.

They face the problem of the suffering of this present time, as well as brother Van Putten. And if they really deny that all sufferings tends to salvation for them that love God, what significance does it have, according to them.

However, I still have that persistent feeling that there is an element in this dispute that I do not understand.

If so, let the brethren write.

H. H.

The Idea Of Conscience In The Epistles Of Paul *

(Continued)

In the first epistle to Timothy we find several passages that are of interest for our subject. In ch. 1:5 the apostle speaks of *agapee ek suneideeseos agathees*, love out of a good conscience, as the end of the commandment. The whole text reads as follows: "Now the end of the commandment is charity (love) out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned." We may remark here: 1. That the apostle is especially thinking of the love of believers to one another, though this is never to be separated from the love of God. 2. True love is ethical. It is the bond of perfectness. It requires an ethically perfect subject and an ethically perfect object. 3. Hence, it can proceed only out of a pure heart, i.e., a heart that is capable of loving the good. And its activity requires a good conscience as its source, i.e., a conscience that is free from the condemning and damaging judgments of evil thoughts and designs with respect to the object of love. Where such judgments defile the conscience, they must first be removed. This is true of our love to God. Only when we are aware in our conscience of the justifying judgment of God concerning us, i.e., only in faith, can we actually and consciously love God. But this is equally true of the love to our neighbor. As long as we are conscious of evil designs in our heart concerning him, or carry the testimony in our conscience that he has been or is plotting evil against us, love cannot function. Love requires a good conscience.

Also ch. 1:19 speaks of a good conscience. Timothy is exhorted to war a good warfare, "holding faith and a good conscience." If he is to fight a good fight as minister of the gospel, he must not use craftiness and deceit, as do the false teachers. He must keep a good conscience. That is, in holding and proclaiming the faith he must so walk that he may receive God's approving judgment, so that, on the basis of it, his conscience may be free from the condemning judgments of evil motives and designs. A good conscience, therefore, is a conscience free from accusing and condemning judgments, awareness of God's approving judgment. It is the same as a pure conscience. Cf. I Tim. 3:9.

On the other hand, in ch. 4:2 the apostle speaks of men that have their conscience seared with a hot iron: *kekausteeriasmenoon teen idian suneideesin*.

* Paper delivered at the Conference of Protestant Reformed ministers in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Kekausteeriasmenoon is perfect participle passive of *kausteeriadzoo*, which means to brand or mark with a hot iron, an operation that was performed not only on slaves, but also on criminals. Hence, a conscience marked by a hot iron is not, as is usually supposed a blunted conscience that no longer bears testimony, but a conscience that is branded with the mark of evil, that bears the witness of evil and sin against its subject. We may remark here: 1. That the one Who thus brands the conscience of the wicked, in this case of the false teachers, is God, Who inscribes His own judgment of their evil work in their hearts. 2. That here, as in many other places, Scripture teaches us that the spreaders of false doctrines are conscious of their evil designs.

In the second epistle of Paul to Timothy the term *conscience* occurs only in ch. 1:3, where the apostle declares that he served God from his forefathers with a pure conscience. The meaning is that the gospel the apostle preached is a continuation of the doctrine and service of the O. T. fathers. He does not preach a new doctrine, or a strange God. Of this he has the testimony in his own conscience. He is aware of God's approving judgment that he never knowingly falsified the truth of revelation.

Finally, we must call your attention to a few passages from the epistle to the Hebrews. Speaking of the service of the earthly tabernacle, the author writes in 9:9: "Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience," (*kata teen eideesin*). Similarly in ch. 10:2: "For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have no more conscience of sins," (*suneideesin hamartioon*). In connection with both these passages we may at once take ch. 9:14: "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience to serve the living God?" And ch. 10:22: "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience. . . ." With regard to these passages, we note:

1. That dead works are works that have their origin in death, i.e. in the spiritual death of the natural man. They are, therefore, characterized by death, i.e. they are void of the life of the love of God, and on the contrary motivated by the enmity of carnal mind. And they tend to death, i.e. to the destruction of a life apart from God.

2. All these dead works of the natural man are under the condemning judgment of God, and the divine sentence of condemnation is constantly inscribed in man's heart and consciousness.

3. The awareness of, and agreement with this divine judgment against his dead works is man's conscience. It is an evil conscience, a defiled conscience.

4. The sacrifices of the Old Testament in themselves could never blot out these sentences of divine condemnation, and the consciousness of them and agreement with them in the conscience. But the blood of Christ does purge the conscience from these dead works, these self-condemning sentences of the consciences are blotted out by His perfect sacrifice, because it is the sacrifice of the Son of God, offered through the eternal Spirit, and without spot, i.e. in perfect obedience. Through faith in Him the conscience is sprinkled and purged and the testimony of an everlasting and perfect righteousness takes its dominating place. Apart from faith, therefore, and outside of Christ, the old witness of condemnation is still in the conscience: our conscience accuses us. But in Christ there is the testimony of an all overpowering righteousness, putting to silence even the voice of the old conscience of sin. A purged conscience is a conscience that is justified by faith in Christ crucified and raised from the dead.

There is one more text in Hebrews in which the term conscience occurs, namely, ch. 13:18. Here the author declares: "for we trust we have a good conscience." For the meaning of this, however, we may refer to our discussion of a good conscience in the epistles to Timothy. The fact that here *kaleen* is used instead of *agathen* makes no material difference. It probably adds the notion that a good conscience is also beautiful and pleasant.

We now offer the following conclusions:

1. Conscience is that function of our consciousness whereby we are immediately aware of and agree with and consent to the judgment of God concerning all our actions with respect to their ethical character and value, which He inscribes into our consciousness by the Spirit and Word, either approving or condemning us as the subject of our actions.

2. Although the contents and the degree of clearness of the conscience vary according to the light of revelation received; and although it is true that one may oppose and contradict the voice of his conscience; as an apprehension of the moral judgment of God the testimony and verdict of the conscience are always true and correct.

3. The Scriptural idea of the conscience differs from the categorical imperative in that it is not antecedent but sequent; it is not directive but critical; it does not command the will, but judge moral actions. This does not mean, of course, that the critical verdict of conscience when passed upon an inner thought or desire, may not restrain the outward act.

4. Although the verdict of the conscience, strictly speaking, is always true and correct, the conscience should always be subjected to a critical examination in the light of objective revelation.

5. A good conscience is the apprehension by faith of the justifying judgment of God in Christ; an evil conscience is the very opposite of this.

6. Strictly speaking, the Christian is not delivered from his evil conscience as long as he is in this life: the consciousness of his past sins and his present transgressions, as well as of the defilement of his old nature, is always with him, and he is aware that God's judgment condemns these sins. Hence, his own conscience accuses him. However, the apprehension by faith of the justifying judgment of God in Christ is not simply another conscience, coordinate with his carnal conscience, but is the awareness of a righteousness that overcomes and completely negates the condemning judgment of his accusing conscience. Hence, he is always in need of the forgiveness of sins.

H. H.

The Idea Of The Covenant*

Since the time of the Reformation, the doctrine of the covenant has occupied an important place in Reformed theology, and a dominating position in the life of the Reformed churches. It is a peculiarly Reformed heritage, even more distinctively so than the doctrine of sovereign predestination, for while the latter truth is held by other than Reformed churches, the truth of the covenant was developed exclusively by them. And we can agree with Dr. G. Vos when he finds the reason for this in the strong emphasis which Reformed theology places on the glory of God as the end of all things, for the realization of the covenant is, indeed, the highest self-revelation of God as the implication of all infinite perfections, and as the Triune, Who within Himself lives a covenant life of friendship. (1).

This development of and emphasis on is not to be traced to Calvin as its source, and certainly not to Melancton, the synergist, as some would contend, but rather to Bullinger and the Swiss theologians. Calvin does, indeed, speak of the covenant, both in his insistence of the unity of the Old and New Testaments, (2) and in his defense of paedobaptism (3); but he does so rather in passing. It was through their contact with Zürich that Olevianus and the Reformed theologians of Germany gave the doctrine of the cove-

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through the same contact this truth received a place nant an integral place in their theology (4); and in the theological system of the theologians of Reformed persuasion in the Netherlands, such as Junius, Gomarus, Trelcatius Sr. and Jr., etc. and in England, of whom may be mentioned the names of Thomas Blake, Perkins, and James Ussher. (5). The development seems to have been thus that the idea of the covenant was applied, first of all, to the relation between God and His elect in Christ, and to the way of salvation, and later to the relation between God and Adam in the state of rectitude. The former became known as the covenant of grace, the latter was known by various terms, such as the covenant of works, the covenant of nature, the covenant of the law.

This latter development of the idea of the covenant with Adam is evident from the Reformed Confessions. For while some of the earlier Confessions, such as the *Confessio Belgica* and the Heidelberg Catechism do speak of the covenant of grace, they fail to mention the covenant of works. (6). And not only are they silent concerning the covenant relation between God and man in the state of rectitude, but it is a striking fact that, in their explanation of original sin they follow the organic line, and omit the idea of the imputation of Adam's guilt to all his posterity altogether. (7). This is all the more important in view of the fact that Reformed theologians generally adopted the creationist view of the origin of the individual soul. Even the Canons of Dordrecht, 1618-19, attribute the corruption of the human nature wholly to the propagation of the fallen and corrupt nature of our first parents: the idea of federal imputation is not so much as suggested. (8). Only when we come to the Westminster Confession, which dates from the middle of the seventeenth century, do we find mention of the covenant of works, and, in close connection therewith, of the imputation of original guilt as a basis for the corruption of all mankind. (9). Since that time, however, also the idea that the original relation between God and man was that of a covenant, was generally accepted and developed by Reformed theologians everywhere. The covenant idea occupies an essential place in any Reformed system of dogma. Reformed theology is federal theology.

Now, in this essay we are to answer the question: what is the idea of the covenant? By *idea*, I take it, is meant something similar to general conception. The term is derived from the Greek *idein*, to see, and refers therefore to a mental image of anything, whether sensible or insensible. My subject, therefore, concerns the proper conception of the covenant in all its essential elements, such as might be expressed in a definition. Besides, the subject as it was assigned to me tacitly implies that there is one, general idea or concept of the covenant that is common to every form this re-

lation between God and man may assume. Taking my subject somewhat broadly, I shall try, after having given a historical review of the question, to answer three questions, viz., 1. What is the covenant relation? 2. What is its deepest ground? 3. How is it finally realized?

When we consult our Reformed Confessions, we find little or nothing that can be of aid to us in defining the idea of the covenant. The Heidelberg Catechism merely declares that infants "sowohl als die Alten in den Bund Gottes and seine Gemeinde gehören," and, therefore, "sollen sie durch die Taufe, als des Bundes Zeichen, der christlichen Kirche eingeleibt und von der unglaübigen Kindern unterschieden werden," but does not define the idea of the covenant. The *Confessio Belgica* declares of the children of the believers: "lesquels nous croyons devoir être baptisés et scellés du signe d'alliance." Our Baptism Form speaks of an "eternal covenant of grace," which God the Father seals unto us, and of two parts in the covenant, our part consisting in this, that we are "obliged unto new obedience, namely that we cleave to this one God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; that we trust in him, and love him with all our hearts, with all our souls, with all our mind, and with all our strength; that we forsake the world, crucify our old nature, and walk in a new and holy life; and it declares that "baptism is a seal and undoubted testimony that we have an eternal covenant of grace with God." And children of believers are said to be entitled to baptism "as heirs of the kingdom of God and of his covenant." (10). All this is, indeed, significant, but it offers no definition of the covenant.

The Westminster Confession reflects the later development of the covenant idea in English theology. It describes the covenant with Adam as something added to his relation to God as creature, and as "a covenant of works, wherein life was promised to Adam, and in him to his posterity, upon condition of perfect and personal obedience"; and speaks of the covenant of grace as a second covenant, "wherein he freely offered unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ, requiring of them faith in him that they may be saved." (11). Here we meet with the idea of the covenant as something additional and secondary, a way to a certain goal, a means to an end. And it is this notion that has become rather prevalent in Reformed theology.

Thus Turrentine defines the covenant as follows: "At *stricte et proprie* notat pactionem Dei cum homine, per quam Deus sua bona, et praecipue vitam aeternam, illi promittit, et ab homine vicissim officium et cultum restipulatur, certis signis externis confirmationis causa adhibitis, quod *dipleuron* et *mutuum* vocatur, quia *mutua* constat partium foederatarum obligatione, hinc promissione a parte Dei, inde conditionis stipulatione ab hominis parte," that is: "Strictly and properly the

covenant denotes a pact of God with man, through which God promises his blessings, particularly eternal life, to that one, and in like manner from man requires due obedience and loving worship, certain external signs being employed for the sake of confirmation; which is called bilateral and mutual, because it is established by a mutual obligation of the covenanting parties, here by the promise on the part of God, there by the keeping of the condition on the part of man."

Van Maestricht defines the covenant as "een overeenstemming tusschen God en Zijn volk, waarin God belooft de gelukzaligheid en allerlei daaraan ondergeschikte goederen en eischt afhankelijkheid tot Zijne eer en heerlijkheid; en de Kerk van hare zijde belooft aan God afhankelijkheid en gehoorzaamheid en eischt de belofte belooning." And he defines the "covenant of works" as "Dat verdrag 't welk God in Adam ingegaan heeft met het gansche menschelijke geslacht om aan hetzelfde te geven het eeuwige leven onder beding van eene volkomene gehoorzaamheid." (13). The covenant, according to him, is strictly bilateral, has two parties, that enter into a mutual treaty: God and the Church. (14). And according to Brakel, the covenant of grace is "een overeenkomst of verdrag. . . tusschen God. . . en de uitverkorenen, in welke God belooft de verlossing. . . en zaligheid, in welke de mensch toestemt, dezelve aanneemt," etc. (14). And the "covenant of works" he defines as an "overeenkomst tusschen God en het menschelijk geslacht in Adam, in welke God de eeuwige zaligheid belooft, onder voorwaarde van gehoorzaamheid, en den eeuwigen dood dreigt, indien hij niet gehoorzaamde, welke belofte en voorwaarde Adam aannam." (15). According to Prof. W. Heyns, the essence of the covenant is the "belofte om u te zijn tot een God." This promise, according to him, gives to all that are born under the covenant, the objective right to the inheritance of salvation, but their actual coming into possession of that inheritance, and the application by the Spirit to them of all the blessings of salvation, depends upon their consent by faith to the covenant. (16).

In the more recent Dutch theologians one finds the glimmer of a deeper and richer notion of the covenant. Dr. A. Kuyper Sr. begins to emphasize the fundamental truth that God is a covenant God in Himself, and that the relation between the three persons of the Trinity is a covenant relation. He finds in this covenant-life of the triune Jehovah the basis for all covenant dealings of God with man. And he even speaks of the covenant as a relation of friendship, in which God eats and drinks with man, and speaks with him as a man with his brother, as a friend with his friend. (17). "Verbondssluiting is een daad van vriendschap." (18). Yet, ultimately, he does not transcend the notion of the covenant as a means to an end, as an agreement or pact or alliance between God and

man. (19). The idea of the covenant is, according to him, expressed in the definition that it is an alliance between two parties against a third. (20).

Also Dr. Bavinck emphasizes that the covenant rests in the covenant-life of God Himself: "Het pactum salutis doet ons de verhouding en het leven der drie personen in het Goddelijk wezen kennen als een verbondsleven, als een leven der hoogste zelfbewustheid en der hoogste vrijheid. Hier, binnen het Goddelijk wezen, heeft het verbond zijn volle realiteit." (21). He even finds in the covenant the very essence of religion, as fellowship with the living God. (22). But also he ultimately considers the covenant as a means to an end, as a way of salvation. The covenant of grace "beschrijft den weg, waarlangs deze uitverkorenen tot hunne bestemming zullen geraken; het is de bedding, waarin de stroom der verkiesing zich voortbeweegt naar de eeuwigheid heen." (23). And Dr. G. Vos defines the covenant of grace as "the gracious pact between the offended God and the offending sinner, in which God promises eternal life in the way of faith in Christ and the sinner accepts this believingly." (24). And identically the same definition may be found in the "Dogmatiek" of Prof. F. M. Ten Hoor. (25).

All these definitions of the covenant have this in common that they describe the covenant as a means to an end, not as an end, the highest end in itself. They differ only in their denotation of the essence of the covenant, some emphasizing the idea of an agreement or pact or alliance, others that of the promise, still others that of a way unto salvation. They differ, too, in their description of the parties of the covenant, and their relation to each other. According to some, the covenant is strictly unilateral, according to others it is completely bilateral, while still others prefer to speak of the covenant as unilateral in its origin but bilateral in its operation. And again, some identify the *pactum salutis* with the covenant of grace, while others consider the covenant of redemption as the basis for the covenant of grace. Some insist that the covenant of grace is established with Christ, others call it a pact between God and the elect, while some prefer to speak of it as an agreement between the offended God and the offending sinner. But always the covenant is essentially a means to an end, a pact or agreement, and the essential elements are always the promise of eternal life and the conditions of faith and obedience.

There are several grave and serious objections against this presentation of the idea of the covenant. First of all, how can man ever be a party, a contracting party, in relation to the living God? God is God, the infinite, eternal, self-existent One. He is the Lord, the absolute Sovereign, out of Whom and through Whom, and unto Whom are all things. There is none

beside Him. And man is the creature, that owes all that he is and has, body and soul, all his powers and talents, his entire existence, every moment, to his Lord and Creator. God is the Fount, and man is the creature that drinks from that Fountain of good. God is the all-sufficient I AM, man is completely and constantly dependent for his whole life and existence upon Him. There is no obligation man can assume apart from that which is encumbent upon him by reason of his being a creature: to love the Lord his God with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his mind, and with all his strength, every moment of his existence. He can bring nothing to God, whose is all the silver and the gold, and the cattle on a thousand hills. He can do nothing for the Most High, Who is perfectly self-sufficient. All the good man has is a gift of grace, of free and sovereign favor, from his God. Even if he may love and serve his Creator, it is a gift of divine goodness, for which man owes Him thanks. How, then, can the relation of that creature to his Creator ever be or become an agreement or pact, according to which man may merit something higher than he has already attained, even eternal life? Shall I make an alliance with the worm that crawls at my feet? Can the man that owes me a thousand dollars merit some other good that I am able to bestow upon him, by paying his debt? Can man, then, be a contracting party with the Most High, and merit anything with Him to Whom he owes all? God forbid! The covenant between God and man can never be a pact with mutual stipulations, conditions, and promises.

Reformed theologians have felt this objection. And, therefore, they usually add that this form of dealing on the part of God with man, is due to His condescending grace and mercy. By grace man is put in a position in which he is a party with God, and is able to merit or attain some higher good, particularly eternal life. But I object that God cannot deny Himself, and that even by grace He cannot so condescend to man that the latter becomes a party next to Him, so that he has the prerogative to make his stipulations, and to demand eternal life on the basis of anything that he has done. The declaration of the law: "do this and thou shalt live," is for ever true, to be sure, because obedience is the sole way of God's favor, and in His favor is life; but it does not, and can never mean that by keeping God's precepts man in the state of righteousness could attain to that higher state which is called life eternal, and which is attainable only through the Son of God. And it is true, that in the covenant of grace, as in all covenants, there are, indeed, two parts, and that our part of the covenant is that we love the Lord our God with all our heart, and with all our mind, and with all our soul, and with all our strength; but let me remark, first of all, that "parts" is not the same as "parties"; and, secondly,

that our part of the covenant is not a condition which we must fulfill in order to enter into the covenant of God, but rather our expression, as rational and moral creatures, of the covenant relation which God establishes with us by His grace. The covenant is first, established with us through "God's part," and our part follows, and is the fruit of that gracious act of God.

Nor do we ever read in Scripture of a mutual transaction between God and man, in which God stipulates certain conditions, which man accepts, and by fulfilling which he may make himself worthy of eternal life. The covenant of works is usually described as consisting in a promise, a condition, and a penalty. The promise is said to be eternal life, the condition is obedience in regard to the probationary command not to eat of the forbidden tree, and the penalty is death. But, first of all, let it be noted that Scripture does not speak one word, in the first three chapters of Genesis, of a mutual agreement between God and Adam. It is God that acts, and He alone. He plants the tree of knowledge of good and evil in the garden, and He gives Adam the command: "thou shalt not eat of it." The command is in no wise contingent upon Adam's agreement or consent. He is under the law. Secondly, the idea that God promised Adam eternal life in case he obeyed this command, is a pure invention. Scripture does not speak of such a promise, nor suggest it. The notion of such a promise is deduced from the threatened penalty: death. It is argued that, since death was the penalty on disobedience, eternal life was the implied promise. And, it may be granted, Adam would not have died had he remained obedient to God's command, but this does not imply that he would have attained to eternal life, and to heavenly glory. He would have been confirmed in the state of life in which he had been created. Moreover, we may safely state that eternal life is a form of fellowship with the living God which Adam could never attain. It is a form of life that has and requires for its basis the union of God and man established in the incarnation of the Son of God, and that has its central realization in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. No promise of eternal life, therefore, was, nor could have been, extended to Adam, nor was the keeping of the probationary command presented to him as a condition unto that higher, heavenly life.

Nor is that other manifestation of the covenant that is called the covenant of grace ever presented in Scripture as a pact or agreement. Uniformly we read that God establishes His covenant. When, after man had violated God's covenant, He continues and maintains it, He reveals this act of grace in a sovereign declaration: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed, it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Gen,

3:15. On man's consent this realization of the covenant depends in no wise. Both before and immediately after the flood, the Lord says to Noah that He will establish His covenant with him, and with his seed. The covenant is God's, and He alone establishes it. Gen. 6:18; 9:11. The same expression is used to denote God's covenant with Abraham. Gen. 17:7. And thus it is throughout Scripture. Through Isaiah Jehovah says to His people: "I will make an everlasting covenant of peace with you." Isa. 55:3; and through Jeremiah: "I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel." Jer. 31:31; Heb. 8:8-10. And the unilateral character of the covenant is clearly revealed in the vision of Jehovah to Abraham recorded in Gen. 15:9 ff. Abraham is commanded to take several sacrificial animals, divide them into halves, and lay the pieces in a row over against each other. Jehovah then, under the symbols of a smoking furnace and a burning lamp, passes through the midst of the pieces. The meaning of this ritual of passing between the halves of the sacrificial animals must have been well known to Abraham. It symbolically expressed that the covenant was inviolably ratified, and that he that so ratified it, guaranteed it with his life, would rather go through death than annul it. Now, while in performing this ceremony the covenanting parties usually would pass through the pieces, because a covenant could not be of one, in the vision of Genesis 15 the Lord alone performs this act, thus indicating that He is His own party, and that He alone establishes His covenant. This is probably the reason, why the word *BERITH* is usually rendered by the Greek *diatheke*, which emphasizes the onesidedness of this covenant.

To this we may add the consideration that this follows also from the fact that the covenant is historically established in the line of continued generation, and that infants as well as adults are comprehended in the covenant of God. How could they be included in the covenant if the establishment of it were a pact, and depended upon the consent of the covenanting parties? Reformed theologians generally have felt that it is absurd to speak of the covenant as an agreement, a mutual alliance between the infinite God and the speck of dust that is man, and, therefore, they usually admit that it is unilateral in its establishment. But if this be true, it depends throughout on God alone. It is no longer a pact. It has no conditions. God sovereignly performs all that belongs to the establishment and realization of the covenant. He alone and sovereignly determines who are to be received into covenant relation with Him. And on His faithfulness alone it is based. God is faithful! That is the reason why the covenant is eternal. He maintains it. That is why it cannot be broken. It is an everlasting covenant!

And here lies another reason why the Scriptural

idea of the covenant cannot be correctly represented by those notions of it that make it a way to salvation, or a means to an end. It is an everlasting covenant. "I will make an everlasting covenant of peace with you," Isa. 55:3. "I will make an everlasting covenant with them," Isa. 61:8. "And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." Jer. 32:40. "Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore." Ezek. 37:26. Similarly, our Baptism Form speaks of an eternal covenant of grace. Now, a way is not everlasting. When the destination is reached the way is come to an end. A means is not eternal. When the thing to be effected by it has been attained, the means has served its purpose. An everlasting covenant, therefore, is not a way or means, but is the destination, the end itself. It is not accidental, but essential.

(to be continued)

H. H.

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H. H.

THROUGH THE AGES

The Calling of the Minister of The Gospel *

(Conclusion)

In the light of observation previously made we can understand the question that the church puts to the minister of the gospel when she ordains him, this question, "I ask thee, whether thou feelest in thy heart that thou art lawfully called of God's church, and therefore of God Himself, to this holy ministry?" What the minister of the gospel feels in his heart, namely that he is called of God, is a matter of divine revelation, and this of necessity, as he is called of God. Hence, the question does not mean, "Dost thou feel in thy heart that the church in calling thee violated no ecclesiastical rules?" That is determined by investigation and is therefore not a matter of divine revelation. Nor can the question mean, "do you feel in your heart that you received the majority of votes of the calling church and that you have in your possession its call-letter?"

The expression: "Do you feel in your heart", is not used of matters that can be seen and handled, investigated, proved and demonstrated. The question under consideration means this, "Dost thou feel in thy heart that the voice of the church is the voice of Christ, laying necessity upon thee, and that therefore thou art called of God to this holy ministry, so that thou must preach God's Gospel and that woe is unto thee, if thou dost not preach God's gospel."

Thus the question does not mean to convey the thought that it is really the church that calls a man to the holy ministry. The church can no more call a man to the holy ministry than she can call a sinner out of darkness into God's light. The church proclaims the call; she says to the man whom she ordains, "Preach the gospel; feed the flock of God; love Christ; feed His sheep." The church proclaims to the man Christ's words of blessing; but it is Christ who binds these commands and exhortations on his heart so that he feels in his heart that he is called of God. Thus it is Christ who by the voice of the church commands and authorizes the man to preach God's gospel, and who blesses the man—the called one—and thereby qualifies him for the work of the ministry.

Rightly considered, that question of the Form: "Dost thou feel in thy heart that thou art called of God's church and therefore of God Himself to this holy ministry", is a terrible question. It is this by

reason of what it asks. It is this secondly because the voice of the church is the voice of Christ. Christ is the interrogator here; the one replying to this question answers Christ, before whose sight all things are naked and opened. Thirdly, consider the answer: "Yes, truly, with all my heart." If a man decides to study the theology in preparation for the ministry of the gospel in the same frame of mind and heart that any worldly man decides to study for lawyer or doctor or for whatever profession it may be, he may find himself in a predicament when finally confronted by this question of the Form. For he ordered his life like a worldling. The worldly man buys and sells, disposes of one farm and takes another, throws over this job for that. Today he is farmer, next year a carpenter, and the following year he buys a store. Today he lives here and tomorrow he takes up his residence there, and the only one whom he consults is himself and the only question he asks is, "does it pay; is it to my material advantage." He never asks, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Then on a day, when disgusted with things in general, he might throw down his tools and decide to study for the ministry, if he is not too old. This man has reason to be afraid of that question of the Form, should he be confronted with it.

But the young man, who by the mercy of God has learned to ask, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" need not be afraid of this question. The first thing that Paul asked when converted is, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" And the Lord told him and will tell any man who asks, also tell him that he must study theology in preparation for the ministry of the gospel,—tell him not by an audible voice from heaven in a vision during the night, but through the events and experiences that form his daily living, and through what the man is physically, mentally, and spiritually; and then the man enters the seminary feeling in his heart that necessity is laid upon him to study theology in preparation for the holy ministry, and that therefore he is in the Lord's way—the way that leads to the office of minister of the gospel. Then when finally the church of God puts to him the question: "Dost thou feel in thy heart that thou art called of God's church and therefore of God Himself to this holy ministry", he with a good conscience before God replies, "Yes, truly, with all my heart."

It is necessary that a young man enter the seminary feeling in his heart that he must study theology in preparation for the Holy ministry, that this necessity is laid upon him. That man is in earnest and will apply himself with zeal. But not until he is called of the church is he called of God to the holy ministry.

Now there have always been some to deny this. The contention is that the Lord does not call through His church but apart from His church through the Spirit; that a ministry called of the church is a crea-

* Address delivered on the occasion of the graduation of Candidate James Howerzyl.

tion of man. But this reasoning is not according to the Scriptures. True it is, that the prophets of the Old Testament were called directly of God. The apostles were sent directly by Christ. But even long before the death of the last apostle Christ began calling His servants by the voice of the church. The seven deacons of the church in Jerusalem were called of the church. Statements occur in the Epistles plainly indicating that the common pastors and teachers in the apostolic churches were called of the congregations. Paul was sent by the church in Antioch to the Gentiles.

However, if the voice of the calling church is to be the voice of Christ, obligating a man to preach God's gospel, the church must call *lawfully*. So our Reformed fathers insisted and rightly so. The question put to the one ordained reads, "Dost thou feel in thy heart that thou art *lawfully* called of God's church and therefore of God Himself?" According to Art. 4 of the Church Order, the lawful calling of those who have been previously in office consists: first in election by the consistory in cooperation with the congregation; second, examination; and third, ordination. If a man is not called of the consistory in cooperation with the congregation, thus called of the church, he is not called of God; for Christ calls only through the church. Secondly, the church must examine a man before she invests him with the office, if the voice of the church is to be the voice of Christ, obliging a man to preach God's gospel. A church that does not first examine renders the office of ministers of the gospel accessible to unworthy men. Christ certainly will not call by the voice of a church guilty of this sin. Finally, the church must ordain a man; that is, command, admonish, exhort, and bless him with the Scriptures, if the voice of the church is to be the voice of Christ. Christ binds these commands and exhortations upon the heart of a man, and thereby calls him, so that if these commands and words of blessing are not spoken—officially proclaimed by the church—there is no word by which Christ calls a man to the Holy Ministry.

We now pass on to our next point: the significance of being called of God's church and therefore of God Himself to the holy ministry. One brief statement will suffice here. To deny this calling is to say that there is no such thing as God's raising up, commanding, qualifying, and authorizing men to preach His gospel. And were this true, the gospel is not being preached. For certainly a man cannot command, authorize, and qualify himself to preach God's gospel. The only one who can do that is God, so that if He is not doing it, no man is being commanded, authorized, and qualified to preach God's gospel. And if so, God's gospel is not being preached, though the earth be filled with men preaching the gospel. For these men are not called of God and not being called Christ is

not preaching through them; and if Christ does not preach, the gospel is not being preached, and if the gospel is not being preached, the church is not being gathered; and if the church is not being gathered, there is no church; and if there is no church, there is no Christ. And if there is no Christ, there is no God and Father of Christ with a people whom He chose to dwell with Him in His house as redeemed from all their sins. Such are the dreadful implication of the denial of the truth and fact that the minister of the gospel is called of God's church and therefore of God Himself to the Holy Ministry,—called as actually as Moses and Samuel were called of God.

Further, that God calls a man, commands, authorizes, and qualifies him to preach God's gospel, has great meaning for that man. For him whom the Lord commands and sends, He also qualifies for the work of the ministry. The Lord's qualifying a man consists first of all in his causing a man to spiritually discern that apart from Christ he is a sinful man, unwilling and without strength. Aware of his impotence, he by the mercy of God besieges God's throne for grace to do that which he must do but cannot do. And in the way of his prayers, the Lord fulfills all his needs. Let us beware of the man who says that he likes to be a minister of the gospel but cannot say that he feels in his heart that he must be a minister of the gospel. That man is not called of God.

Finally, there is the question how the church may know that a man is truly called of God's church and therefore of God Himself to the Holy Ministry. A man may say that he feels in his heart that he is called of God, but how may the church know that the man speaks the truth or that he is not deceiving himself? What to the church is the sign that the Lord has actually sent him? There is such a sign. It is given by the Lord Himself and receives statement at Deut. 18:23, where we read, "When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him," "that is, thou shalt not hear him but turn away from him, for I have not sent him." In the Old Dispensation there were men who said that the Son of God would come into the flesh, that He would atone for the sins of His people by His sufferings and death. They said this not in the language of the New Testament Scriptures, but in the language of a typical dispensation. And they said, too, that they spoke in the name of the Lord and that the Lord sent them. The Lord sent them indeed; for the thing followed. It came to pass. And they also said that this world is passing away and that there will be new heavens and a new earth. And through all the succeeding ages of the past to the present there have been

men and there now are and ever will be men as long as the earth endureth, who have made and are making these prophecies their own. And they say that they speak in the name of the Lord and that the Lord sent them. Let us receive these men, for the Lord sent them indeed. For the thing follows. It comes to pass. The world is passing away. There will be new heavens and a new earth, where the tabernacle of God will be with men.

G. M. O.

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

Job Sees God With His Eye

Let us now turn to the book of Job and read at verses five and six of chapter 42 as follows, "Then Job answered the Lord and said, I have heard thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes." Job was a true believer, tried perhaps, as no other believer—with the exception of Christ—has ever been tried, the reason being that the Lord wanted to provide His people with an outstanding example of the indestructibility of their faith. Job's case can be briefly stated. God had said of him, that there was none like him in all the earth, a perfect and an upright man, fearing God and eschewing evil. But Satan accused Job of serving God for gain and thereby slandered God. For what Satan denied is, that God is capable of attaching His people to Himself through Christ by a true faith that cannot cease, is thus capable of shedding abroad in their hearts a true love, from which nothing can separate them. To silence the slanderer, God gave him power over all that Job had, including his person. Satan now did his worst. Job was rich in material substance. Besides, he had sons to the number of seven and three daughters. Suddenly, he was overtaken by a calamity of the first magnitude. He was stripped of all his wealth. Fire from heaven consumed his sheep and those that cared for them, and all his children were hurled into eternity by a mighty wind. Shortly thereafter, Job was smitten with a terrible disease. A description of Job's plight, can be had from the book that bears his name. He was stricken with boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. His form and countenance were so disfigured by the disease, that the sufferer's friends could not recognize him. The ulcers seized his whole body both without and inwardly, and emitted a loathsome smell, that drove everyone from the sufferer's presence, and made him seek refuge outside the village upon an ash-heap. The ulcers were accompanied by an itching so intollerable, that he took a piece of

potsherd to scrape the sores. The sufferer was haunted by terrible dreams, and unearthly terrors, and harassed by a sensation of choking. While in this state, his breath was strange to his wife, his kinsfolk failed him, his friends forgot him, and even the young children despised him. "Have pity on me", he cried out, "have pity on me, O my friends, for the hand of God hath touched me." But they had no pity.

In the beginning of his trial, Job's faith was strong. As stripped of all his material possessions, and as standing in the midst of the coffins of his ten children, he worshipped and said, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord." But then, as his anguish and pain increased, Job lost sight of God and descended into the deep, and hell rejoiced, for it seemed as though his faith had ceased. As submerged in the flood of trouble that swept over him, he hurled curses at the day of his birth, accused God of destroying the perfect with the wicked, of laughing at the trials of the innocent, of giving the earth in the hands of the wicked, and of multiplying his wounds without a cause. So did he set himself up as critic over God, in that dark hour, and deny the rectitude and the justice of his afflictions. So do God's people behave, when, in their sufferings, they lose sight of God, and the vile murmurings that rise in their flesh, escapes their lips. Job's speech became very bitter in that dark hour. "If I am wicked," he complained, "why labor I in vain? If I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands ever so clean; yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me." In other words, "I am to be guilty, God wants me so, even me, of all men. I was selected for this treatment. It is utterly vain therefore that I weary myself in trying to be innocent, that I may be acquitted of God." Job's faith seemed to have ceased indeed and hell rejoiced, though all too soon. For this speech, however perverse, is not the mad ravings of an athiest, but the lamentations of one of the saintliest of men, who, as he passes through the valley of the shadows, loses sight of God for the moment, and who is sad beyond words, because it seems to him that God, whose fellowship he craves, now counts him as one of His enemies. So, addressing God once more, he asks God to tell him the "why" and the "wherefore" of His heavy rod, to make known to him the reason of the heavy tribulations peculiar to his trial. Why had he, of all men, to suffer thus? "I will speak in the bitterness of my soul," such is now his complaint, "I will say unto God, do not condemn me; shew me wherefore thou contendest with me. Thou knowest that I am not wicked; and there is none that can deliver out of thine hand." But God is silent. He will answer Job but not immediately.

But three of the four friends, who came to com-

fort Job, imagine that they have the solution of his afflictions. They said to Job, that he was being smitten because, in his well days, he had been walking in the gross sins of godless men. "Thine iniquities, O Job, are infinite," they said, "for thou hast taken a pledge from thy brother for nought, and stripped the naked of their clothing. Thou hast not given water to the weary to drink, and thou hast withholden bread from the hungry. Thou hast sent widows away empty, and the arms of the fatherless hast thou broken. Therefore snares are about thee, and sudden fear troubleth thee". But Job was a man of singular uprightness. Yet, such was their solution of Job's pain. And by it they wounded his soul, cut him to the quick. These friends have a theory as old as the patriarchs. But it is a theory, that is what it is—a theory picked up by the wayside and slung at random at those in affliction and distress. That the wicked are punished, Job well knew. But that they always receive their deserts in this life—and such was the contention of the three friends—he proves untrue. The words of these friends went deep into Job's heart. Poor counsellors they are indeed, Satan's right hand, to hasten Job's infidelity, if God should permit.

There was also a fourth friend, who had come to comfort Job in his sorrows. His name was Elihu. He did not, as these three friends of Job had done, accuse Job of having led, in his well days, a wicked life, to seek therein the solution of his pain. Proceeding on the foundation of Job's being a true child of God, but mindful of his being a sinful man, despite his essential uprightness, he tells Job that God's visitation upon him is a ministry of love, sent for his correction, and that, in the way of his willingness to be corrected, God will heal all his diseases, restore his soul, and crown him anew with honor and glory.

Elihu speaks for God. For this is the true solution of Job's sufferings and of the sufferings of every child of God. In it is contained the germ of the New Testament teaching that "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourges every son whom he receiveth and that, if we endure chastening, God dealeth with us as with sons, Hebrew 12:6, 7. Elihu's solution of Job's suffering is God's answer to Job's request that He reveal to him the "why" and the "wherefore" of his affliction. And although it leaves unanswered the question of the tribulations peculiar to Job's trial and the tribulations peculiar to every believer's trial—for all God's people suffer not alike—it is the only answer that Job receives, because it is an answer fully satisfying to faith, and it opened to Job and to every child of God the way of faith in his afflictions. It shows that, though it is true, that there is a suffering because of sin, it is equally true that not all suffering can be attributed to personal sin. There is a suffering among God's people which is not the result of wickedness; it

is for the spiritual uplifting of God's children.

Job has heard the instruction and the counsel of Elihu. And hearing he is silent. The storm that rages in his bosom subsides, and he becomes thoughtful and pensive. For God is working in him His very own salvation, through sanctifying His word unto Job's heart—the word spoken by Elihu. A new day dawns in Job's soul, and the low-hanging vapors from the abyss are being dispelled by the sanctifying breath of God's Spirit, so that Job now breathes a purer atmosphere.

But why does not Job now praise God and bless His name and glory in tribulations? Why does he remain silent? Because, though he is making progress, he still hears of God by the hearing of the ear, perceives rationally, that God is good, and that his affliction is God's perfect work in him, a work of love. Job's discernment is not yet sufficiently spiritual. That, "whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth", is a truth that, as yet, does not stand out in his mind as a blessed reality. (He knows it to be true, but as yet he can take no comfort from it, so that his mouth remains closed. He must first see God. He must first see God with a spiritual eye, by means of intellectual faith-perception, before he can thank God for his pain, and glory in his sorrows. He must first stand on the summit of the hill of God and behold the beauties of the Lord in His temple, before he can praise. But that hill, that rock, is too high for him. God must set him there, which He now does. For we read, "Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind and said, "Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge." That one was Job. Of this he is guilty. Two things are implied in what the Lord here says to Job: that his suffering is founded on a purpose of God and that Job, by his perverse speeches, is guilty of distorting that purpose by representing it as caprice without purpose. He had accused God, had he not, of multiplying his wounds without a cause. The Lord continues, "Gird up thy loins now like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me." This is a severe approach on the part of God. But Job had need of it for the breaking of his pride. He had set himself up as critic over God. And he must suffer until his pride is broken and he justifies God, seeks his pardon, cleaves to Him as his Saviour, and blesses His name. To attain his purpose with Job, God brings him face to face with His infinite goodness, with His power, wisdom and knowledge, as revealed gloriously in all the wonderful works of His hands in nature. He directs Job's mind to the creation of the earth, to the formation of the sea, to the dawn, to the underworld, to the surface of the earth, and to ice and snow. And he asks Job, whether the earth and its fulness is his work, whether it is under his government and control, and whether he can explain

its operations. "Where wast thou," says the Lord to Job, "when I laid the foundations of the earth? Declare, if thou hast understanding. Hast thou commanded the morning since thy days; and caused the dayspring to know its place? Where is the way where light dwelleth, knoweth thou it? Canst thou lift up thy voice to the clouds, that abundance of waters may cover thee? Canst thou send lightnings, that they may go and say unto thee, Here we are."

Turning from the inanimate creature, the Lord now directs the mind of Job to the wild roaming animals, to the lion, the wild-goat, the raven, the hinds, the wild-ass, the wild ox, the ostrich, the war horse, the hawk. And God asks Job whether these creatures are in his hand, whether he can explain their behaviour and whether they look up for their sustenance to him. "Knowest thou the time when the wild goats bring forth? Who provideth the raven with food? Dost thou Job, Hast thou given the horse strength? Canst thou make him afraid like a grasshopper? Thou, Job who striveth with the Almighty, instruct him now. Thou, who reproveth God, answer." We grasp the thrust of this discourse of the Lord to Job. It is this. "O Job, art thou God, is power, wisdom, knowledge and understanding thine, and am I man, seated at thy feet, that thou shouldest reprove and criticize me, and presume to be able to instruct me, as to how I should order thy life? If so, answer these questions, and I will listen and be informed."

Then Job answered the Lord and said, "Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee. I will lay my hand upon my mouth." We grasp the thrust of Job's reply. It is this, "Thou art God and none else. Thine is all the power and knowledge and wisdom and understanding. That I, a sinful man, should have criticized thee. O the sinfulness of sin, the amazing stupidity of sin, even as it riots in the flesh of God's people."

But God is not yet done with Job. Job has made progress, but he is not yet where God wants him. So the Lord again answers Job out of the whirlwind and says, "Gird up thy loins now like a man: I will demand of thee and declare thou unto me. Wilt thou disannul my judgment? Wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayest be righteous." Also the thrust of this word of God to Job is, "Art thou Job God? Are divine attributes thine?" The Lord continues, "If so, deck thyself now with majesty and excellency. Look on every one that is proud and bring him low, and tread down the wicked in their place. Then will I also confess unto thee that thine own right hand can save", "thus confess that thou art God indeed."

It is enough. Job is humble now. "I know that thou canst do everything," such is his reply to the Lord. "and that no thought can be withholden from thee. Who is he that hideth council?" "That one am I Lord." "Therefore have I uttered things I under-

stood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not." "Thou chastenest me, and I severely found fault with thee. I said that in smitting me, thou wert unjust. But I spake without understanding and knowledge."

Job is now with God in His holy temple, where he sees God with his eye and gains a new insight into his own vileness, wherefore he says, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear but now my eye seeth thee, wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes." It is good for Job to be afflicted. Ascending from the valley of the shadows, he passes onward and upward to new and unknown spiritual heights. He tastes, as never before, that the Lord is good. The question of the "wherefore" of the tribulation peculiar to his trial no longer vexes his soul. It is enough for him to know that "whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth." He can only praise now, for he sees God with his eye.

So has the slanderer been silenced; for Job's faith did not cease. It could not. His faith had suffered only an eclipse. See now what God does to him. He casts Job's sins behind him, defends Job before his accusers, vindicated him, heals his diseases, and crowns him with honor and glory, not certainly because of anything of goodness inhering in Job—Job is vile—but solely for his own name's sake. Certainly, the designs of the book of Job is not to exalt Job but to abase him and to exalt God's indestructible work of grace in him, and thus to exalt God, in order that He may be feared.

During the period of his suffering and pain, Job had put his trust in God. The conviction had continued to be his that Jehovah was his Goel, his defender and redeemer, who in His own good time would arise to justify him in the hearing of his accusers and to deliver him for His name's sake out of all his troubles. And the Lord did not put him to shame. He turned Job's captivity, he healed all his diseases and gave him twice as much as he had before, blessed his latter end more than the beginning: "For he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she-asses. (He had also seven sons and three daughters. . . . And in all the land were no women found so fair as the daughters of Job: and their father gave them inheritance among their brethren.

And "then came unto him all his brothers and sisters, and all they that had been of his acquaintance before." During the period of Job's fiery trial all these brethren and sisters, and acquaintances had kept their distance. They had deemed him smitten of God on account of his sins of which he was innocent. Thus all had forsaken him. He bitterly complains of this, while in his great pain, "O that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me. . . . When I went

out of the gate through the city. . . . The young men saw me and hid themselves: and the aged rose and stood up. . . . but now they that are younger than I have me in derision." Truly, the plight of Job was sorry. But in all his trouble Job held fast to God. And this trust is rewarded. God causes even those acquaintances to return to Job and to retract their vile accusations, and to confess that Job is one of God's just ones, the beloved of Jehovah. And this they confess through their eating bread with him in his house, and comforting him and giving him gifts. And after this Job lived a hundred and forty years, and saw his son's sons, even four generations. So died Job, old and full of days.

G. M. O.

SION'S ZANGEN

Wondere Veiligheid

(Psalm 91; Tweede Deel)

Vanuit een zeker oogpunt, is het geen wonder, dat de goddeloozen zeggen, dat er tegenstrijdigheden in Gods Woord zijn. We dachten daaraan toen we ons voor de tweede reis zetten om iets te schrijven over den een-en-negentigsten psalm. Alles, letterlijk alles in dezen psalm spreekt van veiligheid en welvaart, van stilte en vrede, van alles wat goed is voor het kind Gods. Terwijl in andere psalmen we de klachten van datzelfde kind Gods beluisteren. Strijdt, b.v. psalm 69 niet met psalm 91?

Vanuit een zekere oogpunt, zeiden we. En dat oogpunt is het aardsche, het vleeschelijke, het verkeerde. Daar zien we niet de waarheid, dat alle dingen mede-werken ten goede dengenen die God liefhebben. Als ge dat niet ziet, kunt ge niets doen met dezen psalm. Dan klinkt hij raadselachtig en vreemd.

Neen, we moeten een ander oogpunt hebben, het hemelsche, het geestelijke, het Goddelijke. We moeten de dingen bezien zooals zij bestraald worden met hemelsch, Goddelijk licht. En dan is alles duidelijk. Als ge eerst gezien hebt, dat Gods volk altijd in de schuilplaats gezeten is van den Allerhoogste, dan verstaat ge ook, dat zij altijd den nacht van verschrikking doorkomen. Dan zult ge met beving zien, dat altijd, overal, in verband met alle dingen, menschen en duivelen, het Gods volk welgaat.

O, als we dat maar zien mogen, dan wordt het stil in het diepe hart. Dan kunnen, mogen en moeten we zingen: In de grootste smarten, blijven onze harten in den Heer gerust.

Het gaat Gods volk altijd wel. Alle tranen, bloed en lijden zijn dierbaar in Gods oog. Dat leert ons psalm 91,

We kwamen toe aan het derde vers: "Want Hij zal U redden van den strik des vogelvangers, van de zeer verderfelijke pestilentie."

Het moet direkt duidelijk zijn, dat de Heere hier spreekt van vogelvangers en pestilentie in den figuurlijken zin des woords. Het beteekent niet, dat Gods volk een vrijbrief heeft tegen allerlei ongemak naar het vleesch. Het gaat over geestelijke dingen, waarvan hier gesproken wordt in beeldspraak.

Eerst, zou ik willen zeggen, dat het om onze ziel gaat in dit vers, en niet over het lichaam. Het lichaam van Gods volk is millioen malen gevangen geweest in de strikken der goddeloozen, en de lichamen van Gods volk zijn evenzoogoed als van de goddeloozen, verscheurd geworden door koorts, ziekten en pestilentiën. Dat het over de ziel gaat, kunt ge lezen in Psalm 124:7. Daar gaat het ook over de vogelvangers die er altijd op uit zijn om de zielen van Gods volk te vangen. Daar staat: "Onze ziel is ontkomen, als een vogel uit den strik der vogelvangers; de strik is gebroken, en wij zijn ontkomen."

Tweedens, het gaat hier over de poging der goddeloozen om Gods volk te verstrikken. Dat pogen der godvergetenen gaat door van eeuw tot eeuw. Het is de poging om Gods volk te verleiden met de leugen, om hen te brengen tot het belijden van de leugen. Dat is duidelijk, allereerst, uit de tweede phrase van den tekst. Daar staat: "van de zeer verderfelijke pestilentie." Het is de pestilentie der leugen, die den mensch krank maakt tot den eeuwigen dood toe. En, ten tweede, blijkt het uit het volgende vers, waar de redding uit den strik der vogelvangers en van de zeer verderfelijke pestilentie in verband gezet wordt met de waarheid. Het is de waarheid Gods die ons beveiligd tegen haar tegendeel, de leugen.

Derdens, de duivel zit er achter. Want hij is de vader der leugen. Want hij inspireert de goddeloozen die altijd op den loer liggen om Gods volk te vangen voor het koninkrijk der leugen en der duisternis.

Maar het kan niet. God redt hen van den strik en van de vreeselijke ziekte der leugen, die het leven van den mensch verpest tot in eeuwigheid.

Hij redt Zijn volk door de bedekking Zijner vlerken: schoone beeldspraak! Gods vlerken zijn over Zijn volk! Hoe schoon is die gedachte. We zien het rijk der vogels. De zwakke, teedere vogeltjes worden tegen de koude en de roofvogels bewaard onder moeders vleugelen. Zoo bedekt God Zijn volk tegen allen aanval. Niet één van die aanvallen gelukt. En wat meer is, al die aanvallen maken, dat Gods volk dieper, hechter gefundeerd wordt in de waarheid Gods.

We mogen het, echter, niet voorstellen, alsof Gods volk geheel en al passief is onder en in die beveiliging. O neen. Het gaat door hen heen, want die vleugelen werken zóó, dat dit volk op God betrouwt. Bovendien duidt het tweede lid van den tekst aan, dat Gods volk

den rondas en den beukelaar hanteert. De rondas en de beukelaar zijn wapenen die Christen gebruikt. Beide zijn namen voor het schild, dat het beveiligd. En dat schild is de waarheid Gods. Als dus de mensch, door den duivel beziel, op hen aanvalt, verschuilen zij zich achter de waarheid Gods, en dat is Jezus van Nazareth.

Het beteekent niet, dat Gods volk nooit zondigt, nooit een onwaarheid spreekt, doch het legt nadruk op de stelling, dat Gods volk nooit de principieele leugen spreekt, zooals de duivelen en de goddeloozen. Die principieele leugen is dit: ER IS GEEN GOD! Dat zegt Gods volk nimmer. Leest het maar in Jesaja 63:8. Daar staat: "Want Hij zeide: Zij zijn immers Mijn volk, kinderen, die niet liegen zullen!" Voor die principieele leugen wordt Gods volk bewaard. Ze blijven in de grootste smarten, wanneer de vogelvangers hen benauwen en de strikken gespannen worden en de pestilentie der leugen woest, door en in de waarheid bewaard. En het bewijs is: ze betrouwen op God! Zie het maar in Uw eigen leven. Herinner U de uren en dagen van groote bezoeking, wanneer de leugen en de zonde U benauwden, in al die smarten bleef ge op God vertrouwen, veroordeeldet ge de leugen en kleefdet de waarheid achterna; en nog eens: die waarheid is Jezus van Nazareth. Herinnert U toch die hoer, die schreide: ze zei niets, ze schreide slechts en kuste de voeten van Jezus. Die hoer was zalig! Hallelujah!

O neen: "Gij zult niet vreezen voor den schrik des nachts, voor den pijl die des daags vliegt; voor de pestilentie, die in de donkerheid wandelt; voor het verderf, dat op den middag verwoest." Gij zult dat niet doen, omdat gij gezeten zijt in de schuilplaats des Allerhoogsten. Komt dan de nacht van pest, schrik en pijl, dan vernacht ge in den boezem Gods, de schaduw des Almachtigen, het paviljoen van het Heilige der heiligen, in den Tempel Gods, en dat is Jezus, Die Zijn bloed voor U stortte!

Het vreezen voor den schrik des nachts is principieel de hel. Dat is het deel van hen die God haten, mitsgaders Zijn Gezalfde. Ge vraagt mij: Hoe brengt ge dat in harmonie met dien klagenden psalm 116, waar Gods kind zingt: "Wijl d' angst der hel mij allen troost deed missen!?" En dan is mijn antwoord, eerst: Ons vleesch bezwijkt en is bang; en, tweedens, het doet mij denken aan dat zekere instrument in schepen, die geheel en al stil, horizontaal stil en onbewogen blijven, zelfs in de grootste stormen. De naam er van ken ik niet, doch het illustreert hetgeen ik op het oog heb. Er is in het weergeboren kind van God een centrum, dat nooit zondigt, dat altijd op God blijft hopen, ook dan wanneer het schijnt alsof alles verloren is. En nu is het mijn overtuiging dat de poëet het oog heeft in dezen psalm op dat centrum. Ik heb daar zeer goed bewijs voor. Om dat bewijs te geven, moet ik evenwel eventjes vooruitloopen. In het elfde en twaalfde vers

hebt ge die bekende aanhaling van Satan toen hij Jezus verzocht. Deze psalm is eerst van toepassing op Jezus. Jezus zit in het Heilige der heiligen en daarom kwam Hij dan ook den eeuwigen nacht van dood en verdoemenis door. (Hij leeft in de eeuwige liefde van Gods hart en daarom kon de dood Hem niet houden. Het is alles waar van Jezus wat ge leest in die verzen die spreken van de wondere veiligheid van Gods volk. Nu dan, die Jezus woont in het diepe hart van Gods volk. En zoo kunt ge begrijpen, dat ge van dit volk kunt getuigen: "Gij zult niet vreezen voor den schrik des nachts." Daar gelooft Abraham tegen hoop op hoop; daar snikt Job: mijn oog druipt tot God! Daar zegt Paulus (en het klinkt zeer vreemd): als droevig zijnde, doch altijd blijde, enz. Dat volk gaat onder, doch ontkomt; ze worden steeds overgegeven in den dood, doch, ziet, ze leven! Ge hebt het in het eerder aangehaalde: In de grootste smarten, blijven onze harten, in den Heer gerust. Dat kan, al smelt ge weg van tranen en al hoort men Uw zuchten en bange klacht. Den duivel, de wereld en de hel tartend, zegt dit volk door alle eeuwen heen: Ik zal God, mijn God, nog loven! Ze komen den nacht door en vreezen eigenlijk niet voor den schrik van dien nacht. Die de wijsheid heeft versta dit.

En ge behoeft niet te vreezen voor den schrik, het verderf en de pestilentie, om de eenvoudige reden, dat ze voor U niet meer bestaan. Het verderf, de pestilentie zijn de zonde, schuld, dood en verdoemenis; en het schrikken ervoor in diepen nacht is de hel. Welnu, die zijn er niet voor U. Zoo is dan nu geene verdoemenis voor degenen die in Christus Jezus zijn!

Aan Uwe zijde zullen er duizend vallen, en tien duizend aan Uwe rechterhand; tot U zal het niet genaken.

Dat is, in één woord, vreeselijk!

Deze val is de val waarvan Jezus spreekt in het Evangelic. Er waren twee bouwers, de een was wijs en de ander dwaas. Straks stonden hun huizen klaar. Doch de regen kwam, met de stormen en de winden. En ze zijn tegen die huizen aangevallen. En het huis van dien dwazen man viel en zijn val was groot. Het is de val van God af. En dan komt men terecht in de diepe diepten der hel. Dogmatisch hooren we spreken van verwerping. God neemt die millioenen beet en werpt hen weg en blijft hen tot in alle eeuwigheid wegwerpen! Is 't niet vreeselijk? Geen wonder, dat Paulus sidderende zegt: Vreeselijk zal het zijn te vallen in de handen des levenden Gods!

Het zijn er duizenden en tienduizenden. Het wordt tot den enkeling gezegd. Neen, het beteekent niet, dat voor elk kind van God er duizend of tienduizend goddeloozen zijn, doch het zegt wel, dat er veel meer menschen verloren gaan, dan dat er behouden worden. Gerekend naar het tonnengewicht is er meer, veel meer, van het graanomhulsel, dan van het graan.

Al die duizenden vallen aan onze zijde, aan onze rechterhand. Ze wonen bij ons, of, liever, wij wonen bij hen. Wij zijn de bijwoners, zij zijn de ingezetenen van den lande. Vleeschelijk, organisch zijn we aan hen verbonden. En door alle eeuwen zijn Gods volk dooreen gestrengeld met de goddeloozen. Van nature zijn wij ook kinderen des toorns gelijk ook de anderen. Doch bij het wegvallen in de diepten komt de uiteindelijke scheiding.

Doch "tot U zal het niet genaken".

Zijt ge in staat om God daarvoor genoeg te danken? Laat me het zoo zeggen: gij behoeft niet naar de hel! Het mocht U gebeuren om den Heere tegemoet gevoerd te worden ten einde tot in alle eeuwigheid veilig in Jezus' armen te zijn. Kunt ge daar bij? Het genaakt tot U niet. Integendeel, inplaats van weg te vallen in onpeilbare diepten, wordt Uw voet geschraagd op de Rots der eeuwen die van geen wankelen weet.

Alleenlijk zult gij het met Uwe oogen aanschouwen; en gij zult de vergelding der goddeloozen zien.

We moeten hier oppassen, dat we hier zuiver blijven. De Heere bedoelt niet te leeren, dat we een soort "Schadengreude" zullen hebben in het lijden der goddeloozen. O neen. Onze blijdschap in dien dag is vanwege de deugden van Gods gerechtigheid en heiligheid die zullen branden, branden.

Het is er meer, als toen Mirjam en de vrouwen de mannen antwoordden in hun zang en dans. Ze zongen en dansten, omdat de oordeelen Gods geopenbaard werden. De reden, het motief van hun blijdschap is theologisch.

Want Gij, Heere, zijt Mijne Toevlucht! Den Alleroogste hebt Gij gesteld tot Uw Verstrekt!

We moeten hier veel met hoofdletters werken, want we hebben te doen in dit lied, allereerst, met God en Zijn Zoon.

God DrieEenig, is de Toevlucht geweest voor Jezus van Nazareth. Wanneer de duivel, de wereld en de machten der hel losgelaten werden en zich samenpakten boven Zijn arme hoofd, dan ging Hij naar God heen. Leest het maar in het Evangelie. Vaak heeft Jezus Zich afgezonderd om te gaan bidden in het eenzame, in het woeste, in de wildernis. Toen heeft Hij met vele tranen geweend, geklaagd, al Zijn smart uitgesproken als water. En Hij bad tot God die Zijn Toevlucht was.

En God heeft Hem altijd verhoord. Want Hij bad naar Zijn wil. God was Zijn vertrek. Ge moet niet denken, dat Jezus van Nazareth ooit in den eigenlijken, werkelijken zin van het woord, door God verlaten is geweest. O neen. Zonder Gods nabijheid had Hij nooit al den arbeid van Zijn ziel kunnen verrichten. En, tweedens, altijd, door al de bange uren van Zijn lijden heeft God Jezus van Nazareth liefgehad met al de energie van Zijn Goddelijk hart. Jezus stelde den

DrieEenigen God tot Zijn vertrik. Tot op den bodem der hel zeide Jezus van Nazareth: Mijn God, Mijn God! Dat bezittelijk voornaamwoord vertolkt den tekst die we hier behandelen.

Zeg het mijn broeder; roep het uit in al Uw angst, mijn zuster; zeg: O mijn God! Zijn naam is Hoorder der gebeden! Straks gaat ge rusten, rusten, voor eeuwig. Maar de Heer zal uitkomst geven! Ik denk er vaak om.

G. V.

IN HIS FEAR

Our Baptism Form (2)

Our Baptism Form starts out with speaking of the sacrament of baptism as a holy sign. It is more than that, for it is also a seal as well as a sign, but it is nevertheless first of all a sign.

To the question, Of what is it a sign?, the answer can be given, that baptism is a sign of our entrance into God's covenant through the washing away of our sins. By nature we are outside of God's covenant, a part of the fallen human race, dead in trespasses and sins, without hope and without God in the world. But God has established an eternal covenant with us in Christ, in Whom He saves us from our sins and takes us unto Him forever.

Thus baptism may be defined as the sacrament instituted by God to be administered by the church, whereby God signifies and seals to the heirs of salvation their entrance into His covenant through their incorporation into Christ, the deliverance from sin and the separation from the world.

This immediately marks the difference between baptism and the Lord's Supper. Both are sacraments, but baptism speaks of our entrance into the covenant, while the Lord's Supper speaks of our abiding in it. The symbolism of baptism is plain. We are afar from God in a world of sin and death as we are by nature, but God takes us unto Himself, causing us to pass through the water of baptism whereby all our sins are washed away, so that we can abide in His covenant forever. We pass from the world, through the water of baptism, into God's covenant life. Therefore the Flood and the Red Sea are both Old Testament types of baptism, for in each case God spoke of the fact that He separates His people from the rest of the world of wickedness unto Himself and unto His fellowship forever. The Lord's Supper is a symbol of heavenly communion with God in Christ. The table of communion, the bread and the wine, the eating and drinking, the fellowship with Christ, Who is the Host at the table,

and with the saints who are gathered about the table as guests, are all a symbolism of the life of God's covenant as it is known in part here on earth and is finally fully realized in heaven. For the believer it is a foretaste of the eternal wedding feast of the Lamb.

Therefore there is also a difference between the administration of the sacrament of baptism and the celebration of the Lord's Supper. The first is administered to us; we celebrate the latter as an act of faith. We are baptized, for it is God Who takes us into His fellowship by an act of His sovereign good-pleasure. We partake of the Lord's Supper as a conscious act of faith by the grace that is given us to live in conscious faith. Secondly, the sacrament of baptism is administered to infants, because "they also are included in the covenant"; but the Supper is celebrated by adults who have knowledge of the work of God's grace within them. And finally, there is this difference, that we are baptized but once, but we celebrate the Lord's Supper repeatedly, for the simple reason that we enter the covenant but once, but we continue to abide within the covenant without end.

Though baptism is a sign of our entrance into God's covenant, emphasis always falls on the fact that this entrance is possibly only through the washing away of our sins in the blood of Jesus Christ.

The word 'baptize' is derived from the Greek word 'baptidzo', which means 'to dip in', as a pen is dipped into the ink, or as clothing are dipped into the water in the process of washing them. This dipping is a symbol of washing, cleansing; which is one of the symbolical meanings of water in Scripture. Water, as you know, is rich in symbolical significance in the Bible. A tumultuous sea of water with its foaming breakers surging against the shore is a symbol of the nations of the earth. The nations, aroused by their inward unrest of wickedness, are like a troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. Isaiah 57:20. A stream of water from a fountain is a symbol of the quickening powers of the Spirit, as for example in John 4:14, But the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." A dipping into water and drawing out again speaks of the washing, cleansing power of the Spirit.

It is not difficult to see that the Baptists use this as an argument against our practice of sprinkling and in favor of immersion as the only proper, Scriptural form of administration of baptism. The argument is simple enough, if 'baptidzo' means to dip in, those who are baptized must be immersed. To bolster this argument they generally refer to such passages as John 3:23, which speaks of much water at the place where John was baptizing; or Mark 1:10, which speaks of Jesus coming out of the water after being baptized; or Acts 8:36, where the eunuch sees a body of water

and requests Philip to baptize him there. Even though we waive any attempt to refute these arguments, the fact remains that Scripture nowhere explicitly demands immersion as the only proper form of baptizing. Over against these passages we might place such passages as Acts 16:15 and 33, where no large amount of water is mentioned at all. It may even be considered doubtful whether immersion was used in those cases, since whole families were baptized, which may as well as not have included little children, and in the case of the jailor it was in the dead of night.

In any case the emphasis does not fall on the amount of water that is used, but on the symbolism. And then sprinkling also expresses the idea of baptism. In the Lord's Supper, which is a sign of eating and drinking, even of feasting on the Bread and Wine of eternal life, so one thinks of indulging in an enormous meal, but a small portion of bread and wine serve as a sign of the spiritual reality.

The Form emphasizes that this washing presupposes our natural corruption and guilt. Baptism teaches us that we are by nature impure, leprous. We are such even from our birth, for we are conceived and born in sin. And we are so depraved that we must necessarily obtain salvation outside of ourselves, only in the way of loathing and humbling ourselves before God.

A few remarks in passing are not superfluous. It deserves to be stressed that "we are conceived and born in sin." This truth is often slighted and denied, especially in our day as the Pelagian tendencies grow within the church. Even the attempt to speak of a restraint of sin in the heart of the wicked, or of the good that sinners do, is a deliberate move in that direction. We cannot maintain too consistently that we are all bound under an original corruption. Through the transgression of our first parents our nature became so corrupted that we enter into this world at birth with a depraved human nature. We are dead in trespasses and sin from the moment of our conception and birth, according to the plain teachings of Scripture and the Confessions. Ps. 51:5; Job. 14:4; Heid. Cat. Lord's Days 2 and 3, questions 5 and 8.

It is necessary also to distinguish between original corruption and original guilt. The transgression of God's commandment also made Adam guilty. And because he was the representative head of the whole human race we also became guilty in him. Ephesians 2:3 calls us children of wrath. See also Jer. 3:25; Rom. 5:18, 19; Lord's Day 4, question 10.

Our depravity makes us unable and unwilling to save ourselves. At the same time we are so guilty that we have deserved nothing but eternal condemnation. But God, Who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead

in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ. Eph. 2:4, 5.

This the church confesses concerning herself and her seed in baptism. By nature we are leprous and outcasts, abiding in a world of sin. By our natural birth we and our children are no different from those born in the world, for grace is not inherited. But God, Who gathers His own unto Himself in the line of generations, gives the heirs of salvation the mark of His covenant upon their foreheads as a sign of His grace. He separates them from the world, causes them to pass through the death of Christ, where they die unto the world, and takes them unto Himself into His covenant life. Romans 6:4, "Therefore we are buried with Him (Christ) by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead to the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

But baptism is more than a holy sign. It is also a divinely instituted seal. The Baptism Form expresses this by saying, "Holy Baptism witnesses and seals unto us the washing away of our sins through Jesus Christ."

Seals as well as signs play an important part in our daily lives. A manufacturer places his stamp upon an article to assure the buyer that the article is genuine. We need but think of an Elgin watch or Campbell soups. Also the dollar bill issued by the government is marked with the seal of the government to guarantee that it is worth its given value. All counterfeit money is an attempt to imitate this seal in order to deceive the public, and it fails to have any true value just because it is not issued on the authority of the government. Likewise the signature on a check is a personal seal whereby the signer vouches for the value of the check, which makes the check as good and trustworthy as the person who signs it. If it were not for this oath, or seal, business transactions would be impossible in a sinful world.

A seal is also common in Scripture. In John 6:27 Jesus speaks of Himself as the Bread of Life, which God seals, guarantees by the signs and wonders He works. In 2 Tim. 2:19 the foundation of God is said to be sealed with a two-fold seal, the seal of God's election on the one side of the cornerstone, and the work of grace that sanctifies unto eternal life on the other side. Revelation 7:3 speaks of the true servants of God being sealed on their foreheads as a mark of distinction that protects them in the midst of the judgments that come upon the world. And in Heb. 6:13 we read that when God made His promise to Abraham, "because He could swear by no greater, He swore by Himself." Which is another way of saying that God seals His own promise by affixing His own name and signature to it.

So also sacraments are seals. They are distinguished from ordinary seals by the fact that they

are holy seals, instituted by God. In the sacraments God gives us earthly signs as seals of that which He has promised us in His Word. The dipping into water is a natural sign of washing and cleansing, but in baptism this becomes a holy sign, and at the same time a divine seal of the promise of God that He washes away all our sins. Bread is a natural token of food, but in the Lord's Supper it becomes a holy sign of Christ, the Bread of life. And wine is a natural symbol of making the heart glad, but in the Supper it speaks of the power of the Blood to gladden the heart in the God of our salvation. When we partake in faith of this bread and wine God assures us of His promise in the Scriptures that His salvation in Christ is also for us. This He does by His Spirit in our hearts. Thus God also assures the heirs of salvation through baptism that the promise of His Word is sure, and that He cleanses them from all their sins and takes them into His covenant forever. Scripture says in Rom. 4:11, "And Abraham received the *sign* of circumcision, a *seal* of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised." C. H.

FROM HOLY WRIT

"In whom also ye, having heard the Word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, in Whom also (in which gospel also) having believed ye were sealed. . . . by the Holy Spirit of Promise unto the redemption of the (final) possession, unto the praise of His glory."—Ephesians 1:13, 14.

There are two important elements in this very rich portion of the Word of God to which we called attention in the former two articles.

The first of these elements was that of the Scriptural idea of the "sealing" of the saints in Christ Jesus. This work of God in Christ, we saw, is performed in such a way that the entire nature of man is honored. It is a sealing that is wrought by God in the "heart" of man. Hence it touches man in his mind and will and all his energies. The inner man is thus strengthened with the power which God works—works according to the working of the power of His might—in Christ the glorified Head of the church. Through this sealing the church is assured of her unique place in God's handiwork of love, of her final possession of all things.

The second element which claimed our attention was, that the Agent of this sealing is none other, than the Holy Spirit of Promise. He is the Spirit promised to Abraham of old, the One in whom the Promise should be realized in the hearts of all the redeemed and elect children. This Spirit of Promise is implicit in the Promise made unto these fathers. In Him the God

of our salvation has come to make His abode in our midst.

The apostle in these verses appeals to our christian, sanctified experience. He here lays the foundation for further comfort and admonition to the believers. Shall we, therefore, really profit spiritually from these passages, we shall have to think carefully into their logical content.

Let us, therefore, take further notice of these verses. The apostle, besides stating what this sealing is and who He is that performs this task, also calls attention to the manner of the operation of the Spirit. In a former article we attempted to show, that the "sealing" is not performed in a mechanical way, nor in such a way which would render man a "stock and block", but that it was wholly in agreement with man's created nature. This latter is moral-rational. Man has a mind and will, he is a thinking-willing being. The sealing, if it is to do justice to man, must needs be a sealing *in this thinking and willing*. Such is the immanence of God in man in His providence, whereby He upholds and rules him, that He never destroys man in his moral-rational creaturehood. And the Scriptures always present the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the believing also in such a light, that man's nature is not destroyed.

That God deals with man as a moral rational creature when He seals him in Christ Jesus is presupposed in our text. This is implied in the fact, that the Holy Spirit of Promise seals us while "we" have heard the Word of truth, the gospel of our salvation, in which also having believed. The Spirit employs the hearing of the Word when He seals us. It is in our "believing" that we experience this wonderful operation of the promised Spirit.

In the just quoted passage there are two elements that demand our attention. The first is: *The hearing of the Word of truth, the gospel of our salvation*. The second: *Our believing in the gospel*, or, *our believing in Christ*.

Concerning these two elements we would take notice of the following in the text: 1. The implication of each of these two elements respectively. We are interested to know just what this "Word of truth" is. We would also inquire why this "Word of truth" is called "the gospel of your salvation." 2. The relationship between "hearing the Word of truth" and "having believed in Christ". 3. What the Scriptures teach us concerning the relationship of the Holy Spirit to this "hearing of the Word of truth" and "believing".

The apostle Paul had preached the gospel in Ephesus. He had brought to them the "Word of truth". Pilate may ask skeptically: what is truth?, but the apostle presupposes that his readers understand perfectly well what must be understood by the "truth". He gives no philosophic definition of it. He merely

further indicates that this "word of truth" is "the gospel of your salvation."

Let us take notice of this a little more in detail. In a general way it can be said that this "word of truth" is the word that was preached. And this word constrained the "truth". It is the "truth of the gospel". Gal. 2:5, 14. It touches the relationship in which God stands to His people and all things in Jesus Christ. Centrally this truth is the Word of the Cross and of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He was delivered for our offenses and raised for our justification. Rom. 4:25. We were dead by reason of our trespasses and sins. We are guilty and subject to the penalty of sin. Children of wrath are we even as the others. As we are by nature there is no difference between the children of God and those of the devil. We are all in the common misery of death and the grave. We all fade and die like flowers that grow in beauty.

Now the "Word of truth" is exactly the Word of God as it is opposed to all that is false and of the lie. This word instructs us as to our misery, indeed! It shows that both Jew and Gentile are under sin. Sin has dominion over us. We are slaves and not free. For he that doeth sin is a slave of sin. Thus in our very real state and condition. Of this the Word of truth speaks. It is always and again the background of the wonderful glad-tidings of the gospel.

But He does more than tell us of our misery. He tells us of the infinite riches of grace for us in Christ Jesus. It speaks of the "redemption" that we have in Him. He paid the ransom price. He has set us free. There is condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus with relation to nothing. There is no condemnation in the present nor in the future, in height nor in depth, in things visible nor invisible, in nakedness, peril of sword. Because Jesus paid it all, we are more than conquerors in Him. We have life in the midst of death, hope in the midst of despair, joy in the midst of sorrow, liberty in bondage. God is for us! None can be against us. That is the answer of the Word of truth.

How could it be different? Is not this "Word of truth" the gospel of our salvation? And is "gospel" not glad-tidings? Tidings concerning our salvation? And is not this "salvation" deliverance from the greatest misery and death to the highest bliss of life and immortality? Oh, let us not forget, it is exactly what the Lord hath wrought. Therefore the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them!

Such is the Word of truth, the gospel of our salvation. And this "Word of truth" is heard. It is "heard" because it has been preached. Christ has given apostles and prophets, shepherds and teachers to the church. This has become a "fact" in the life of

the Ephesian believers. They had heard the gospel; Christ had evidently been portrayed, set forth in their midst. They had learned the truth as it is in Jesus. Gal. 3:1; Eph. 4:20, 21. They had come to know not merely about Him, but they had come to know Him! Phil. 3:10.

How could they know the resurrected and glorified Son of God in the flesh? To be sure they had never seen Him, had they? And yet, they knew Him? No, they did not merely know something or much about Him, but they had learned to know *Him* and the power of His resurrection! They had learned to know Him with a personal, intimate, living and ever increasing knowledge. To know this Christ is life. That is the truth of the Gospel. What they now live *they* no more live. They have died, have been crucified with Christ. In this knowledge Paul says: "Now *I* no more live, but Christ lives in me, and what *I* now live in the flesh, *I* live in the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me and delivered Himself in behalf of me." Gal. 2:20.

Such is the knowledge which we have of the living and glorified Christ, in whom are all the treasures of knowledge stored up. And this knowledge is so unique and wonderful because such is the nature of faith in Christ, or faith in the gospel. In our text it is not quite clear to what "in whom" refers. It may refer either to "Christ" verse 12, or to the "gospel of your salvation" verse 13. It really makes very little difference materially to which it refers. Should we refer it to Christ it means the Christ in the gospel, and should we refer it to the "gospel" it means the gospel that had Christ as its content. In the Bible we have both faith in the gospel and faith in Christ. An instance of the use of the former we have in Mark 1:15 "Repent ye and believe in the gospel". On the other hand in verse 15 of Ephesians 1 we read of: "Faith in the Lord Jesus and love to all the saints." Personally we favor in this connection "faith in the gospel", or rather "in which (gospel) I have believed."

Now, what is the nature of this faith? Is it merely an intellectual acceptance of the logical content of what the Scriptures teach us concerning the Christ? Such is the contention of Roman Catholicism. Faith is for them the acceptance of the body of truth. We also, believe that faith does accept the body of truth. Surely faith has a logical content. When the Bible preaches Christ to us, it always tells us "something" about Him. Yet, faith is much more than this. Faith is that tie of living fellowship that is energized by the love of God. Faith is rooted in love for God and for the brethren. Faith vibrates with love for Christ, for His Word. It does not rest until it reaches and knows Him. This is the ever-recurring theme of the apostle. "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision hath any power, but faith energized by love." Therefore also we expect the hope of righteousness

"through the Spirit of faith". Gal. 5:5, 6.

This faith is a gift of God. Man has only unbelief in himself. Such is also, indeed, the case with us as people of God by nature. By nature we have not died unto self. We do not live by the faith of the Son of God. But faith is a gift. It is such a gift in order that no flesh should boast before Him. But gift it is; a gift of sovereign free grace and mercy. This implies that faith in all its actuality and operation is gift of God to us. God continually unites us with Christ. And He does this through the hearing of the gospel, the Word of truth.

That we thus come to stand in such a living relation to Christ and to God in Him, by faith and the hearing of the gospel is the plain teaching of this passage under consideration. We have come to experience the living Christ and the power of His resurrection, have we not? We have come to know what is the exceeding greatness of God's power to usward who believe, according to the working of the power of His might. This power is all in the Christ, glorified. It is all in Him in whom God will reunite all things in heaven and on earth, even in Him! It cannot fail.

That it cannot fail we are assured of by faith and the preaching of the gospel of our salvation. And let us not forget that this "salvation" is here salvation in its most comprehensive sense. It includes heaven and earth and all things that are therein. And in this we, the saints, shall be the "heritage of God". The "riches of the glory of God's inheritance" shall be in us the saints. Such is the orb of our salvation.

And the Holy Spirit of the Promise seals us, inwardly assures us by faith and the hearing of the truth. More and more He gives us from Christ's fullness. He takes it out of Christ and gives it to us. John 16:13-15. More and more He leads us into all Truth, into the truth of the Gospel. He brings into remembrance the riches of the truth that we have heard by having the truth preached again. And thus we are led to the Truth, to Him who said: "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life." And we thus receive the rock-bottom assurance of faith from the operation of the Spirit of the Promise.

The Spirit of Truth leads us into the truth as it is in Jesus. He illumines our mind, gives us spiritual understanding. In His guidance, instruction, His wonderful gifts, the flood-gates of all wisdom and prudence are opened to us. And we receive from the fullness of Christ, grace for grace! Now we see through a glass darkly, but presently we shall know as we are known. That is the hope of the saints, the faith whereby Christ lives in us the hope of glory!

G. L.

NOTICE

As is customary, The Standard Bearer will not be printed July 15 and August 15.



PERISCOPE

The Closed Shop.

Because the question of labor unions and the 'closed shop' is a question which is more and more confronting us as believers and as churches, we were much pleased that the consistory of Creston called the attention of Synod to this vital question by way of an overture.

Esteemed Brethren in the Lord:

Due to the well-known fact that it becomes more and more difficult for the christian (who desires conscientiously to live according to the principles of the Word of God) to obtain employment because of the existing 'closed shop' and Labor Union domination of places of employment, and believing that the 'closed shop' is a violation of the very Constitution of the United States of America, the Consistory of the Prot. Ref. Church of Creston hereby petitions Classis to overture Synod to compose a document of protest and petition against the 'closed shop' and other closely related matters which we firmly believe to be an encroachment upon the religious liberty of the individual and a violation of his Constitutional rights guaranteeing him the free exercise of religion.

We further propose that this suggested document be addressed to the proper authorities in Washington. Wishing you God's guidance, also in the deliberation of this matter, we remain

Yours respectfully,
Consistory of Creston Prot. Ref. Church,
John D. De Jong, Pres.
Stephen Kuiper, Sec'y.

A Letter of Protest.

In re the overture of Creston, Synod decided to send the following letter of Protest, not only to the president, but also to all the members of the Cabinet, of both houses of Congress, and of the Supreme Court. This letter reads as follows:

Hull, Iowa, June 7, 1946

The President of the United States
Washington, D. C.

Sir:—

The Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches, assembled June 7, 1946, in Hull, Iowa, beg to bring to your attention the following matter and request you kindly to give it your most earnest consideration.

The social and economic situation in our land today is such that we are developing fast in the direction of the complete unionization of all labor. And one of the means,—and, indeed, a most powerful one,—whereby the unions seek to attain to their desired goal is the closed shop. This means that for those who cannot agree with the principles and methods of the existing unions, and who, for conscience' sake cannot join them, it becomes increasingly impossible to find a job or position in order to provide for themselves and for their families. More and more, the situation arises that one confronts the alternative of permitting himself to be coerced into membership of the union against the dictates of his conscience, or to be expelled from a decent and proper place in the industrial world.

We, the Protestant Reformed Churches, are opposed to membership in the existing unions: because we believe that the principles of the class-struggle, dividing society into the two opposing camps of capital and labor, are contrary to Holy Writ and

to the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; because we cannot agree with the materialistic motives and purposes that so manifestly actuate the unions, but believe that we should first seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness; because we believe that unionism in often defying authority and taking the law in its own hand, is in conflict with the Word of God which enjoins us to honor those that are in authority over us; because the union seeks its own end through the employment of force and coercion, which militates against the principles and spirit of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in short, because we refuse to affiliate ourselves with an organization whose principles and practices are so plainly in conflict with the teaching of Holy Writ.

But, Sir, we believe that, under the Constitution of our land, we have the right to serve our God according to His Word, and to decline membership in any organization that, according to our conviction, is in conflict with that Word, without being hampered, either by individuals or by organizations, in the exercise of this our constitutional liberty. And this constitutional freedom certainly implies that because of the exercise of our religious liberty we shall suffer no hardships in looking for and finding a job, and earning a livelihood, such as the closed shop and its related evils would inflict upon us.

It is, therefore, Sir, under the Constitution of our land, that we appeal to you, the Head of our government, that you may protect us in the exercise of our liberties, and employ your power and influence to stamp out this evil of the closed shop, and to seek proper legislation whereby this evil, and all methods of coercion may become unlawful, and we may fully enjoy the freedom to which we are entitled under the Constitution.

Once more earnestly petitioning you to give this our plea your most serious consideration, we beg to remain

Most respectfully yours,
The Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches.
Rev. Gerrit Vos, Pres.
Rev. Martin Gritters, Sec'y.

A Life of Protest.

It is not sufficient, however, that we as churches direct a letter of protest to our government against the evil of the worldly union, and the 'closed shop'. It is also our calling as christians to live a life of protest by refusing membership in these worldly organizations. It is becoming ever more difficult for us as christians to live alone in this world. Yet therein lies our safety as people of God. Any compromise with the ungodly of this world is sure to end in disaster. Let us dare to live by faith, for it is only by faith that we will overcome the world.

B. K.

CLASSIS EAST

will meet in regular session D.V., July 10, 1946, at Fuller Ave., at 9:00 A.M. The Synod of 1945 referred the Psalter Committee Report to the Classes for further study. The Synod of 1946 decided that this should still be done. So every delegate please take with you a copy of the Acts of the Synod of 1945 in which the Report of the Psalter Committee can be found.

NOTICE TO OUR CHURCHES

The Synod of the Prot. Ref. Churches, after it had examined Student J. Howerzyl, declared in its session of June 7, 1946, that brother J. Howerzyl is a candidate for the ministry; and that after July 7, 1946, he is eligible to receive a call from one of our churches.

D. Jonker, Stated Clerk.