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MEDITATION

Vlammen Des Heeren

“En van den troon gingen uit bliksemen en donderslagen en stemmen; en zeven vurige lampen waren brandende voor den troon; welke zijn de zeven Geesten Gods. En voor den troon was een glazen zee, kristal gelijk.”

Openb. 4:5, 6a.

Uitgenoodigd door Jezus, mag Johannes een blik slaan in den hemel der hemelen, om te zien de dingen die haast geschieden moeten.

Hij was in den geest op den dag des Heeren. En hij had een stem gehoord die tot hem sprak, zeggende: Kom hier op!

Toen had hij wondere dingen gezien.

Dat hij door de geopende deur den hemel in mocht blikken, was alreede een wonder van genade. Bij ons, en ook bij Johannes, past de gesloten hemel.

Maar Jezus sprak tot hem, en Jezus is die geopende Deur in de symboliek van dit boek.

En Jezus is Jehovah Heil!

En in den hemel inblikkende had Johannes in het midden des hemels een troon gezien, en Eene zat op den troon.

En 't aanzien was wonderlijk!

Het schitterde alles van den steen Gods, den allerhostelijksten steen jaspis gelijk. Gelijk de diamant schittert als het zonlicht er op valt, zoo schittert God ook, maar dan Goddelijk. Het spreken van onzen diamant is slechts stamelen. God is God!

Hij had dien God gezien als den VerbondsGod, want er was een regenboog boven den troon; en hij verhaalde van het jeugdij groen der smaragd. Het zong daar alles van de hope!

En rondom den troon waren er vier-en-twintig

tronen: hij zag de gansche verlost kerk in hare vertegenwoordigers: de vier-en-twintig ouderlingen. Later zullen we meer van die ouderlingen hooren.

En nu gaan we verder.

Als Johannes weer naar dien troon staart, dan ziet hij bliksemen en hoort hij donderslagen en stemmen. Ook brandende lampen en een glazen zee.

Wat zou dit alles beteekeneen?

* * * *

Bliksemen, donderslagen en stemmen!

Symboliek voor een God die alles doet daveren en sidderen, vanwege Zijn grootheid en Goddelijkheid in het gericht!

O, de Heere heeft Zich nooit onbetuigd gelaten.

Gaat met mij naar het verleden, o zoo lang verleden. En ik zal den Heiligen Geest laten spreken.

“Als mij bang was, riep ik den HEERE aan, en riep tot mijnen God: Hij hoorde mijne stem uit Zijn paleis, en mijn geroep voor Zijn aangezicht kwam in Zijne ooren.”

Even van te voren had deze benauwde ziel gesproken van de banden der hel die hem omvangen hadden.

En wat geschiedde er toen?

Luistert!

“Toen daverde en beefde de aarde, en de gronden der bergen beroerden zich en daverden, omdat Hij ontstoken was. Rook ging op van Zijnen neus, en een vuur uit Zijnen mond verteerde: kolen werden daarvan aangestoken. En Hij boog den hemel en daalde neder, en donkerheid was onder Zijne voeten. . . . En de HEERE donderde in den hemel, en de Allerhoogste gaf Zijne stem, hagel en vurige kolen. En Hij zond Zijne pijlen uit en verstrooide ze, en Hij vermenigvuldigde de bliksemen en verschrikte ze. En de diepe kolken der wateren werden gezien, en de gronden der wereld ontdekt, van Uw schelden, o Heere!

Hij zond van de hoogte, Hij nam mij, Hij trok mij op uit groote wateren. Hij verlost mij van mijnen

sterken vijand en van mijne haters, omdat zij machtiger waren dan ik." (Psalm 18)

Ik wilde wel, dat ik den tijd had en de ruimte om door te gaan en af te schrijven wat er nog verder volgt, maar het kan niet.

Doch ik denk, dat er genoeg aangehaald is om U te doen zien, dat de symboliek van bliksemen, donderslagen en stemmen ons God vertolken zooals Hij de rechtvaardige Rechter is van hemel en aarde.

En die arme man, die vanuit de banden der hel en van zijn haters verlost is bij het daveren van den richtenden God, die arme man is Jezus. Leest den psalm uit tot het einde, en ge zult zien, dat ook hier weer alles gaat om Christus Jesus; God geopenbaard in het vleesch.

Of hoort naar den Heiligen Geest in een anderen psalm die ons ook vertellen zal, dat de donkerheid, met bliksemen en donder en stemmen, ons God doen zien die regeert, en regeerende recht doet Zijnen knecht.

"Rondom Hem zijn wolken en donkerheid, gerechtigheid en gericht zijn de vastigheid Zijns troons. Een vuur gaat voor Zijn aangezicht henen, en het steekt Zijne wederpartijders rondom aan brand. Zijn bliksemen verlichten de wereld, het aardrijk ziet ze en beeft." (Psalm 97)

Ook hier: leest den geheelen psalm: het geeft commentaar op ons vers.

O ja, van den troon Gods gaan uit bliksemen, donderslagen en stemmen!

Hebt ge ze niet gehoord? Anno Dominus 1939-1945? En dat waren nog maar kleine voor-weeën. De volheid van dien donderenden en bliksemenden God komt eerst straks.

In de verten der tijden hooren we het gerommel van den naderenden donder Gods.

Omdat Hij verbolgen is tegen alle goddeloosheid en ongerechtigheid der menschen die Zijn geliefden Zoon ten onder houden, doen krommen, in Zijn arme volk.

Dingen die haast geschieden moeten!

Ze haasten zich!

* * * *

Zeven vurige, branden lampen vóór den troon!

O ja, al het donderen en bliksemen en luide roepen van God is naar het reinste recht en gerechtigheid.

Ook staat het onlosmakelijk in verband met Zijn eeuwig trouwverbond. Er zijn vurige lampen, en zij zijn zeven.

Zij zijn de zeven Geesten Gods.

Hier hebben de dogmatici moeite met hun dogmatiek, want zij spreekt slechts van éénen Geest Gods. Er zijn Vader, Zoon en Heilige Geest, en deze drie zijn één! En van jongs aan hebben we het hen nazeged.

In de grijze oudheid hebben we al van dat zeven-tal gehoord.

Er waren zeven armen in den kandelaar in het heilige.

En die zeven werden gevoed met de olie, beeld van licht en leven, het leven Gods.

En dat licht en leven Gods is in den Heiligen Geest.

En Zacharia wordt geleerd door het Woord des Heeren, dat de twee takjes der olijfboomen en de twee gouden kruiken die al maar goud gieten, den Heiligen Geest beduiden.

En ook daar, ja ook daar wordt gesproken van de zeven oogen des HEEREN die het gansche land doortrekken en alles doorspeuren.

Verder, zal hoofdstuk vijf, vers zes ons leeren, dat het zevental Geesten Gods de oogen van het Lam zijn. En ook daar doorspeuren die oogen des Geestes, des Lams, alle landen.

We mogen dus hier besluiten en zeggen, dat de zeven vurige lampen de Heilige Geest zijn die vanuit Christus Jezus het gansche land, de gansche aarde doorspeuren, om dan op grond van wat ze zagen te donderen, te bliksemen en te roepen.

En dat er van zeven Geesten gesproken wordt ziet op het feit, dat het leven van Gods trouwverbond, zooals het door Jezus Christus tot ons komt, de veelvuldige rijkdom van dat verbond ons schenkt. Ook om onze vijanden te richten. Zoo rijk ons deel van dien grooten Koning zal zijn, zoo vreeselijk zal de uitgieting van toorn zijn op allen die "dien armen Man" beangstigden, hetzij, in Hemzelf, of in Zijn arme leden.

Het donderen is naar recht, en daarom zal Hij den kwade straffen en den goede beloonen. Het bliksemen is naar gerechtigheid, want Hij speurt eerst door te zien door den Geest die als vurige (zuivere) lampen het al wat is en wat geschiedde verlichten. En zoo bliksemt Hij. Het luide roepen, neen, brullen van den grooten God zal zijn naar groote billijkheid, want Hij is de Getrouwe in Zijn verbond: er zijn zeven Geesten, die de rijkdom van Gods goedheid en trouw in het gericht brengen zullen.

O, wacht U voor de vuurvlammen des HEEREN!

Wacht U voor de brandende fakkelen van Gods jaloerschheid, die de weerschijn is van verbondsmin.

Wacht U, want wat Hij zag, onfeilbaar zag met die zeven brandende oogen, de oogen van het Lam, zal Hij zekerlijk in het gericht brengen.

Maar er is troost voor den armen man. Eigenlijk moest ik eerst schrijven: de arme Man, want ik bedoel Jezus daarmee. God zal Hem geven om Zichzelf te wreken tegenover Zijn wederpartijders. Hij heeft den Geest en niet met mate. Hij zal Zijn haters al donderende en bliksemende en roepende vinden, want Hij heeft de zeven vurige oogen van den Heilige Geest Gods.

En ook troost voor den armen man.

Den armen man in Christus Jezus. Het gericht zal ons beschutten in dien dag. Johannes zag het op Patmos.

Ik sprak daar van die zeven.

Ik verbond het aan het verbond van God.

En terecht. Zeven is het verbondsgetal. Zeven is de som van drie en vier. Drie is het getal van den VerbondsGod. En vier is het getal van den mensch met de verlore aarde die in dat verbond deelen zal tot in eeuwigheid. Straks zullen we moeten mediteeren van vier dieren en van vier winden en van vier hoeken der aarde.

Nu dan: die DRIE en die vier zijn vereend. Ze zijn zeven. Ze zijn ineengestrengeld. Ik denk hier aan het woordje verknocht en vervlochten.

Zeven is God en Zijn volk die elkaar kennen, lieven, loven. Het zijn God en mensch vereend in Jezus Christus, den Heere.

Twaalf is hetzelfde, doch van uit een verschrikkelijk verschillend oogpunt. DRIE en vier zijn zeven: daar zit rust in en onveranderlijke vastheid. Van eeuwigheid zijn God en Zijn volk zeven. Het is "STATIC" zouden ze hier in America zeggen.

Twaalf is ook DRIE en vier, doch het is de som van dezelve. Ik noemde hier een verschrikkelijk verschillend oogpunt. Dat woord is niet te sterk. Vermenigvuldiging ziet op werking, strijd, rumoer, beweging, proces, en wat dies meer zij. Daarom is twaalf de kerk van God in Christus Jezus, den Heere. In die werking en dat proces moet ge ook het gruis een plaats geven: het verschrikkelijke. Jesaja zal U voorlichten hier. Hij spreekt van Gods groote verbolgenheid omdat wij gezondigd hadden. In dezelve, zoo zegt Jesaja, is de eeuwigheid, opdat wij behouden wierden. Welnu, die twaalf, die vermenigvuldiging, die werking van DRIE en vier om tot twaalf te komen, zit vooral in het kruis. De eeuwigheid van Gods liefde vaart in die zonde, ter eener zijde, en de verbolgenheid, ter anderzijde, en het wondere resultaat is, dat we behouden worden.

De kerk is twaalf; en het verbond is zeven. Beide hetzelfde, maar uit verschillend oogpunt. De twaalf is de worsteling, de beweging, de worstelende Jacob-Israel. De zeven is de omhelzing, de eeuwige omstrengeling van God en Zijn volk, het eeuwige Trouw-Verbond!

Keer op keer zult ge van dat twaalfstal en van dat zevental hooren in de visioenen van Johannes.

De zeven-voudige vlammen des HEEREN!

* * * *

En vóór den troon was een glazen zee, kristal gelijk.

Dit gezicht heeft een bekende klank. Vooral dat kristal. Het doet ons onmiddellijk denken aan den jaspis, den allerkostelijksten steen jaspis, den steen van God.

Wat die zee beduiden mag?

Ik denk, dat het ziet op de weerkaatsing van Gods deugdenbeeld. Het is vlak vóór den troon. Een ieders blik gaat vanzelf naar den troon. En dan zal een ieder vlak vóór den troon een schittering zien, een weerkaatsing van God die op den troon zit.

Dat is ook zoo geweest in het eerste Paradijs.

Dat zal ook altoos zóó zijn.

God is glorieus. Hij is de heerlijke, de glorieuze. Zijn schoonheid en heerlijkheid schittert voor elks oog.

Hij schiep de aarde en den hemel, en sindsdien vertellen zij Zijn lof, en spreken dag en nacht van Zijn wonderen.

Zij toonen het werk eens Scheppers.

Zij weerkaatsen alles wat Hij is.

De Goddelijkheid Gods en de kracht Gods worden verstaan en doorzien van de schepping aan.

Adam zag in de glazen zee, en dat is de weerkaatsing van Gods deugden in de eerste schepping, en hij loofde God.

Nu dan, dat zullen wij óók doen, doch nu veel heerlijker. Alles is heerlijker.

De schepping van het eerste was heerlijk; Adam zag groote heerlijkheid, doch het was aardsch.

Doch de herschepping is zoo veel heerlijker als de aarde hooger is dan den hemel. Als Jezus Christus heerlijker is dan Adam.

Als straks God alle dingen nieuw gemaakt heeft, dan zullen we de weerkaatsing van het diepe hart Gods zien in het nieuwe Koninkrijk. En dat is de glazen zee, kristal gelijk. Het is een zee in de kleur van den jaspis, den steen Gods.

Paulus had eerder eigenlijk hetzelfde gezegd, toen hij zeide, dat straks God alles en in allen zal zijn.

Hij is op den troon en Hij schittert als den jaspis.

Hij werpt die heerlijkheid op de 24 tronen en vervuld de kerk met die schittering.

Die geschonken afstraling van deugd, doet het hart der kerk zingen.

En zoo geven zij Hem heerlijkheid en eere.

Straks zult ge het zien: ze vallen voor den troon; ze hebben de weerkaatsing gezien en begrepen: ze aanbidden Hem die leeft in alle eeuwigheid.

De ijver van Gods Huis verteerde hen. Tot eeuwige zaligheid.

Vlammen des Heeren!

G. V.

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EDITORIALS

The Schilder Conference

At the time I write this editorial, our esteemed brother Prof. Dr. K. Schilder is on the way home again. Some time ago he left per auto to New York where he will take ship for the Netherlands. On the way he will stop over at Philadelphia, the city where the Theological School of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church is located, as also the home of Dr. C. Van Til. I understand that he (that is, Dr. Schilder) is to lecture there also.

The visit of our brother to our shores has not been in vain. I am sure that I speak for our men, both my colleagues and our Protestant Reformed constituency, members and office-bearers, when I say that we have enjoyed this contact with him. He has spoken and preached in practically all our churches from Michigan to California, and no less than four formal conferences were held: one at Sutton, Nebr., one at Hull, Iowa, and two at Grand Rapids, Michigan. I say, formal conferences, for wherever the brother was entertained at the home of our men, there we also conferred with him. And the reason is plain: we are very much interested in the struggle of the Netherlands Reformed Churches, both as to the church-political aspects involved and the dogmatical-exegetical questions that have arisen in the dispute.

I said: his visit was not in vain. Indeed, for there was a great deal of misunderstanding from both sides. I am certain that both Dr. Schilder and we have learned to know more of one another during the months he sojourned in our midst. He had the opportunity time and again to lecture thetically to us, especially on the dogmatic side of the matters that relate to the controversy in the Netherlands. Also there was ample opportunity to ask him pertinent questions relative the Covenant views and related matters. Much light was shed by him on the entire controversy. At times he would lecture to us for hours on end.

A highlight in the conferences at Grand Rapids was the fact that our beloved Rev. Hoeksema could attend and take part in the conferences. Especially during the last held conference did he take a very active part. At one time he lectured for two and one half hours, elucidating our view of the Covenant and the sacrament of Baptism, etc. It gladdened our hearts to see him again in the old professorial chair, and to hear his voice. At times the old fire was very evident.

It is our plan to write on the questions of the Covenant and related matters. And we will do so with the express purpose to clarify our position and to de-

fend it against those views which are contrary to the Word of God, according to our convictions. Doing this, we shall also criticize the views of the liberated churches. For although we may now say with all emphasis that their view is not entirely Heynsian, especially as far as the late professor's views on the so-called subjective baptism-grace is concerned, and although Prof. Schilder constantly stated that our differences are only a matter of terminology, we nevertheless are convinced that there are elements in their covenant views, clearly expressed in their written and published treatises, and now corroborated by the spoken elucidations of Prof. Schilder which we whole-heartedly reject. And it is also our conviction that even though it were only a matter of difference in terminology, we are of the opinion that their terminology is not correct, not according to Scripture and not according to the form of baptism. We will welcome exchange of ideas in the future.

However, we agree with Prof. Schilder, and also our Editor of the Standard Bearer has stressed this conviction, that we ought to become sister-churches, we ought to have ecclesiastical correspondence. Strictly speaking, there is no Reformed Covenant view. That is, there is not one Covenant view, be it Kuyperian, Heynsian, Schilderian or Hoeksemanian which is *confessedly* Reformed. There is for that reason room for friendly debate and exchange of ideas.

Would to God that the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands had remembered this in 1942-1944! It would have saved them from the cardinal error of throwing faithful men out of the church of their birth. If anything has become plain to us through this contact with Prof. Schilder, it is that those churches have sinned grievously. And the reward of their wickedness has already been partly rendered them. More than one hundred thousand of Reformed people and officebearers are lost to them. In order to save a private opinion of one theologian, and raising some formula to an accepted church dogma they have robbed themselves to the extent of the church communion of a multitude which was theirs; they have become culpable before God in substituting man-power for the only power which God ordained in the churches, namely, Jesus Christ; and they have become a double mockery in their later action: the formula which refused candidates to the Holy ministry was later dropped. First every one must believe that the child to be baptized was supposed to be born again, and later this regeneration could take place subsequent to the rite of baptism. Let him who has synodocratic wisdom understand this!

The church political error is also very grievous.

It is difficult to imagine that the Reformed Churches can have fallen so low that now the Almighty Synod holds sway over the *lower* provincial synods, classes

and consistories. But the facts have spoken. We have ordered and received the Acts of the Synods of 1942-44, etc. And it still sounds unbelievable. The Synods simply do that which is the sole right of the consistories. They simply suspend and despoise office bearers, although they did not put them in office, although the only royal ruling power in the church of Christ is the office of the elder, and then, according to the Holy Word of God!

Again, let him who has synodocratic wisdom understand it!

But we are thankful to our Covenant God that we might have Dr. Schilder in our midst. May it be the beginning of still closer contact.

The days in which we live are evil. We need one another.

God-speed on your journey home, esteemed brother!

G. V.

Our Conference With Dr. Schilder

Dr. Schilder has left us again.

The more than two months of his stay with us quickly flew by. The time of his sojourn with us was all too short, not only in our estimation, but also for his own feeling. Our people everywhere received him gladly, so much so that I told the Professor that he was being "verwend", spoiled. This was, no doubt, in part due to the fact that, from a church political viewpoint, the history of the churches he represented in the old country was similar to that of our churches in 1924; partly, however, also to the personality of Dr. Schilder to whom one cannot help being attracted.

Personally, my contact with him was somewhat limited due to my sickness. Especially during the first part of his stay in Grand Rapids, my condition made it impossible for me to converse with him a great deal. However, I heard him speak several times in our own church over the loudspeaker that had been installed in my home. And when he returned from the west, I was sufficiently restored to take an active part in the conferences we had with him.

The first of these conferences was held on October 16, the second lasted three days, from November 4 to 6.

The subject of discussion in both conferences was the covenant. This was but natural, since it is this subject on which we differ with the Liberated Churches in the old country, a difference of which Dr. Schilder and we were all well aware before he came here. Let me add immediately, however, that this difference did not in any way interfere with our harmonious fellowship with him. We both based our view of the covenant on the ground of Scripture and the Confessions.

We both love the Reformed truth. And on that basis we were able to have a free and open discussion of our differences without any personal animosity whatsoever.

At the first of the above-mentioned conferences I was able to be present only part of the time. I introduced the subject in the form of several propositions which I briefly explained. They are the following:

I. De idee des verbonds is niet:

- a. De belofte.
- b. Een contract.
- c. De weg der zaligheid.
- d. Een alliantie tegen een derde partij.

II. Maar is de gemeenschap der vriendschap tusschen God en Zijn volk in Christus Jezus.

- a. De hoogste openbaring van Gods eigen leven als de drieëenige God. God is een in wezen en drie in personen.
- b. Bewijs:
 - 1) De Schrift spreekt van een eeuwig verbond.
 - 2) De tabernakel en tempel zijn de woning Gods bij de menschen.
 - 3) Abraham is de vriend Gods genaamd.
 - 4) Enoch en Noach wandelen met God.
 - 5) Teksten zooals Ps. 25:14, II Cor. 6:16-18, etc.
 - 6) Het einde aller dingen is: de tabernakel Gods bij de menschen. Openb. 21:3.
 - 7) Het centrum van deze gemeenschap der vriendschap tusschen God en Zijn volk is de incarnatie.

III. Dit was de idee des verbonds in het Paradijs.
Geen werk verbond.

IV. God alleen richt Zijn verbond op en handhaaft het. Hij doet dit op grond van Christus' verdienste en door de genade des Heiligen Geestes. Onvoorwaardelijk.

V. De vrucht van God's oprichting van Zijn verbond met ons is, dat wij den Heere onze God liefhebben van ganscher harte, van gansche ziele, van ganschen gemoede, en met alle krachten, de wereld verlaten, onze oude natuur dooden, en in een nieuw godzalig leven wandelen.

VI. De belofte des verbonds vervult God alleen in de uitverkorenen, zooals ze hen alleen geldt. Rom. 9:6-8, 15; Hebr. 6:16-18.

VII. De bedeeeling des verbonds loopt in de lijn der geslachten der geloovigen.

- a. In die lijn wordt de belofte aan allen zonder onderscheid door de kerk bedeed. Allen wor-

den gedoopt, onderwezen in den weg des verbonds, komen onder de prediking, en vallen onder de kerkelijke tucht. Allen staan dus voor de verantwoordelijkheid om den Heere hunnen God lief te hebben, de wereld te verlaten, etc.

b. De Verworpenen echter overtreden Gods verbond gelijk Ezau, en verzwaren daarmee hun oordeel.

c. De uitverkorenen daarentegen in wie God Zijne belofte vervult worden behouden, en komen door genade in de wereld te staan als van de partij des levenden Gods.

In the afternoon Dr. Schilder replied to these propositions, but my strength was still too limited to attend the afternoon session.

According to reports, however, he seems to have emphasized that our differences were not a question of churches but of theologians. For the rest it was largely a matter of terminology and emphasis.

It was decided, however, to hold another conference on November 4. The sessions of this conference I was able to attend in full.

The first day of this conference Dr. Schilder spoke. He elaborated on his view of the covenant, especially emphasizing the covenant as a historical institution. He explained his idea of the parties in the covenant, elaborated especially on his conception of the conditions in the covenant, on the relation between promise and demand, and rejected the view of the late Prof. Heyns in as far as he proposes a subjective covenant grace for all the children of the covenant. Dr. Schilder spoke freely, and I am sorry that he did not briefly summarize his view in the form of definite propositions.

After the professor spoke I once more presented to the meeting certain propositions, which read as follows:

- I. The elect children of the covenant are usually regenerated from infancy:
 - a. The promise of God is fulfilled in them.
 - b. God places them from infancy in the sphere of the preaching.
 - c. Experience plainly teaches this.

II. The meaning of "sanctified in Christ" in the first question of the Baptism Form is subjective:

- a. That is the only meaning of the phrase in the Bible.
- b. It stands over against "conceived and born in sin."
- c. This interpretation is historically correct.

III. No separation can be made, in the first part of the Baptism Form, between the work of the Father

and the Son, on the one hand, and that of the Spirit on the other:

- a. The Father seals unto us that He establishes an eternal covenant with us.
 - b. The Son that He washes us in His blood from all our sin.
 - c. The Holy Spirit assures us that He will apply unto us that which we have in Christ.
 - d. All this is applicable only to the elect.
- IV. The Thanksgiving in the Form also has in view only the elect.
- a. Forgiveness of sin.
 - b. Membership in Christ,
 - c. Adoption unto children.
- V. Children of the promise in Rom. 9 means the elect seed of the covenant.
- VI. What is usually called the covenant of redemption or the council of peace has no ground in Scripture, but is the covenant between the Triune God and Christ as the Mediator or the Servant of Jehovah.

The afternoon of the same day, that is, the 5th of November, and the forenoon of the next day was occupied by Dr. Schilder's reply to those propositions.

On the whole, we had very interesting and instructive meetings.

The differences between the Liberated Churches and us, as they were brought out in the discussion, concerned especially the following points:

1) First of all, the definition of the covenant. According to us the idea of the covenant is essentially that of friendship and fellowship between God and His people in Christ; the Liberated Churches, although they do not define the covenant, nevertheless, lay all the emphasis on promise and demand.

2) In our view the promise of the covenant is for the elect only; according to the Liberated Churches the promise is for all that are born in the covenant line, although this must not be understood in the Arminian sense, since also they emphasize the truth that God Himself must fulfill all the conditions of the covenant.

3) The Liberated Churches speak of parties in the covenant, although they admit that in the real sense man cannot be a party over against God; we prefer to speak with the Baptism Form of parts rather than of parties.

We agreed upon fundamentals, and for the rest we agreed to differ.

But a true brotherly feeling was maintained to the very last, witness the fact that at the end of the conference we presented Dr. Schilder with a nice gift.

H. H.

OUR DOCTRINE

God Is Triune.

God is the Triune God, one in essence and three in Persons. This truth is prominently mentioned in our Reformed Confessions. In answer to the twenty-fifth question of Lord's Day 8, "Since there is but one divine Being, why do you speak of three, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?", we read: "Because God has so revealed Himself in His Word that these *three distinct Persons* are the *one, true, and eternal God*." In Lord's Day 9 we read: "That the *eternal Father* of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who. . . ." In Lord's Day 13, in answer to the question, "Why is He called God's only begotten Son, since we also are children of God?", we read: "Because Christ *alone* is the *eternal, natural* Son of God. . . ." And in Lord's Day 20, in connection with the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, we read of the third Person of the Trinity: "First, that He is *true* and *co-eternal* God with the Father and the Son." Our Confession of Faith, also called the Belgic Confession, speaks of the truth of the Trinity in Article 8: "According to this truth and this Word of God, we believe in one only God, Who is the one single essence, in which are three Persons, really, truly, and eternally distinct according to their incommunicable properties; namely, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Father is the cause, origin, and image of the Father; the Holy Spirit is the eternal power and might, proceeding from the Father and the Son. Nevertheless, God is not by this distinction divided into three, since the Holy Scriptures teach us that the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit have each His personality, distinguished by Their properties; but in such wise that these three persons are but one only God. Hence, then, it is evident that the Father is not the Son, nor the Son the Father, and likewise the Holy Spirit is neither the Father nor the Son. Nevertheless, these persons thus distinguished are not divided, nor intermixed; for the Father has not assumed the flesh, nor has the Holy Spirit, but the Son only. The Father has never been without His Son, or without His Holy Spirit. For They are all three co-eternal and co-essential. There is neither first nor last; for They are all three one, in truth, in power, in goodness, and in mercy."

A Tremendous Mystery.

The truth that God is triune is a tremendous mystery. Of course, understanding "mystery" in a generally accepted sense of the word, as something we do not understand, all of life is a mystery. Parents and their children exercise fellowship with each other; but

their knowledge of one another is never to be identified or confused with understanding or comprehension. The same is true of the relationship between a shepherd and his dog. Our own life is a tremendous mystery. I am a human person and consist of body and soul. I know that the physical and psychical (body and soul) aspects of my life are intimately related. Seeing is an activity of the soul, but it is possible only with the physical eye. Yet, all the wisdom of this world cannot begin to understand or comprehend this wonderful relationship.

Scripture speaks repeatedly of "mystery". In I Cor. 15:51 the resurrection of the dead is called a mystery. In Eph. 6:19 the apostle speaks of the mystery of the gospel, and the apostle would teach us in these words that the gospel is a mystery. And in I Tim. 3:16 the Incarnation is called a mystery in the well-known words: "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." A mystery, according to Holy Writ, is not a contradiction. Such is oftentimes the presentation today. The proclamation of a general offer of salvation and particular atonement, of a general love of God and eternal election and reprobation is then presented as a mystery, as something which appears contradictory to our finite, limited mind. However, this is evidently not the meaning of a mystery in the Scriptures. Fact is, the mysteries, whereof the Scriptures speak in the above mentioned passages of Holy Writ, have been revealed. It lies in the nature of the case that a contradiction cannot be revealed. As soon as anything which appeared contradictory to us has been explained or disclosed it ceases to be a contradiction. Yet, the mysteries in the above named passages have been revealed. Besides, are the Incarnation and the resurrection of the dead, mentioned by the apostle as mysteries, contradictions? A mystery we would define as a truth which lies beyond the scope of our human life and therefore must be revealed unto us. This surely applies to the Scriptural truths of the Incarnation and the resurrection. In the Incarnation *God* assumes our flesh and blood. Surely, no human understanding can possibly conceive of this truth and no human eye can possibly see it. In the resurrection we put off mortality, the earthly, and all that pertains to this present scheme of things, and we put on immortality and the heavenly scheme of things. This, too, lies entirely beyond the scope of our human life and understanding. This also applies to the gospel. It, too, speaks of things which lie beyond the scope of our human life. It proclaims a salvation which is Divine in origin and realization and heavenly in its culmination, and therefore could never arise within the heart of man. How true, then, that the doctrine of the Trinity is neces-

sarily a mystery! This doctrine speaks of the life of the living God Himself!

The mysterious character of the doctrine of the Trinity, however, does not exclude the possibility of our knowledge of the Triune God. That parents and their children do not understand each other, or that a shepherd and his dog do not comprehend one another does not necessarily imply that they therefore cannot know one another. Knowledge and comprehension are not identical. We will never be able to comprehend the Lord. God is great and His greatness is unsearchable. But we can know Him. For to know God means that we love Him in the light of His revelation.

The Doctrine of the Trinity Definitely a Doctrine of Revelation.

Various analogies have been suggested to shed light on the subject of the Trinity. Some of these illustrations or analogies were taken from inanimate nature or from plant life, as the water of the fountain, the creek, and the river, or of the rising mist, the cloud, and the rain, or in the form of rain, snow, and ice; and as the tree with its root, trunk, and branches. Other illustrations of greater importance were drawn from the life of man, particularly from the constitution and the processes of the human mind. These analogies were considered to be of special significance because man is the image-bearer of God. To this class, e.g., belongs the unity of the heart, head, and hand, our life from the three-fold aspect of its willing, thinking, and doing or working. Based upon the three-fold aspect of our life is also the three-fold office of man: prophet, priest, and king.

The doctrine of the Trinity, however, is definitely a doctrine of revelation. This doctrine implies, in the first place, that God is one. To call attention to this aspect of the Trinity is not necessary in this article. The doctrine of the oneness of God was treated at length in a preceding article. We noted at that time that the doctrine of the oneness of the Lord is not only based on Deut. 6:4, but that it is taught throughout Holy Writ.

Besides revealing unto us the oneness of God, the Scriptures also teach us that God is three. In the Old Testament we read of three Persons in passages such as Is. 48:16; 61:6; 63:9, 10, and we quote: "Come ye near unto Me, hear ye this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there am I: and now the *Lord God*, and his *Spirit*, hath sent Me. . . . The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me; because the Lord hath anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He hath sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound. . . . In all their affliction *He* was afflicted, and *the angel*

of His presence saved them: in *His* love and in *His* pity *He* redeemed them; and He bare them, and carried them all the days of old. But they rebelled, and vexed His *Holy Spirit*: therefore He was turned to be their enemy, and He fought against them." The New Testament presents to us a clearer revelation of the distinction in the Godhead. In I John 5:7 the Three Persons are mentioned literally: "For there are three that bear witness in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one." Well known to us is the baptism of Jesus as recorded in the gospels, as in Matt. 3:16, 17: "And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him: and lo, a voice from heaven, saying, This is my Beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased." Matthew speaks here of the Voice out of heaven, of Christ standing in the water, and of the Holy Spirit Who descends upon Him. We are all acquainted with the Great Commission recorded for us in Matthew 28:19: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost". And also familiar to us is the apostolic benediction recorded in II Cor. 13:14: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen." It is clear from the Scriptures, therefore, that God is not only one God, but also that He is three. It remains to be proven, however, that these Three of whom the Scriptures speak, are three Divine Persons, co-eternal and co-equal.

We need not prove the Godhead of the Father. This truth is accepted without dispute. Neither need we prove the personality of the Christ. This, too, is accepted without dispute. Everyone agrees that a person once lived upon this earth, suffered and died, whose name was Jesus of Nazareth. And, finally, we need not establish the Godhead of the Holy Spirit. All are familiar with the fact that the Scriptures ascribe Divine power to the Holy Spirit. Of this Spirit we read, e.g., that He raised up Jesus from the dead and that He will also quicken our mortal bodies, Rom. 8:11. Two things must be established upon the basis of Holy Writ to complete the cycle of Scriptural proof for the Trinity. On the one hand, it is abundantly clear from the Scriptures, not only that the Lord Jesus Christ is a person, but also that He is Divine. The apostle, John, in the prologue to his gospel, begins by declaring that the Word, Which was in the beginning and Which was with God, was God. And of this Word we read in verse 14: "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth. Hence, Christ is declared by the apostle John, to be the living God Himself. The same holy writer

declares in one of his epistles, I John 5:20: "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. *This is the true God, and eternal life.*" And in Matt. 9:1-6 the evangelist records the miracle of the healing of the palsy. In this miracle all the emphasis falls upon the fact that the Son of Man, our Lord Jesus Christ, hath power to forgive sins. Jesus, we read, had declared the sins of the palsy to be forgiven. Immediately certain of the scribes said within themselves that He had spoken blasphemy. Only God might forgive sin. Jesus, to show His almighty power and that He, therefore, as God had the right to forgive sin, thereupon promptly heals the palsy of his sickness. It was surely easier *merely to say*, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee", than actually to heal the man of his disease. Besides, if Christ were merely a man who therefore did not have the right to forgive sin, would the living God have healed the palsy upon the word of the human Christ. Matt. 9:1-6 definitely establishes the Godhead of the Christ. On the other hand, besides establishing the truth that Christ is Divine, the Scriptures also teach us that the Holy Spirit is a Person. We need not prove His Godhead. But we must establish the fact, upon the basis of Holy Writ, that the Spirit is a Person. Concerning this there can be no doubt. The Word of God ascribes personal acts of thinking and willing to the Holy Spirit. We read in I Cor. 2:10: "But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." Here the Spirit is held before us as searching, as consciously searching the deep things of God. And in I Cor. 12:11 we read: "But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will." In this text an act of the will is ascribed to the Third Person of the Trinity. And in John 14-16 He is held before us as the Comforter. Scriptural proof for the doctrine of the Trinity.

The Content of the Doctrine of the Trinity.

What is the content of this doctrine? What do we profess when we declare that God is triune? That God is triune implies, in the first place, that He is one. As stated before in this article, to this oneness of God we have called attention in a preceding article. There is only one God. This we profess in distinction from all heathen polytheism. But God is also one in Himself. There is in Him no division, no strife, no conflict, no change. God is everlastingly one in Himself, in His own life, and therefore in all His counsel and works.

The doctrine of the Trinity implies, in the second place, that the Lord is personally three. God is not essentially three. We do not believe in three gods.

This is Tritheism. God is *personally* three. This truth teaches us, on the one hand, that our God is a personal Being. Modernism denies this. The modernist would rather speak of God's power, wisdom, etc. He would identify God with creation. He would have us believe that if we love one another, we have and live the life and mind of God, and that we thus become the sons of God. He really identifies God with the creature. This modernistic conception of the Lord is actually the deathblow to all religion. If God be not infinitely exalted above all, if He be not the living God, infinitely and consciously exalted above all, there is none to whom we can pray, none against whom we can sin, and none before whom we need confess our sin. If God be not the living God, all religion is impossible, as well as all morality and consciousness of sin. We maintain, must maintain that the Lord is a personal Being. A person presupposes a moral-rational being, we cannot, e.g., speak of animals as persons. A person is an individual subsistence, denotes an individual rational-moral being, possessed of self-consciousness. That I am a person signifies, therefore, that I am conscious of myself as a moral-rational being, and that as such I conduct myself. The application of this to God is a truth of tremendous significance. God is not merely power, wisdom in the abstract sense of the word, identified with the world. He is the only true, living God, the God of infinite perfections, infinitely exalted above the creature, alone worthy of all praise and adoration, and as such He is conscious of Himself. Hence, as that alone living God He ever seeks Himself, maintains Himself, loves Himself, blesses therefore His people whom He loves for His Name's sake in Christ Jesus, and curses them who seek their peace and joy in the things below rather than in the living God.

God, however, is Tri-Personal. This does not mean that the Lord is essentially three. That the Lord is three in Persons and that these Persons are co-equal does not mean that the Divine Being is equally divided into three parts and that therefore the three Divine Persons are co-equal and co-eternal. To teach this would render one guilty of the heresy of Tritheism, "three gods." The Lord, however, is essentially one and personally three. Each Person lives the entire Divine fulness in His own personal way. The First Person of the Trinity is Father. The fundamental idea of fatherhood is that of generation. The First Person of the Trinity is Father because His personal relation to the Divine fulness is that of origin. He generates the Son and causes the Spirit to proceed from Him. The Second Person of the Trinity is Son. He is willingly generated by the Father. The act of Divine generation therefore does not merely imply an act by the Father; it also implies that the Son is willingly generated. The Son is the eternal Image of the Father and also causes the Spirit to proceed from Him. The

personal relation of the Holy Spirit to the Divine fulness is that of Procession. Eternally He proceeds from the Father and the Son. Hence, the life of the Trinitarian God proceeds eternally out of the Father, through the Son, and in the Holy Spirit. And the Three Persons are, of course, co-eternal. The Father cannot be Father without the Son and the Son cannot be the Son without the Father, and together they eternally know one another in the Holy Spirit.

Its Practical Implications.

We have already referred in a previous article to the practical implications of the truth that God is one. The truth that God is one has a unifying effect upon the people of God throughout the world. Whereas heathen polytheism sets nations and peoples over against each other, Monotheism causes every child of God, whatever his race or color may be, to worship the same Lord. In addition to this, the truth that God is one also unifies the life of the individual Christian. He knows that, because God is one, all things must work together for his good.

The truth of the Triune God reveals God unto us as a covenant God. Inasmuch as it is our purpose to discuss the Covenant in subsequent articles, we will not at this time enter into a detailed discussion of this thought. We can say at this time, however, that God Himself is a covenant God, lives a life of Divine and eternal friendship. The basic requirement for a life of friendship is two-fold. Friends are characterized, first of all, by unity. One willing, desiring, seeking, thinking characterizes them. Hence, they are one. And the other requirement for a life of friendship is personal distinction. Each must have his (or her) personal function to perform. Hence, God is characterized by a life of Divine and eternal friendship. He is essentially one. Conflict, strife, dissension, difference of opinion, etc., never mar the life of the living God. And the Lord is personally three. He is Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. They are essentially one and personally different. God, therefore, is a covenant God, the God of eternal friendship in the sphere of infinite perfection.

This truth is of vital significance for the church of God. This lies in the nature of the case. God Himself must surely determine the relationship with His people. That God Himself is a covenant God is the basis for His covenant-fellowship with us. The fact that God Himself is characterized by the most blessed fellowship, Himself delights in communion to walk and talk and exercise fellowship with Himself, is the basis for His fellowship with His people. Moreover, God's own covenant fellowship also determines the nature of His fellowship with us. God is characterized by infinite perfection. God's fellowship with us is therefore also characterized by perfection. There is consequently no

fellowship of God with the wicked. Communion between us and the Lord is possible only in the sphere of perfection. This also determines our calling. If anyone say that he has fellowship with God, and walks in darkness, he lies and does not the truth. To have fellowship with God, Who Himself walketh in the light, is possible only if we walk in the light. Our covenant calling is therefore to put off the old man with his evil lusts, and to put on the new man, unto the glory of God, our Father.

H. V.

The Potter and The Clay

My text is again taken from the ninth chapter of Paul's epistle to the Romans. The verses selected are the verses twenty and twenty one of the aforesaid chapter. Let us begin reading at verse eighteen: "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy; and whom he will he hardeneth. Thou wilt then say unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? for who hath resisted his will? Nay, but O man, Who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?"

We deal here in verses twenty and twenty one with the first part of Paul's reply to the objections raised against his doctrine by its opponents,—the doctrine that Paul summarizes in the statement, "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy; and whom he will he hardeneth." Let us concentrate on this part of the apostle's reply, first of all upon the statement, "Nay, O man who art thou that repliest against God." We must take notice of the fact that the apostle calls his opponent by his name man, and certainly with a definite purpose. He wants his opponent to understand that he is but a man, a mere man. Now what is this *man* doing? This *man* raises objections against that particular work of God that consists in His having mercy on whom He will have mercy and in His hardening whom He will, that is, against that work of God according to which He brings into being the Jacobs, the children of the light, and raises up the Pharaohs according as He will. Paul's claiming for his God a sovereignty *that* absolute is unutterably provoking to this man. To him the idea of a God *that* sovereign is insufferable. And in his great vexation of spirit he voices his objections. And his argument is that if Pharaoh hardens his heart as sovereignly hardened by the Lord, Pharaoh is wicked because God wants him

wicked, which of course is true; and that therefore the blame for what Pharaoh is rests squarely upon God; and that Pharaoh is not responsible, which of course, is not true.

The opponent imagines his argument to be a masterpiece of Logic; and supposes that hearing it God stands silent and mute, not knowing how in the world to reply to it. Thus in dealing with this man and his objections, the first thing that Paul does is to set this man in his place with the rebuke, "Who art thou O man that repliest against God?" that criticizest God, contradictest God to His face. And this precisely is what the man does; he criticizes God and thus sets himself up as judge over God, and pronounces God's work of hardening whom He will an atrocious doing, a shameful abuse of His sovereignty. The amazing audacity of this man raises questions. How can that man have the right, the authority, to set himself up as judge over God? Did he create God so that God is his creature, the work of his hands, and he, this man, God's maker and by virtue hereof God's lord and judge? Or did God perhaps appoint this man his judge and abdicate his throne? And besides, does this man have the mental and spiritual capacity to sit as judge over God and His works? Who is this man anyway? He is a man, nothing but a man, a creature of the dust; his breath is in his nostrils. His life is as a handbreadth, as a cloud that passeth by. He is grass, and all his glory as the flower of the grass. As the grass he withereth; and his glory passes away as the flower of the grass. And this man sets himself up as judge over God—the eternal, the incomprehensible, infinite and infinitely wise God, whose wisdom is unsearchable, and whose ways are past finding out, the holy and the righteous God who dwelleth in a light to which no man can approach; the almighty God, who measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, meted out the heavens with a span, comprehended the dust of the earth with a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance, and before whom all the nations are nothing. Man, this man, sets himself up as judge over this God, and imagines that he slays God with the foul breath of his puny logic. What wickedness! what impudence! what pride! what amazing stupidity! The combined languages of the whole work are not adequate to express it. O man, who art thou, who dost thou think thyself to be, that repliest against *God*,

Having set this *man* in his place, the apostle, speaking for God and God through him, now tenders his reply. Says the apostle to this man, "Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus?" We must take notice that the apostle is no longer dealing directly with this opponent's slanderous attack upon God, that whereas these Pharaohs cannot resist God's will to harden them, God cannot hold them responsible for their wickedness; but that here the

apostle strikes rather at the thought and evil disposition of heart and mind that inspires this vile attack upon God—the thought, namely, that God has no right over the Pharaohs to raise them up Pharaohs; that doing so, God is guilty of a shameful abuse of His sovereignty. This is the contention of the man. He insists that God has no right to be that absolutely sovereign, and that whereas he nevertheless does claim and exercise this right, the Pharaohs shall say to God, “Why hast thou made me thus.” According to this opponent of Paul, the only right that God really has over his rational-moral creatures is to love them all and in that love assist on their way to heaven as many of them as, according to the good pleasure of their own sovereign will, choose to accept Christ, and thus the right to condemn the others in the grief of a great disappointment that, according to their own sovereign will, they chose to harden their hearts. But it is plain that this is equivalent to saying that God has no real right over His rational-moral creatures at all. Such indeed is the contention of Paul’s opponent. And it is to this argument that the apostle now replies.

“Shall the thing formed say unto him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?” Shall Pharaoh say unto God, why hast thou made me a Pharaoh?” Pharaoh shall not say to God, why hast thou raised me up a Pharaoh, as if God had no right over him to raise him up a Pharaoh. Just what is the issue here? Precisely this:

Is Pharaoh God’s creature, who lives and moves and has his being in God; and does God raise him up and make him to stand in all his rebellion? If so, then Pharaoh in his rebellion and defiance belongs only to God and in no conceivable respect and in no degree however infinitesimal does Pharaoh belong to himself; and then it follows, must needs follow that God has all the right over Pharaoh and that Pharaoh has no right over himself, and that therefore he shall not say to God, “Why hast thou made me thus,” “Why hast thou raised me up a Pharaoh.” But if, on the other hand, Pharaoh lives and moves and has his being in himself, and if there is in Pharaoh power—physical, intellectual, volitional, spiritual power—original with Pharaoh and thus not out of God, by which Pharaoh by himself can harden his heart, and thus raise himself up a vessel of his own choosing; if all he needs of God is a little assistance in working out his inherent potentialities and in realizing himself as a vessel of his own conception and choice, he indeed could say to God, “why hast thou made me thus,” take God to task for not obeying his voice and thus for following instead his own ideas in raising up Pharaoh. For in this case, Pharaoh is very actually his own and God has not an atom of right over Pharaoh and does him a gross injustice indeed in laying hold on Pharaoh to use him for the promotion of the ends of His kingdom. And then there

is very actually unrighteousness with God; if Pharaoh by himself hardens his heart, thus hardens His heart not as sovereignly hardened by the Lord; and what is more, in this case there could be no reason in the world for this opponent using on God that foul argument that Pharaoh cannot be held responsible for his wickedness in that he is what God wants him to be.

Just what is truth here? This is truth here. Pharaoh is God’s creature. All Pharaoh’s powers of body, mind, soul and spirit, are God’s. And God sovereignly hardens Pharaoh’s heart, not by withdrawing from Pharaoh the gracious influences of His Holy Spirit—there were no such gracious influences of God’s Holy Spirit operative in Pharaoh at any time—but God hardened Pharaoh’s heart by giving Pharaoh over to a reprobated mind, through the wickedness of his own heart, Rom. 1:24, 28. Thus it is verily God who raises up Pharaoh and makes him to stand in all his rebellion and disobedience, so that also in his wickedness and perversity, Pharaoh belongs solely to God, and not to himself. God therefore has all the right over him to raise him up a Pharaoh, a vessel unto dishonour, and to use Pharaoh as He pleases. Pharaoh then shall not say to God, “Why hast thou raised me up a Pharaoh.” The thing formed shall not say to him that formed it, “Why hast thou made me thus?”

But let there be no misunderstanding. That the Pharaohs and the Esaus say to God, “Why hast thou made me thus,” certainly does not mean that the thought that they are Pharaohs and Esaus is to them too painful for words; so that they would that God raise them up Jacobs, children of the Light. Were this true, the Pharaohs would not be Pharaohs at all but they would be Jacobs. Nay, the fact is that Pharaoh wants to be exactly what he is, a Pharaoh. And therefore he hardens his heart, persistently opposes his *way* to the command of God that he let the people go. And therefore his saying to God, “Why hast thou made me thus,” is sheer defiance of God, of God’s sovereign claim upon him. Over and over is Pharaoh commanded and admonished to let the people go; and should he obey, he would live and not perish. But the more he is commanded, the more he hardens his heart. But Pharaoh could not will to obey. For God hardened his heart, through the very command, repeated over and over, that he let the people go.

Now this doctrine that the Lord has absolutely all the right over Pharaoh to raise him up a Pharaoh, a vessel unto a dishonourable use, the apostle reinforces by the figure of the potter and the clay. “Hath not the potter power—here power in the sense of right, authority, as implying power also in the sense of strength, might—hath not the potter power, right, authority, over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? Clay in the figure appears in the relation that it sustains to

the human potter. And the issue is again precisely this: Is there original with that clay, power—physical, mental, volitional, moral, spiritual power—by which that clay can make of itself vessels of its own choosing? If so, then the potter has no power, right, over the clay at all and the clay hath all the right over itself, and the potter must leave the clay severely alone and keep himself at a distance and wait until the clay orders him to draw nigh to give it whatever assistance it thinks it may need in realizing itself as vessels of its own choosing. Or is the clay nothing but lifeless, inanimate substance? If so, the potter hath right over the clay, given him of God, to make of it, of any lump of it, vessels exactly as the potter chooses. And certainly the vessels made unto a dishonourable use, being as they were, in their unformed state, nothing but lifeless matter, with not an atom of right over themselves therefore, have certainly not the right to say to the potter, supposing now that they were gifted with speech, "Why hast thou made me thus. Well, the latter is the case, isn't it? In their unformed state, the vessels made unto a dishonourable use were lifeless substance. The intelligence and strength that it takes to make of a lifeless lump of clay vessels of any description; resides not in the lump of clay but in the potter. Hence, the potter does certainly have all the right over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto a dishonourable use and another unto an honourable use. And the final product—those vessels—are still lifeless things. The potter bears them in his hands; and he sets them where he will, and puts them to whatever use he chooses. And he has a perfect right; they are his creations.

Now in applying this figure, we must by all means bear in mind that what can only be relatively true of that lump of clay in relation to the potter, is absolutely true of man—of the Jacobs and the Pharaohs, in their relation to God. That lump of clay by itself apart from the potter is at least inanimate substance, and as such a creature of God. The potter always works with God's substance; and it is God therefore who gives the potter right over the clay. The potter has not this right in himself. And also his intelligence and strength to make of a lump of clay vessels of his own choosing is God's gift in him. But in their relation to God, man, the Jacobs and the Pharaohs, are absolute nothingness. Thus to make that lump of lifeless clay a figure of man in his fallen state is to miss the point in the figure altogether.

There is still another figure that man, mankind, in itself is nothingness, namely, the figure of the small dust on the balance and the drop on the bucket. Says the Lord by the mouth of the Prophet, "Behold the nations are as a drop on the bucket and are counted as small dust of the balance. Small dust throws no weight on the balance at all; and the drop on the bucket

you wipe away. Holy Writ brings down man very low. In fact, it reduces man, mankind, to an absolute nothingness in itself. And this of course man in his colossal pride cannot endure. Paul's opponent cannot endure it. He insists that the Jacobs and the Pharaohs in themselves are something. He maintains that there are gods, and no little tin gods either, but verily gods—gods so terrifically powerful that the true God of heaven and earth must shape his whole eternal counsel according to the sovereign will of each and every one of them.

But let us now apply Paul's figure. The issue is this: Is there original with and inhering in that nothingness that the Scripture calls man, mankind, power—physical, intellectual, moral, spiritual power—by which this nothingness can make of itself vessels of its own choosing? If so mankind in itself is not a nothingness at all but verily a lump of potential gods. Or is that lump of nothingness that Scripture calls mankind, actually in itself a nothingness? Certainly the latter. Such is the teaching of God's Word. And the teaching is true. The Jacobs, the children of the light, have being and existence only in God through Christ. He is the true vine, and without him they can do nothing. And the Esaus and the Pharaohs have being only in God and by His power do they exist. And he hardens them according to His will. And therefore God alone hath all the right over that lump of nothingness, mankind. And accordingly He brought it into being, the one, the Jacobs, by themselves dead in sin, but chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world that they should be blameless and holy before him in love—these, the Jacobs, He brought into being, through the creation of man, man's fall, and by the redemption of Christ, vessels unto honor, children of God, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of His grace; and the other, the Pharaohs, condemned unto everlasting damnation before the foundation of the world, He brings into being, raises up, through the creation of man, through man's fall, and by hardening them according to His will. So does the divine potter, of that same lump of nothingness, mankind, make the one, the Jacobs, a vessel unto honour; and the other, the Pharaohs, a vessel unto dishonour. And he hath the right. For He alone is God and not man is God. He is all and man is nothing.

G. M. O.

"My Lord is ever with me
Along life's busy way;
I trust in Him completely
For guidance day by day."

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

David Slays The Giant

When we last left David, he had hastened into the army, and was asking his brethren peace, that is, saluting them. As he talks with them, Goliath comes forth and repeats his challenge. And the Israelites flee when they see the man, and are sore afraid. Some of the refugees come to the place where David converses with his brethren. He hears them say what Saul will do by the man who kills the giant. David speaks to the men and has them repeat Saul's promises of reward. His inquiry indicates his amazement at the lack of faith on the part of Saul and the Israelites in general, and not interest in the promised reward as such. For he replies, "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?" In other words, the insult offered Israel and Israel's God by the Philistines must be wiped out. For the Philistines are an uncircumcised race of men that has no fellowship with the living God and stands outside of God's covenant with Israel. And their reviling the people of God is scorn and derision directed against the living God himself. This reproach must be taken away; and he who ventures to take it away will have God on his side and overcome with God's help, whose is the victory. Such is the faith in which David stands immovable. For he is now the anointed of the Lord, Israel's real king, appointed and qualified by God's Spirit to war God's warfare.

Eliab, the eldest brother, overhears what David speaks to the men. He is angry and calls his youngest brother to account. "Why camest thou down hither? and with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness?" he says, and without waiting for a reply adds in the same breath, "I know thy pride, and the badness of thine heart; for thou art come down that thou mightest see the battle." These are unkind words. As blown up with pride, David no longer wants to be a shepherd of sheep. He has his heart set on doing bigger things. He imagines his place to be among the warriors of his people. Yet, he came not to take part in the battle but only to see it. The spectacle of a bloody combat delights him. For his heart is bad. Let him then return in haste to his sheep. These are cruel words, inspired by envious zeal. Eliab hates David. In expressing his disdain, words fail him. He even minimizes to the smallest possible proportions the flock that has been placed in David's charge. He is but the keeper of a few sheep.

Eliab's attitude is hostile. He is bitter. It is the anger of hatred that he displays, and not the anger of love. He ascribes to David the worst motives. For

his purpose is to wound. Why Eliab hated David is not revealed. A good conjecture is that he was envious of David's outstanding mental and spiritual endowments. If he knows of the anointing that has taken place in Bethlehem, he would be hating David the more now on that account. For he is a self-absorbed man, proud of his personal beauty.

David is accounted for little even by his father. Jesse had made all his eight sons but one to pass before Samuel. And the son omitted was David. Had Jesse gotten his way, David would have remained in obscurity. And had Samuel not been deterred by the voice of God in his heart from following his own impulses, he would have poured the sacred oil on the head of Eliab. It was the Lord who took David from the sheepcots (II Sam. 7:18). David is disallowed by his own family. And in this respect, too, he preindicates Christ, the stone, which the builders disallowed, but which was made the head of the corner. For God laid him in Zion a chief corner stone, elect and precious, and he that believeth in him shall not be confounded.

Under the fire of Eliab's verbal attack David behaves as it becomes the Lord's anointed. He remains calm. His only reply is, "What have I done? Is there not a cause? Had he retaliated in kind, he would have done himself and the cause of his God only harm. "Is there not a cause?" The question has reference to the sad state of affairs of the moment. The Philistine defies the armies of the living God; and there is no one who dare fight with him. For there seems to be no one who stands in the faith that the victory is the Lord's. Others translate, "Is there not a word," supposing that the reply refers to the word that David has spoken (verse 26). According to this rendering, the sense is, "Is not this word permitted me?" May I not speak to the men?" Assuredly, David has done nothing amiss. Eliab knows that he came not to the scene of battle of his own will, but as sent by his father. For David already has saluted his brethren, as Jesse has instructed.

David is not intimidated by his brother's tongue-lashing. For the Spirit of the Lord is upon him. Saul has issued a proclamation, urging combat with the giant. And his inducements are amazing, as we have seen. Yet, no one bestirs himself, though the giant has been repeating his challenge these forty days now. All are afraid to the last man! The shame of it! But the men of Israel are not cowards. Who wouldn't be afraid to fight with that Philistine? His body is encased from head to foot in metal. He is nine feet and one inch in height. The weight of his armour is astounding. But he can wear it. For he is a creature of prodigious physical strength. The strongest and tallest of Israel's warriors would be as a grasshopper in his own sight, and in the sight of the giant. Who

can fight with him and overcome? The attempt would be madness.

But that Philistine defies the armies of the living God, mark you, of the living God, thus armies invincible in battle in that the living God fighteth for them, if only they put their trust in him,—the living God, who doeth with the hosts of heaven according to His will, and before whom all the inhabitants of the earth are counted as nothing. And who is that defier of this living God's armies? He is a man, nothing but a man. In God he lives, and moves and has his being and by the power of the living God does he exist. And this man, uncircumcised Philistine, daily challenges the living God's armies to produce, if they can, a man to engage him in combat. And there is no one to accept the challenge.

The unbelief of the men of Israel troubles David. It vexes his soul. So, turning from Eliab, he goes through the crowd, speaking as he goes after his former word. "What shall be done to the man that killeth the Philistine, and taketh away the reproach of Israel," is the question that he puts over and over; and in the same breath adding, "for who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?" Not that he wants the report of what Saul will do by the man who will fight with the Philistine corroborated in order that he may convince himself that he has not been listening to rumors, as though he has his heart set on the promised reward of the king. His sole purpose is to stimulate faith, instrumentally, and arouse to action. A living faith in God will overcome that giant. Where is the man with that faith! It is that man that David seeks. For the giant must be silenced. His unanswered challenge is a disgrace to Israel's armies, being, as they are, the armies of the living God. For the challenge goes unaccepted; and the heathen say that God is not living or that, if living, he is not Israel's God.

The people answer David again and again after the former manner; but no one comes forward to do battle with the giant. In the meantime some go and rehearse David's words in the hearing of Saul. Not that they can tell the king that there is a man in the camp who says that he will go fight with the giant. For David goes no further than to express his amazement at their fear of the Philistine. But he speaks the language of faith, rarely heard in those days, and thereby not purposely but necessarily lets it be known that he is unafraid and willing and even determined to fight with the giant, if the faith of the others continues to falter. So they rehearsed his words to Saul. And doubtless they also tell the king that it is but a youth, a stripling, who thus speaks, and not one of Saul's seasoned warriors. Saul is interested. He wants to lay eyes on David. For he concludes that he must be a remarkable youth. "And he sent for him." According to the nar-

rative David is the first to speak, "Let no man's heart fail because of him," says he to the king. The words indicate that Saul's spirits are low. There is that giant and his challenge. The likes of him is nowhere to be found, least of all among Saul's warriors. Who will go and fight with the Philistine! Woe unto Israel! Woe unto Saul! It must have been in response to such and similar wailings of unbelief on the part of the king, that David said to him, "Let no man's heart fail because of him; thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine." But Saul discourages him. "Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him: for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth." Saul means what he says. It would be unforgiveable to allow this stripling to go against the giant and just as foolish. But David will not be discouraged. For he has an unction of the Spirit. That giant must be silenced. And God will give victory. For the Lord has helped him in the past, perhaps only recently, against a lion and against a bear, preying upon his father's sheep and running off with a lamb out of the flock. And as the sheep had been entrusted into his care, he took after the lion. As a result of the blow that he dealt the beast, its jaws relaxed, and the lamb was free. But this was not the end of it. The angry beast rose up against him. But catching the animal by his beard, he smote him again, and killed him. And so had he done to the bear. That had been a wonderful accomplishment, made possible only by the Lord's help. The two beasts had stolen a lamb. That was their offense, not to be compared, certainly with the offence of this uncircumcised Philistine. For he defies the living God. That was his offense. Will the Lord not help him against this Philistine? Is God in His own sight less than a lamb? Can't Saul see that the Philistine will be as one of those beasts, thus see that the Lord, that delivered David out of the paw of the lion and the bear, will deliver him out of the hand of the Philistine? Saul does not see. For he believes not in wonders. Yet he does not withhold his consent. "Go", says he, "and the Lord be with thee."

Saul arms David with his armour. But David cannot go, says he, in these garments because he has not proved them. They would only hinder him in the fight, and he puts them off. He returns to his shepherd impliments, staff and sling. The latter as well as the former was necessary to keep off the wild beasts.

Goliath draws nearer and nearer to David as a result of David's approach to him as equipped with staff and bag containing the five smooth stones that he had taken out of the brook. As he comes nearer, Goliath looks more closely at him, and despises him, seeing in him not a warrior but a pretty youth. And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. Here is seen the contrast which comes out in the battles between the Israelites and the Philistines and the heathen in gen-

eral. It is the contrast between the living God and His people on the one hand, and the kingdoms of Satan on the other. David's answer to Goliath's reproaches contains the important element of his faith in contra-opposition to the trust of the Philistine, which is in the arm of flesh and in his gods. The giant comes to David relying on his own strength and on his powerful armour, but David comes to him in the name of Jehovah Sabaoth, the God of the armies of Israel, whom the giant defies. Therefore the Lord will give the adversary in David's hand. And all the assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the Lord's. It may be supposed that Goliath, confident of victory, advances against the despised shepherd-lad with uncovered forehead. David slings the stone, and smites the giant in his forehead, and the stone sinks in his forehead; and he falls upon his face to the earth in an unconscious state. David cuts off the head of the fallen adversary with the latter's own sword. Seeing their champion dead, the Philistines fled.

G. M. O.

SION'S ZANGEN

Het Gebed Eens Verdrukten

(Psalm 102; Tweede Deel)

De vorige maal toen we stilstonden bij dezen psalm hebben we opgemerkt, dat de zanger die ons dit lied gaf een zeer wijs man geweest is. Eerst, hij gaat in zijn klagen tot God; en, tweedens, hij kent dien God als de HEERE! Dat neemt wijsheid.

We zijn niet klaargekomen met dat gedeelte, hetwelk ons meldt hoe vreeselijk hij moest lijden.

We gaan nu verder.

"Mijne vijanden smaden mij al den dag: die tegen mij razen, zweren bij mij!"

Zou dit vers in onmiddellijk verband staan met het voorgaande? Ik denk het wel. In de vorige verzen had hij gewaagd van zijn groote eenzaamheid. Hij vergeleek zich met den "roerdomp", de "steenuil" en de "musch". Het is duidelijk uit de vergelijking die hij maakt, dat dit vogelen zijn die gewoon zijn om in de eenzaamheid te verkeerren, en ook, dat zij in het woeste en wilde verkeerren. Daarom denken wij, dat de vertaling "musch" niet opgaat. Een musch is het tegenovergestelde van eenzaam. Dat soort vogels hebben de gezelligheid lief. Zij worden altijd gevonden met massa's.

Onze vraag is: zou het zoo zijn, dat de eenzaamheid die deze arme man moest verduren in verband staat

met die razende vijanden waarvan hij in dit vers spreekt? Ik denk van wel, ofschoon we er tegelijk bij willen voegen, dat de zanger verder ziet dan die vijanden, dat hij, namelijk, achter die vijanden zijn God ziet, die hem kastijdt door middel van dat goddelooze volk.

Dat dit zoo is, is ook duidelijk, als we voor de aandacht houden, dat deze zanger een type is van den Christus. Zie vers 19, en ook het slot van den psalm, hetwelk in Hebr. 1 door den Heiligen Geest toegepast wordt op den Christus. O ja, de zanger heeft het benauid gehad, doch al die benauidheid is vervuld door den Messias.

Mijne vijanden smaden mij al den dag!

Keer op keer komen we uitdrukkingen tegen die zeer duidelijk op Christus' lijden zien. Zoo ook hier. Het is niet vaak gebeurd, dat een mensch zeggen kan: den ganschen dag ben ik de gesmade voor het oog mijner vijanden. Het is ook duidelijk, dat al de smaadheid die Gods volk ooit droeg, het zij in het Oude of in het Nieuwe Testament, verbonden moet aan den Christus Gods. Zoo kunnen we zien hoe Mozes, zoovele jaren vóór Bethlehem, de smaadheid van Christus grootere rijkdom achtte dan de schatten van Egypte.

Wat wil het zeggen: gesmaad te zijn?

Men smaadt datgene hetwelk men veracht, haat, verwerpt, niet telt, en onder Zijn voeten vertreedt.

Welnu, deze zanger klaagt tot God, dat zijn vijanden hem zóó behandelen. Die behandeling is zóó erg, dat men zelf bij hem zweert. Men veracht hem zoo erg, dat men zijn naam gebruikt tot verwensching, tot vervloeking.

Ziet om U heen vandaag, luistert naar het razen der godvergetenen, en huivert! Als de wereld hoogtij viert, dan geschiedt dit tegelijk met de versmading van Christus, dan noemt men Hem een vervloeking, die het gezang der Engelen Gods is.

Dit vers doet ons eenigzins de vreeselijke val des menschen peilen. Zoo diep zijn we gevallen, dat we het eelste vuil en vervloekt noemen. Waarom toch een vijand te zijn van de goeden? Het volk Gods is toch goed? "Kinderen die niet liegen zullen", zegt de Heilige Geest in Jesaja.

Doch achter die belagers van den psalmist stond God. Dat zag hij, en hij zal er klagende van zingen: "Want ik eet asch als brood, en vermeng mijnen drank met tranen, vanwege Uwe verstoordheid en Uwen grooten toorn. . . ."

Altemaal wijsheid Gods die den zanger kenmerkt. De domme mensch doet juist anders. Als we verstoord worden door den mensch dan ballen we de vuisten en zuchten naar de zoet wrake: "Ik zal hem wel krijgen!"

Doch niet Gods kind.

O ja, hij lijdt wel, doch hij verbindt zijn lijden aan God. En dat is wijsheid.

Hoe bang het erbij staat met hem blijkt uit zijn beeldspraak. Ik eet asch als brood! Ik vermeng mij-

nen drank met tranen. Ja, dan is het heel erg. De beeldspraak is duidelijk. Als het tijd van eten is, dan schikt hij zich wel tot de tafel, doch zijn brood is gelijk asch in Zijn mond. En terwijl hij drinkt loopen de tranen, al maar door. Er schijnt geen einde te komen aan zijn groot verdriet.

Eerder trachtte ik om die beeldspraak eenigzins te verklaren. Ik merkte op, dat we dan eerst de dingen van Gods schepping kunnen genieten als we vrede met God hebben. Anders is alles verkeerd. Dat begrijpt alleen Gods kind. De goddeloozen voeden zich met het aardsche en spreken van succes. Doch het is niet zoo.

Ook hier weer: deze taal past uitstekend in den mond van Jezus Christus. Hij heeft ook dezen psalm vervuld.

Niemand heeft zóó geleden van vijanden als Jezus. Letterlijk allen waren Hem een vijand. We mogen zelfs zeggen, dat voor het bewustzijn van Jezus ook de DrieEenige tot een vijand gekeerd was.

En Hij werd heel werkelijk gesmaad. Er is nooit iemand zóó gesmaad als Jezus. Paulus mag later zeggen, dat hij en de zijnen behandeld werden als het afschrapsel der wereld; maar die uitdrukking is *vervuld* aan Christus, zooals aan niemand anders.

Laat ons eens zien.

Hij werd een duivel geheeten, en Hij was de Zoon van God.

Hij heeft een duivel, zeide men, doch Hij heeft het inbegrip van alle deugd in Zich.

Hij deed veel goed, doch als men Hem gadesloeg in Zijn goedgevoelen, dan zeide men: Hij werpt de duivelen uit door den grootsten duivel die er is, namelijk, de vorst aller duivelen: Beëlzebul.

Komt Hij aan het einde van Zijn rondwandeling, dan grijpt men Hem beet en hecht Hem aan het hout der vervloeking.

Hij zendt Zijn Heiligen Geest op aarde, om daar door het wonder van Gods eeuwige genade geduriglijk te openbaren in de menschen van Gods welbehagen; en men zegt: ze zijn dronken van zoete wijn.

Hij past Zijn Woord en Geest toe in het midden van een gevallen en reddeloos verloren wereld, en men vloekt Hem zóó vreeselijk, dat het kind Gods er van ijst.

Is er een smart en een smaad die grooter is, die ook maar vergeleken kan worden met die van Jezus?

En let dan op de toevoeging in dit vers: al den dag!

O, als we gesmaad worden, dan ervaren we het schrijnende van de verwerping der menschen. Als men tegen ons raast, en onzen naam gebruikt om ermee te vloeken, dan is dat erg. Doch ik vraag U: kunt ge erin komen, dat zulks U zou geschieden "al den dag"? En let wel: dit houdt in: dag in dag uit, geduriglijk!

Zou het mogelijk zijn om dit op eenig mensch toe

te passen? Is er ooit een mensch geweest die zóó geleden heeft. Neen toch.

Maar past dit toe op Jezus (en dat mag en dat moet) en alles klopt. Al den dag beteekent bij Hem: tot in eeuwigheid! Jezus is gesmaad tot in den eeuwigden dood toe. En als een resultaat was Hij de EENZAME buit uitnemendheid. Legt dit naast dat vreeselijke kruiswoord, hetwelk ons van der jeugd aan deed huiveren, en ge zult zien, dat het werkelijk klopt. Leest den tekst zóó, en het klopt tot sidderens toe: Ik ben de Gesmade, de Vertrapte, de Verworpenen: en daarom ben ik de Eenzame! O God, mijn God! Waarom verlaat Gij Mij?! (Hier moesten ontelbare uitroepsteekens staan!)

Zoudt ge nog twifelen? Leest dan verder, en ge zult het moeten zien. "Vanwege Uwe verstoordheid en Uwen grooten toorn; want Gij hebt mij verheven en mij weder nedergeworpen!" Past dit toe op den zanger van psalm 102, en ik verzeker U dat ge in moeite zult komen. Dan zult ge eindelijk *moeten* spreken van het relatieve, van het betrekkelijke. O ja, zult ge zeggen, God was verstoord tegenover den zanger en God heeft hem ook Zijn grooten toorn doen gevoelen! Doch ge zult er oogenblikkelijk bijvoegen: Evenwel, niet ten volle, slechts gedeeltelijk, in *betrekkelijken zin*, anders ware die arme man verbrand geworden onder zulk een hitte, want de toorn des Heeren is als een vlammend vuur, vlammen des Heeren. Misschien zult ge Jesaja aanhalen die in Gods naam spreekt van een verborgen aangezicht in een weinigje toorns, in een oogenblik van onlust.

Maar gaat nu staan voor de schandpaal op Hoofdschedelplaats, en het klopt om van te sidderen. Luistert dan maar naar Jezus, en ge kunt uw *relatief* verklaren gerust vergeten. Jezus alleen kan zeggen: Voor Mij is asch brood, want ik sta hier op den bodem der hel! Mijn drank is vermengd met tranen, tranen van Messias, want ik lijd zoo in deze vlam van Uwen grooten toorn! In de berijmde psalmen hebben we voor honderde jaren nu al gezongen: Wat hitte doet Mij branden! We zongen Jezus na!

"Mijne dagen zijn als een afgaande schaduw, en ik verdor als gras."

Het beeld is duidelijk, of, liever, de beelden zijn duidelijk. Als ge een licht achter U hebt en u in een richting beweegt weg van dat licht, dan zult ge zien, dat Uw schaduw al langer wordt, maar ook al zwakker, al onbelijnder, al onbestemder. Eindelijk ziet ge geen schaduw meer: zij is afgegaan. Een afgaande schaduw is een schaduw die aan 't verdwijnen is. Op zijn best is een schaduw een niet en ijdelheid. Een *afgaande* schaduw is te vergelijken met een onding. En zoo is het eenigzins met onzen zanger. Hij telt eenvoudig niet meer mee. Maar toegepast op den Redder Uwer zielen, spreekt het vreeselijke taal. Jezus is al minder geworden. In Bethlehem konden we Hem nog

zien. Het stond er toen al treurig bij, want Hij ligt daar verdrongen aan de rand der wereld: er is geen plaats voor Hem. Het wordt al minder. Straks wil men Hem van af de hoogten te Nazareth neerstorten op de rotsen daar beneden. Eindelijk zien we Hem haast niet meer. Zijn voeten rusten niet meer op de aarde: Hij hangt, Hij hangt!

Doch ten slotte verdwijnt Hij geheel en al. Er is een woord, hetwelk door onze brave en goede dogmatici nooit kan verwerkt. Het is het woord *vernietigd!* Fil. 2:7 zegt ons, dat Jezus Zichzelven vernietigd heeft! Neen, ik kan het ook niet verklaren, maar ik dacht eraan, toen ik zat te peinzen over die afgaande schaduw. Bleef er nog iets over? Was er nog bestand in Jezus toen Hij den beker tot den heffe toe ledigde, daar op den bodem der hel? Was er nog wat dat vast was, dat bekleef in Jezus toen Hij den *eeuwigen dood stierf?*

Ach, komt maar terug van vragen. Ge kunt het volle antwoord toch niet uitspreken!

En het vreeselijkste van alles was, dat God het deed.

De zanger, en achter hem, Jezus zegt: Gij hebt mij verheven en mij weder nedergeworpen!

Hier zit een eeuwigheid van lijden in.

Ge ziet de beeldspraak, niet waar?

Gij hebt het ook wel eens gedaan. Ge naamt iets op, en om de een of andere reden beantwoordde het ding niet aan Uw smaak, of iets anders, en ge smeed het ding van U.

Zoo heeft Jezus geleden van God.

Dat moet ge zóó zeggen, en niet anders. *Zóó moest* God doen. Met Zijn teederlijk beminden Zoon.

Kom, laat mij er iets van zeggen tot verduidelijking.

Toen de DrieEenige God Jezus aanvatte, anno Dominus 33 of 34, toen zag God aan Hem alle goddeloosheid en vuilheid en overvloed van boosheid die Zijn uitverkoren volk bedreven had van Adam tot het laatste kind Gods aan het eind der eeuwen.

Hij zag die goddeloosheid, vuilheid en overvloedige boosheid aan Jezus als *schuld*, en niet als zonde als zoodanig. Jezus was goed, ook toen Hij lag te schreien op den bodem der hel.

En toen God als die verachtelijke zonde zag, als schuld op Jezus, toen heeft God gegruwd en Hem neergesmeten tot der helle toe.

En Hij verdorde als gras. Dat kwam van God die een verterend vuur is. Als ge commentaar wilt op dat woord *verterend vuur* moet ge het Messias vragen. Hij weet het beter dan Kaïn, Ezau of Judas.

Hij leed het alles en droeg de smaadheid van Zijn volk alléén.

En als de Heilige Gods.

Wat onbegrijpelijke liefde!

Zijn verschrikkelijke verwerping is Uw aanname!

Och, of nu al wat in mij is Hem prees!

G. V.

IN HIS FEAR

The Reformation And Our School Movement

There is an historical event which we call "The Reformation". We do well to bear in mind that there are things belonging to that reformation which, rather than to be classified as historical events, are the spiritual experiences of the child of God as led by His Spirit. We have reference to such things as Luther's quest for justification. Moved by the Spirit of Christ, Luther was caused to hunger and thirst after righteousness. And because he found no peace for his soul in the doctrine of the Roman Catholic church but rather found new joy in the truth of God's word that we are justified not by works but through faith in Christ, he took those steps which led up to the Reformation of 1517. Likewise did the Spirit of Christ move thousands of others in Luther's day to hunger and thirst after righteousness and to see and believe the truth of God's Word. Unless we bear this in mind the Reformation of 1517 is for us no more than a debate, a quarrel or battle between Luther and the Roman Catholic Church. At best it becomes a successful attempt of Luther to impose his ideas about things upon thousands of his fellowmen and to deliver them from the fear in which the Pope held them.

Another thing we do well to bear in mind when we consider the Reformation of 1517 is that although we can speak of it as "The Reformation", yet reformation is not one historical fact taking place in the sixteenth century and then alone. Ever since the lie was brought into our world and until the day of Christ, there is and will be reformation. And there will be need of reformation. The lie continues to manifest itself in a thousand different forms, and it is the calling of the church to reform itself and cast out the false teachers and their doctrines. Not until the day of Christ, and then forever, will reformation be completed. When Christ comes the lie will be fully destroyed, and in the New Jerusalem the church will not be undergoing reformation. She shall know the truth and love it. And the lie shall never enter in. We may speak of the reformation of 1517 as "The Reformation" because it was the greatest reformation ever to take place in the church militant here below, but we may not call it "The Reformation" if we mean that it was the only reformation in church history.

In the twenty minutes allotted for this speech I will have to limit myself very severely. The facts of The

(*) Transcription of a speech delivered at the Reformation Day program sponsored by the Ladies School Auxiliary in Fuller Ave.

Reformation themselves make a long story, and one could speak for hours on the significance of these facts. Seeing that this program is being sponsored by the Ladies Auxiliary, a Society which labors faithfully for the establishment of a school of our own here in Grand Rapids where we may bring up our children according to the doctrine that is taught in our churches, I thought it would be both fitting and profitable to speak to you tonight on the subject, "The Reformation and Our School Movement". I believe that you will agree with me that they have things in common and have significance for each other.

Let us bear in mind that reformation is always a return to the truth. The fruit of a reformation is at the same time a development of the truth. But its chief characteristic always is that it is the return to the truth that had been discarded and denied.

So it was in the days of Luther and for many years before. The Roman Catholic church was full of false doctrines and corruption. The church was full of idolatry, worshipping of images and of saints. It taught various unscriptural, dangerous doctrines. It showed itself wholly unconcerned with the salvation of God's people. Such a beautiful doctrine as that of the forgiveness of sins was distorted and pressed into the service of the flesh so that the church could make money therewith. This beautiful doctrine of the forgiveness of sin became with the Roman Catholic church a money making scheme.

You are no doubt aware of the fact that a certain Tetzl with not only the permission of the Pope but with the full support of the Pope sold his indulgences upon the street corners. These indulgences were paper certificates declaring that the possessor thereof had the forgiveness of his sins. The declaration was signed by the Pope and thus in his name and for a sum of money one could obtain forgiveness of his sins. Justification before God was not accomplished by Christ's blood. We were not purchased by that blood but by a few paltry pennies given to the church. Our redemption was not sealed by God but with pen and ink by the hand of the Pope. So the Roman Catholic church corrupted the truth. It was especially this corrupt practice of purporting to sell the forgiveness of sins that moved Luther to action. Luther being shocked and indignant at this corrupt procedure nailed his now famous ninety five thesis on the door of the church at Wittenberg calling the attention of the church to the evil of this practice.

Luther was not assuming an attitude of defiance against the church. He was not seeking an argument. Nor was he intent upon making a split and separation in the church. He strove to call the attention of the church to the error of its ways. He sought to save the church from the lie and from sinful practices. Because he had found peace for his soul in the truth of Scrip-

ture that we are justified not by works but by faith in Christ, he was desirous that all the church enjoy this peace and truth. He sought to instruct the church and to call the attention of the church to the lie, being of the opinion that the leaders of the church were not aware of these corrupt practices and false doctrines implied in them.

But the leaders did know and were behind these sinful practices. And therefore rather than to heed Luther's words, they put him out of their church and commanded his books to be burned. Luther with thousands of those whose hearts the Spirit likewise had moved and filled with love for the truth formed a new denomination around that truth. It was no new doctrine which formed the basis of their union. It was the old doctrine of salvation by faith. It was the doctrine which Adam knew when he found that his own works and fig leaves left him as guilty as before. Then God taught him that He brings salvation apart from our works. It was the old truth which Paul expressed in Romans 5:1, "therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Reformation is always a return to the truth and is occasioned by a departure from that truth.

Thus it was again in 1924. The mother church had invented three expressions which were contrary to the truth and demanded acceptance of them by all its leaders. The mother church taught three statements concerning "common grace" which deny such fundamental doctrines of Scripture such as election and reprobation, the total depravity of man and the righteousness of God. These three declarations denied the distinct and keen antithesis of which God spoke in Genesis 3:15. Surely if God sincerely offers salvation to the reprobate, we cannot speak any longer of election and reprobation. God elects some to everlasting life and glory and predestinates others to eternal damnation. Yet does He also *sincerely* offer eternal life and glory to these reprobate? Where is the sharp line of election and reprobation then? The natural man can still do some righteous deeds at least in the sphere of civic things, so these dangerous three points declare. But where then is the Scriptural truth of total depravity that there is none that doeth good, no not one? God shows a little favor or grace also to those whom He has reprobated. Thus He shows favour to those who never walk in His ways and whose sins are not blotted out through the blood of Christ. Where then is the justice and righteousness of God? Is He dealing justly with His Holy angels, who never sinned, by also being graciously inclined to those who never served Him? But where is His justice to His own Son? Of Christ He demands the most terrible suffering of hell and the cross before there can be one blessing bestowed upon His people. And these reprobate who are outside of

Christ, for whom He performed no work of redemption, do they receive blessing, be it called material blessings, without any of God's justice being satisfied? Where is the distinct antithesis between darkness and light, between the world and the church in such a doctrine?

Our leaders protested in 1924 against these unscriptural views. We did not do so as dramatically as Luther did when he nailed the ninety five thesis on the door of his church. But in speech and writing our leaders protested vigorously.

History repeats itself. The leaders of the mother church did not want to listen. In a very hierarchical manner contrary to its own church order ministers, elders and deacons who could not ascribe to these unscriptural declarations were deposed. A new denomination was formed around the old truths of election and reprobation, total depravity and the sharp antithesis between light and darkness.

As truly as it can be said of Luther that he was not seeking to split up the church, so truly can it be said that our leaders in 1924 were not seeking to form a new denomination. As truly as it can be said that Luther sought to instruct and warn the church, so truly can it be said that our leaders sought to make it plain that the doctrine of common grace was a grievous error with tremendously dangerous implications. I challenge anyone to prove the accusation that we are a separate denomination because we sought to make trouble and sought to break up the church. History, written black on white in the Acts of the Synod of the churches of those who make this accusation, reveals that our leaders, elders, deacons, ministers of the Word of God were put out of office without even the request of their consistories. That is hierarchy. That is breaking up the church. I challenge anyone to deny that even as was the case with Luther when the Spirit of God moved him to hate the lie and to be concerned with the glory of God, so our leaders were moved by that same Spirit to hate the lie and to be concerned with the glory of God and therefore had to protest against such grievous errors which do not do justice to the glory of God nor the teaching of His Word. The Spirit caused this reformation and not our flesh.

And now here in Grand Rapids we have a school movement. And what is it but the worthy activity of our Protestant Reformed parents in this vicinity to provide our children with daily instruction in harmony with the doctrine as taught in our churches and to protect our children from the dangerous world and life view of light and darkness, election and reprobation and of righteousness and unrighteousness.

Our school movement is not a vain attempt to multiply schools and to work havoc with the existing Christian schools. Our school movement is not motivated by any carnal ambitions or attempt to make it

more convenient for us to send our children to a Christian school. There will be hardships rather than conveniences. We are seeking spiritual and not material things. Our school movement is due to the reformation of 1924. Our school movement has for its purpose the instruction of our children in the world and life view of the Scriptures as God has given us to behold and enjoy it.

(To be continued) J. A. H.

FROM HOLY WRIT

The Beginning Of Signs

(John 2:1-11)

We may quite safely assume that all of our readers are very well acquainted with the Gospel narrative of the Wedding Feast at Cana of Galilee, where Jesus and His disciples were also invited to be present. We need, therefore, not write out this portion of Scripture in full. Those who wish to acquaint themselves with the passage, or refresh their memory can take their Bible and read it. We will limit our quotation here to the eleventh verse, which reads: "This beginning of signs did Jesus in Cana of Galilee and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him".

The essays that have been written and the sermons which have been preached on this passage are, no doubt, legion. And it is rather certain that a great deal of fanciful exegesis has been given also. It is a passage that seemingly lends itself to all manner of topics and to many occasions.

First of all there is the matter of Jesus being present at a wedding. Jesus went to a wedding, too. His life was not only that of the man of sorrows. He also partook of the feasting, and that, too, so very shortly after He had been pointed out by John the Baptist to be the Lamb of God, which should bear the sins of the world. And so one could make a "nice" sermon on Jesus at a *wedding-feast*, a *wedding-feast*.

Or, again, there is the subject of the wine. Wine must be good because Jesus made it. We, too, believe that wine is good. Not because Jesus made it, changing the water into wine, but because it is God's good creation. But it is another question whether the wine is the subject here in the Gospel of John. We think not.

Or, not to mention more, who has not heard a great deal about Mary and her conduct here at the wedding feast. Mary also so easily becomes the prominent

personage in this account of John, according to many a preacher.

Now, it is our conviction that neither Mary nor the wine, nor the presence of Jesus at a feast, not even the presence of Jesus there with His disciples, is the subject here in this account of John. We make bold to say that the central important matter in this account is what John himself tells us in verse 11. It is the manifestation, the revelation of the glory of the Son of God in the flesh that is here not only important, but which is also the sole consideration here in the Word of God. All the rest is exactly subordinated to this. That is true of the disciples for whose benefit and salvation this sign was performed. For this reason they are present. Also for this reason Mary is present. On the background of Mary's conduct and presence Christ must come to stand before us in this sign in His real significance for us and in His divine calling. Also here He is the Lamb of God.

The important element here is: *The Manifesting Of His Glory In A Sign*.

We shall attempt to show that such is indeed the case, in this essays, and in the one to follow.

First of all, we shall call attention to the very prominent element in the narrative, to wit, "His glory". Just what is this glory? In what capacity does Jesus stand here in the text?

Secondly, we must also notice that Jesus "manifested" His glory in this Sign, which John calls "the beginning of Signs". Why did Jesus manifest *His* glory in a *sign*?

Thirdly, it should also be observed in this passage, that Jesus here very really maintains His Messiahship, His unique relationship to God as the Servant of the Lord.

Finally, that in the design of both Jesus in performing this Sign, as well as in John's recording of it so many, many years later, the practical goal of the faith in the Christ, the Son of God is the great consideration.

That it is of the utmost importance to have a correct understanding of the import of what John here calls "His Glory", verse 11, should be evident at once. Not to understand this will at once exclude the correct understanding of the entire act of Christ at the Wedding feast. Just what is this glory here spoken of? What is its idea in the Bible? We might compare it with the terms *praise* and *honor*. Both of these terms are in Scripture often associated with the term *glory*. In contrasting these terms we will be better able to grasp the implication of the last named term. "Honor" is that which is coming to one because of his implicit worth. Thus we are told in Scripture to honor God, the king and also our parents. When we honor God or our parents and the king, then we place ourselves in the proper distance to them, and acknowledge them

for their authority, and we place ourselves under them. That is honor. "Praise" is rather the expression of what is in our hearts. It may be expressed honor. It is the fruit of the lips. But "glory" is the greatness and virtue of God or of His creatures becoming visible. Amongst men the "glory" of a king is sometimes in his army and strength, then again in his display of wisdom and sagacity. With God "glory" is always the manifestation of greatness, His virtues and perfections. God's glory is the revealing to us what is His own, proper greatness, His power, divinity. Rom. 1:20. Thus is His glory in creation as this is revealed by the things made. But God also reveals Himself in His Son in the flesh. Thus we read that Christ was raised out of the dead by the *glory* of the Father, in Rom. 6:4. Obviously it was the power, the working of the power of His might that raised Jesus from the dead. But this power is here in Rom. 6:4 called: the glory of the Father.

Here in John 2:11 reference is made to the glory of Jesus, the Christ. John says: "His glory". Just what is this glory? Is this the glory which belongs to the Son as He is God out of God, co-equal with the Father and with the Spirit, or is this the glory, which is His in the way of being lifted up as the Son of Man unto the right hand of God, the Father? Surely, it makes a great deal of difference in which sense the glory is here referred to. There can be no doubt that John is here referring to the glory of Jesus as He came into the flesh; the glory which shall be the Son's as He shall presently sit Lord over all in the New Heavens and the New Earth, the First Born of all creatures, the First Born out of the dead, in whom according to God's eternal good pleasure, all the fulness should dwell in heaven and on earth. Col. 1:15-20.

Jesus manifested here the glory which in God's firm Decree was His from before the foundation of the earth. Of this Psalm 2 speaks. Says the Lord: I will declare of the Decree, I have anointed my Son, have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. And, again, we read in the same Psalm: "The Lord said unto me, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." In the Sacerdotal prayer Christ also refers to this Decree when He prays: And now Father glorify me with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was. John 17:5.

There can be little doubt that this is the glory of which the text speaks. Does not John say in chapter 1:14: "The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, as of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth"? And does not the same John tell us in 7:39, where the sending forth of the Holy Spirit is connected with Christ's glorification, "for the Spirit was not yet given; because Jesus was not yet glorified"? Besides, is it not ever thus in the Word of God, as well in the Old Testament as in the New. Wherefore Peter can write: "Concerning which

salvation the prophets sought and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what time or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did point them unto, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow." I Pet. 1:10, 11. And speaking in line with what all the prophets had said concerning the Christ, Jesus says, after He rose from the dead, to the travelers to Emmaus: "Behooveth it not the Christ to suffer these things, and thus enter into His glory"? Luke 24:26. Nay, in the light of the whole testimony of Scripture there can be no doubt that the "glory" which Jesus revealed here in Cana of Galilee is that glory, which became His because of the suffering and death of the Cross. Heb. 2:9.

The glory here referred to in the gospel narrative is therefore not the glory of the Son as Son in the bosom of the Father, but rather the glory which is His according to God's firm Decree, in the Counsel of peace, of redemption, and, which became His, in the way of the suffering of the cross, and in His resurrection from the dead. Such is this glory!

This is the glory which the church shall share with Christ. The saints wait for it patiently and hope for it unto the end. Of this Paul speaks in Rom. 5 where he says: "in which we stand and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God." And Peter says: "Whom not seeing ye love, unto whom now not seeing, believing ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." (1:8)

Such is the glory which Jesus manifested on the wedding-feast of Cana in Galilee!

Does this possibly sound contradictory? Or impossible? For you have already said, that Christ could not manifest the glory which was not yet His! He could not even as yet shed forth the Spirit in His Church when not yet glorified. This latter must wait till after His actual glorification in the ascension. And to this we agree. It surely is true, that Jesus must wait with the actual manifestation of His glory, not only till after His ascension, this must wait even till His final revelation, in His coming with the clouds of heaven as the Son of man. Hence, it was indeed impossible for Jesus to manifest all His glory here in Cana.

But Jesus does manifest His glory here nevertheless. He manifests His glory in a *Sign*.

But, pray, why in a sign?

In our former articles we have already called attention to the idea of the "Sign" in the Scripture rather at length. We will not here repeat what we have there already written. It will be sufficient to remember that a "Sign" always presupposes that, that which is obfuscated, is *not yet* a reality, and that, therefore, a sign is needed to give expression in our present world of the future realities. Thus it is, namely, with the Lord's Supper. We need the visible signs of bread and wine

as long as we do not see Christ Himself. Wherefore we are commanded by Christ to "do this till I come". Even the Lord's Supper is prophetic of the end of things. It is a confession of our hope for Christ's return, and a proclamation that, as long as Christ is still in heaven, we need the sign just as we also need the Word of preaching. And thus it is here. Christ needs the sign of the changing of the water in wine to show forth His glory, and, at once, to also show forth the *manner* of its realization. Also this latter.

Let us attend just a bit more closely to this Sign. We notice, first of all, that Jesus did not just create wine out of nothing. That He could have done, I believe, but such is not the nature of His work. Nor would we then have a *sign*. He is the last Adam, the Lord out of heaven to redeem not only His own, but to bring all things back to God in a renewed heaven and earth. Hence, not making wine "out of nothing", but rather here a making wine out of water. For, secondly, we should notice, that the Sign lies in the *change* that is affected. Christ *changed* the water into wine. And, finally, it should not escape our attention, that water is changed into *wine*. Also this latter, we believe, is significant. For what is wine? Is wine not a product which we have only as the culmination of a process? When wine is aged it can develop no further.

(To be continued)

G. L.

PERISCOPE

Another Voice

That we are not alone in condemning the action of the Synodical Committee of the Christian Reformed Church in ordering its constituency to refuse Dr. K. Schilder a hearing, is evident from the following. Dr. N. B. Stonehouse, of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and Professor of New Testament at Westminster Seminary, also reflects on this action. In *The Presbyterian Guardian* of November 10, he writes under the title: "Christian Reformed-Orthodox Presbyterian relationships". After commenting on these relationships, Prof. Stonehouse adds the following regarding the notice which appeared in *The Banner* concerning Dr. Schilder.

"Although this distinction between a sister church and a corresponding church is evidently one of vital significance to the Christian Reformed Church, we have recently had cause to wonder whether the distinction is constantly kept in view. A notice recently published in *The Banner*, official organ of that Church, and head "Consistories, Attention!," bears out this fact. After mentioning the presence in this country

of certain clergymen of the Netherlands, the notice concludes in rather astonishing fashion. It states: "We beg to inform our consistories and churches that we do not maintain church correspondence with the denomination to which Prof. Dr. K. Schilder and Rev. D. Van Dyk are affiliated, and therefore do not recognize this denomination as one of our sister churches, and consequently cannot invite their ministers to speak or preach in our pulpits." This notice was placed "by order of the Synodical Committee."

"This notice is of special interest, moreover, because it suggests that, unless some official recognition exists, consistories cannot invite ministers of other denominations to occupy their pulpits. If this were applied consistently, it would mean that Orthodox Presbyterian ministers would be excluded from Christian Reformed pulpits, at least for the present. We doubt very much, however, whether the Synodical Committee possesses under the Church Order of its Church the authority to tell consistories whom they may invite to their pulpits. It is indeed vital to the purity of the churches that great care be taken in the matter of pulpit supplies. But we cannot regard it as a wholesome development when committees, whether synodical or otherwise, arrogate to themselves authority which belongs actually to the local sessions."

Visit To Westminster Seminary

In connection with the above it might be of interest to inform our readers of the visit of Dr. K. Schilder and undersigned, at Philadelphia and Westminster Seminary, there located. It was our privilege to chauffeur Dr. Schilder to the East coast and accompany him to Westminster. We arrived at Chestnut Hill early on Wednesday afternoon, Nov. 12. Two former students of Prof. Schilder, who are now studying at Westminster, met us and conducted us around the buildings and campus of the Seminary. Our hearts beat hard and fast as we viewed the beautifully spacious and commodious estate with its buildings, that has been converted for use as Westminster Seminary. The location, the arrangements, the solemn dignity and beauty of the whole lay-out, struck us as being ideal for purpose of a Theological Seminary. We must admit that the little imps, "jealousy" and "envy", were busy in our hearts and minds as we saw and heard.

After enjoying the gracious hospitality of Dr. and Mrs. C. Van Til for tea at their home, we returned to the Seminary and joined with the students in the dining hall of the school. When the remains had been cleared away and everyone had assumed a comfortable position, Dr. Van Til introduced Prof. Schilder to the assembled student body and Professors, who had gathered to hear this eminent Dutch theologian. For the

next three hours Professors and students kept Dr. Schilder busy answering various questions. The following points were briefly treated in the discussion: The Church, the Covenant, the Historical Aspect of the Schism, and Common Grace. And all of it was in the English language! Dr. Schilder handled the English very well and intelligibly; one could notice improvement as he went along. If we had only known this! Mrs. Hofman, who also accompanied us, aptly remarked that she now knew more of Dr. Schilder and the situation in Holland than she had been able to determine from several lectures and personal contact. If and when, by God's will, Dr. Schilder should ever return to this country, we must hear him in English.

We were indeed happy to have been at Westminster and to have met several of the Professors and students. Perhaps, on another occasion we may comment a bit more on the discussion that took place there. In closing we wish to compliment and commend the Seminary and its teaching staff for their desire and willingness to give Dr. Schilder a hearing. Westminster is *alive!*

Report On Europe

In June and July of this year fourteen religious leaders, representing American Protestant, Catholic and Jewish faiths, made a tour of investigation of Europe. They were the guests of Secretary of War, Robert Patterson, who had invited them to make the tour. The tour extended over 14 thousand miles and was made in one of the huge DC-54 planes. The following are excerpts from a report written for The Moody Monthly of Nov. 1947, by W. O. Garman, Secretary of the American Council of Christian Churches, one of the Protestant representatives.

"We enjoyed perfect liberty throughout the trip. If we indicated prior to our arrival at a certain destination that we would like to meet with certain Christian workers, educators, or public officials, we would invariably find when we arrived that Army personnel had located these persons for us and made arrangements for us to meet with them alone.

"We met the commanding generals in each area visited, sat in on staff meetings, visited military installations. We also met with local Protestant clergymen, chaplains, government officials, and private citizens in their homes. We visited displaced persons, camps, youth centers, hospitals, cemeteries, relief agencies and bombed-out areas. We looked at the problem of Europe from all sides.

What We Saw And Learned:

"Words cannot describe the destruction we witnessed. Even when one sees it, it is so vast he cannot comprehend its scope. It was one of the most depressing things I have ever seen.

"The damage is so vast that we often heard such exclamations as, "This city can't be rebuilt in fifty years." How people can live amid such ruin and continue to carry on without giving way to complete despair is a marvel of the ages.

"The Germans are carrying on in spite of terrible handicaps.

"To augment their near-starvation diet, they raised vegetables everywhere and in anything that would hold earth. Lawns and parks are devoted to this purpose. Hundreds of women were seen in grain fields laboriously picking up stray grain dropped in harvesting. They salvage every piece of loose straw. In this way German mothers are keeping their families from starving.

"It is my opinion that Russia is most responsible for the prevailing misery. She has done everything possible to cause confusion and to retard every agreement reached by other Allies, that might have brought peace."

Condition of the Church

"1. No other institution, perhaps, suffered such material and spiritual damage as the Church.

"In Germany there are 40,000,000 Protestants and 20,000 pastors who are depressed and very much disillusioned. To save Protestantism in continental Europe Germany's Protestants must be saved, for they represent the great bulwark of Protestantism in continental Europe.

"In Europe (350,000 Protestants in a population of 6,500,000), churches have experienced frightful losses. They are *actually poverty-stricken*. One hundred thousand dollars a year will be needed to pay the salaries of Austrian pastors if they are to survive.

"In France, 78 percent of the churches were destroyed and 147 severely damaged. There are 1,000,000 nominal Protestants among 40,000,000 people. The great bulk of the French make no religious pretenses.

"2. Another problem is that of refugees or displaced persons. There are 500,000 in the American zone in Germany and Austria, 30 percent of whom are Protestants. They are in need of just about everything. Many are *Volksdeutsche*, who were driven from their lands by Hungarians and Serbs. They can't go back to their former homes; they can't stay where they are; and they can't come to this country. It was reported to us by Protestant pastors in Vienna that the Protestants among them were discriminated against and prevented from coming to this country, while Catholics were accepted.

"In France there are 250,000 refugees and displaced persons. There are 100,000 Republican Spaniards, of whom 2,000 are Protestants; the remainder were baptized Catholics, but are violently anticlerical.

"3. A third problem has to do with Christian edu-

cation. Many church schools were closed by the Nazis. Seminaries in particular are very hard hit. Many teachers, Germans in particular, are physical wrecks, carrying on under terrible difficulties. The schools have little financial backing, limited facilities and below par faculties. Students were sleeping on broken-down beds, and even on the floor, until help came from American and Swedish churches."

Following a few brief remarks on "the brighter side" regarding increased Church attendance in Southern Bavaria, the Youth Movement in Europe, Trends towards separation of Church and State and the distribution of Christian literature, Mr. Garman concludes with the following 5-point program as to what we in America can do.

"1. With or without Russia's aid we can put into effect any good plan that will make European countries self supporting. If Russia won't cooperate, we should go ahead without her as soon as possible.

2. We should send food and clothing, and see that there is an honest and proper use made of them. There is a dire need of men's clothing and shoes. Only 10 percent of the clothing sent thus far has been for men. It is feared that unless substantial quantities of food and clothing are sent, thousands will starve or freeze this winter.

"3. We should bring as many seminary students as possible to this country to be educated. They are eager to come. Our government is anxious for us to bring them. They can't be properly educated abroad, with present facilities. *This would be the finest kind of missionary work.* Fundamental Bible institutes and seminaries ought to be eager to receive such students, train them and send them back home as ardent disciples of the historic Christian faith, thereby to lead many of their own countrymen to a saving knowledge of Christ.

"4. We should send sizable amounts of Christian literature. Pastors are most eager for Christian books, even in English, since many have had their libraries destroyed. If we are wise and grasp the wonderful opportunity, we will flood Europe with true-to-the-Bible Christian literature. Many German pastors are disillusioned, wondering which way to turn, and are only too willing to read whatever we send them. This is one of the greatest opportunities the Lord has ever given us for disseminating Christian truth and winning these pastors back to the historic faith.

"5. The most important thing we can do is to help fan to a blaze what flicker of revival fire there is in Europe by our prayers, our contributions to worthwhile mission agencies, our gifts of food and clothing, and Christian literature. . . .

"May we in America not fail Europe in this her hour of greatest need, and also the hour of our greatest privilege and responsibility."

W. H.