

THE STANDARD

Bearer

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

VOLUME XXIV

January 1, 1948 — Grand Rapids, Michigan

NUMBER 7

MEDITATION

Bij De Wisseling Des Jaars

"Zie, Hij komt met de wolken, en alle oog zal Hem zien, ook degenen die Hem doorstoken hebben, en alle geslachten der aarde zullen over Hem rouw bedrijven; ja amen."

Openb. 1:7.

Al zoo vaak hebben we het de ouden hooren zeggen: "Het is nu erger dan toen *wij* jong waren!"

En we hebben soms gelachen en gezegd: Kom, kom, het zal wel zoo erg niet zijn! In Uw dagen waren de menschen óók zondig!

Dat laatste lachen en zeggen is in den grond goddeloos.

Zelfs de goddeloozen worden bang in onze dagen.

Deze oudejaarsavond, die aan 't komen is (we schrijven vandaag December 13) is benauwder dan ooit te voren. En er is niemand die het loochent. Het godvruchtig volk en de goddeloozen beginnen langzamerhand hetzelfde te zeggen. Dat wil zeggen, formeel. Materieel is er een hemelsbreed verschil. De goddeloozen zeggen: Het loopt aan op het einde van alle beschaving en cultuur. Gods volk zegt: Het loopt aan op het einde van deze tegenwoordige wereld: de Heere komt met de wolken!

O ja, men wordt bang in onze dagen.

De Heere HEERE wordt meer en meer gerechtvaardigd in Zijn oordeel. Hij heeft aan den morgen van dit wereldgebeuren gezegd, dat de mensch goddeloos is van zijn prille jeugd. En door de eeuwen heen is het bewezen geworden. In groote goddeloosheid. Met alle gedachten Gods die in de rijke schepping liggen hebben ze gehoereerd, gezondigd, en het geheel en al verdorven.

En, let er op, hoe meer het naar het einde der dagen gaat hoe sneller het proces der zonde zich voort-

spoedt. We zagen het booze zaad en huiverden bij het opgroeien van boom en tak en blad. In onze dagen verspreidt de vieze bloesem de stank van steeds grooter goddeloosheid.

Doch troost U, volk van God: want zie, Hij komt met de wolken!

* * * *

De woorden zijn *gezien* door Johannes op Patmos: hij zag en hoorde de dingen die haast geschieden moesten. Het boekken werd uit de hand van God afgenomen door den Leeuw uit Juda's stam, want Hij was waardig.

En toen zond Hij Zijn engel om Johannes te toonen de dingen van het komend wereldgebeuren.

En de missie kwam er bij: om het den volke bekend te maken, opdat ze getroost mochten leven en sterven in den Heere.

Troost U dan ook in het laatste der dagen!

Oudejaarsavond predikt gelijk nooit te voren: Hij komt met de wolken!

Wat die wolken dan zijn?

Ze zijn negatief: de wolken van Zijn oordeel!

En positief: de wolken van groote heerlijkheid!

En er is ook een nauwsluitend verband, want Zijn heerlijkheid is in Zijn vreeselijk oordeelen.

* * * *

En alle oog zal Hem zien, ook degenen die Hem doorstoken hebben, en alle geslachten der aarde zullen over Hem rouw bedrijven, ja Amen!

Die tekst staat óók in de profetie van Zacharia. Daar staat: Doch over het huis Davids en over de inwoners van Jeruzalem zal Ik uitgieten den Geest der genade en de gebeden, en zij zullen Mij aanschouwen dien zij doorstoken hebben, en zij zullen over Hem rouwklagen als met de rouwklage over eenen eenigen zoon, en zij zullen over Hem bitterlijk kermen gelijk men bitterlijk kermt over eenen eerstgeborenen.

Maar hoe zit dat dan? In Johannes' openbaring bedrijft de wereld rouw, omdat zij ten verderve geleid worden, en in Zacharia kermt en klaagt het huis Davids en Jeruzalem over God vanwege den Geest der genade en der gebeden. In de laatste teksten is het dan ook een klagen tot eindelijke zaligheid, en in het eerste een klagen vanwege de verdoemenis die komt. En het gaat om dezelfde zaak, want in beide teksten staat, dat zij Hem zien zullen *dien zij doorstoken hebben!*

En de Heilige Geest zegt in Joh. 19:34, dat die Schrift van Zacheria vervuld is toen de soldaten van Rome de zijde van Jezus doorpriemden met een zwaard.

Het antwoord is gemakkelijk, als we eerst zien, dat het doorsteken van Jezus ziet op de zonde, alle zonde, of het geschiedt door de uitverkorenen of door de verworpenen.

Welnu, als die zonde thuisgezocht wordt door God, dan klaagt men en rouwt men, hetzij dat men kerk is of wereld. Allen komen tot erkenning van gezondigd te hebben, den Heere doorstoken te hebben.

Maar, o wat een verschil.

Bij Gods volk is dat de bekeering. Ik heb wel eens gezegd, dat wij elken dag den dag des oordeels ervaren in zekeren zin. Dan zoekt God de zonde thuis en dan geeft Hij den Geest der genade en der gebeden en dan klaagt het huis Davids en Jeruzalem en zegt: O Heere! we hebben U doorstoken met alle onze zonden! De editie van dat geklaag bij Paulus is: Ik ellendig mensch! wie zal mij verlossen uit het lichaam dezes doods! En bij den tollenaar: O God! wees mij, den zondaar, genadig! En bij den verloren zoon: Vader! Ik heb gezondigd tegen den hemel en voor U! En ik ben niet waardig Uw zoon genaamd te worden; maak mij tot een Uwer dienstknechten! En gij allen zingt ervan, gebruikende de editie van David! "Gena, o God! gena, hoor mijn gebed!"

Bij de wereld echter is het het laatste oordeel. Dan zal men óók klagen en kermen en bitterlijk weenen. Dan zal Stalin en consorten inzien, dat zij tegen zulk een heerlijken God gezondigd hebben. Dan zullen zij zien, dat toen die God Zich liet zien in de nederige gestalte van een slaaf, zij Hem doorstoken hebben, Die het gezang en het gerei is der Engelen Gods en der volmaakt rechtvaardigen.

O ja, wij allen die geleefd hebben, nu leven, of nog komen zullen om wat jaren te leven, we gaan allen kermen en weenen, of hebben dat al gedaan. Daar is nu geen uitzondering op.

Evenwel, wat een verschrikkelijk onderscheid wanneer we vragen naar den tijd van dat kermen, en derzelver oorsprong!

Bij den eenen, dat is, den wereldling, vindt ge het kermen als het voor eeuwig te laat is. Het is in zijn wezen het kermen, het berouw, de droefheid der wereld

die den dood werkt. Al sidderende vluchten, zingt David.

Bij den andere, dat is, den door God beminde, daar vindt ge den Heiligen Geest der genade en der gebeden, en dat maakt een ontzettend onderscheid. Zij weenen omdat zij God liefhebben. Zij zeggen in hun smarten: Tegen U, O God, dien ik bemin, heb ik gezondigd en gedaan wat kwaad is in Uwe oogen! O vergeef mij alle mijne zonden. "Zijn kroon heb gevlochten, Zijn beker gevuld!" Ja, en ge kunt er bij voegen: ik heb Hem doorstoken met mijn groote zonden!

* * * *

De goddelooze wereld!

Over haar komen de wolken van den komenden Christus, anno 1947 en ook 1948.

Steeds duidelijker worden de teekenen van Zijn haastelijk komen.

En het doorsteken van den lijdenden Christus neemt banger en angstiger afmetingen aan.

Wie siddert niet bij het lezen der dagbladen en der tijdschriften. De wijzen (?) der wereld, de wetenschappelijken der chemie, de mannen die weten wat vreeselijke krachten in de vuile handen der menschen gegeven zijn door den komenden God, zij worden steeds angstiger in hun roepen tot hun gezellen: Beseft toch dat de tijd ten einde spoedt; dat "the sands of time are running out!"; dat er straks een vernieling komt die niet afgemeten kan, die de tegenwoordige beschaving verpletteren en vergiftigen zal, die van werelddeelen gaten in den grond maken zal, zoo zij niet zelfs de aarde zal doen splijten! Ze schreeuwen van de daken: Het einde nadert! (Hier schijnt de wereld sommige klanken van het Evangelie-woord te benutten!)

En er is slechts één oorzaak: in al die dingen komt God op de wolken!

Hij komt in de bange teekenen der tijden!

Of ziet ge het niet bij de vreeselijke goddeloosheid der volken? Wie siddert niet van het ruwe der Russen, het vuile der Franschen, het bluffen der Engelschen, het vijzen der Amerikanen? (Wij hebben mooi praten waar we tot over de ooren zitten in de weelde en den rijkdom!)

Herinnert ge U nog dat eenige jaren geleden onze president een brief schreef en dien brief begon met "Dear Joe!?" Die democratische Joe! Die "gallant Russians, our allies!?"

En dan die gevleugelde termen om toch maar af te meten hoe lieflijk dat Fransenland was, dat geholpen, verlost moest uit de klauw en van het Duitsche Beest! Ze waren nog niet eens vrij toen het de hand beet van hen die hen verlost. Hoe zou men ook ware trouw en dankbaarheid vinden in een wereld die God doorsteekt in Zijn zijde als Hij aan het kruis hangt?

Ja, ge leest de courant en Uw aangezicht verbleekt elken avond. Het wereldgebeuren wordt al angstiger, al benauwder, al rijper voor den komenden God!

De wereld!

De wereld die in het booze ligt gaat ten verderve, want God komt met de wolken van Zijn rechtvaardig oordeel.

Ze beginnen alreede te kermen en klagelijk te weenen.

Maar het zijn nog maar de voorweeën van een eeuwig krijschen in bangen nacht waar men tevergeefs wacht op den morgen, die toch nooit komt. Want God is recht. Zijn wolken zijn óók heerlijkheid.

* * * *

De goddelooze kerk!

O ja, die is er ook.

Daar is de kerk zooals ze de goddelooze menschen insluit, die bij hun zonde van allerlei goddeloosheid ook nog huichelarij voegen. Het zijn de menschen die zeggen: Heere! Heere! en Zijn Zoon elken dag kruisigen, Zijn Woord aan flarden scheuren, Zijn deugden, vooral van oprechtheid en waarheid, verloochenen: de valsche kerk.

Zij zal zich uiteindelijk scharen aan de zijde van AntiChrist, om Gods lievelingen te benauwen.

In Jezus' dagen traden zij schroomvallig terug van het rechthuis van Pilatus. Stelt het U voor: zij wilden niet ontheiligd worden! Maar zij leverden Jezus over aan 't wild gediert!

Hun kinderen vandaag zijn bezeten met den zelfden aard.

Zij wonen in het huis Gods, maar zij verloochenen den Eigenaar van dat Huis. Zij kruisigen Zijn Zoon elken dag.

Er is nog een schijn van Godsvrucht, maar de kracht is er allang uit. Hun wacht grooter smart dan den openbaren zondaar.

Als de komende God met de wolken eindelijk Zich zal laten zien in den laatsten dag, zal Hij zeggen: Gaat weg, gij vervloekten!

Wolken, vreeselijke wolken van oordeel!

* * * *

En in de ware kerk van Christus is zooveel schuld!

De Heere Jezus heeft eens gezegd, dat in de laatste dagen de liefde van velen zal verkoelen; dat menschen zullen zijn liefhebbers van zichzelf, meer dan liefhebbers van God.

Ook heeft Hij geprofeteerd van den grooten afval.

Die afval, mijn geliefde broeders, nam groote afmeetingen aan.

Ze is doorgedrongen tot in de zuiverste kerk-openbaring op aarde.

Beide in het Oude Vaderland en hier in Amerika dorst men het bestaan om hen die trouw waren aan Gods Woord en de erfenis der vaderen, te folteren, te beangstigen, te benauwen, kwalijk te behandelen; uit te werpen, hun naam te ontnemen onder de broederen.

Deze smartelijke dingen zijn gebeurd niet in de valsche kerk, maar in de kerken waar God Zijn volk vergadert en onderwijst. Het is ons gegaan als met David, die klaagde: Het was niet mijn vijand die mij benauwde! O neen. Het was mijn vriend die met mij opging naar Gods Huis!

Dat maakt het lijden zoo bang.

En het zijn de teekenen der tijden.

En men schijnt met blindheid geslagen. Stelt het U toch voor: men had een zekere voorstelling hooren prediken voor vijf-en-vijftig jaren, zegge 55 jaren! En na zoo langen tijd maakt men er een zaak van om dezulken uit te werpen. O neen! bedriegt U niet! Het was niet om die beschouwing! Er zit een adder onder 't gras.

Bewijs?

Waarom geschiedde het toen de beklagde niet kon spreken, schrijven, zich verdedigen?

Is het anders met ons gegaan?

Waarom wierp men ons uit, en waarom bestendigt men die uitwerping op Oudejaarsavond van 1947?

Omdat er een stem was die zeide: God is God en de mensch is verdoemelijk, zoo verdoemelijk, dat hij niets is, kan, wil wat goed is uit zichzelf!

Toen maakte de kerk een omtuining rondom den verworpenen. Men wierp Gods volk uit, om den wille van den verworpene. Dat is de waarheid.

Maar God zag en ziet en zal het zoeken.

* * * *

Hij komt! Met de wolken!

En gij, mijn hart, wat hebt gij te zeggen aan den avond van een jaar dat vreeselijk is, een jaar dat ten einde spoedt en steeds duisterder schaduwen werpt?

Laat ons allen tot onszelf inkeeren, en ons door de pijlen des Almachtigen laten doorpriemen.

Ook wij zien Hem dien wij doorstoken hebben.

Er zijn bergen van zonde voor een iegelijk onzer.

Het wordt al stiller, naarmate wij het gedreun van de twaalf slagen naderen, de twaalf slagen die een somber vaarwel zijn aan een bang jaar.

Neen, het is niet doodstil. Ik hoor een bede, een kermen van Gods volk uit alle landen, natiën en tongen: Wees, mij, den zondaar, genadig!

Het is de vrucht van dien Geest der genade en der gebeden!

Kom, Heere, kom haastiglijk!

The Standard Bearer

Semi-Monthly, except Monthly in July and August

Published By

The Reformed Free Publishing Association

1463 Ardmore St., S. E.

EDITOR: — Rev. H. Hoeksema.

Contributing Editors: — Rev. G. M. Ophoff, Rev. G. Vos, Rev. R. Veldman, Rev. H. Veldman, Rev. H. De Wolf, Rev. B. Kok, Rev. J. D. De Jong, Rev. A. Petter, Rev. C. Hanko, Rev. L. Vermeer, Rev. G. Lubbers, Rev. M. Gritters, Rev. J. A. Heys, Rev. W. Hofman.

Communications relative to contents should be addressed to REV. GERRIT VOS, Edgerton, Minnesota.

Communications relative to subscription should be addressed to MR. GERRIT PIPE, 1463 Ardmore St., S. E., Grand Rapids, Mich. Announcements and Obituaries must be mailed to the above address and will be published at a fee of \$1.00 for each notice.

(Subscription Price \$2.50 per year)

Entered as Second Class Mail at Grand Rapids, Michigan.

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EDITORIALS**A Riddle**

The following article was cut from the periodical "De Strijdende Kerk", of which Rev. G. Toornvliet is the Editor-in-chief.

He writes as follows:

NAAR AMERIKA

Prof. Schilder is naar Amerika. Naar ik vernam zal ook Ds. van Dijk volgen. Doel is onder meer om voorlichting te geven.

We weten hoe dat gaat: ze spreken van eigen strijd en nood en stellen daartegenover de verdorvenheid van de Synode. Wij beklagen de broeders en zusters in Amerika als zij het alleen zouden doen met de voorlichting van deze twee woordvoerders der vrijgemaakte kerk. Hoevelen in ons eigen land zijn al niet gevangen door de voorstelling die deze twee broeders van het conflict gaven; ze zagen alleen maar twee geestelijk mishandelde broeders die het o zoo goed bedoelden en een vijandig college. Maar wie zich niet gewonnen gaf aan hun voorstelling maar zich op het objectieve vlak der feiten stelde, die heeft gezien, ook al is hij het niet in alle dingen met de Synode eens, dat het optreden en van prof. Schilder en van Ds. van Dijk onnodig op kerkscheuring moest uitlopen.

Er zijn kerken in Amerika, die hun kansels voor deze broeders zullen sluiten en die geen enthousiasme kennen voor de broeders van 31.

Maar de "Protestant Reformed Churches", die zich achter Ds. Hoeksema hebben gesteld (en door de leer van de algemeene genade apart zijn komen te staan) hebben op haar synodevergadering besloten nauwer contact te zoeken met de Vrijgemaakte kerken in ons land en de kerken aangeraden haar kansels voor prof. Schilder te ontsluiten.

Deze sympathie voor prof. Schilder kunnen we eensdeels wel verstaan, omdat ook die kerken zich gegriefd voelen door de kerkrechtelijke behandeling die haar van de Synode in Amerika destijds ten deel viel.

Anderzijds staan we voor een raadsel. Ds. Hoeksema bestreed prof. Heyns zeer fel op het punt van het Genade-verbond en erkent nu dat de kerken art. 31 naar het standpunt van prof. Heyns zijn overgegaan.

Anderzijds schrijft H. B. in "De Vrije Kerk" (art. 31): "Nu weten wij, dat er tusschen de Protestant Reformed Churches en ons leerstellig verschil is. Om het eenvoudig uit te drukken: zij staan dogmatisch goeddeels op het synodale standpunt terzake van de

vraag aan wie de Heere Zijn verbondsweldaden toezegt."

Hoe moet dat nu: kerkrechtelijk vinden zij elkaar; maar dogmatisch liggen ze tegenover elkaar. Tot nu toe was het altijd zoo, dat wat leerstellig samenbond sterker woog, dan wat kerkrechtelijk verdeelde.

Voor Ds. Hoeksema dus een zware stap: iemand tot de kansel toe te laten, die in de voetsporen van prof. Heyns gaat en voor prof. Schilder het onwennig gevoel om op de kansel te staan in kerken waar men het standpunt der Synode goeddeels aanvaardt.

Het wondere is, dat hij onze kerken om die leer verfoeit en met woorden, die buiten het burgerlijk fatsoen vallen, te lijf gaat, ons den broedernaam en ambtsnaam ontzegt en in Amerika spreken gaat tot hen die op ons standpunt goeddeels staan met de aanspraak: vrienden, broeders, dominee. . . . en hen zijn liefste glimlach waardig keurt.

Werkelijk: 't duizelt me.

Waar is de ernst van principieel konsekwentie, waar is het heilig moeten van kerk-verbreking en het heilig moeten van kerk-heling.

Ik zie het bij prof. Schilder niet.

Misschien dat de broeders in Amerika prof. Schilder kunnen helpen.

G. T.

I translate:

TO AMERICA

Prof. Schilder went to America. From what I heard the Rev. Van Dijk will follow him. Their purpose is to give elucidation.

We know how that will go: they speak of their own struggle and misery and they will put overagainst it the corruption of the Synod. We pity the brothers and sisters in America if they have nothing else than the elucidation of these two spokesmen of the liberated church(es). How many in our own country are already caught through the presentation which these two gave of the conflict: all they saw was these two spiritually maltreated brethren who meant so well, and a hostile college. But whosoever did not give himself over to their presentation, but who would place himself squarely on the plane of the facts, has seen, even though he may not agree with all the Synod did, that the action of both Prof. Schilder and Rev. Van Dijk would unnecessarily end in church-schism.

There are churches in America who will close their pulpits for these brethren, and who have no enthusiasm for the brethren of 31.

But the "Protestant Reformed Churches" who have placed themselves behind the Rev. Hoeksema (and who have come to stand separate because of the doctrine of common grace) have decided at their synodical

meetings to seek a closer contact with the Liberated Churches in our country, and they have advised the churches to open their pulpits for Prof. Schilder.

This sympathy for Prof. Schilder we can understand in part, since also those churches feel aggrieved because of the church-political treatment they received some time ago from the hands of the Synod in America.

On the other hand we are placed before a riddle. The Rev. Hoeksema fiercely contended with Prof. Heyns on the question of the Covenant of Grace, and he now acknowledges that the churches of Art. 31 have gone over to the standpoint of Prof. Heyns.

On the other hand, H. B. writes in "De Vrije Kerk" (art. 31): "Now, we know that there is a doctrinal difference between the Protestant Reformed Churches and us. To state the matter simply: dogmatically they adhere to a great extent to the Synodical standpoint with reference to the question to whom the Lord pledges His covenant blessings."

Now then, what must we make of that: church-politically they find one another; dogmatically they are opposed to each other. Up to now the proper judgment was that what united dogmatically would weigh heavier than that which divided church-politically.

Therefore a heavy step for the Rev. Hoeksema: he has to open the pulpit to someone who follows the steps of Prof. Heyns, and for Prof. Schilder the strange feeling to stand on the pulpit in churches where they hold the standpoint of the Synod to a great extent.

The wonder of it all is that he abhors our churches because of that doctrine and that he attacks us with words that lie outside the pale of civil decency, that he denies us the name of brother and office-bearer, and that he will speak in America to them that to a great extent adhere to our standpoint as follows: friends, brethren, pastors. . . and judges them worthy of his loveliest smiles.

Really: it makes my head swim.

Where is the earnestness of fundamental consistency, where is the holy obligation of church-schism and the holy obligation of church-healing?

I do not see it with Prof. Schilder.

Perhaps the brethren in America may be able to help Prof. Schilder.

G. T.

Comment:

1. I did not intend at first to place this article of the Rev. Toornvliet nor did I intend to comment on same. However, I changed my mind with the thought that many may be misled by some of the statements

of us, in that he comments on the action of The Protestant Reformed Churches. Then also, I count it a duty, an honorable duty, to defend Dr. Schilder in his appearance and work among us these last months.

2. In general I must say that I am amazed at the ignorance of the brother. I always had the opinion that those who lead in the Reformed Churches are far advanced, more so than here in America, in what they call "scientific" procedure. That is, they investigate *all* the sources before they build their structures with the resulting conclusions. Attend to this: the Liberated Churches adhere to the standpoint of Prof. Heyns! Yes, I know that we thought so too at first. And it was to be forgiven us. We are in America, and at first, because of the war, were unable to diagnose the struggle that was raging. After all, it takes much time to read all the brochures and to scan all the official data that pertained to the fight in the Reformed Churches. Allow me, brother, to correct you. We know now that Prof. Schilder and his churches reject the main tenet of the late Prof. Heyns, to wit, that the children of the covenant receive subjective grace through which they can do good works in the sight of God. We were afraid that the Liberated Churches adhered to that error. And we have found that they do not. Did you not read the article which Prof. Schilder wrote in one of the recent issues of the *Reformatie*? There he repudiated this error.

3. Yes, there are differences between the Liberated Churches and us. But we certainly would not be guilty of the sin to refuse to hear the other side, even as the Christian Reformed Churches here! They simply ordered the churches around in a hierarchical way, and said: you cannot let this man on your pulpits! Imagine: three men, members of the Synodical committee, ordered the church of Jesus Christ around as though they were some Holy Order, some Pope who alone is responsible to God! Oh yes, we gladly would let him come and speak in our midst so that we might hear first hand about the struggle in the Netherlands both from the church-political and from the dogmatical side.

4. Pray, Rev. Toornvliet, did not the view of the Liberated Churches anent the Covenant of Grace circulate in many of your churches and by many of your ministers before 1942? And were they not considered good, sound and Reformed? Why should we, and much more, why should you cast them aside like the harlot and the publican? After hearing both sides such as we have, we have come to the conclusion that the Reformed Churches (bound by hierarchy) have sinned grievously.

5. Do not flatter yourself, Rev. Toornvliet, the Protestant Reformed Churches do not stand "to a great extent" on the standpoint of your churches. We

detest the "supposed regeneration", we cast from us the so-called "offer of grace"; we will have nothing of the so-called "common grace"! And more and more we are convinced that your churches honor a dead orthodoxy, a chewing over and over again of the words of great men, who themselves have warned in their day *not* to use their opinion as a touchstone to evict faithful officebearers.

6. We have learned to know Prof. Schilder as a beloved brother in Christ, as a faithful servant of that same Christ, as a man mighty in the Scriptures, as a truly Reformed man whom to throw out of the church communion cries to heaven. Of course, there are differences! Do all the ministers in your churches think alike on all dogma's? You know they do not! Follow the path you have begun to tread and you will end up with peace, but it will be the peace of the graveyard, where no one disagrees with no one. They are alike still, but it is the stillness of death. The end of the pathway you have followed in 1924-1946 is the path that will surely end with Roman Catholicism where there is but one voice of authority: the Pope!

7. Rev. Hoeksema took a heavy step? Prof. Schilder felt strange on our pulpits? I wish that you could have *seen* our communion, could have attended our conferences, could have heard the words that were spoken on both sides which spoke of warmth, of love, of trust, of appreciation. And all this in the knowledge that we differ on some points. What of it? No one has all the truth. And we will learn one from the other.

8. Rev. Toornvliet! I am very sorry that your churches have made the cardinal error of raising the pet notion of one theologian to a church dogma, even though the man himself warned against just such a foolish action while he still lived among us. I am also sorry that you threw from your communion faithful office bearers. And because I will think well of you, I am of the opinion that many hundreds of you are sorry for the silly and sinful things that were done in 1942-1946! I hope that you may see the error of your way!

Fraternally,
G. V.

CLASSIS EAST

will meet in regular session Wednesday, January 7, 1948, at 9:00 A. M., in the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Mich.

D. Jonker, Stated Clerk.

OUR DOCTRINE

Our Covenant God

We concluded our previous article with the observation that God's covenant with His people constitutes the very essence of eternal life. We must not identify the idea of the covenant with a promise. God, then, establishes His covenant with man merely by bestowing upon him His promise of eternal life. And, according to the late Prof. Heyns, this promise must be understood as intended for all the children of the covenant, as given to all without distinction. This, of course, is the arminian conception of salvation. Neither must God's covenant with man be regarded as a contract or mutual agreement, with mutual stipulations and obligations. This definition may apply to a covenant between men who stand on an equal footing toward one another. But we can hardly speak of an agreement or contract with respect to the covenant between the Lord and man. The Lord is the living God. Hope, faith, love, obedience, etc. are gifts of God's grace and therefore not conditions upon which God's covenant is realized. The work of the Lord is always unconditional. Our covenant obligations are nothing else than what is required of us because of the nature of God's grace, which is such that it saves us as moral-rational beings and therefore causes us to work and to will according to His good pleasure. Thirdly, God's covenant must not be identified with a way of salvation. Regarded from this point of view, the covenant is the Lord's unchangeable word or revelation to us that He will save us to the uttermost in the way of faith and obedience. To this conception of the covenant we object that the covenant according to Scripture is not something temporary but eternal. Finally, God's covenant with His people must not be interpreted as an alliance of God and His people against the power of sin and the wicked world round about us. Sin and Satan, we remarked, must not be viewed dualistically. Fact is, they serve the development of God's covenant throughout the ages. All things exist for the sake of the elect, and all things work together for good for those who love God and are the called according to His purpose. God's covenant with man is therefore life itself, the highest to which man can possibly attain, the blessed relationship of the living friendship of the living God with His own in and because of and through the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Word, "Covenant"

The word which is used in the Scriptures for "covenant" affords us little help in our attempt to deter-

mine the significance of this Scriptural concept. In the Old Testament the word for "covenant", used approximately three hundred times, is always "berith". According to some this word "berith" is derived from a word which means "to cut", and it contains a reference to the ceremony described in Gen. 15:17. Abraham had been commanded by the Lord to take an heifer of three years old, a she-goat of three years old, a ram of three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon, to divide them in the midst, and lay each piece one against another. It was customary for parties who entered into a covenant-relationship with one another to follow this procedure, thereupon to pass between the halves of these slain animals, thereby declaring that, if either failed to live up to his obligations, to him would happen what had happened to these animals. God, we read in verse 17, passed between these pieces, and thereby availed Himself of this ceremony to conclude His covenant with Abraham. Some opine, therefore, that "berith" is derived from a word which means "to cut" and that it refers to this ceremony in Gen. 15. Others declare, however, that the word used for "covenant" is derived from a word which means "to tie, bind". They are of the opinion that the idea of "covenant" is that of a bond.

In the New Testament we have the word "diatheenee". This word is generally translated "covenant". In Hebrews 9:15-17, however, this word is translated "testament" and this is undoubtedly the correct translation. The word "testament" emphasizes the thought that the idea of priority belongs to God. And this also receives emphasis in Luke 1:72-74, where we read of "His holy covenant, the oath which He swore unto our father, Abraham" (covenant and oath are identified here). It remains a question, however, whether the meaning of this word in the New Testament emphasized the idea of "disposition, testament, disposal" or that of "covenant, agreement, contract".

Hence, to determine the Scriptural significance of the concept "covenant" we must attend to the Scriptural passages which speak of God's relation to His covenant people. The word itself affords us little help in the attempt to ascertain the significance of this concept.

The Idea of the Covenant

Basically and fundamentally, the Scriptural concept "covenant" is inseparably connected with the trinitarian existence of the living God. This thought is literally expressed in 2 Pet. 1:4: "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the Divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust". That the Scriptural concept "covenant" should be inseparably connected with the trinitarian

existence of the living God lies in the nature of the case. Also Prof. Berkhof declares in his "Reformed Dogmatics", and I quote: "The archetype (original pattern—H.V.) of all covenant life is found in the trinitarian being of God, and what is seen among men is but a faint copy (ectype) of this."—page 263. All revelation is necessarily Divine *Self*-revelation. That all revelation is *Self*-revelation must be understood in a two-fold sense of the word. This is true, first of all, in a subjective sense. God's revelation is *Self*-revelation because He is the Subject of His own revelation. He does the revealing. Of course, only *God* can reveal Himself. God's revelation is also *Self*-revelation, however, because He is the Object of His revelation. If it be true that only *God* can reveal Himself, it is equally true that God can only reveal *Himself*. He is the absolute Reality and the absolute Good. Of whom could He speak except of Himself? All revelation, therefore, is Divine *Self*-revelation. God does all things to reveal and to glorify Himself. Hence, to know that God is life eternal. This knowledge, we understand, is an experiential knowledge. To know about God is not life eternal. It is surely possible that one may know all about the Lord and, yet, that it were better that he had never been born. But to *know* God, to know Him experientially, to know Him with all the love of our heart and mind and to enjoy living fellowship with that Eternal and Alone Blessed Good—that is life everlasting. Greater good than the living fellowship with the alone blessed God is inconceivable. And of this blessed fellowship between the living God and man God's own covenant life is the basis.

God is the Triune God and, therefore, in Himself a covenant God. God is Triune. This implies, as we saw in a previous article, that He is essentially one. One mind, one will, one desire, one seeking, one life characterizes the living God. He is never in conflict with Himself, is never divided. And He is personally three. Personally He is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. That God is personally three implies that each Person lives the entire Divine fulness in His own personal way. Hence, God is a covenant God. God's covenant is not something incidental, something external, something which was added to the Divine life. God's covenant is not a contract which the three Persons concluded among themselves, or an agreement between the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, a pact into which the Three Divine Persons voluntarily entered. God's covenant is the very essence of the life of the Triune God. He is a covenant God. The life of covenant-friendship constitutes the very essence of God's being. A life of friendship presupposes two conditions or requirements. To be friends we must, in the first place, be essentially one. This speaks for itself. There must not be any conflict between us. The second requirement for friendship, however, is

personal distinction. Although essentially one, we must personally have our personal function, duty, work to perform. Both requirements are fundamental for a life of true friendship. Notice how this applies to Scripture's revelation of the living God. He is essentially one. And personally Three. He is essentially one and personally Three. Hence, the relation of covenant-fellowship constitutes the very essence of the life of God. The Lord our God is a covenant God.

This also determines God's covenant relationship with His people. The Lord receives us, inducts us, takes us up into His own covenant life. He makes us partakers, according to 2 Pet. 1:4, of His own Divine nature. To be sure, the infinite distinction between God and the creature must be maintained. Prof. Schilder, during his recent visit among us, preferring to speak of parties rather than of parts when discussing the relationship between God and man or his people, emphasized this distinction between the Infinite Creator and the finite creature by the use of the capital "P" and the small "p". Of God then, he spoke with a capital "P", Party, and of man with a small "p", party. Upon this distinction he surely laid all the emphasis. And this distinction must indeed be maintained. God does not, cannot impart Himself unto man essentially. This lies in the nature of the case. He is infinite, we are finite; He is the Creator, we are creatures; He is the Eternal, we are temporal. He is the Absolute Reality; we are relative, exist only thru Him and in relation to Him. He is the self-sufficient God in Himself, owes His life to nothing outside of Himself. If heaven and earth were to fall away, He would remain standing. All creation, not only man therefore, but all creation, the entire universe together is less than a drop on the bucket and a particle of dust on the balance. This distinction, this distance between the living God and man must be emphasized, always borne in mind. How, then, can the covenant between God and man possibly be presented as a contract or an agreement, or even as an arminian promise? Shall this conception of the covenant be attributed to the living God, of Whom we read in Isaiah 40:11-15: "*He* shall feed His flock as a shepherd: *He* shall gather the lambs with *His* arm, and carry them in *His* bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young. Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being His counsellor hath taught Him? With whom took He counsel, and who instructed Him, and taught Him in the paths of judgment, and taught Him knowledge, and shewed to Him the way of understanding? Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, He

taketh up the isles as a very little thing." God is and must ever remain the living God.

Yet, we become partakers of the Divine nature. This, we understand, does not mean that we become partakers of the divine nature in the essential sense of the word. God is and will forever remain the infinite Creator and man is and will forever remain the creature. But we become partakers of the Divine nature according to the measure of the creature. As creatures we share the Divine life. What God wills and seeks and loves and desires, as God, we will and seek and love and desire, as creatures. The life of the Lord has been reflected in us. We *know* Him. As the Lord seeks and loves Himself we have learned to seek and love the living God.

Hence, God's covenant with man is the fellowship, the communion of friendship between God and His people in Christ Jesus. This relationship is characterized, first of all, by a communion, a friendship of love. God and His people love one another. But, this relationship between the Lord and man is a relationship between *God* and *man*. Indeed, they know one another in a bond of friendship. God and His people are friends. However, because God is the living God He is the Sovereign Friend. In this relationship of friendship the Lord loves us, blesses us, is the sovereign Lord Who must be worshipped and adored. He is and forever will remain the Source of all our blessings, the Fountain of life and all our peace, the God out of Whom and through Whom and unto Whom are all things, even forever. And man, in his relationship toward the living God, is friend-servant. He is God's friend and loves the Lord with all his heart and mind and soul and strength. But, as man, he is the Lord's servant. His calling it is to serve the Lord with all that he is and has, to inquire after and do the will of his God. And this is for that man eternal life. Is it possible to conceive of a greater calling, of a higher glory, of a grander ideal than to praise the glories of Jehovah and proclaim the greatness of Him Who hath called us out of darkness into His marvellous light? Surely, to be the servant of the living God with all the love of one's heart and mind, to be privileged to proclaim His greatness and behold His beauties and sing of His glories,—this is eternal life, the highest to which man can possibly attain. And thus man has been inducted into God's life, loves and wills the Lord, according to the measure of the creature, even as God eternally loves Himself. And this covenant relationship, we understand, is the essence of religion, the highest to which man can possibly attain.

*Scriptural Proof for this Conception
of the Covenant.*

This conception of the covenant we believe to be

the teaching of the Word of God. We believe that the Holy Scriptures speak this language throughout. In various ways this glorious truth is held before us. Sometimes the word "covenant" itself is used. Very often, however, other expressions appear in Holy Writ, such as: dwelling, abiding, tabernacle, temple, friend of God, etc. All these expressions refer, point us to the one cardinal truth of the Word of God, namely, that the Lord our God is a covenant God, in Himself, and also for and with His people, in and through and because of Jesus Christ, the Lord.

First, we would call attention to Paradise. Recently, the doctrine of a "covenant of works" has been advocated in connection with the calling and sin in Paradise. The history of the doctrine of the covenant of works is comparatively of recent date. Our Reformed Confessions do not speak of it. This is all the more remarkable in the light of the fact that the Westminster Confession, drawn up soon after the Synod of Dordrecht, does mention it. That our fathers did not incorporate this doctrine into our confessions is therefore not to be attributed to the fact that they had not heard of it. The later Dr. A. Kuyper, however, developed this theory, and of late this doctrine is generally accepted as sound, reformed doctrine.

This so-called "covenant of works" speaks of a promise, a threat, and a condition. To be sure, so it is said, man cannot merit anything before God. Yet, the covenant of works is presented as a gracious, special condescension of God whereby He agreed to give Adam eternal life in the way of obedience. The condition upon which this threat and the promise were contingent was Adam's obedience of the prohibitive command of God which had forbidden him to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and of evil. His failure to obey this command of God was threatened with death. And, if the first man refrained from eating of the forbidden fruit he would receive eternal life, the eternal and heavenly fellowship with God. That this promise refers to eternal life in the heavenly sense of the word lies in the nature of the case. Spiritual life could hardly be offered him inasmuch as he possessed it. What the Lord therefore promised our first father was the eternal fellowship with God, the service of the living God minus the possibility of sin and death, and therefore eternal life.

This conception of Adam's position and calling in Paradise we consider impossible. We reject it, in the first place, because of its utter lack of Scriptural proof. That the Scriptures do not speak literally of this doctrine is even admitted by its exponents. Nothing is said in Genesis 1-3 of any agreement between God and Adam. Besides, nothing is said in these three chapters of a promise of eternal life. One simply does not read of it. However, so the exponents of this doctrine say, neither do we read of God's coming to

an agreement with Abraham or with Noah—should this latter fact not have warranted the conclusion from the defenders of a “covenant of works” that, therefore, also in connection with Abraham and Noah we must not speak of an agreement of the Lord with them. Moreover, so these exponents continue, the threat of death implies the promise of life. But, is this true? That a murderer will be electrocuted surely does not imply that he will receive special favors if he obey the law. Consequently, the attempt to prove the “covenant of works” by appealing to Rom. 5:12 collapses. To be sure, sin and death entered into the world by one man. Does this prove that also eternal life could have been merited for all by that one man? Secondly, we reject the theory of a “covenant of works” because man cannot merit anything before God. Scripture abundantly establishes this. And, thirdly, the doctrine of a covenant of works is fundamentally a denial of the Christ. To teach that God offered Adam eternal life in the way of obedience implies that Adam could have attained unto it. But the Scriptures teach us (Eph. 1:1-10): “Having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself: That in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him.”

In distinction from the mechanical theory of a covenant of works we maintain that Adam was created by God in covenant relationship with Jehovah. It was not Adam's choice whether or not he would serve God. Neither did the Lord enter with Adam into an agreement. Of such an agreement we read nothing in Holy Writ. Fact is, Adam was created as God's friend-servant. He was simply created *man*, and in the image of God. He was therefore created the Lord's friend-servant. Adam's service of God was the spontaneous expression of his whole being, and, therefore, his relation to the living God was an essential relation, created in his very being.

To this must finally be added the striking word of Genesis 3:15: “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel”. Adam violated God's covenant. He tramples it under foot. He refuses to be the friend-servant of God and would be the master of his own fate, the captain of his own soul. He turns his back upon the Lord and becomes the servant, slave of the devil. However, the Lord maintains His covenant. He maintains it in Christ. Sin, after all, is but a means in the hand of God to realize His covenant fellowship with His chosen people in the way of sin and grace unto the glory of His blessed Name. And notice that God maintains His covenant by establishing enmity between the seed of the woman and that of the devil, between His elect

people and those reprobated unto eternal damnation. But enmity is essentially friendship. The enmity against the world is surely the friendship of God. We are enemies of sin and of the world exactly because we become the friends of God. Hence, the Lord maintains His covenant with Adam and His own elect by maintaining him and them in the relationship of friendship. Paradise is therefore proof for our conception of the covenant. And Gen. 3:15, let us never forget, is the key to all subsequent history. All of history is nothing else than the development of this spiritual struggle. God makes us His party and grants us the victory.

H. V.

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

Saul's Duplicity.

As we have seen, Paul refuses to submit to his sentence of deposition and the loss of his kingdom pronounced over him by Samuel in the name of God. Contrary to the revealed will of the Lord that he abdicate his throne to make room for his God-appointed successor, Saul is determined to maintain himself in power and to secure his throne for his kin. Accordingly, he will be on the alert for that “neighbor” better than he to kill him as soon as he can be certain that he has identified him. It doesn't take Saul long to make up his mind that this “neighbor” is David, son of Jesse; and the latter is therefore a marked man. Saul's first attempt on David's life is made in his delirium in obedience to a sudden diabolical impulse. He twice stabs at David with the javelin that is in his hand, as he says, “I will smite David even unto the wall”. David avoids the missile and removes from Saul's presence. Saul goes from bad to worse. As David's favor with the people continues to grow, Saul's wrath as fed thereby burns with always greater heat; and he has now reached that stage at which he begins to plot against David's life.

Having fought with the giant and killed him, David should have received Merab, Saul's eldest daughter, to wife, according to the king's word. But Saul has not kept him to his word. And he is not intended to keep him to his word. But this does not deter him from using David's claim upon Merab for the destruction of the son of Jesse. He tells David that he wants the marriage to go through. Merab shall be David's wife. These are his words, “Behold, my elder daughter Merab, her will I give thee to wife,” but he adds, “only

be thou valient for me, and fight the Lord's battles". Saul can mean this only as an obligation and not as a condition by the fulfillment of which Merab will become David's. For the latter's right to either of Saul's daughters has been firmly established, on the ground of the king's promise, by the slaying of the giant. But with Merab betrothed to him, thus as prospective son-in-law to the king, he must fight for the king, the more so, seeing that the king's battles are the battles of the Lord. These are Saul's words, the obvious design of which is to induce David to prosecute the war with the Philistines with great vigor; and the hope that Saul cherishes is that David perish in the doing. Let the enemy triumph over God's people on the battlefield. It is well, if only the son of Jesse be destroyed. Such are the thoughts of Saul's heart. Such is the motive that hides behind his honeyed and pious words. And his reason in hoping to rid himself of David in this way is that he does not want to kill David by his own hand. "For Saul said, Let not mine hand be upon him, but let the hand of the Philistines be upon him". As if Saul, by hating David without a cause, is not on this account alone a murderer in God's sight. As if, in wanting David killed in his war with the Philistines and sending him into this war that he may be killed, Saul will not be guilty in the sight of God of slaying David with the sword of the Philistines, should he fall in battle,—thus as guilty of doing him to death as he would be, should he allow his own hand to be upon him. Saul imagines that he has thought out a way of murdering David without being responsible. Saul knows better. His doing indicates that he knows David innocent and righteous.

Though the narrative makes no mention of this, there can be no doubt that David continues as valiant as always. He is Israel's real king in the sight of God. Whether by this time he fully realizes that his anointing was an appointment to the kingship, is quite another question. Samuel may have told him immediately; or he may have waited. The narrative does not say. The latter is the more likely, as also David's reply to Saul at this time seems to indicate. If David speaks honestly, if he voices his true feelings—and there is no reason to believe that he does not—his words betoken that the thought of his being son-in-law to the king overwhelms him. Says he to Saul, "Who am I? and what is my life (Hebrew: "Who is my life", meaning perhaps, "What is my station in life"), or my father's family in Israel, that I should be son-in-law to the king." The prospect of marrying Merab is not unwelcome to David. But, considering who he is, it is hard for him to conceive of himself as son-in-law to the king. Or does he doubt Saul's motive? Does he see through the man? And is this his way of telling the king that he is not being fooled? The narrative in the sequence is opposed to this interpretation of David's words. He speaks honestly. It shows that

he still is the artlessly humble and self-effacing David of yesterday, despite his victory over the giant, his achievements as general in Saul's army, and the growing consciousness of his calling to the kingship. And he believes that Saul deals honestly with him. And in this faith he expects Saul to keep him to his word. "But it came to pass at the time when Merab, Saul's daughter, should have been given to David, that she was given to Adriel the Meholathite to wife." Why does Saul do this to David? The reason is not revealed. But it is not difficult to conjecture correctly the explanation of Saul's doing. Saul did not intend that David should have Merab. Why did he lie to David? Only to get him to fighting as prospective son-in-law of the king, furious battles with the Philistines that he might be killed. But it doesn't appear that any such battles were fought by David at this time. If they were, David was kept by the hand of God. Disappointed, Saul does what all along he has planned to do: He gives Merab to another. The narrative is silent on David's reaction to this foul treatment. It is certain that he behaves himself wisely. He does not go about airing his grievances in the ears of men. He understands that vengeance belongs not to him but to the Lord.

As to Saul, his determination that David be removed from the land of the living is just as strong and even stronger. Hence, when it is now reported to him that his daughter Michal loves David, he is delighted. He imagines that new ways open to him for having David put out of the way. "And Saul said, I will give him to her, that she may be a snare to him, and that the hands of the Philistines may be against him". These are his words, the vile whisperings of his wicked heart, known only to himself and to God. For these thoughts and intents of his heart he keeps to himself. What he has just done to David regarding Merab is indication what he means by his resolution to give his daughter to David. He will betroth Michal to David as determined by himself that the betrothal shall not consummate in marriage. And Saul's purpose again is to put David anew under the obligation to fight the Philistines as a prospective son-in-law to the king. It shows how little Saul really knows David. David fights the battles of the Lord under the inspiration of the Spirit and as motivated by the love of God and his people. But Saul, being reprobated and on this account a thoroughly self-absorbed man, has no understanding of this. He, too, has been fighting the Lord's battles but only as motivated by love of his own cause. And he cannot believe but that David does likewise. David, he thinks will fight the Lord's warfare if supplied with a carnal motive. This motive Saul will again supply. He will offer David now the hand of Michal. And to realize a long cherished ambition to marry into the king's family, David will fight the Lord's battles for the king and, so Saul hopes, perish

by the hand of the Philistines. "Wherefore Saul said to David, Thou shalt this day be my son-in-law in the twain". The meaning of the phrase "in the twain" is not clear. It obviously must have some such meaning as "In a second way thou shalt be my son-in-law".

Saul's proposal has the appearance of an apology. Apparently he wants to make good the wrong he did David by giving Merab to another. Actually he is bent on David's destruction. We know this because the sacred writer lays bare Saul's heart on the pages of his narrative. But David did not have our Bible. Hence, he does not know. For Saul screens his motives by pious and sweet-sounding offers. And David, being but a man, does not know Saul's heart. It cannot be but that he is in a quandary—this is also evident from the sequence—regarding the true state of Saul's feelings toward him. Twice has Saul stabbed at him with his javelin, as if he had wanted to pierce him through. But David could fairly say that Saul was not himself then. The evil spirit from God had again seized upon his soul. Not knowing Saul's heart, David cannot tell whether Saul had actually meant to do him injury. He still has reasons to doubt this. Everybody knows that there was a time when Saul was fond of David. And no one has yet heard Saul say that his feelings toward David have changed. David slays the giant and Saul takes him into his service permanently and even raises him to the rank of officer in his army. And though he tricked David regarding Merab, he still insists that David be his son-in-law. So what is David to think of Saul? Though David has reasons to distrust Saul thoroughly, the evidence that Saul is determined to kill him or to have him killed is still too insufficient. Accordingly, David has not yet brought himself to believe this, as is plain from the narrative.

How David replies, when Saul says that he wants him to marry his daughter, is not stated. But the narrative makes it rather clear that David, mindful of how Saul tricked him regarding Merab, refuses to give Saul his promise to marry Michal. This is little to Saul's liking. He tries hard to get David to promise that he will be his son-in-law. For David must perish fighting Philistines for Saul in the confidence that he is going to marry Michal. Saul therefore commands his servants. He orders them to communicate with David in secret. They must say to him, "Behold, the king hath delight in thee, and all his servants love thee; now therefore be the king's son-in-law." It is not stated that Saul reveals his motives to his servants, tells them his scheme. There is reason why Saul should refrain from this. Why should he needlessly disgrace himself in the eyes of his servants, which he would do should he lay bare his heart to them. For it is a heart that seems to have become the center of all hell's blackness. The servants must not tell David that Saul sent them and instructed them what to say. Naturally Saul wants David to believe that the servants come of

their own accord with him knowing nothing about it. For he would have it appear that his love of David is so great and that he esteems the son of Jesse so highly that he cannot refrain from praising him to the faces of his servants all the day long; and that the servants felt it their duty to tell David in order that he might perceive how true it is that the king really wants him to be his son-in-law; and tell him also that the marriage will have the full approval of all the servants in that they love him too.

David's reply to the servants seems to indicate that it does not occur to him that they simply obey orders. These are his words to them, "Seemeth it to you a light thing to be the king's son-in-law, seeing that I am a poor man and lightly esteemed?" If the theme of his former reply was the lowliness of his status and the insignificance of his family, it is now his poverty to which he directs attention. We may believe that now, too, David speaks sincerely, voices his true sentiments. For the love that Michal bears him is mutual. But he cannot well afford to marry her. She is the daughter of a king. The marriage would call for a dowry, a gift of property to the bride, far above his means. Do not these servants understand? Their importunity puzzles him. Does it also open his eyes to their hypocrisy and to the diabolical duplicity of the master who sent them? This cannot be expected. Though David has come to perceive that Saul is not to be trusted, though the eagerness of the servants may strike him as strange, he does not apprehend what really goes on at the moment. Such apprehension calls for an all-seeing eye, for an eye that can pierce "even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." Such an eye belongs only to God.

The messengers tell David that all the servants of Saul love him. There is truth in what they say. The text at 8:15 reveals that David was accepted in the sight of all the people, and also in the sight of all Saul's servants. David may still be accepted in the eyes of these very messengers. In telling him that they love him they may be speaking the truth. They may be imagining, too, that Saul actually delights in David. For no more than David do they know Saul's heart. But their love of David is not the love that men, who are one by a common faith in Christ, bear one another. It is a kind of love that at bottom is cruelty. For these messengers, and perhaps the majority of Saul's servants, stand ready to do the king's bidding even when he commands them to bring David to him in his bed, that he may be slain (19:15). They love David, but they love themselves more; and therefore they will do whatever the king commands them. That God must be obeyed more than man is not in all their thoughts. All that has weight with them is the favor of the king. That favor must be retained at all costs, even at the

cost of justice. And David is a just man. Saul declares him just first by his failure to name his crime and later by word of mouth in the hearing of the whole nation (24:16-22). Every one in Israel therefore should follow the example of Jonathan. He refuses to obey the king's command that David be killed. He goes over to David's side and delivers David from Saul's wrath at every opportunity. But he organizes no rebellion against Saul.

That David has established his right to either of Saul's daughters by his slaying of the giant, is a thing that he chooses to disregard. Perhaps at no time for some reason or other has he considered asserting this right. Some interpreters suppose that Saul's promising to give his daughter in marriage to the slayer of the giant was a rumor that originated with the people. But this is not likely.

The servants tell Saul what is standing in David's way of marrying Michal. It is his poverty. Saul has considered that. "Go tell the son of Jesse," says he to his servants, "that the king desires no dowry." This is generous of Saul. But he has not finished. "The king desireth not any dowry; but a hundred foreskins of the Philistines, to be avenged on the king's enemies." What Saul requests is not unfair to David. He really is making it easy for the poor man to marry his daughter. As an officer in the king's army it is his calling to wage war against the Philistines. As following his line of duty he will have sooner or later the required number of foreskins. Yet, as coming from Saul, the request is deeply sinful. The motive and purpose are to destroy this man. "But Saul thought to make David fall by the hands of the Philistines." But David does not know Saul's heart. Thus "when his servants told David these words, it pleased him well to be the king's son-in-law."

That Saul is motivated by wickedness is now apparent. Without a moments delay he should make arrangements for the consumation of the betrothal in marriage. But he holds back. And with reason. As a man just married David will not have to go to war for a whole year. So Israel's law decrees. But Saul does not want David to rest from war. His sole purpose is to get him to fighting Philistines in order that he may be killed. Accordingly, he does not keep him to his word. He insists that David go forth and kill Philistines and get him the required number of foreskins. And not until David has returned with the full count will Saul allow the marriage to take place. David does so. "And the days were not fulfilled—the days of the year of the exemption for David—And David arose and went—so reads the Hebrew text—he and his men, and slew of the Philistines two hundred men. And David brings their foreskins: and they bring them in full count to the king, that David might be his son-in-law." The son of Jesse, unbeknown to himself, has again triumphed

over Saul. Once more the Lord brings his wicked counsel to nought by preserving David in his battle with the Philistines. Saul is crestfallen and furious. David has returned with twice the number of foreskins that Saul had required. It is perhaps his way of expressing his disgust to Saul with the manner of treatment afforded him by the king. Saul can hold out on David no longer. He must allow the marriage to take place to save his face. So the two are married, David and Michal. "And Michal, Saul's daughter, loves him" (18:28). But they are not long together, when Saul takes Michal and gives her to another, to one Phaltiel the son of Laish (II Sam. 3:21). It again shows that Saul had not intended that Michal should marry David. His hatred of David was too deadly for him to really want David to be his son-in-law. All that he wanted is David's destruction. And his whole scheme was to put David under the obligation of fighting for him the Philistines by betrothing to him first Merab and then Michal; and putting him under this obligation in the hope that in one or the other of his battles with the Philistines he might be killed. All that Saul does and says in connection with this matter brings clearly out that he had no intention of marrying off either of these daughters to David.

"And Saul saw and knew that the Lord with David. . . ." (18:28). The evidence is there before his very eyes. And it continues to accumulate. And the Lord lays the speech thereof—the Lord's speech or word—on his heart, so that he sees not only but knows, is convinced in his heart. But he does not repent. For the Lord is against him to destroy him. Thus, holding under the truth in unrighteousness, he persists in hardening his heart as sovereignly hardened by God. In the words of the sacred writer, "And Saul was yet the more afraid of David; and Saul became David's enemy continually."

The two hundred Philistines that David slew for their foreskins must have formed an enemy garrison somewhere in Judah not mentioned in the sacred narrative. Hearing the disaster by which it had been overtaken, the Philistines swear vengeance and mobilize for war, and errlong their armies as headed by the princes of the land are encamped on the soil of Judah, poised for battle. This must be the import of the statement contained in 18:30, "And the princes of the Philistines went forth. . . ." That the Philistines right at this time do set on foot a military movement against Israel, is revealed by the text at verse 8 of chapter 19. Here the statement occurs, "And there was war again," war, so this verse tells us, between Israel and the Philistines. It is in the behaviour of David during this war, more than in the war as such, that the narrator is interested. Of David's behaviour in this new crisis, brought on, it seems, by his slaying of the two hundred Philistines, it is stated, "And it came to pass after they the Philistine princes with

their armies—went forth, that David behaved himself more wisely than all the servants of Saul; so that his name was precious" (18:30). As in the former crisis, so now; he speaks to the terrified people the language of faith, it must be, exhorting them to fear not but to trust the Lord to save them. It is also a good conjecture that, to demonstrate his faith, he raids the Philistine encampment, and that, as working for him, the Lord lays his terror on the hearts of these heathen. This would go a long ways to explain the statement that David's name is precious. At the same time, the name of Saul is scarcely being mentioned. And with reason. The contrast between David's faith in its heroic working and the inertia of Saul's unbelief is glaring and always more glaring. It is to David that the nation looks in its crises, not to Saul. Verily, the Lord is taking the kingdom from Saul and is giving it to that "neighbor" who is better than he. Saul sees and knows but he persists in fighting God. His heart is hard and always harder. It is a hardening process by which Saul is being visited characterized by clearly discernible stages. The first stage in the process was reached when Saul began to eye David. Next he stabbed at David with his javelin. David had to leap in order to avoid being pierced through. Advancing in sin, Saul schemes to slay David by the sword of the Philistines. David was not slain. He lived as kept by the Lord. Then the princes of the Philistines go forth, and David behaves himself wisely and his name is much set by. Unutterably grieved, Saul now makes another advance in sin. He calls on Jonathan and on all his servants to cooperate with him in putting David out of the way. "And Saul spake to Jonathan his son and to all his servants, that they should kill David" (19:1).

G. M. O.

THROUGH THE AGES

Renaissance Popes.

The last series of articles appearing in this magazine under the above caption were on the papacy. This article is a continuation of that series. We were occupied with the Renaissance Popes, 1431-1521. Before we proceed it is well to get our bearings.

There were in all eight renaissance popes. Since they were renaissance popes it is necessary that we be clear on that movement known in history as the Renaissance. As was said, the Renaissance—the word means new birth—was a revival of the pagan learning, wisdom and art of the Graeco-Roman world. It

had its beginning in Italy shortly after the capture of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453. The fall of this city caused a great migration of Greek scholars into Italy. These fugitives brought with them the pagan culture of the East and disseminated it among the Italian secular and spiritual princes and the wealthy classes. From Italy the new learning spread to the utmost bounds of Europe and eventually to the New World (the United States of America). Our civilization is the Christianized paganism of the Graeco-Roman world. Thus in its broadest sense, it was the working of that natural energy that brought into being our modern civilization with its new and pagan conception of religion and science and with its manifold inventions and discoveries.

As was said, of this movement the Reformation was neither a phase nor a product. The two movements differed in principle and in aim. The subjective principle of the Reformation was the life of regeneration, the faith and love of God's believing people. Its objective principle was the Scriptures. And its aim was the emancipation of the scriptures from the reign of tradition and dogma and the subjection of human reason to the reign of the Scriptures. The Reformation loved the Bible. To the Bible it went back in its original languages. The Renaissance, on the other hand, went back to the ancient classics and revived the spirit of Greek and Roman paganism. Its objective principle was these classics, the pagan learning and wisdom contained therein and in which it gloried. Its subjective principle was unbelief, hatred of God and His word, and positively, the love of the world and the things thereof—the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. True, in Germany the Renaissance, too, inveighed against popes and councils as the ultimate authority in matters of faith. But it was moved by hatred of all authority, whether expressed in the degrees of councils, in the pronouncements of the popes, or in the doctrines of the Scriptures. Thus its aim was to emancipate the mind of man from the reign not merely of tradition and the dogma of the church but of the Scriptures as well. If the priests had subordinated the Bible to tradition and the dogma of the church, the Renaissance submitted it to individual and private judgment. Humanism (Renaissance) therefore was sceptical, rationalistic.

As was said, the ten pontiffs who occupied the papal throne during the years 1431-1517 gladly received the new learning and were deeply influenced by it. All were worldly men who gave little thought to the spiritual interests of the Christian church. They were patrons of letters, artists, and great builders who adorned Rome and filled it with treasures of art, and whose principal ambition was to increase the estates of the church and to maintain themselves as independent rulers in their estates over against the lay ponten-

tates of Italy, who, too, were always striving to extend their possessions. And they had a big heart, did these popes, for their own nephews and other relatives, and bestowed upon them great favors in total disregard of their intellectual and moral disqualifications and age. The vatican in this period was always crowded with office-seeking kin of the popes. And some of these popes could count among those seeking emoluments of office their own illegitimate children. They acknowledged them without shame and could easily marry them off to the sons and daughters of the most aristocratic families in Italy. Banqueting and indecent entertainment was the order of the day in their palaces, and among their invited guests were even women of ill-repute. The popes of this period were great spenders. For the cost of maintenance of their household was enormous. When their resources were exhausted, they would borrow from banking houses with the things of the vatican put in pawn.

In fine, the gayeties, scandals and crimes of the Renaissance popes make this period one of the most depraved in the history of the popes. So we wrote. The lives of three of the renaissance popes has already been reviewed. We therefore pass on to Paul II, the dates of whose pontificate are 1464—1471. His real name was Pietro Barbo. His home city was Venice, where he was born in 1418. As a young man, he started in life as a merchantman; but soon thereafter, acting upon the advice of his eldest brother, he gave up his business and devoted himself to the church. His prospect of rapid promotion was excellent, as his uncle was pope Eugenius IV. The pope successively appointed him arch-deacon of Bolongue, bishop of Gervia, bishop of Venice, papal pronotary and cardinal. Then followed his election to the papal chair. The cardinals that chose him had agreed amongst themselves to demand that the new pope prosecute the crusade against the Turks, call a general assembly within three years, limit the number of cardinals to 24, appoint to that body not more than one of his relatives, and none who had not attained the age of 30. But Paul, as pope, refused to be dictated to, on the ground of the theory that no one had the right to command the pope, he being the supreme judicial power of Christendom. Accordingly, he called no council, appointed three of his nephews cardinals, and ignored the Turks.

Paul was an energetic Pope. He brought the whole of life of Rome under his actual jurisdiction, even putting ceilings on the prices to be paid for clothing, banquets at weddings and funerals, and dowries.

King Podiebrad of Bohemia offered to crusade against the Turks on the condition that Paul recognize him as Byzantine emperor. The pope not only rejected the offer, but deposed the king and ordered Mathias of Hungary to rule in his stead. This doing was in strict accordance with the theory of papal supremacy.

In 1468, Frederick III visited Rome. In the basilica of St. Peter's holy communion was served. Frederick was seated at the pope's feet.

Paul seems to have despised learning in the Roman schools. But he took a great deal of pleasure in collecting precious stones, coins, vases and other curios. In his palace were found after his decease, 54 chests of silver filled with pearls that he had collected. But this was not his only diversion. Gregarovius states that he filled his house with concubines. Rome had its carnival week. Paul delighted in its gayeties. From St. Mark's he watched the crowd make merry. Much to the delight of the merry-makers he provided a feast in the public square and threw down among the people handfuls of coins. He was extravagant in his dress; and his custom was to paint his face, when he appeared in public. He was immoderate in the use of food. He is said to have died as a result of gorging himself with two large melons. Though his eyes stood out with fatness, and though he possessed more than heart could wish, he was a bored man. Asked why he was not contended, he replied that a little wormwood can pollute a whole hive of honey. He attended to official business only under compulsion. He did his sleeping in the daytime and worked nights. His legates had to wait sometimes even till three in the morning before they could get a hearing.

SIXTUS IV. (1471-1484)

The real name of this pope was Francesco Rovers. Being the son of a fisherman, he was born in lowest obscurity near Savona, 1414. He studied theology at Pedia. Obtaining his doctor's degree, he spent several years in teaching, when he was appointed cardinal by Paul II. As pope, Sixtus' chief concern was his 16 nephews and grand-nephews. All that was in his power to do, he did, to establish them in positions of opulence and honor. Five of them he appointed cardinals, two of them prefects of Rome. His favorite nephew was Julian Rovere, later elected pope under the name Julian II. He loaded this relative, a man of rare ability, with benefices. He was arch-bishop of Avignon and then of Bologue, bishop of Lausanne, Constance, Viviers, Istia and Lelletri, and besides the head of several abbeys. Another nephew, Riario, was similarly favored. His income amounted to 2,500,000 francs. He had several mistresses, all elegantly dressed. The slippers worn by one of them were embroidered with pearls.

Sixtus was a bloody pope. He fanned the feud between rival families in Rome; and nearly succeeded in blotting out the name of one of them by assassinations and judicial murder.

His sixteen nephews, several of whom were worth

less men, caused Sixtus no end of trouble as disturbers of the peace of Italy.

Sixtus also gave some attention to the doctrine of the church. He issued two bulls bearing on the doctrine of the immaculate conception. In all matters of ritual and outward religion, none was more punctilious than he, despite the fact that the diarist of Rome, Infessura, calls the days of his death the day on which God liberated Christendom from the hand of an impious and iniquitous ruler, who had before him no fear of God nor love of the Christian world nor any charity whatsoever, but was actuated by avarice, the love of vain show and pomp, most cruel, and given to sodomy.

G. M. O.

SION'S ZANGEN

Het Gebed Eens Verdrukten

(Psalm 102; Vierde Deel)

De zanger had den Heere gebeden uit groote verdrukking. Hij had bewezen, dat het volk al zijn sterkte verwacht van den Heere. In tijden van elende gaat dat volk naar Hem toe Die alle kracht heeft. 'k Ben gewoon in bange dagen. . . .!

In die bede om hulp en heil had de zanger den Heere gevraagd om Zich over Sion te ontfermen, want, zoo zei hij, de tijd om het genadig te zijn, de bestemde tijd is gekomen.

Alles wat er geschiedt op aarde heeft zijn tijd. Doch er zijn bijzondere dingen die te gebeuren staan. En die bijzondere dingen met hun bestemden tijd vragen om de bijzondere aandacht des Allerhoogsten.

De allerbijzonderste gebeurtenis is de geboorte, het lijden en sterven van Jezus, met Zijn herrijzenis. Dat is de centrale gebeurtenis aller eeuwen. Alles stuwt naar dien Jezus heen, en alles ontwikkelt zich vanuit den hof van Jozef.

En om die centrale gebeurtenis had de zanger gebeden.

Geschiedt dat hoogerlijke feit, dan "zullen de heidenen den naam des HEEREN vreezen, en alle Koningen Uwe heerlijkheid."

De naam des HEEREN en Zijne heerlijkheid komen hier voor in den vorm van de parallel. Zij zien op hetzelfde. Het gaat in beide om het groote Wezen, dat tot ons treedt in Zijn "naam" en ons toeschittert in de "heerlijkheid" Zijner deugden.

En de heidenen zullen dien Naam vreezen, en de Koningen Zijn heerlijkheid.

Wat hier zingend gebeden wordt is geschied.

Dat ik hier op mij schrijfmachine tik, en dan wel over deze materie, is gevolg van dat komen des HEEREN om Sion genadig te zijn. Dat gij en Uw kinderen psalmen zingen komt van de vervulling van dit gebed.

Onze voorvaders zijn verloren gegaan. Zij wandelden in de duisternissen van hun dwaalziek en verdorven hart; en, zonder hoop en zonder God in de wereld zijnde, hebben zij de mate hunner ongerechtigheid volgemaakt, en vielen in de handen van den levendigen God.

Maar over ons, over het late nageslacht dier benden in Noord-Europa, is de zonne der gerechtigheid opgegaan. De zendelingen kwamen, sommigen hunner zijn gemarteld en stierven. Anderen leefden en verkondigden het Evangelie. En de latere voorouders hebben geloofd.

En zoo zijn we geboren en getogen in het volle licht.

Straks kwam de HEERE en was ons genadig. Hij sprak Zijn Eigen Woord in ons diepe hart en wederbaarde ons. De Heilige Geest van Jezus Christus stortte in ons diepe hart de genade van het Verbondsleven, en weldra trad dat leven naar buiten in de bekeering en geloof.

Zelfs Koningen hebben geloofd en gezongen van die genade over heidenen. Ik heb plaatjes gezien van een Gustaaf Adolf die knielde op het slagveld. En Prins Willem van Oranje stierf met den Naam op zijn lippen. O ja, de Koningen geloofden en zijn zalig geworden.

Alle de Koningen der aarde?

Zullen alle heidenen den naam des HEEREN vreezen?

Daar moet ik tweeërlei van zeggen.

Eerst, alle heidenen en alle Koningen, zonder onderscheid, zullen de knie buigen voor God. Daar zal Hij voor zorgen. Alle mond zal Hem óók belijden. Sommigen, de meesten van hen, zullen het doen met de smart des eeuwigen doods die hen doet krommen in de foltering van zelfverwijt en vertwijfeling.

Tweedens, ik ben overtuigd, dat het hier gaat over alle koningen en alle heidenen die opgeschreven staan in het Boek dat des Levens is, en dat is Jezus. Ten slotte is het zoo, dat de uitverkorenen de wereld van Gods geneugten uitmaken. Zij zijn het menschedom, dat meetelt. Hebt ge er wel eens op gelet, dat den naam van de verlorenen uitgedelgd worden zal? Vreeselijke gedachte!

Dit alles zal geschieden "als de HEERE Sion zal opgebouwd hebben, in Zijn heerlijkheid zal verschenen zijn."

Eerder zagen we, dat Sion de aanraking in ondoordringelijke liefde is van den hemel en de aarde. Waar die aanraking geschiedt, daar vloeit het bloed van het onstraffelijke Lam Gods. Waar God de aarde kust,

daar hoort ge het kermen van Jezus Die vanuit de hel schreeuwt tot God: Waarom! o Waarom?!

En het antwoord is, dat "de goedertierenheid en de waarheid zullen elkander ontmoeten, de gerechtigheid en de vrede zullen elkander kussen".

Dat is Sion. God en mensch vereenigd: de onmogelijkheden zijn mogelijk geworden in en door de "verborgenheid der godzaligheid": God geopenbaard in het vleesch. Straks zullen de kinderen overal ervan zingen. Hebben ervan gezongen bij den tijd, dat ge dit leest.

Als de HEERE in Zijn heerlijkheid verschenen zal zijn.

Wie denkt hier niet aan dat plotselinge licht hetwelk den herders omscheen? Vreest niet, want, ziet, ik verkondig U groote blijdschap!

En dit alles is geschied vanwege het feit dat de HEERE "Zich gewend zal hebben tot het gebed desgenen die gansch ontbloot is, en niet versmaad zal hebben hunlieder gebed."

Wie is die man die gansch ontbloot is?

Wie zijn de menschen (in het meervoud) die baden tot God?

Dat is eerst geweest de zanger van dit lied, de verdrukke.

Die velen zijn het volk geweest die eensgeestes waren met hem: de kinderen Gods die in alle eeuwen tot God geroepen hebben uit hunlieder verdrukking.

Maar het is vervuld toen God Zichzelf verhoorde op het roepen van den Zoon. Gaat maar naar Hebreërs 5:7. Daar staat, dat Hij verhoord is geweest. Neen, ik versta hier niet alle dingen. Maar ik weet, dat het roepen om genade van Jezus bestemd was om het volk aan wiens spitse Hij stond te zaligen, te zaligen. En waar Hij de Gezondene des Vaders is (en dan neem ik Vader hier te zijn den DrieEenige) die Hem zond om het volk thuis te halen, mag ik zeggen, dat God Zichzelf verhoorde. Toen Hij Jezus eindelijk uit den vreeze verlost, kwam het volk mede. Roemt nu met nieuw lofgezangen de nieuwe blijken van Zijn gunst! Hier weiden onze zielen met verwonderende oogen!

En die Man was gansch ontbloot.

Zoudt gij mij één, slechts één mensch kunnen aanwijzen van wien gezegd mag, dat hij *gansch ontbloot* was?

Houdt maar op van zoeken: hij is er niet.

Straks zult ge er millioenen aan kunnen wijzen, als zij met lichaam en ziel tezamen wegvaren naar de plaats die voor den duivel en zijn engelen bereid is. Daar zullen ze dan voorts (er zitten eeuwigheden in dit vreeselijke woord) gansch ontbloot zijn.

Maar de zanger?

God had hem lief.

Zijn hart was rein.

Gods Geest vervulde hem: hij is een Bijbelschrijver.

Alle dingen, ook de kwade dingen, werkten hem ten goede want hij had God lief.

Ge weet het allen, zijn lijden waarvan hij klaagt in dezen psalm was slechts betrekkelijk.

Zoo zult ge het met mij eens zijn, als ik zeg, dat dit ziet op Jezus.

Hij was waarlijk van alles ontbloot.

Hij kon door den mond van Jeremia klagend vragen: Is er eene smart gelijk mijne smart?

Met lichaam en ziel moest Hij den eeuwigen dood in. En ik weet het, alhoewel ik het nooit heb ervaren, ik weet, dat in den eeuwigen dood er geen beschutting meer is. Daar is alles ons tegen.

En dan is er een mysterie.

Hoe, namelijk, God Hem bleef liefhebben, en toch de vreeselijke Godsverlating deed ervaren. Ik kan er niet bij!

Maar Hij is de gansch ontbloote.

Denkt eraan. Denkt er telkens aan. Ge zult er aan herinnerd worden tot in alle eeuwigheid. Het groote en vreeselijke van Jezus' lijden is het juist, hetwelk U zegt hoe onbegrijpelijk lief de liefde God is.

Er blijft voorts niets over dan te aanbidden, te aanbidden.

"Dat zal beschreven worden voor het navolgende geslacht; en het volk dat geschapen zal worden, zal den HEERE loven!"

Weet ge waaraan ik dacht bij het bestudeeren van deze woorden?

Dit: wonder, of die man het toen wist, dat een kleine dertig eeuwen later een eenvoudige dominee over zijn woorden zou peinzen, en stamelende spreken, aarzelend schrijven?

Want die man werd onfeilbaar geleid door den Heilige Geest, om te onderzoeken naar de tijden van Jezus' lijden en de heerlijkheid daarna volgende.

Maar wij strompelen ons paadje af, we vallen en staan op.

Maar de schrijvers des Bijbels konden zeggen: "en ik meen ook den Geest Gods te hebben!" (Paulus)

Maar het is geschied: de woorden Gods zijn geschreven!

"Dat zal beschreven worden!" Wat? Dat God Zich gewend heeft tot Hem die gansch ontbloot was.

Wilt ge er een ander woord voor? Een dogmatisch woord, dat letterlijk door de dogmatici uit den Bijbel gehaald is? Het is dit: de opstanding van Jezus.

O ja, toen Jezus in groote smarten stierf en Zijn stoffelijk overschot verborgen werd in Jozef's hof, toen heeft God Zich tot Hem gewend, en Hij heeft Hem toegeroepen: Kom hooger op, Mijn geliefde Zoon!

En toen is Jezus ontwaakt!

Zeker, ik weet wel, dat Paulus zich voornam om

niets te weten dan Jezus Christus en Hem gekruist, doch vergeet niet, dat hij dien Gekruiste predikte als Degene die opgestaan was uit de dooden. Het is juist Paulus die het onvergetelijk hoofdstuk schreef van I Cor. 15.

En zoo is de Bijbel er gekomen. Op Goddelijk bevel.

En de Bijbel werd bewaard. Overgeschreven. En later gedrukt bij de biljoenen.

En menschen worden geschapen (ik denk dat de Heilige Geest hier herscheppen bedoeld, zooals in II Cor. 5:17) die dien Bijbel in zich opnemen, door den Heiligen Geest, om te loven, te loven!

De zanger gaat voort: "omdat Hij uit de hoogte Zijns heiligdoms zal hebben nederwaarts gezien, dat de Heere uit den hemel op de aarde geschouwd zal hebben, om het zuchten der gevangenen te hooren, om los te maken de kinderen des doods."

Hier hebt ge het telkens wederkeerend wonder weer. God ziet naar de menschen om.

Laat ons het apart neerschrijven:

God ziet om naar de menschen op aarde.

Dat is een wonder.

Want wij zijn kinderen des toorns. Leest den tekst: kinderen des doods. Dat is onze naam. Die naam hebben we duizendmaal verdiend. Het onkreukbare recht (en dat is God Zelf) eischt dat de ziel die zondigt zal sterven. Dat zei God in het Paradijs, en dat gebeurde naardat de mensch in arren moede het bestaan durfde om Zijn God in het aangezicht te slaan.

Toen kwam de mensch in de gevangenis. En het einde van die gevangenis is de put die brandt van vuur en sulfur.

En daar te blijven tot in alle eeuwigheid is recht, Goddelijk, heerlijk, aantrekkelijk, schoon en lieflijk recht.

Hoe kan God dan luisteren naar dat zuchten der gevangenen? Hoe kan God in liefde neerblikken op de aarde?

Het antwoord is gemakkelijk. We spraken er al over. We zullen er van spreken totdat geen maan meer schijnt. En dan zullen we er van gaan zingen tot in eeuwigheid.

Hier is het antwoord: God ziet naar U om, God blik op de aarde ter neder met liefde en lankmoedigheid en groote goedertierenheid, vanwege het zuchten van Jezus. Jezus is naar onze gevangenis gegaan. En in die gevangenis heeft Hij gebeden. Gebeden van den beteren Jona. Vanuit het ingewand der aarde heeft Jezus tot God gebeden. Ge kunt die gebeden in de psalmen van David en der anderen vinden.

Gebeden van Jezus!

En onze God ontfermt Zich op *Zijn gebed!*

G. V.

IN HIS FEAR

P. S.

In an article which I wrote, (page 66, Standard Bearer) I mentioned Jacob waiting fourteen years for Rachel (page 67). At the Conference a brother reminded me that Scripture states Jacob took Rachel to wife before the last period of seven years labor began, hence waiting but seven years for her. Some time later another brother writes to this column about it, and he too reminds me of this fact. By the way, I attempted to correspond with this last named brother, writing to him at the address given on his letter, but I got the letter back, saying there was no such address. Hence, let me assure the brother that I received his letter and that his contention is correct. My mistake. Jacob waited seven years for Rachel, not fourteen, that is, he took her to wife before the seven years of labor for her began. I was surprised to learn this. Perhaps you too will be surprised. Imagine that! having learned it that way once upon a time (I believe it was in catechism), having studied this event and its surroundings, having preached about it, taught it in school and catechism, wrote Sunday School lessons concerning it. . . . and still always having read the text wrong. Perhaps you have had like experiences with these things. Our "I'm sure I know", sometimes wanes into a "I thought I knew", and even sometimes dissolves into a "I don't know".

If I do not discontinue this shortly, you might think that I was just writing this to fill up my column. That is not the case.

I choose for my subject this time:

Growth In Prayer.

When discussing the subject of prayer with one of the saints, he said to me: "I find this a great danger in our praying, that we repeat our prayers, until at length we can utter them from memory".

Have you ever accused yourself of not having your thoughts with your prayers? That is, have you ever experienced that while were were praying you were actually thinking about something else? In other words, your thoughts were not with your praying.

There then you have two things related to our prayer life.

And I wonder if there is not a possible connection between these two things. Sinful as we all are, we sometimes pray to leave an impression. Sometimes we pray to express our opinion about matters, and sometimes we pray to gain a point. Then our thoughts may be with our prayers, indeed, but not with God

to whom we are praying. In which case our thoughts are at another place than our words purportedly are.

But sometimes our thoughts wander here or there, they roam aimlessly about, our thoughts may be on our business, our undertakings, or any other thing, but all the while we are speaking words, words purportedly addressed to God.

I recall the story (as stories go) of a horse-trader, stopping for dinner with a friend. The host asked the guest to offer prayer. The guest consented. After the prayer the host remarked what a fine prayer he had offered. The guest however, to his shame, had to admit that while he was offering that prayer he had really been selling his horses. This may be a bit coarse, but who of us hasn't had to accuse himself of uttering words while the thoughts were elsewhere. This ought not to be, it is sinful, but sins are facts, and painful facts sometimes.

Formula Praying.

How about this repeating the same prayers until we can utter them from memory? Is there a danger here? How serious is it?

We all know how the Catechism defines the essence of true prayer, and naturally we must find this essence in every prayer which we utter. Therefore we will repeat our prayers as long as we live.

But they who are called upon to pray often, especially I mean in public, realize that the tendency exists to become used to a certain, I might say, formula prayer, and then repeat it almost invariably.

This can become the case with ministers who perhaps twice or thrice every Sunday engage in congregational prayers. And then all the other public prayers which are to be rendered, sometimes ten to fourteen or even more on one day. The prayers must always bear the essence of true prayer as the Catechism defines it, and hence there must be repetition. And it is well that certain things be always repeated. They cannot be repeated too often. Repeat it until everyone learns to repeat it with you. But unless the minister watch diligently, he will in due time be able to pray his prayer without the stimula of sanctified thinking.

Fathers in the home, too, who perhaps offer prayer six or more times per day at meals, are confronted with the matter of repetition. I have heard fathers say to me that they felt themselves incapable of offering six prayers a day without falling into simple repetition. This was no excuse of course, for if they engage in silent prayer the same problem confronts them.

Teachers in our christian schools offer perhaps two or four or more prayers per day. They, too, are liable to adopt stereotyped prayers and use them almost without variation.

Is there a danger here?

This is a delicate subject.

No one ought to be discouraged at the tendency of repetition much less ought they to use this tendency as an excuse to refrain from public praying, nor from frequent public praying.

Let us stand fast.

We easily adopt prayer formulas.

Repetition With Variation.

If we take somewhat of an inventory of the prayers recorded in Scripture we find what we might call repetition with variation. If one reads the Psalms, the prayers of David and others, one finds certain matters always repeated. There is the petition for forgiveness of sins, the prayer for deliverance, the plea for mercy, the request for strength, the doxology, etc. Yet one finds these almost with endless variations, depending upon the condition of the soul or upon the attendant circumstances. David' prayer in Psalm 23, for instance, is quite different from his Psalm 51. The Spirit of Christ which was in them prayed within them, yet the expression thereof varied.

Jesus gave us the perfect prayer. It was given at the request of a disciple, who said: teach us to pray (cf. Luke 11). And our Heidelberg Catechism explains it as the model of the prayers of all saints. It was not given merely as something which one memorizes and then simply repeats, but as the model after which all our prayers should be fashioned.

Therefore we will have repetition, but with variation.

Danger?

Is there danger if we get stereotyped prayers?

I believe there is.

A person can adopt a certain word order, certain sentences, and then repeat that prayer so often that at long last one can give it from memory. In that case there is the danger of praying almost purely from habit. And it can easily be that the soul scarcely enters into the prayer at all. I do not say that the soul cannot enter into formula prayers (it can and does if used aright) but the danger is present that our prayers become words which we can utter without any soul effort.

The words can be uttered while the mind and our thoughts are engaged elsewhere.

Besides, when one grows used to confining himself to his adopted form, it becomes almost impossible to express himself in any other way. If he tries it he stutters and stumbles and can scarcely seem to find words. Conditions and circumstances vary, but his prayers cannot vary. Thus making it impossible for him who prays to re-act or respond in harmony with

the circumstances. Life is varied and changeable, circumstances change constantly, our needs vary, we re-act differently under different circumstances, the soul would sometimes groan in contrition, sometimes it would leap for joy. . . . but the soul has not the words with which to express itself. Such a situation can result if we do not grow in prayer and develop the gift of prayer.

Finally, if we stereotype our prayers we shut out the possibility of growth and development. We are satisfied to stay within the framework of our formula and therefore make no progress toward prayer development. This is the more serious if we consider that prayer must be soul-effort. Prayer must engage all our attention, all our interest, all our effort. We are liable to lose this if we adopt custom prayers. Nay, rather, if prayer becomes soul-effort, spiritual wrestling. . . . if we approach that of which Scripture says that there are groanings "which cannot be uttered" and of "joy unspeakable", then we shall wrestle also to find new words, more words; we should exhaust the dictionary to find means of expressing ourselves. Even then we fail. But that effort is prayer.

How we may develop prayer growth? Let us leave that for the next time.

M. G.

FROM HOLY WRIT

Signs In The Gospel Of John

"The Beginning Of Signs"—concluded

(John 2:1-11)

Many long years had passed by. And always the mother of Jesus was pondering in her heart concerning the meaning of all this Word of God, this revelation concerning *her* son. And while she pondered, and, no doubt, instructed Him, He "increased and grew strong, filled with wisdom and the grace of God was upon Him". For thirty years she had watched this marvelous son, and all the while she pondered.

Small wonder it is, that, when Jesus was thirty years of age and when so many great and important things were happening—things that seemed to point to the indisputable fact, that the hour had struck, that Mary, Jesus' mother, could contain herself no longer, that on this memorable day at the wedding-feast in Cana of Galilee she seeks to take the initiative by saying: they have no wine. Mary would push the issue.

But she does not understand! And in her hands things would have gone all wrong. The way which she

would have chosen would not have led to the glory of the throne of David, the glory of Christ in the deep way of His suffering, His hour, at the right hand of the Father.

But it is now that Christ takes matters into His own hands, and that most fundamentally.

Notice that He takes it for this very reason out of the hands of Mary. He puts her into her rightful place. No, this is not the crude rebuff of a rude son who would dare call his mother "woman". The word that Jesus here speaks as the Son of God in the flesh, as He is His anointed Servant. He is obedient here to His Messianic calling. He here stands not as Mary's son, but here He stands as the First-born Son of God, who will be Lord over all. He is, therefore, also Mary's Lord, as well as that of David. Compare Psalm 110:1; Matt. 22:43. And in this relationship as the Anointed Son in our flesh, whose work is wrought in flesh and blood, yet not along the line of the progress of flesh and blood, by the Word and Spirit, water and His blood, He here lays down the lines of the foundation of the Father's house. In this house He will be Lord and all the others will be brethren. But they will not be the brethren of the flesh. How could this be. Thus was never the promise given to Abraham. That is not the style of the heavenly Architect and Builder. Nay, the mother, brethren and sisters of the Lord in this new relationship are they who do the will of His Father who is in heaven.

And so the mother of Jesus is here fundamentally corrected by the Messiah of Israel.

So, fundamentally that now Jesus has cleared the way to begin His work in the Father's house!

He has in this correcting of Mary, in one stroke, kept the way clear for Himself to walk the way, that will lead to His "hour". And the chief corner-stone, the stone that was laid by God in Zion will He be in His own blood in that "hour".

When Jesus, therefore, thus speaks He is preaching the cross and its power. He is preaching Himself as the only hope for Israel and also for Mary. Mary He is saving from her own destruction. He takes Mary's little plans, the plans of a mere mother according to the flesh, and raises it to the exalted style of the eternal goodpleasure of God's will in the Beloved Son. And so, this is not a crude rebuke, but it is marvelous saving grace, of which even Mary and her other children will one day sing in perfection, as they already did in the day of Pentecost.

And, we think, Mary felt something of the wonder here already. She immediately is obedient. No, do not say, that when she tells the servants to do whatsoever he says, that she still persists to take matters into her hands. She doesn't. She says: let's all be obedient to Him. We will do what He says.

And now Jesus begins with His "sign". He tells the servants present to fill the water-pots, that are

present, to the brim. This they do. And with His almighty power, which is His because of the Father's love for Him (John 5:20) He changes the water into wine. And here again there is Divine majesty. The servants knew that it was water that they put into the pots. And what a water they had carried. Approximately 120 gallons of water. And now, behold it is wine. It is carried to the governor of the feast upon Christ's command. And real wine it is found to be. It was very good. It exceeded in quality the wine that had up till this time been served. Such was the testimony of the governor of the feast not after he knew whence it was. The servants knew. The judge is ignorant of the circumstances. The witnesses are present. There can, therefore, be no doubt about this sign for the servants, nor for Mary and the disciples.

Such was the "*beginning* of signs".

The text says beginning. We must not attempt to change the sense of this. Let us leave it as it stands. "Beginning" is not the same as "first". Indeed this was the first sign. But it was much more. It was the *beginning* of signs. The implication of this is undoubtedly, that in this first sign the fundamental pattern of all future signs is present. All the other signs in the book of John fall into line. When we understand this sign the others are understandable too. This plan in the work of Christ is what we would expect from Christ. Does Jesus not follow the same plan also in the parables that He speaks. Wherefore when He speaks the first parable, the parable of the sower, and when the disciples do not understand it he says: "Know ye not this parable, and how shall ye then know all parables?" As is the case with this first parable, so we would also understand the "*beginning*" of signs.

What Christ manifests in this sign is His glory in the way of His "hour". And in this "hour" He will enter into His own glory, and we shall be brought with Him into this glory. Other signs Jesus will perform, and we hope to study them. And they will all point us to this Christ, to the glory that is His and that shall be ours with Him in His death and resurrection.

Thus it also becomes clear why John writes as he does. He is obedient to the Spirit of truth. The Holy Spirit as the Spirit of the living Christ in glory led Him, John writes! But writing he is led by Christ Himself, who sends the Spirit. And this Spirit take it all out of Christ and gives it unto us. What He gives is not merely the spiritual blessings, but also the work of instruction, the testimony concerning the Christ, the Son of the Living God. These things, these signs are written in this book by the guidance of Christ, that we might believe, and that believing we might live in His name. It is His own Word concerning Himself that we possess here in this fourth gospel.

And, therefore, John adds the important notice, that when Jesus manifested forth His glory in this

"beginning of miracles" the disciples *believed in Him*.

This might at first glance seem to merely imply that the disciples believed that Jesus had performed the miracle. But surely that cannot merely be the meaning of John. The disciples believed that He was the Christ. By faith they saw the implication of the sign. They began to look for greater and better things to come. Here was the long promised Messiah indeed. Indeed, he was a prophet and God was with Him. Here is Immanuel!

It is true that there are notices in the Gospels which indicate that the disciples did not always understand. They often were of little faith. But believe in Christ they did. Although the content of their faith shall presently increase in riches they now already see in Him the Messiah, the one that shall redeem Israel. Concerning this there is no question in their minds.

Thus John says: And His disciples believed in Him.

We have but to think of Andrew, one of the two who first visited with Jesus, who goes to Simon Peter, his brother and says: "We have found Him, the Messiah". Or again we think of Phillip. After seeing so many of the signs of Christ, and after having been "so long a time" with Christ, he still asks that the Father be shown to Him in the upper room in the night in which Jesus was betrayed. He does even then not yet fully comprehend. But at the first meeting with Jesus, when Jesus tells him that He already saw him sitting under the sycamore tree, then Phillip already makes the wonderful confession: "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel". He had been promised to see greater things than these. At this wedding-feast Phillip is shown with the other disciples in this Sign of the changing of the water into wine, the greater things, the glory of the Son at God's right hand. Truly the very heavens were come down to earth. The wonder of Jacob's ladder of ascending and descending angels must have been brought to Phillip's attention. And in faith he saw and believed. Vistas of glory opened up before his believing eyes!

Such is the power of this manifested glory. It is the clear testimony of God in heaven to His Son for our sakes, in our behalf.

It is well in these weeks of commemorating the birth of Christ to be mindful of this truth. The Christ, in whom we believe, is not the Christ in the manger. Truly there He was laid as Mary's son. But there He did not remain. He is now at the right hand of God. We see Him who was made a little lower than the angels, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor.

Let us remember, that He is Mary's son, but He is now her Lord. Also Mary confesses with that other disciple: My Lord and my God. She also is with all the saints able to comprehend the love of Christ that passes all knowledge. She also is a living stone built

together with all the other stones unto a spiritual sacrifice. She with all the redeemed of all ages looks unto Him as unto her Saviour.

Thus is the wondrous testimony of the apostle. By this testimony we have fellowship with them by faith, and with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ!

G. L.

PERISCOPE

"Common Grace" and God's Attitude Towards the Ungodly. . . .

This heading appeared on an article in a recent issue of *De Reformatie*. As is known, the subject of "common grace" was among those which was being discussed in the Netherlands before the war, and that the Synod of Sneek-Utrecht also declared itself in respect to this theory. Since the Liberated Churches have separated themselves, this subject is still open for discussion amongst them. We are, of course, especially interested in this particular subject. The article referred to is signed C. V. and written, undoubtedly, by Prof. C. Veenhof of Kampen. We will attempt to translate and transcribe the article as literally as possible.

"Whoever has followed the discussion of the so-called 'common grace' of 'general grace' with any degree of interest, knows that in connection therewith the question has often arisen whether, relative to 'common grace', we have to do with a certain 'attitude' of God, and naturally, *favorable*, in respect to all men, and more particularly towards the ungodly in this world and this dispensation.

"All those who are fundamentally reformed agree that there is in God an attitude of 'grace', and more particularly of 'forgiving grace', towards all the elect, and an attitude of 'wrath', and more particularly of absolute condemnatory wrath, towards all the reprobate. But now the question also arises: must we assume that there is, next to, or better, *between* these two, still a third attitude in God toward mankind. An attitude which, because it extends to all men and embraces all of mankind as such, can be called '*general grace*' or '*general goodness*' or '*common grace*'.

"If one accepts the position of such an 'in-between-attitude' in God, then it must be maintained that a two-fold disposition of God is expressed to all men. The elect partake of that grace—the special or forgiving grace—which is extended to them only. But besides this they also are partakers of the 'general grace', which extends to all men. And the reprobate, first of all stand under God's eternal wrath, but they

likewise, also experience beside this the 'general grace'.

"Concerning the question whether this 'general grace' can be spoken of as such a 'middle-attitude' in God, we wish to make a few remarks.

"If we desire to consider these questions in the light of Scripture, we must maintain, first of all, that God looks upon all His creatures *as (qua)* creatures with Divine good-pleasure. God has eternal pleasure in the great and variegated work of His hands. He saw all that He had made and behold, it was very good.

"But it also true that men are never merely creatures and nothing more. Whoever speaks of men as *creatures* speaks of an abstraction, therefore. Men are always creatures *who think, act, and live in a definite manner*, and who, in that activity, assume a definite attitude toward God. They know and serve Him with a perfect heart and thereby embrace the covenant in which God will live with them, or—they reject and break it once and consequently, permanently.

"After the fall of Adam, all men are covenant-breakers, sinners, by nature, and as such all are turned into the way of destruction.

"But it has pleased God to elect unto salvation a certain number of men, not because they were better or more worthy than the others, for they lay with the others in a common misery, but out of pure grace and according to his own free and eternal good-pleasure.

"The result of this election is that there are now living in this world two specific groups of individuals. There are the *elect*, to whom God in Christ reveals His grace. These are the vessels of mercy that partake of God's disposition of grace. And overagainst them are the *reprobate*, the vessels of wrath, towards whom God's disposition of wrath is poured out unto eternal destruction.

"If we examine the dealing of God with these two groups of men, as it is revealed in the Holy Scripture, we find among the many other references also this, that on the one hand it is stated that God is kind (friendly, easy, good) towards the unthankful and evil. 'Maar hebt uwe vijanden lief en doet en leent zonder er iets van terug te verwachten. En uw loon zal groot zijn, en gij zult kinderen des Allerhoogsten zijn, want hij is mild jegens den dankbaren en boozen, Luc. 5:63, vert. Greijdanus. And on the other hand, that God's judgment, God's wrath, is expressed to believers. 'Want (het is) de tijd, dat het oordeel begint van het huis Gods' (I Petr. 4:17, vert. Greijdanus).

"If, therefore, in the first instance we desire to speak of 'general grace' or something of that nature, we should also speak of 'general judgment' or 'general wrath' in the second instance.

"The examination of these two pertinent expres-

sions, which apparently belong on the same level, will make it easier for us to acquire the correct view of God's goodness to the ungodly.

"We begin with the quotation from Peter concerning God's judgment over believers.

"Analyzing what Prof. Greijdanus writes about this text in his commentary, we give the following summary of its meaning:

1. *Taken by itself and considered from the viewpoint of its origin* all suffering of the creature is the operation of God's wrath and judgment over sin.

2. In the suffering of believers God executes His judgment over the sin which still is present with them.

3. When "judgment" is spoken of here, reference is not thereby made to God's *motive* in that which is called judgment, but it is called judgment because of its essential nature by itself.

4. So understood, this judgment has for its purpose the sanctifying and purifying of believers, hence, it is subservient to the revelation and exaltation of God's grace.

5. This suffering—this judgment, therefore,—is but temporal; believers are only touched by "the beginning" of it.

6. Considered from the viewpoint of God's deepest *motive* therewith, and with an eye to its *effect* in the believers, this "beginning of judgment" is not judgment, not the imposition of punishment, but the revelation of God's love, which purposes their salvation; seeking it and working it also through that which distresses (Rom. 8:1, 28). Also this suffering is, therefore, grace for the believers. "The Lord Christ atoned for all their guilt and carried all their punishment, and therefore, took away all judgment for them'."

(To be continued) W. H.

Ingezonden

Wanneer men zich de moeite getroost eens de oude jaargangen van onze "Standard Bearer" door te blade-ren, dan komt men tot de ontdekking, dat de inhoud van voorheen en thans heel wat verschilt. Nu bedoelen we niet wat taal en stijl betreft; ook niet het geestelijk gehalte van den Editor en contributing Editors, doch we hebben het oog op de vele bijdragen die jaren geleden door sommige leden van bijna iedere gemeente als "Ingezonden" door de Standard Bearer werden opgenomen.

Vele artikelen waren "op-to-date", en toonden een meelevende in ons kerkelijk gebeuren 't welk bepaald verassend was. Het was vaak een genot de vragen en antwoorden, zoowel als opmerkingen en critieken, te lezen, en men gevoelde, als 't ware, den polsslag van het kerkelijk samenleven.

Men was, o.a., verrukt over sommige artikelen die tintelden van enthousiasme over de vreugde die ze nu mochten smaken in het hooren van de nu zuivere prediking welke ze in geen jaren hadden gehoord, en hun dankbaarheid betuigden in warme bewoordingen die de gemoederen bij vele lezers in vuur en vlam zette.

Doch, helaas, het bleek al heel spoedig, dat de vreugde van korten duur was; de vlam die bij sommigen zoo helder had geschitterd, ging als een "Verkade's nachtpitje" weer uit. . . . Het zaad van de zuivere prediking vond geen diepte van aarde, en was spoedig verdort.

Doch er waren ook andere inzenders, die door hunne degelijke artikelen het blad sierden, en toonden mee te leven met de beginselen in Gods Woord zoo kostelijk uitgestippeld.

Doch hoe dichter we kwamen bij de nieuwere jaargangen, hoe minder vonden we ingezonden artikelen.

Misschien komt het, dat de dingen nu bij ons een meer volkomene zekerheid krijgen.

Nu we toch aan 't schrijven zijn, willen we nog even op iets de aandacht vestigen, wat misschien sommigen onzer is ontgaan. We bedoelen, namelijk, de toevoer van vele Hollandsche emigranten naar Canada. In een zeker blad lazen we jongstleden, dat er in Nederland twee millioen emigranten gereed staan, waarvan duizenden plan hebben naar Canada te trekken.

Onwillekeurig dachten we aan de geestelijke verzorging die zoo dringend noodig zal zijn aan zoo velen van onze stam- en geloofsgenooten, want dat er velen onder die duizenden zullen zijn van Gereformeerden huize is tamelijk zeker. Een prachtig arbeidsveld voor een energieke Zendelingsleeraar. Die emigranten zullen niet vragen: is de Ds. een van de richting van 1834, of van '86, of van 1924, doch als ze een zuivere gereformeerde prediking hooren voorgedragen met gloed en bezieling in hun eigen moedertaal op vreemden bodem, zullen ze zich spoedig thuisgevoelen, en zich binnen niet al te langen tijd tot een gemeente laten organiseren. Geen gemeente gratie kwestie, geen doopsprobleemen vragen daar eerst de aandacht, doch de zuivere prediking des Woord. "Zoekt eerst het Koninkrijk Gods en zijne gerechtigheid" staat bij een goed gereformeerde op den voorgrond. En als ze dan een "speech" mogen hooren over Psalm 73, en de brochure lezen "De Geloovigen en hun Zaad", zal onder de leiding des Heiligen Geestes het donker opklaren, en alles komt terecht.

J. R. VanderWal,
1015 Ohio St.,
Redlands, California.

Naschrift der redactie:

De kerken, in classis en synode, hebben de zaak der emigratie naar Canada behandeld, en officieus is

Canada zijn geweest, of dat zij er nog werken. Binnen kort zullen we er wel meer van hooren.

U verder dankend voor Uw bijdrage, met de stille hoop, dat zij het begin zij van een grooten stroom van enthousiastisch getuigen en meeleven van meerderen die het goede voorbeeld van br. VanderWal volgen, verblijf ik.

Uw vriend en broeder,
G. V.

Ripon, California
November 29, 1947

Waarde Broeder, Ds. Vos: —

Vergun mij U eenige inlichting te mogen vragen, en wel over hetgeen in de Standard Bearer, 15 Sept., No. 22, geschreven is. Ik bedoel de Correspondentie met de Nederlanders: Een antwoord door Ds. Doekes aan Ds. Hoeksema, en dan zij opgemerkt dat ik de eerste acht regels van bedoeld stuk niet begrijp. Het begint: "Hoe spreekt de Schrift? In de taal, die de synodes van 1942 en daarna ons wilden opdringen: dat de volle heilsbelofte 'eigenlijk' alleen de uitverkorenen toekomt? En zooals Ds. Hoeksema het sterk heeft uitgedrukt, in woorden die herinneren aan de beruchte taal van Toelichting en Praeadvies: 'Het is eenvoudig niet waar, dat God in den Heiligen Doop iets belooft en verzegelt aan alle gedoopten'?"

Spreekt de Synode 1942 nu uit, dat zij de volle heilsbelofte eigenlijk alleen de uitverkorenen toekomt? (Dat geloof ik ook! Geo. Vrieling). Hoe spreekt dan Ds. Doekes van een *opdringen* daarvan door de Synode? Ik meende, dat Ds. Doekes en de vrijgemaakten daarmede geheel accord gingen, alsmede met het woord van Ds. Hoeksema, als deze zegt: "Dat het niet waar is, dat God in de Heilige Doop iets belooft en verzegelt aan *al* de gedoopten."

Nu, dat van Ds. Hoeksema beaam ik ten volle, maar het bovenste begrijp ik niet, en ook de vrienden in Ripon niet, met wien ik deze dingen bespreek. Deze zeggen: "Wij begrijpen het niet, en hebben maar een blaadje omgeslagen (maar dat doe ik niet)."

Mocht U mij persoonlijk antwoorden willen is heel best. Of als U het noodig oordeelt, mag U ook de Standard Bearer daarvoor gebruiken, naardien ik vertrouw, dat er meerdere lezers zullen wezen, die het niet begrepen hebben.

In beleefde afwachting dan, broedergroetend,
George Vrieling,
Ripon, California.

Antwoord:

Naar afspraak kan, mag en wil ik mij niet mengen in het debat tusschen Ds. Hoeksema en Ds. Doekes van Nederland. Die correspondie zal voortgezet wor-

den zoo spoedig Ds. Hoeksema in dier mate hersteld is, dat hij het hoofdredacteurschap weer op zich neemt. De Heere geve in Zijn genade, dat dit spoedig geschieden mag.

Toch dacht het mij goed U eenig antwoord te geven. En door factisch te antwoorden zal ik mij vrijwaren van de beschuldiging de overeengekomen belofte geschonden te hebben. Ik zal U dus eenvoudig uit den droom helpen door feiten te noemen die iedereen toestemt.

En dan kan mijn antwoord kort zijn:

1. Ja, Ds. Doekes en de vrijgemaakten leeren, dat de volle heilsbelofte geschiedt aan allen die gedoopt worden.

2. Neen, wij gelooven dat niet. Wij gelooven, dat de doop beteekent en verzegelt "de rechtvaardigheid des geloofs". Ik ga ten volle accoord met wat Ds. Hoeksema poneerde: "Het is eenvoudig niet waar, dat God in den Heiligen Doop iets belooft en verzegelt aan alle gedoopten."

3. Een en ander zal U en de vrienden in Ripon duidelijker worden in de debatten en correspondentie die voortgezet zullen worden in de Standard Bearer.

Broedergroetend,
G. V.

ACTS and YEARBOOK

The Acts of the Synod of 1947, combined with the Yearbook, giving information and statistics of all churches, have again been sent out to our consistories.

We have some extra copies. Our people should all have a copy of this Yearbook and Acts combined in one volume. You can order them from the undersigned. Price: \$1.00 per copy.

There are still a few copies left of the Church Order, which also sell for \$1.00 per copy.

D. Jonker, Stated Clerk
1210 Wealthy St., S. E.
Grand Rapids 6, Michigan

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IN MEMORIAM

The Consistory of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan hereby gives expression to its condolence with its fellow office-bearer, Mr. J. Boelema in the recent death of his sister,

MRS. P. VANDER KOOY

of Grand Rapids, Michigan. May the God of all grace and mercy work in the hearts of the bereaved by His Spirit, in order that also in this His work they may acknowledge, "He doeth all things well".

The Consistory of the First Prot. Ref. Church,
Rev. H. De Wolf, Vice President
Mr. S. De Young, Clerk.