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Brokskens Voor Hondekens

“En zie, eene Kananeesche vrouw uit die landpalen komende, riep tot Hem, zeggende: Heere, gij Zone Davids, ontferm U mijner! enz.

—Matth. 15:22-28.

Onze Heiland had vijanden gemaakt. Er waren eenige Schriftgeleerden en Farizeërs tot Hem gekomen vanuit Jeruzalem met een aantijging tegen Zijne discipelen. Deze laatsten hadden de gewoonte om brood te eten zonder eerst de handen te wasschen. En er schijnt een gebod der ouden te zijn geweest, om dat niet te doen.

En toen had de Heere Jezus tot die schijnheiligen gezegd: Waarom overtreedt ook gij het gebod door uwe inzettingen? En beginnende bij het vijfde gebod, had Hij hen verweten, dat zij door hunne leeringen dit gebod ondermijnden. En daarna had Hij de Heilige Schrift aangehaald, hen veroordeelende door de woorden die God gesproken had door den profeet Jesaja.

De discipelen waren daarna tot Hem gekomen en hadden Hem een soort verwijt gemaakt, zeggende: Weet Gij wel, dat de Farizeërs deze rede hoorende, geërgerd zijn geweest? Het schijnt wel alsof zij de rede van Jezus ietwat hard vonden.

Doch de Heiland had gezegd: Alle plant die Mijn hemelsche Vader niet geplant heeft, zal uitgeroeid worden. Laat ze varen, zij zijn blinde leidslieden der blinden: indien nu de blinde den blinde leidt, zoo zullen zij beiden in de gracht vallen!

En daarom was Jezus naar de landpalen van Tyrus en Sidon uitgeweken. Het was Zijn ure nog niet: Hij moest nog wat verder leven en prediken de dingen van het Koninkrijk Gods. En in die landpalen geschiedde er een schoon wonder.

Er was een vrouw die een dochter had, deerlijk van den duivel bezeten. We weten niet wat dat geweest is. Maar dat het verschrikkelijk was is wel duidelijk uit de verschillende verhalen die tot in bijzonderheden ons die toestand beschrijven.

Dat mensch was een heidin. We zouden niet veel verwachting van haar hebben. Vooral als we opmerken in het verband, dat zelfs de discipelen door Jezus bestraft worden vanwege hun ongelooft. Indien de discipelen, die geduriglijk met Hem omwandelden zoo weinig geloof aan den dag brachten, wat zal men dan van een heidin verwachten? En dan vanuit die streek! Tyrus en Silon waren vuile plaatsen.

En toch, die vrouw beleed een geloof, waarover de Heere Zich grootelijks verwonderde. En haar geloof werd ook beloond.

Straks komt ze thuis en vind haar dochter gezond en wel. De duivel was uit haar gevaren, en zij lag op het bed.

Ze mocht eten de brokskens die van de tafel des Heeren vielen.

* * * *

Hoe ontzettend is haar geloof op den proef gesteld!

Dat zij geloof had is overduidelijk uit het verhaal.

Eerst al, omdat zij tot Jezus komt om hulp en genezing. Dat doet een natuurlijk mensch nooit. Daar zijn wij veel te hoogmoedig voor van nature. Wij helpen onszelf veel liever. Dat komt overeen met den aard der zonde. En die aard is dat wij onszelf tot een god zijn. Dan gaat met te rade met zichzelf zoolang het kan, en als we het zelf niet meer kunnen redden, dan gaan we naar den mensch of naar eenig ander schepsel, maar naar God in Christus? Nooit!

Dat zij zaligmakend geloof gehad heeft is ook duidelijk uit het feit, dat zij tot Jezus komende Hem aanbidt. Dat doet geen mensch wien het er slechts om te doen is om van een zekere bezoeking af te komen. Als het er haar om te doen was geweest om haar dochttertje van den duivel verlost te zien, en niets anders, dan had zij Jezus daarvoor *gebruikt*, en dat ware het einde geweest. Denkt in dit verband aan die elf melaatschen

die nadat zij gereinigd waren, Jezus eenvoudig vergaten. Doch deze vrouw aanbidt! Dat toont geloof, zaligmakend geloof.

En ten slotte blinkt haar zaligmakend geloof ook hierin, dat zij ontzettend nederig zich betoont. Leest dit verhaal en. . . schaamt U! Ze wordt eerst doodgezwegen, dan beledigd, bij een hond vergeleken, en zij blijft nederig, en erkent het. Zoo handelt geen ongeloovig mensch. Die was allang weggelopen.

En dat geloof wordt op den proef gesteld. Eerst al, omdat de Heere net doet alsof Hij haar niet hoort.

O, het is erg, als we roepen om hulp. Maar het wordt erger als we dan ook nog aan doovemansooren kloppen. Dat is een vreeselijke beproeving geweest voor die arme vrouw.

De discipelen schamen zich ten slotte voor dit onsmakelijke schouwspel (?). Ze treden op den Heere toe, en zeggen: Heere, laat ze van U, want zij roept ons na! Waarschijnlijk bedoelden zij met dit zinnetje: Om des lieven vredes wil, Heere, genees haar dochter! Niet omdat wij met innerlijke ontferming over haar en haar dochter bewogen zijn, maar om der schande wil. Wordt Gij het niet zat om zoo nageschreeuwd te worden? Wat een barmhartigheid!

En dan zegt de Heere, zoo in het priyaat tot Zijne discipelen: Ik ben niet gezonden dan tot de verlorene schapen van het huis Israëls. Ik denk niet, dat die vrouw dit zinnetje gehoord heeft.

Maar zij gaf het roepen niet op. Als de Heere doet alsof Hij haar niet hoorde, dan keert zij zich direct tot Hem, naderbij komende, en zegt: Heere, help mij!

En dan moet zij een zeer harde leer hooren.

“Het is niet betamelijk het brood der kinderen te nemen en den hondkens voor te werpen.”

Wat een harde leer!

Nu dan, daar staat zij. Haar dochttertje is van den duivel bezeten. Zij heeft het arme wicht misschien in waanzinnigheid en schreeuwende achtergelaten om Jezus te vinden, die, zooals ze waarschijnlijk gehoord had, in die streken was. Eerst luidkeels roepen en kloppen aan een doovemansdeur; dan van nabij zoo dringend vragen, dat er een antwoord moet komen; en dan wat? Dan komt er een wreed (?) antwoord: Vrouw, gij zijt een hond. En ik red wel, maar alleen de kinderen des Koninkrijks. Dus ik ga geen brood van de kinderen Gods wegnemen om U, die een hond gelijk zijt, voor te werpen. Voor zoover zij het wist kon ze met dit antwoord naar haar bezeten dochter terugkeeren. Vreeselijke beproeving.

* * * *

Het brood is voor de kinderkens en niet voor de hondkens!

Maar deze vrouw heeft zaligmakend geloof! Daar zit al het verschil. En daarom laat zij niet af.

Het ware geloof is sterker dan de dood. Het geloof is de almachtige kracht van God die in Zijn schepsel

werkt om te zaligen. En daarom keert de vrouw niet af om den Zaligmaker te smeeken.

Wat geeft het al wordt zij beleedigd? Er zit een nimmer eindigende eeuwigheid in het geloof van deze vrouw. Niets kan haar keeren om te smeeken, te smeeken. Zij zal het karakter des waren geloofs toonen.

Eerst, zij spreekt niet tegen. Zegt dat duizend malen, over en weer: het geloof spreekt niet tegen.

Als God spreekt, dan legt de geloovige de hand op den mond.

Luistert dan eens naar den ongeloovige, en siddert. Van Jezus staat er, dat Hij het tegenspreken der zondaren tegen Zich heeft verdragen.

Het helse werk in het Paradijs is juist daarmee begonnen. Men sprak God tegen. Eerst de duivel. Eva zeide tegen den duivel: zoo en zoo heeft God gezegd. O neen, zegt de duivel, gij moet niet naar God luisteren. Ik zal het U verklaren. God heeft gelogen. En Hij spreekt het Goddelijke Wezen tegen Wiens naam de WAARHEID is.

Als God later op aarde komt, dan spreekt men Hem in het gezicht tegen. Kunt ge er geen berekening van maken hoevele malen Jezus tegengesproken is in Zijn leven van ruim 33 jaren? Zelfs de godvruchtige Maria, Zijn moeder, sprak Hem tegen. Goddeloos of rechtvaardig, men sprak Jezus gedurig tegen. Dat is de aard der zonde. Dat is de trochtschheid der levens.

Maar als de relaties fundamenteel weer rechtgezet zijn, en dat geschiedt als men geloovig wordt, dan gaat het geheel anders. Dan legt men de hand op den mond, en dan zegt men: Heere, spreekt Gij! Ik ben van gister en weet niets! Als we geloof hebben, dat zaligmakend is, dan zeggen we niets tegen de Majesteit, ook niet, als Hij ons vreeselijke dingen in gerechtigheid doet hooren. Ook niet als Hij tegen ons zegt, dat we geheel en al verdoemelijk zijn. Ook niets als Hij zegt, dat wij honden zijn. Ook niet als Hij zegt, dat Hij Zijn brood aan uitverkoren kinderkens geven zal, om de honden buiten te werpen, waar zal zijn weening en knersing der tanden.

Ziet het maar aan die vrouw. Gij zijt een hond, en gij, noch Uw dochttertje, krijgt het brood der kinderen. Dat is niet betamelijk. Wat zal zij nu doen?

O, geliefde lezers, ge kunt wel een geheele Christelijke ethiek op dit verhaal bouwen. Christelijke ethiek: hoe te handelen en te wandelen met God.

De vrouw? Luistert, ze gaat den Heere van antwoord dienen.

Ja, Heere! Eigenlijk is dat hemeltaal. Ge kunt er van op aan, dat alles in den hemel geduriglijk ja roept naar het centrum van den troon, waar Eenen zit, met de regenboog boven Zijn hoofd. Maar de editie hier is aardsch. Daarom zegt zij: Ja, Heere! Ik ben een hond. Ik geloof dat, want Gij zegt het. En door het licht dat van Uw aangezicht straalt in mijn duistere ziel en hart, begin ik er ook wat van te zien. Ja, waar-

lijk, ik bemerk het meer en meer, ik ben een hond, en woon in het midden eens volks dat honden zijn!

En dan komt de honger naar heil naar voren. Heere Jezus, Gij Zone Davids, ik zal U antwoorden naar Uw eigen woorden. Wel verre van U tegen te spreken, zal ik beginnen waar Gij mij en mijn dochttertje geplaatst hebt: we zijn honden. Ik heb de beeldspraak gevat. Maar, Heere, er zit meer in die beeldspraak: de hondkens spelen onder en rondom de tafel waar het brood der kinderen opstaat. En het is regel geworden, dat de hondkens eten van de brokskens die vallen van de tafel des Heeren.

Heere Jezus, werp mij en mijn dochttertje een zulk een broksken toe! Wat lieflijke sprake! Hoe toont deze vrouw dat zij uit God geboren is. Zij vertoont een aanvallige geest. Zij is waar, en daarom nederig. Zij knielt zeer diep. Zij heeft de kunst van Jakob's worstelen verstaan. Zij zal zich, zij heeft zich vorstelijk gedragen met God's Zoon. Zij heeft overmocht.

Heere, als hondkens staan wij bij Uw tafel, met de koppen opgeheven, en wij wachten op een brokstuk van de lieflijkheden die in Uw rechterhand zijn, eeuwiglijk en altoos. De vrouw uit de streken van Tyrus en Sidon wacht op Jezus' woord.

* * * *

Straks zal Jezus spreken van haar groote geloof.

Ik zou U ook nog willen wijzen op die grootheid, vooraleer we luisteren naar Jezus' directe sprake.

De vrouw aanbad en zij zeide: Heere, ontferm U mijner! In die twee fingerwijzingen van den Heiligen Geest, onderkennen we het ware geloof.

Eerst, het ware geloof aanbidt. Ontelbare malen heb ik Gods volk hooren vragen: wat is bidden? En evenzoovele malen heb ik het antwoord gehoord: bidden is vragen. Nu is dat wel waar, maar er moet meer bij gezegd worden. Bidden is wel vragen, doch er moet bij: bidden is ook loven en prijzen. En dat is belangrijk. Ik ben er van overtuigd, dat dit laatste juist het belangrijkste stuk van het gebed is. Zegt de Heere niet, dat wij alle onze begeerten *met dankzegging* tot Hem moeten brengen? En het duidelijkste bewijs voor onze stelling is wel, dat we straks ook bidden zullen in den Hemel, doch dan valt zelfs het eerste element van vragen weg. In de volmaaktheid vragen we niet meer, doch daar loven en prijzen en dankzeggen wij uitsluitend.

En dat het zoo is en niet anders leert ons deze vrouw. Als er een mensch geweest is die wat te vragen had, dan was het deze diep bedroefde moeder met haar bezeten kind. En wat doet ze? Ze aanbidt! Hoe zou het anders? Ze is van God geleerd. Dat blijkt overduidelijk. En daarom zegt ze: Ontferm U mijner!

Zie die smeekbede op den vuilen achtergrond van het schelden en razen der Schriftgeleerden en Farizeërs. Die menschen zagen ook de Goddelijke wonderen die Hij deed. Die menschen zagen ook de bewijzen van

Zijn Godheid. Die menschen hoorden ook de Goddelijke antwoorden die Hij gaf. Maar het deed hun geen nut, omdat het met het geloof niet gemengd was.

Maar deze vrouw zegt: Heere, ontferm U mijner! Daar zit een zware belijdenis in. Daar zit in, dat de Heere redden kan. Zij belijdt de deugden van het Goddelijke Wezen in Jezus. Alleen God is grooter en krachtiger dan de duivelen, want er is geen kracht, ook geen duivelsche kracht, die niet van God is. Als Jezus dan zich zal ontfermen over haar dochttertje, dan houdt dat in, dat Hij eenvoudig den duivel zal verslaan. Zij heeft een zware belipdenis gedaan in al haar angst en lijden. De Heere was haar leermeester.

Heere ontferm U mijner!

Aanbidden is het opsommen van de deugden Gods. Aanbidden is het bewijs dat God ons leerde.

* * * *

O vrouw! groot is uw geloof!

Deze vrouw is een dergenen die geweldenaars genoemd worden. De geweldenaars in deze dagen namen de dingen van het Koninkrijk met geweld. Jezus was nog niet eens aan het Kruis genageld. Hij had den prijs des bloeds nog niet betaald. En eerst als dat geschied was, en Hij den Heiligen Geest uitgestort zou hebben, zal God Zich wenden tot de honden. En uit alle landen en volken, ook uit Tyrus en Sidon, zal God Zijn volk trekken. Doch deze vrouw kon niet wachten. Zij is een voorloopster van die ontelbare scharen der heidenen die komen, die komen naar Jezus.

Ge moogt hier ook wel wat tusschen de regels door lezen. Eigenlijk moet ge dat doen, als ge den Heere al den lof zult geven voor dit schoone wonder. De Heere had haar zooveel geloof gegeven, dat zij moest spreken zooals zij deed. De Heere had haar gemaakt tot een geweldenaar, die de dingen van Jezus' Koninkrijk met geweld nam. Maar de Heiland zal haar getuigenis geven van het geloof, dat in haar woonde. Ook om Zijne discipelen te leeren. Ook voor U en voor mij in deze late dagen. Opdat wij altijd op God zouden vertrouwen, en Hem nooit tegen zouden spreken. Maar altijd zeggen: Ja, Heere!

O vrouw, groot is uw geloof!

U geschiede gelijk gij wilt. Als we geloof hebben, dan is het vertrouwd, dat de Heere ons de sleutel geeft van Zijn schatkamers. U geschiede gelijk gij wilt.

Groot is uw geloof! Daar mag ik dit van zeggen; daar *moet* ik dit van zeggen: Groot is de Gever van zulk geloof! De Heilige Geest heeft een boodschap voor al dezulken zooals deze vrouw.

Luister, gij dochter uit de streken van Tyrus en Sidon! De HEERE Heere spreekt! Uit genade zijt gij zalig geworden. Door dat groote geloof, waarvan Uw Heiland getuigenis gaf. Maar denkt er altoos om: dat geloof is niet uit U, het is Gods gave, niet uit de werken, opdat niemand roeme! Wilt ge toch roemen? Roemt dan in God!

G. Vos.

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EDITORIALS

An Unsavoury Mixture

In *The Banner* issues of March 12, 19; April 2, 16, the Rev. H. J. Kuiper is writing a series of editorials under the general theme: *God and man in salvation*. And as sub-heads he has chosen the following titles: 1. Did Christ die for all men? 2. Christ died to save His people. 3. Christ died to save "The World". 4. Did Christ die to save all?

If the Rev. Henry Kuiper would have poured his wine unmixed, I would have drunk of it and savoured it. But as it is, he has poured out a miserable mixture, and I cannot drink it.

Judging from the very suggestive titles, he had a marvellous opportunity to instruct his readers in the undoubted catholic faith such as we as Reformed people confess it in the midst of a lying world. I said there that the titles are very suggestive. And they are. They seem to shout their very answer. To the first title I would shout: No! Christ did not die for all men. To the second I would offer a thankful Amen: Christ did die to save His people. To the third I would say: I like those quotation marks on the words "The World". They show a tendency, and the right one at that. And to the fourth one I would have answered whole-heartedly: Yes, but then I mean by *all*, all God's elect people in Christ Jesus the Lord.

But the Rev. Kuiper has botched it. He has poured out a mixture. He has not been true to his calling. He seems to fight the Arminian, and I am afraid that most of his readers will applaud him, and remark about his able defense of the Reformed truth, although the poor, deluded sheep have not seen how he is guilty of the same things he accuses the Arminian of. And I would want my present readers to know that I am heartfelt sorry for this state of affairs. I would *love* to see the whole Christian Reformed Church(es) embrace the Reformed truth, and not the miserable mixture which Kuiper pours us.

It is clear from his introductory remarks that there are many in the Christian Reformed Churches who are departing from the soundly Reformed doctrine of particular atonement. Attend to the following, and I quote Kuiper from his first article:

"We shut out eyes to facts if we think that this doctrine (namely, universal atonement, G.V.) is not making an impact on the minds of our Reformed people. It is being dinned into their ears daily over the air; they hear it in evangelistic meetings which they sometimes attend; it greets their eyes on bill-board

gospel-messages and in other religious advertisements; it finds expression in many hymns smuggled into our churches through the purchase of popular song-books by Sunday school officials, leaders of church-societies, and mission-workers. Would we could add that all who have a part in this are able to recognize such Arminian hymns and avoid them!"

One thing I want to point out to our readers about the above paragraph which is rather striking. I have in mind the last sentence: "Would we could add that all who have part in this are able to recognize such Arminian hymns and avoid them!" This from the man who has played a major part in the introduction of hymns in Public Divine Worship. This from the man who was appointed again and again to prepare the hymns for the Christian Reformed Churches. This from the man who has included in his hymnals countless hymns with Arminian tendencies. And he dares to attach an exclamation point to that sentence.

The same is true of this series. He warns against Arminian tendencies, and worse, but at the very outset he incorporates that rotten, God-provoking doctrine.

Attend to this piece of human philosophy which you may find on the first page, starting in the first column, of his first article where he intends to go to war against the Arminians! And I quote:

THE CROSS AND THE WORLD.

"What complicates this question is that there is *a sense in which it can be said that Christ died for all mankind*. All men receive *temporal* benefits from the death of Christ. Not only do many unsaved persons enjoy the fruits of Christian civilization. None of the earthly blessings which God bestows on the world would have been given apart from the cross of Christ. The enemies of the cross of Jesus do not realize that God would not have suffered this sinful world to exist nor any human beings to live on this earth after Adam's fall, except for the work of Christ on the cross and for the Church which that cross called into being.

Reformed theologians, practically without exception, hold that even the reprobate receive some of the fruits, the lesser fruits, of the death of Christ (Calvin, Kuyper, Bavinck, Hodge, Dabney, Berkhof and many others). Perhaps none has put it stronger than that penetrating theologian, Dr. R. L. Dabney. Though he defends the Reformed doctrine of limited atonement uncompromisingly, he also speaks of a special and a general design in Christ's satisfaction. Regarding the latter he declares: "Along with the actual redemption of the elect, it works out several other subordinate ends. There is then a sense in which Christ 'died for' all those ends, and for the persons affected by them."

What are those general ends? What are the bless-

ings which even the reprobate receive from the death of Christ? Dabney answers: "A reprieve of doom for every sinner of Adam's race who does not die at birth And this reprieve gains for all many substantial, though temporal, benefits, such as unbelievers, of all men, will be the last to account as benefits. Among these are postponement of death and perdition, secular well-being, and the bounties of life" (Systematic and Polemic Theology, p. 528 ff.)

In these words, by the way, Dabney touches on one important angle of the doctrine of common grace. Opponents of this doctrine have often challenged us to explain on what basis a righteous God could bestow his grace on the reprobate. That basis in the case of the elect is the vicarious atonement of Christ. But there can be no legal basis for common grace, they say, because Christ died only for the elect. Our answer is that all the mercies which God bestows on sinful mankind flow from the Redeemer. There is no grace, special or common, apart from the Savior's cross. That grace does not begin at the cross, is not generated at the cross, so to speak. On the contrary, that grace precedes the cross, it is first. It also calls for that cross since grace cannot be imparted unless the demands of divine justice are met. That grace is like a heavenly stream which can reach men only through the channel of the cross as the instrument of the stern justice of God. Apart from that cross the elect cannot inherit salvation; apart from that same cross God's justice would demand *immediate eternal punishment* for all the sons of fallen Adam."

So far Kuiper.

I would like to have you notice that although he uses text after text when he arrives at the pure part of the present mixture, he does not let the living God speak at all when trying to teach his people the lie of common grace. Perhaps we will have to put that on the credit side of Kuiper. If he would have quoted texts in order to prove the lie of common grace, as is done altogether too often, we add insult of God to injury to God. Yes, we will credit him for the fact that the only witnesses he has for his philosophy is the WORD OF MAN. And he especially calls on a man by the name of Dr. R. L. Dabney. Sorry, never heard of him. But I did hear of God. And I am glad that you did not try to set His glorious name under the fallacy of the above paragraphs.

Let us see:

Note first the words at the beginning of the above piece which are placed in italics. There is a sense in which Christ died for all mankind. And it is plain that Kuiper means all mankind, head for head. And the sense is also specified. It is that all men may have *temporal* benefits. The italics are Kuiper's. So Jesus died and suffered untold agonies so that every man may

eat some bread and drink some water. Christ went to God, offering His precious blood, through the Eternal Spirit, in order that man, wicked, reprobate, godless man might prolong his days on earth? Later, Kuiper calls these temporal benefits *blessings*, *earthly blessings*, and the italics are mine.

Would the Rev. Kuiper please tell us where in God's Word the word *blessing* is ever used for the things that the reprobate wicked receive? In the meanwhile I would like to have the Rev. Kuiper explain his stand on common grace in the face of a very plain text such as we find in Prov. 3:33? There we read: "The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked: but He blesseth the habitation of the just." We read there: the house of the wicked. So you have the proper setting for the so-called temporal benefits or blessings. His house is his body, soul, family, beasts, plants, barns; all his possessions in the midst of the world. And the Holy Ghost states here, and in many like passages, that His curse inhabits all his household. And remember here that His curse is the cursing God Himself. All day and all night the living God walks alongside of this man, and He tells him continuously: I curse thee! Where is that introduction of Rev. Kuiper at this juncture. How can he super-impose his philosophy on this terrible picture of Proverbs?

But there is more. And worse.

In the fourth paragraph above he simply states that the mercies of God which He bestows on sinful mankind flow from the Redeemer. And in the subsequent reasoning it is crystal clear that he includes the reprobates as recipients of the mercies of God.

Now Holy Scripture has told us what the concept of mercy is. It is the love of God toward His people that are for the time being in great misery and distress, and which longs to deliver them out of all their distresses, and, thirdly, which determines to deliver them at His own good time out of their troubles. That is the mercy of God. And the Bible nowhere at all connects this wonderful virtue of the mercy of God with the reprobates. But Kuiper simply writes that the mercy of God, or rather, mercies of God flow toward the reprobate through the Redeemer.

That last thought he tries to work out later. And the thing gets worse.

He has heard our objection to their theory of common grace, to wit, that there is no legal basis for common grace. Kuiper will answer that charge. And here is his answer. You can control me and see if I do him injustice. If words mean anything at all, Kuiper states above that there is an eternal grace in God, a desire which is eternal, to be good, to bless and to bestow benefits on the reprobate. But that eternal grace toward the elect, *and to the reprobate*, (Kuiper combines the two in his reasonings from all eternity,) that eternal grace cannot find an avenue to the human

heart and life except through the pathway of strictest justice. And that way is the cross. Both for common and for particular grace, the cross of Jesus, and His eternal death, are the legal ground. It is very bad indeed.

And all this terrible philosophy he offers the Reformed public without a shred of Scriptural proof. He does not say: Thus saith the Lord, but: Thus saith Kuiper.

Well, I reject it, and I hope many of his readers will.

In fine, it is exactly reasoning such as is found in the above paragraphs which leads the people of God astray. When you teach a God who from everlasting is moved with pity for the reprobate, it is only one more step to say and teach, and live: God loves the reprobate!

But there is more, although I must wait until the next issue.

G. Vos.

Calvin's Commentaries

The William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company is to be congratulated on the mighty endeavour which they have undertaken, namely, to reprint the commentaries of John Calvin. As far as is known to me, the last publication of his commentaries is almost one hundred years old, and it was more than time that a new publication appeared.

This work entails a considerable outlay of money, and standing correction, I seem to recollect that it will mean the expense of a quarter of a million dollars. A mighty venture indeed.

The mechanics of the book are very good. The paper is a very fine French offset, the binding waterproof cloth, gold stamped, while the print is very clear and readable.

I said above that it was more than time that such a reprint should come. Whenever you come in a preacher's study, ask him to show you his set of Calvin, and you will be surprised at the condition of the books. My set is almost one hundred years old, and they look it. They were printed for the Calvin Translation Society in Edinburgh, England. And, mark this, it is an exact reprint. There are notes by the editor here and there, but for the most part, it is well to ignore them. What is important in this venture is that the very words of Calvin will once more come among our people. For Calvin has been abused by the churches of the last century. They call themselves by his name, but they have repudiated his teachings.

Many times I have been asked, by individuals and by societies: Dominee, what commentary would you recommend? And my answer is always: if you can

get Calvin, get him. He is the best and the most trustworthy there is. And as far as I am acquainted with commentaries, I have found no exception.

Friend and foe have admitted that Calvin was an honest exegete. He would not press his own opinion on the text; he would not try to circumvent the difficulties which confronted him in the text; he would at once go to the heart of the text and lay it open for his hearers and readers. That is the way I have found Calvin to be in the years that I have used him. I am glad that this new reprint came, for some of the volumes of my Calvin set are broken in three parts.

Closing, I would say that whenever I would contemplate buying a commentary, I would always see what they wrote about John 3:16 and Romans 9:18. Those texts usually reveal their pernicious bias if they were of the Arminian school, openly so or camouflaged. Listen to Calvin on Rom. 9:18: "But the word *hardens*, when applied to God in Scripture means not only permission, (as some washy moderators would have it), but also the operation of the wrath of God: for all those external things, which lead to the blinding of the reprobate, are the instruments of His wrath; and Satan himself, who works inwardly with great power, is so far His minister, that he acts not, but by His command, etc."

All in all there will be 45 volumes, for Calvin wrote about almost the whole Bible.

So far, four volumes have come off the press and are for sale at Eerdman's: The Epistle to the Romans, to the Hebrews, and the first two volumes of the prophet Isaiah. The prices will be usually \$3.50 per volume, although the volume of Romans is \$4.50, presumably because of its size.

If our societies would like to have a set of commentaries which they can trust, we would heartily recommend the present reprint. And also individuals, especially at this time, are able to buy these books. So much money is spent for needless things that a few dollars a month is not too high a price to pay for excellent reading and studying material.

The present plan is to have one volume appear each month. The next four books coming off the press will be First and Second Corinthians and the last two volumes of Isaiah.

G. Vos.

YOUNG MEN, ATTENTION!

Young men who desire a limited Pre-Seminary course of instruction in our Theological School are requested to meet with our Committee the evening of May 14 in the Fuller Ave., Church.

Young men who desire to attend our Seminary in September to prepare themselves for the Ministry of the Word of God are likewise requested to be present at this meeting. They should come with a statement of health from a reputed physician and a testimonial from their consistory as to their membership and walk of life.

The Theological School Comm.

Per Rev. John A. Heys

1551 Wilson Ave., S. W., R. 5 — Grand Rapids, Michigan

OUR DOCTRINE

The Expression "Sanctified In Christ" In Our Baptism Form*

INTRODUCTION

The Liturgy of our Reformed Churches, to which also our Baptism Form belongs, is historically not as rich as our highly treasured Confessions. With respect to our Confessions, our Belgic Confession, also called The Thirty Seven Articles and our Confessions of Faith, reminds us of Guido de Bres and of the fact that he preferred martyrdom to a renouncing of his faith and principles. These articles, originally composed by the above named French Reformer, were born of the blood and suffering of the saints of God for the Cause of Christ, and we treasure them, also for this reason, even before we have begun to read them. Our Heidelberg Catechism, drawn up by Ursinus and Olevianus upon the request of Elector Frederick III, also called "The Pious", can also trace its origin to the fact that Germany, then composed of hundreds of greater or lesser states, had become a battleground of the various conflicting views, such as Catholicism, Lutheranism, Calvinism, etc. And our Canons of Dordrecht, too, are the fruit of an uncompromising opposition to Arminianism and all which that ungodly theory implies. It is somewhat different with our Liturgy, although it, too, was composed in trying times of hardship and peril, as in the days of bloody Mary, Queen of England, wife of Philip II of Spain, who ruled England in the years 1553-1558, during whose reign many Protestant leaders were compelled to suffer martyrdom, among whom we may name Cramer, Latimer, and Ridley. This persecution, we understand, was not merely confined to the English isles.

Our Liturgy and our maintaining of it are significant. They, too, serve as a bond to preserve the unity of the Church of God in the midst of the world. It is not difficult to foresee what the result would be, if these ecclesiastical bands were relinquished, abandoned, if each minister were left to himself to determine the policy and course of action which he would choose to adopt.

This is applicable particularly to our Baptism Form. In the history of the Church of God in the Netherlands, following upon the year, 1834, a person's ecclesiastical identity was determined by his conception of Infant Baptism. To maintain "presumptive re-

* Paper delivered at the Ministers' Conference held April 9, at the First Church.

generation" as the ground of infant baptism stigmatized one as a follower of Kuyper; to oppose this conception placed one in the camp of the "A" group. To emphasize the first view exposed a person to the charge of Catholicism; to champion the "A" conception exposed him to the accusation of despising the sacrament and of Methodism. The minister who spoke a few edifying words at the administration of Baptism was regarded as a pure "A" man; whoever omitted such words was truly "B". And, indeed, no other question reveals our truly and distinctively Reformed identity more clearly than the question which pertains to the ground of and reason for the baptism of all our children. And of all the difficult questions connected with our Baptism Form, so it is claimed, none is acknowledged to be more difficult than that which concerns the expression, "Sanctified in Christ".

A Historical Review of Our Baptism Form.

Our Form of Baptism we owe largely, together with our other Forms of worship and our psalms, to one man, Petrus Dathenus, or Datheen as he is also called, had fled from the Netherlands to a small village in Germany, Frankenthal. There a place of refuge had been accorded him by the great Elector, Frederick III. Because many of Reformed persuasion had fled with him to Frankenthal, gradually a strong city developed there and with that growth a powerful and active congregation sprang into being. In the midst of this congregation a liturgical book was composed and used, which served, almost without change, until 1737; this book, at least for the greatest part of it, still remains our heritage. Peter Dathenus although performing the lion share, did not work alone. Others helped him and he drew from various sources, as for example, A Lasco, the great London Reformer. Another source which aided Dathenus was a liturgy drawn up by Olevianus, who corresponded with Calvin and was greatly influenced by that great French Reformer. Calvin, therefore, be it indirectly, has set the stamp of his spirit upon our Baptism Form.

As far as the subsequent history of our Baptism Form is concerned, in 1574 the provincial Synod of Dordt shortened it considerably. However, because the national Synod of Dordt neglected to bestow upon the churches a carefully prepared and established version, the Baptism Form was corrupted in various ways and arbitrarily explained. In 1897 Professor Rutgers presented a new edition of the Baptism Form, and this product of Prof. Rutgers was adopted, preliminarily, by the Synod of Arnhem in 1902.

A Highly Significant Question.

The phrase, "Sanctified in Christ" occurs, in our Baptism Form, in the first question which is asked of

the parents. This question reads: "Whether you acknowledge, that although our children are conceived and born in sin, and therefore are subject to all miseries, yea, to condemnation itself; yet that they are sanctified in Christ, and therefore, as members of His Church ought to be baptized?" The true interpretation of the phrase, "Sanctified in Christ" is a highly significant question, because it is obviously the heart and core of our entire Baptism Form. We have here the all-important question directed to the parents whether they acknowledge that their children *ought* to be baptized. It is true that the parents are asked whether they confess the truth as contained in the Old and New Testaments and as taught in their Christian Church to be the truth and also whether they will instruct or help instruct their child or children in that Christian doctrine. But in this first question the fathers touch upon the very ground and basis of infant baptism. This is a self-evident fact. And, it is also self-evident that this first question, as far as its essential significance is concerned, can be summarized as follows: "Whether you acknowledge that our children, because they are sanctified in Christ and therefore are members of His Church, ought to be baptized?" We may safely conclude, therefore, that the phrase, "sanctified in Christ", is the very heart, the nerve-center, of our Baptism Form.

Besides, in our appraisal of this expression, we must be strictly honest. The important question is not, "How *can* we explain it?" Because of the failure of the National Synod of Dordt to produce a carefully prepared and established version of our Baptism Form, it was often arbitrarily explained and interpreted. Recognizing the dilemma which confronted them in this first question directed to the parents, several preachers very arbitrarily asked this question of the parents in the form of their own choosing. According to the book, "Ons Doopsformulier" by Ds. B. Wielenga, page 275, the following change would be made in this first question of our Baptism Form: Do you acknowledge that some children are sanctified in Christ?; or: Do you acknowledge that they can be sanctified in Christ?; or: Do you acknowledge that they are probably sanctified in Christ?; or: Do you acknowledge that they ought to be sanctified in Christ?; or: Do you acknowledge that they, sanctified in Christ, that is, when they are sanctified in Christ? However, it is not the important question whether we can interpret or how we can interpret our Baptism Form and particularly this first question directed to the parents.

We must ask ourselves this question: How *must* this phrase be explained? How did our fathers interpret the expression? What does it mean as it constitutes a part of our officially adopted confession? In regard to this point the undersigned is convinced that no doubt need exists in our minds relative the interpretation by

our fathers of the much disputed phrase, "sanctified in Christ."

Finally, we will attempt in this paper to limit ourselves to these words, and refer to the rest of our Baptism Form only insofar as it throws light upon this expression. We need not, therefore, enter upon a detailed discussion of our Baptism Form in general. Neither will it be necessary to discuss the sacramental operation in the sacrament of Infant Baptism, whether we must conceive of such an operation of the Spirit upon the elect recipient of the sacrament. The question which confronts us in this paper is: What is the interpretation of the phrase, "sanctified in Christ"?

Various Interpretations of the Expression.

Some would interpret this phrase in a subjective-spiritual sense. The expression, then, refers to spiritual, actual, subjective holiness. To be "sanctified in Christ" would signify that we are spiritually in Christ and consequently partakers of His holiness in that spiritual, subjective sense of the word.

Others regard this sanctification or holiness in the objective sense. Such, e.g., was the presentation of the late Prof. W. Heyns. Baptism, as such, is an objective sign of God's covenant, of our entrance into God's fellowship through the blood of Christ and the grace of the Holy Spirit; that is, the sacrament itself is an earthly picture and therefore a sign of this fact as such. This sacrament, however, is also an objective seal, whereby the Lord declares, in this sacrament of baptism, that the child has the right to all the covenant blessings of God in Christ Jesus—our receiving of these blessings, we understand, is contingent upon our acceptance of the proffered salvation. Hence, all our children are "sanctified in Christ", set apart in that objective sense of the word.

A third presentation of this phrase is called a sort of covenant holiness. This conception was entertained exclusively by the "A" brethren during the famous controversy in the Netherlands prior to and including the Synod of Utrecht, 1905. The undersigned candidly admits that it is difficult for him to distinguish sharply between this view and that of the late Prof. W. Heyns. The following explanation of the phrase, "sanctified in Christ", by J. Van Andel, which appeared in his 'Pastoral Epistles' in the year 1907, was quoted in the pamphlet 'Rondom 1905', page 115, and we translate: "Exactly because they are so seldom, the apostolic references concerning our children are of such great value. We know the much-discussed passage: 'your children are holy', I Cor. 7:14. Would Paul here define the children of believers as regenerated? Not at all; this idea lies completely beyond his vision. But wherein does the holiness of the child consist? We must seek the answer in the Old Covenant. While God gave the peoples of the world over unto sin, in the same

measure that they held under the light of His general Revelation, His dealings with Abraham's seed were exactly the opposite. He separated it from the peoples of this world, covered its impurity with the blood of sin-offerings, placed upon it the imprint of His peculiar possessions, and redelivered (hergaf) it unto men's original destiny, by calling it unto His service. Israel became thereby an holy, priestly people. Now, our children occupy the same position. This holiness can undoubtedly be lost. This does not take away the fact, however, that it is of great value. The sanctified child partakes of privileges which have been denied entire peoples. It is not estranged from the blood of Christ, Heb. 10:29; fact is, none is sanctified except by blood. Christ bought with His own also their seed, and merited for them the right to serve God instead of being given over unto sin and being subject to its condemnation. If this were not true, God could exercise no fellowship with the seed of His own whatsoever, yea, He would not will to have fellowship with them. Neither does the sanctified child stand outside of all communion with the Spirit of God Who lives in the church. He resides underneath His holy influence (heiligen adem), is led by Him unto the knowledge of salvation, and also considered worthy to taste the good work of God, Heb. 6:5. . . . But the most important gift to them remains, that they have been laid at the open gate of heaven, and may request, in all confidence, all grace of the Lord which they need to enter."

And on page 37 of the same booklet we quote the following as an expression of the beliefs of Ds. T. Bos, a prominent "A" man: "Because of the words 'in Christ' the word 'sanctified' (in this phrase of our Baptism Form—H.V.) means more than a separation to reside underneath the means of grace; it is a privilege which the children have in common with the believers, and which distinguishes them from unbaptized, who reside underneath the Gospel. On the other hand, it is less than 'being regenerated'. To him 'sanctified in Christ' is the same as being member of the church, as we know her; to express it with his own distinction: sanctified refers to membership of the church, not according to the line of election, but according to that of the covenant. We do not err, therefore, when we conceive of Bos as understanding covenant-holiness as being partaker of the promise. The possession of the promise is, on the one hand, more than a residing underneath the gospel, and, on the other hand, less than a being regenerated."—thus far this quotation concerning the beliefs of Ds. T. Bos.

In this same vein spake all the "A" men of that day who so furiously opposed the conception of the late Dr. A. Kuyper. It is clear that they did not interpret "sanctified in Christ" in a subjective, real, spiritual sense, but objectively, as a sort of covenant holiness. All the children of believers were regarded as

in the covenant, as possessing a special privilege, as receiving a certain right to the service and blessings of God.

That also Prof. Berkhof, in his Reformed Dogmatics, conceives also of the unregenerate as being in the covenant in the sense that they have special privileges, such as the right to lay claim to the promises of God and as sharing the so-called common covenant blessings, appears from his writings on page 289, and we quote: "They are in the covenant in the sense that they may lay claim to the promises which God gave when He established His covenant with believers and their seed. Paul even says of his wicked kinsmen, 'whose is the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises,'—Rom. 9:4. . . . They are in the covenant also as far as the covenant blessings are concerned. Though they do not experience the regenerating influence of the Holy Spirit, yet they are subject to certain special operations and influences of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit strives with them in a special manner, convicts them of sin, enlightens them in a measure, and enriches them with the blessings of common grace, Gen. 6:3; Matt. 13:18-22; Heb. 6:4-6."—end of quote.

The Spiritual-Subjective Interpretation the Only Possible Interpretation of the Expression, "Sanctified in Christ".

First, the expression, "sanctified in Christ", appears throughout the New Testament in this ethical, spiritual sense. On the one hand, this phrase as it appears in our Baptism Form is surely not a quotation of I Cor. 7:14. There we read: "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy." The meaning of this passage is surely not that the believing wife renders the unbelieving husband spiritually, ethically holy, or that the believing husband renders the unbelieving wife holy in that sense of the word. This, we know, is impossible. But the apostle would teach us that the marriage relationship between such parents is sanctified by God to the extent that He will establish His covenant with their seed. There is, however, and this is self-evident, a striking difference between I Cor. 7:14 and the expression as it appears in our Baptism Form: the words, "in Christ", who do appear in the first question directed to the parents do not appear in the text in I Corinthians. Also the late Prof. Bavinck declared that it cannot be established that the expression in the first question directed to the parents is a quotation of or an appeal to I Cor. 7:14; yea, he adds that if the author of our Baptism Form inserted the phrase, "sanctified in Christ", because of I Cor. 7:14, he would have misinterpreted the text.

On the other hand, the phrase is a quotation of several other passages in the Word of God. Permit us to quote the following: "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours"—I Cor. 1:2; "Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons."—Phil 1:1; "Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth."—John 17:17; "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God,—I Cor. 6:11; "That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word."—Ephesians 5:26. In all these texts the expression must be understood spiritually-subjectively. In fact, no text can be quoted from the Scriptures in which this expression ever has another connotation.

Secondly, the context of this phrase, "sanctified in Christ", demands that it be spiritually-subjectively interpreted. Notice with me, first of all, the immediate context. To the parents the following question is directed: "Whether you acknowledge, that although our children are conceived and born in sin, and therefore are subject to all miseries, yea, to condemnation itself; yet that they are sanctified in Christ, and therefore, as members of His Church ought to be baptized?" The words, "conceived and born in sin", speak for themselves. They can be understood only in a spiritual-subjective sense of the word. Hence, if then the phrase, "sanctified in Christ" merely refers to covenant holiness and does not necessarily imply ethical holiness, we would be able to ascribe this quaint interpretation to this first question: "Whether you acknowledge, that although our children are conceived and born in sin, and therefore are subject to all miseries, yea, to condemnation itself; yet, that they are sanctified in Christ, and therefore still in their sin, as members of His Church ought to be baptized?" To explain the phrase objectively surely leaves room for the possibility that they are yet in their sin. Notice with me in the second place, however, the general tenor of the Baptism Form. In the didactic part of the Form (the first part) we are told, firstly, what the Father *has done*. We are told that "God the Father witnesseth and sealeth unto us, that He doth make an eternal covenant of grace with us, and adopts us for His children and heirs, and therefore will provide us with every good thing, and avert all evil or turn it to our profit." Thereupon we are told what the Son *has done*. We read that "the Son sealeth unto us, that He doth wash us in His blood from all our sins, incorporating us into the fellowship of His death and resurrection, so that we are freed from all our sins, and accounted righteous before God." Finally, in this first part of the Form, we are

told, not what the Spirit *has done* but what he *will do*, not because this work of the Spirit is dependent upon us, but because this work applies to our entire future. And we are told that "the Holy Ghost assures us, by this holy sacrament, that He will dwell in us, and sanctify us to be members of Christ, applying unto us, that which we have in Christ, namely, the washing away of our sins, and the daily renewing of our lives, till we shall finally be presented without spot or wrinkle among the assembly of the elect in life eternal."

(to be continued)

H. Veldman.

The Creston Overture

In an editorial of the April 15 number of our Standard Bearer, the Reverend G. Vos deplors the action of Classis East because the Classis did not accompany her rejection of Creston's proposals with a single ground. To deny this fact as such is, of course, not the intention of the undersigned. However, we would call the attention of our readers to the following observations.

The consistory of Creston, as the editor correctly states, presented an overture at our recent Classis. This overture, and an unbiased reading of the document will sustain me in this assertion, was in reality a protest against certain actions of our 1947 Synod. The document is rooted in the many voices of protest against and displeasure with the 1947 Synod which, and I quote, "went on a spending spree and did pretty much as it pleased."

Moreover, this writing of Creston fails to advance a single ground, does not cite a single act of Synod, fails to lay the finger upon one solitary action of said Synod. Creston fails completely to prove Synod's "misuse" of our ecclesiastical funds—to go on a spending spree is certainly a misuse of these funds.

Thirdly, when I am accused of "going on a spending spree or doing pretty much as I please", must I prove myself innocent or is it not proper that I be proven guilty?

Hence, why was it necessary for Classis to formulate grounds when, actually, Creston presented nothing which could be refuted?

The document of Creston also asserts that "Synod makes all kinds of important decisions and financial commitments about which the local churches have nothing to say, unless it would be by way of protest." And the discussion on the floor of our recent Classis was such that the idea was advanced that our people should not be ignorant of these Synodical actions before these actions are taken. But, is this assertion of the Creston consistory true?

We all understand that the document of Creston

refers primarily to the increase of our ecclesiastical assessments because of the synodical action with respect to our missionary activity and our theological school program. However, again the consistory fails to mention one concrete fact. Is it true that the action of the 1947 Synod fell upon our people as "a bolt out of the blue"? On pages 42, 82, and 83 of the Acts of Synod of 1946 we may read of the proposals to have two missionaries instead of one and also of the expansion of our school. To be sure, it is beneficial to discuss these matters publicly in our church papers. The undersigned is surely of the conviction that such a public discussion is a sign of a healthy spiritual life in our churches. Yet, what Synod did the last year did not fall upon our people as a complete surprise. All our people may avail themselves of these Acts of Synod and thereby renew acquaintances with our synodical activities. And finally, it belongs to the jurisdiction of Synod to supervise our Mission activities and regulate the affairs of our Theological School—also from this viewpoint the 1947 Synod did not exceed her bounds, "do pretty much as it pleased", but acted in matters which belong to her supervision.

A third matter upon which the undersigned would comment concerns the reaction of many of our people to the increase of our synodical assessments. This increase is the chief cause of the complaint. The document of Creston expresses this literally. I do not write this now because I would criticize the consistory of Creston or because I feel that this complaint also reflects the personal conviction of this consistory. Creston had the courage to bring this matter into the open and present in the form of an overture what has been expressed by many of our people. Personally, the undersigned has heard no complaints about the increase of our assessments. But Creston's consistory declares that a good many of our people have expressed dissatisfaction even to the extent of accusing the Synod of 1947 of having gone on a spending spree.

If the increase of our assessments is the cause of our complaint, I believe, too, that the document of Creston, as far as its content is concerned, is a serious matter. It is serious, not because of the reason for the complaint as such. These complaints, in my opinion, are shallow and superficial. But, these complaints are serious because many of our people have the boldness to complain. Over a period of several years, I understand, our mission assessment amounted to the staggering sum of exactly ONE DOLLAR a family per year. Did we complain then? Then we should have complained! That meant that we were doing exactly that much for mission work. Then we should have felt extremely ill at ease. Now we must pay \$12 a year per family (since then Fuller Ave. has assumed the expense of one of the missionaries) and a certain sum for the expansion of our school. What of it?! I chal-

lunge anyone to show me worthier causes than mission work and the training of prospective ministers. O, if we wish to complain, let us please never lament because it costs too much. The Synod of 1947 acted as she did because she had faith in the future, in our future, in our future as the Cause of the living God. Are we complaining because we must pay? God forbid! Let such a man among us examine himself, repent, and learn to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. Such is our calling; may we not be found wanting.

H. Veldman.

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

David Tempted

As pursued by Saul, David, it was seen, had fled southward to the wilderness of Moan. Catching up with him, the king nearly had succeeded in surrounding and seizing the fugitive, when he received information of a new Philistine invasion. He had to desist from further pursuit; and David was saved. So had the Lord again delivered his servant. Going up from thence, David dwelt in the stronghold of Engedi, a mountainous region with many caves on the border of the wilderness of Judah about the middle of the West shore of the Dead Sea. These were the "rocks of the wilderness", (24:3) where David and his men were now in hiding.

No sooner is Saul returned after the Philistines, then it is told him that David is in the wilderness of Engedi. Without losing any time, he takes three thousand chosen men out of all Israel and goes to seek David. He comes to the "sheepcotes on the way". The words indicate a well-known locality, which serves as the abode of sheep. In the place is a cave in the deep recesses of which David and his men abide. Into this cave Saul enters alone not to sleep but to cover his feet, that is, to comply with the necessities of nature. David's men say to him, "Behold, this is the day of which the Lord said unto thee, Behold, I will deliver thine enemy into thine hand, that thou mayest do to him as it shall seem good unto thee," meaning to say to him, 'It is plainly the Lord's will that thou slayest Saul. Such is now God's command to thee.'

David is sorely tempted. By sending his adversary into the cave, the Lord does deliver Saul into his hand. Shall he then allow him to leave the cave alive? Can that be the Lord's will? David's men don't think so. It can be explained. Is not Saul a deposed king

by virtue of the word of the Lord to him, "The Lord hath rent the kingdom from thee this day, and hath given it to thine neighbour who is better than thou." Had not the Lord said to Samuel, "I have rejected him—Saul—from reigning over Israel? Had not David been anointed to reign in Saul's stead? Had not the Spirit, departing from Saul, already come upon David that he might be qualified for the kingship? Was not the kingdom rightfully his by the word of God? Verily, Saul is a deposed king. He should step down from his throne; but he is unwilling, and persecutes the righteous David. Shall David then allow Saul to pass out of his hands? Besides, all David's troubles will end, if he slays Saul; and the nation will be delivered of a worthless, godless king.

So do David's men reason, so, in that vein. David must silence those seductive voices. And he does so, but not without an inward struggle. For, being a sinful man, he is not immune to the temptation of adopting the point of view of his men. This is evident. He hears them out in silence. Not a word of remonstrance passes over his lips. Rising to his feet, he moves slinkingly to Saul in order not to be observed by the king. Is he half-minded to slay his master? It is not revealed what goes on in his soul at this moment. The sacred writer only tells us that he cuts off the skirt of Saul's robe privately, and that afterwards his heart smites him, "because he has cut off Saul's skirts." It is his awakened conscience that now troubles him. He is being condemned in his heart for what he has just done, so that he clearly perceives now how wrong it would be for him to slay the king. And being a god-fearing man, he hearkens to the voice of his heart as understanding that it is the very voice of God. Thus by the mercy of God he endures temptation. Turning to his men, he says to them, "The Lord forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the Lord's anointed, to stretch forth my hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the Lord."

Speaking of Saul, David says of him that he is the anointed of the Lord. And rightly so. For upon Saul's head has been poured the sacred oil. The action with the oil was symbolical. It signified a doing of God whereby he appointed, called Saul to the office of theocratic king and by His Spirit qualified him for a time for the duties of that office. Thus Saul is the anointed of the Lord indeed, but not certainly in the sense that he is *still* Israel's *rightful* theocratic king—the Lord has rejected him from being king over Israel; and accordingly the Spirit of the Lord has long ago departed from him—but in the sense that it was the Lord who by special revelation appointed him to the kingship and seated him upon Israel's theocratic throne. This was the Lord's doing, not man's, not David's. King Saul therefore is solely the Lord's. Hence, the only one who has the right to hurl him from the throne

is the Lord. No man has this right except by divine direction. And whereas no such direction has been given, all Israelites, including David, must endure Saul and submit to his rule. For though Saul is a rejected, deposed, and disqualified theocratic king, the Lord, also through Saul's unwillingness to abdicate, continues to maintain him on the throne; and the authority that Saul continues to exercise is the Lord's. Thus in the sense here explained Saul is indeed still the anointed of the Lord. David now has full understanding of this. And therefore, fearing God, he spares the king's life. "The Lord forbid that I should do this thing. . . ." namely, slay Saul. The Hebrew text here reads, "A curse be to me from Jehovah, should I do this to my master." The thought of slaying Saul is now abhorant to him, but not on account of his esteem for Saul's person—Saul is a godless, worthless king, and as such a menace to the nation—but because of his regard for the Lord. Saul is the Lord's anointed. Hence, should he slay Saul, he would be committing a great sin against God. Slaying Saul, he would be moved by carnal ambition and be giving indication that he is no more fit to be king than is Saul. David, as already has been explained, may not capture the throne by violence; he must be willing to come into his kingdom in the way of implicit faith in the Lord his God as enduring Saul's persecutions. The Lord will give him the kingdom in the way of his patiently abiding the Lord's time. Soon God will remove Saul by the sword of the Philistines. This then is David's calling. And as walking worthily of it in the strength of the Lord he typifies Him, Christ Jesus, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God Heb. 12:2.

(That Saul in those final years was a rejected, deposed and disqualified theocratic king upon Israel's throne is the only tenable view in the light of what is written. "For thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord hath rejected thee from being king over Israel," we read at one place (I Sam. 15:26). This is followed by the statement, "And Samuel said unto him, The Lord hath rent the kingdom from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine that is better than thou." And finally this scripture, "And the Lord said unto Samuel, how long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing that I have rejected him." Saul's rejection and deposition from office went into effect on the very day that these words were uttered by the seer. "The Lord hath rent the kingdom from thee *this day*," are his words to Saul, mark you, "*this day*". Judicially, before the tribunal of God, Saul's status in Israel from that day on was that of a rejected and deposed king from whom had been rent the kingdom. Accord-

ingly, Samuel broke with Saul on that very day. He refused to return with the king to honour him before the elders. The Spirit also departed from him; and the word of the Lord came to him no more. David was anointed, and upon him came the Spirit. There can be but one meaning to all this: Saul was deposed. But the Lord for a while continued to maintain him on the throne; for He had use for Saul. And woe unto the man who stretched forth his hand against him. For he was the Lord's anointed and not man's. Thus a distinction must be made between Saul's judicial rejection and deposition in the kingly office and his removal from that office, his actual dethronement. The latter followed some time later; it was accomplished through the agency of the Philistines. Saul wanted to rule without God; and for a while the Lord gave him his way to his own unspeakable sorrow, ruin, and destruction.)

Saul now receives absolute proof that David does not seek his life. Rising out of the cave, Saul goes on his way. He has gone but a few paces, when there is a cry at his rear, "My Lord the king". Turning him about he sees certainly to his amazement that he is being accosted by the very man whose life he seeks. Verily, it is David. And he stoops with his face to the earth, does David, and bows himself in recognition of the fact that he stands in the presence of his master. Having thus paid the king his respects, he loses no time to speak to him his mind. "Wherefore hearest thou man's words, saying, Behold, David seeketh thy hurt." It is thus a question that he puts to his master. But he does not pause for his answer. Doing so, he might be inviting disaster. Saul might reply by making a dash for David or by calling to his men yonder to storm the cave. Besides, it is not David's purpose to start an argument with Saul, but to overwhelm the king with the undeniable evidence that he seeks David's life without a cause. So he gets on with his discourse. "Behold, this day thine eyes have seen how that the Lord had delivered thee today into mine hand in the cave: and some bid me kill thee: but mine eyes have spared thee; and I said, I will not put forth mine hand against my lord; for he is the Lord's anointed." Is the king in the face of that evidence now ready to drop all his charges against David? The Lord delivered Saul into his hand, and his eye spared the king. It is evidence the genuineness of which Saul cannot sincerely question. For, as David says, he saw with his own eyes. He saw in seeing himself walk out of that cave alive. It is therefore as impossible for him truthfully to deny the genuineness of that evidence, thus deny David's guiltlessness, as it is impossible for him to doubt the reliability of the testimony of his own senses, of his eyes and ears. And he cannot truly gainsay that he was in David's power in that cave.

For the cut-off skirt of his robe is in David's hand. And he holds it forth for Saul to see, "Moreover my father, see, yea, see the skirt of thy robe in my hand: for in that I cut off the skirt of thy robe, and killed thee not, know thou and see that there is neither evil nor transgression in mine hand, and I have not sinned against thee." "That there is neither evil in mine hand. . . ." From the nature of matters, Saul is now as thoroughly convinced of this as he is convinced that he sees with his eyes that skirt in David's hand. Against the background of that evidence of his innocency David now sets forth Saul's doing of trying to get David in his hand to slay him, when he says to the king, "And yet thou huntest my soul to take it!" 'How unutterably wicked thy doing, O Saul. For I am guiltless, as thou seeest.' 'There can now be no question of that in Saul's mind. For his own eyes have seen. And therefore Saul is not sneering at David in his heart at hearing him say that he commits himself unto God Who judgeth righteously. For Saul now has received witness in his heart that David is guiltless indeed—undeniably guiltless—and therefore he now knows that David can call on God to judge his case without fear for the outcome as far as he himself is concerned.

And this David does. He appears with his case before the tribunal of the Lord; for he has a good conscience before God. Thus he will not avenge himself. For that would be wickedness. But David is not wicked. He fears God. But the point to take notice of is that he wants Saul to know about it, as his whole purpose is instrumentally to prick Saul's conscience in order that henceforth he desist from seeking David's soul to take it. So he next says to the king, "But my hand shall not be upon thee. As sayeth the proverb of the ancients, "Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked. But my hand shall not be upon thee."

But David has not yet done with Saul. He will next show him the senselessness and thereby again the wickedness of his fear-inspired attempts on David's life. David has no evil designs against Saul's life. This has now been proved beyond the shadow of a doubt. Saul therefore has as little reason to be afraid of David as he has reason to be afraid of a dead dog or a flea. Yet the thought of David's being alive and at large fills Saul's soul with dread. Accordingly, he seeketh David's life to take it. He continually comes against him with armed bands of choice men. The abject foolishness of such a doing. Do kings set out on military expeditions against a dead dog or a flea? Verily, no. And therefore David puts to Saul the question, "After whom is the king of Israel come out? After whom dost thou pursue? After a dead dog? After a flea?" Verily, Saul is guilty of such foolishness. For as driven by fear of David, of all men the most harmless, he makes war against him.

But there must be still more meaning in these

words of David. In Israel a dead dog was an object of abhorance for the twofold reason of its being an unclean animal and of it being dead. So, too, David. In Saul's eyes he is an object of hatred and disdain. For Saul knows that the Lord has appointed him to reign in his stead. It is not only fear that moves Saul to seek David's soul to take it, but his hatred of David as well—fearing David, he naturally hates him—thus his being disposed toward the son of Jesse as though he were a dead dog. But in fearing, hating and seeking David's life, he commits a great sin. For he has not a shred of evidence to support his charges against David. Not only so, but from now on he can no more actually doubt David's innocence than he can doubt his own existence in the flesh. For he now has seen with his eyes that in David's hand there is no evil.

And so David concludes his discourse with the statement, "The Lord therefore be judge, and judge between me and thee, and see, and plead my cause and deliver me out of thine hand."

Having had his say, having expressed to Saul his mind, and unburdened to him his heart, David is silent. Saul has waited until he completed his discourse. He has heard him out to the end. Not once did he interrupt the speaker. But now he speaks, "It is thy voice, my son David?" Having uttered these words, he lifts up his voice and weeps. Saul is deeply moved. It indicates how these introductory words of his reply are to be understood, 'I have heard a man telling me that he spared my life? Can that be thee, my son David? Is it possible that I have been listening to thy voice? Verily, art thou the man whose eyes spared me? How can it be! What a marvel. It is a thing unheard of. I am overwhelmed.' Such is Saul's reaction. And he is sincere. There is no hypocrisy or pretence here. The king means every word. But it is not true that here he "is laid hold of in a hidden corner of his heart, where he was still accessible to the power of the truth, and involuntarily yields to the nobler arousing of his soul, though it is not destined to be permanent." Being thoroughly depraved there can be in him no noble arousings to which he momentarily yields. The plain fact is that Saul has received undeniable evidence of David's innocence and thus of his own ungodliness as a persecutor of a righteous man; and that, as pricked in his conscience, he confesses it in tears not of true contrition of heart but of a carnal fear and remorse. His behaviour at this moment is identical to that of the wicked in the final day of judgment. Then every tongue shall confess that Jesus is Lord, also the tongues of the reprobated. Their knees, too, shall bow before him. Then "the loftiness of men shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day. And the idols shall be utterly abolished. And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for

fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty, when he arises to shake terribly the earth" (Isa. 2:17). The high places also of Aven, the sin of Israel, shall be destroyed: the thorn and the thistle shall come upon their altars; and they shall say to the mountains, cover us, and to the hills, fall upon us" (Hosea 10:8). "And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and lo. . . the heavens departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall upon us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the lamb; for the great day of wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand" (Rev. 6:2-7).

What Saul's reaction and these scriptures teach is that God will put an end to the terrible reactions of the wicked to Him and His people, the righteous, so that all their rebellion, defiance, and sinful pride will cease. Such was the case with Saul *for the moment*.

Let us take notice of his confession. Says he to David, "Thou art more righteous than I, for thou hast done me good, and I have done these evil," which is equivalent to saying, 'Thou hast rewarded me good for evil, and I have rewarded thee evil for good. Hence thou art righteous and I am wicked.' That precisely characterizes the righteous. They bless such who curse them, and pray for such who spitefully use them. But the wicked love only such who love them, hate their enemies; and in persecuting God's people, they spitefully use such who do them well. Saul was that kind of a man. He was wicked. But David was righteous. Saul now freely admits this. "For thou," so he continues, "hast showed me this day how that thou hast dealt with me: forasmuch as when the Lord had delivered me into thine hand, thou killest me not," 'me, who all these days have been seeking thy soul to take it.' "For if a man find his enemy, will he let him go away?" 'Such is not the doing of depraved men,' Saul means to say. 'So do the righteous only. So doest thou; for thou art righteous.' And therefore Saul blesses David, "Wherefore the Lord reward thee good for that thou hast done unto me this day." Saul knows that it will be well with David, he being righteous. "And now, behold, I know well that thou wilt surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in thine hand." And thus he adjures David to do well by his seed, "Swear now therefore unto me by the Lord, that thou wilt not cut off my seed after me, and that thou wilt not destroy my name out of my father's house." David swears. He will not blot out Saul's name out of his father's house. But the Lord will. And of this Saul is well aware, knowing, as he

does, that he is wicked. Thus he will be plucked up out of the "land of the living", and be cast in the place of everlasting desolation. For he is wicked and will not repent.

G. M. Ophoff.

SION'S ZANGEN

Majesteit En Heerlijkheid

(Psalm 104; Eerste Deel)

In dezen psalm wordt uitgewerkt hetgeen we in de eerste zeven verzen van den 19den psalm vinden. De hemelen vertellen Gods eer en het uitpansel verkondigt Zijner handen werk. De dag aan den dag stort overvloediglijk sprake uit en de nacht aan den nacht toont wetenschap, en wat daar verder volgt. Doch hier krijgen we dezelfde heerlijke waarheid in veel bijzonderheden.

Het geheel is schoon, aanbiddelijk schoon, en leerrijk.

Ik sprak daar van leerrijk, en met opzet. Wij menschen zijn zoo dom en hard en goddeloos! We moeten zoo ontzaglijk veel leeren, en ook afleeren.

De geleerde theologen spreken van Deisten. Dat is een volkje, dat leert hoe God ver boven alle dingen woont en Zich niet inlaat met de alledaagsche dingen die op aarde en in de hemelen gebeuren. Als een twijgje van den boom zich langzaam heen en weder beweegt in een zachte zomer-koelte, dan heeft God daar niets mee uit te staan. Op zijn hoogst is het God die een Titanic doet verongelukken, die de wereld-oorlogen doet beginnen en ophouden, doch Hij bemoeit Zich niet met de kleine, alledaagsche dingen! Arme, domme mensch! De dichter van dezen psalm zal het U anders leeren, tenminste als ge bevattelijkheid hebt om te leeren. Eigenlijk had ik het woordje *dichter* met een hoofdletter moeten schrijven, want die Dichter is God, te prijzen tot in alle eeuwigheid, Amen.

Ja, God zal ons leeren van de schepping en de onderhouding aller dingen. En als ge dan die eerder genoemde bevattelijkheid hebt, dan zult ge het uitjubelen van blijdschap. O, het gaat het kind Gods naar den zin, als God geëerd en geloofd en geprezen wordt.

We lezen veel van Gods wondere werken in het aangezicht van den Heere Jezus Christus. Dat zijn de werken van de oprichting aller dingen. Dan lezen we van den val des menschen, van zijn verdoemelijkheid en groote schuld voor God, van Jezus Christus die beloofd was aan de vaderen, van Zijn nederige gestalte toen Hij kwam in Bethlehem, van Zijn bitter

lijden, sterven, en eindelijk van Zijn verrijzenis, Zijn ten hemelvaring en van de uitstorting van Zijn Heiligen Geest in de gemeente. En ook hoe die gemeente het gemaakt heeft, nog maken zal, en hoe zij als een gesierde Bruid straks den Heiland tegemoet zal worden om dan voor eeuwig bij den Heere te zijn, waar den Drie-eenigen God zal toegezongen worden de lof en de prijs tot in alle eeuwigheid.

En dat te lezen en in te denken is goed. Dat is Gods wil over ons.

Maar de werken Gods in de natuur zijn ook schoon. Daar vertelt de Bijbel ons ook van. Niet zooveel als van het schoon Zijner eeuwige liefde in Christus, maar toch schoon, aanbiddelijk schoon. Deze psalm zal er van gewagen.

Een van mijn professoren zeide eens in de klas van Dogmatiek: Wezenlijk is er geen verschil tusschen de openbaring Gods in de natuur van de genade. En ik zag het direct. Het is de Eene God die spreekt, beide in de eerste schepping en in de herschepping.

Laat ons eerbiedig luisteren naar een schoon lied, dat zingen zal in onze ooren van de grootheid, de heerlijkheid en de majesteit van Gods werken in de natuur. Het is een wedergeboren kind van God die zong in dezen psalm. Aan het einde van het gezongene zal hij nog wat mediteeren: zijne overdenking van den HEERE zal zoet zijn, zegt hij. Hij zal zich in den HEERE verblijden zijn gansche leven. En de bittere klanken die er op aarde, te midden van Gods majesteit, gehoord worden, zullen straks ophouden zegt hij, want de zondaars zullen van de aarde verdaan worden, en de goddeloozen zullen niet meer zijn.

Verleden Zondag vertelde mij een oude man die nog op de fabriek werkt, dat hij zoo lijden moet van de goddeloosheid die hij steeds rondom hem hoort en ziet. Ik kan daar inkomen: ik heb het ook voor jaren gehoord in de fabrieken. Ik dacht aan dien ouden man. Hij mag zich troosten als hij dezen psalm leest, en met de zanger zeggen: Ik ga mij in God verblijden vanwege Zijne heerlijke werken. En die goddelooben? Zij zullen verdaan worden van de aarde, en de goddeloozen zullen niet meer zijn.

Gaat met mij naar het begin van den psalm. Ge zult lieflijke dingen hooren.

Loof den Heere, mijne ziel!

Dat hebben we al meermalen gehoord. Een oproep naar binnen, naar onze ziel, om toch den Heere te loven.

Ja, dat hebben we meermalen gehoord, in den Bijbel, en door den Heiligen Geest die het Woord toepast. En het eindelijke refrein was dan: Ik zal God, mijn God, nog loven!

En dan zullen we nog meermalen hooren, wanneer geen maan meer schijnt. Ik denk, dat we in den hemel onszelf en alle creaturen toeroepen zullen, als om strijd: Looft toch den Heere, want Hij is zoo goed, zoo

lieflijk, zoo heerlijk. De zalen des hemels zijn vervuld met Zijne heerlijkheid.

En dan volgt de titel van den psalm: O Heere, mijn God! Gij zijt zeer groot, Gij zijt bekleed met majesteit en heerlijkheid!

Dat is het opschrift. De psalm zelf zal dat verklaren.

O HEERE, mijn God!

Wat een mooie benaming van onzen Vader in den hemel.

Hij is de HEERE. Dat is de onveranderlijke verbondsGod, die Zijn beloften altijd gestand doet van geslachte tot geslachte.

Hebt ge al opgemerkt, dat ofschoon deze psalm de aarde en de hemel die nu zijn bezingt, er tevens sprake is van den VerbondsGod? Er is een schoone eenheid tusschen de werken van God nu en van straks, van de werken der eerste schepping, en van die der herschepping. Het is de HEERE die beiden werkt. Ook nog wel door Zijn Zoon. Door het Woord des HEEREN zijn de hemelen gemaakt, en al hun heir door den Geest Zijns monds. Toen ik een kleine jongen was heeft mijn leeraar mij dien tekst laten leeren om te bewijzen, dat er een Drieheid in de Godheid is. Schoone tekst.

En die VerbondsGod is de God van den zanger. Hij zegt: O HEERE mijn God! Dat bezittelijke voor-naamwoord: *mijn*, in de phrase *mijn God*, spreekt boekdeelen. O, het is meer dan dat! Het spreekt van een eeuwige relatie van liefde. Ik denk aan dien tekst: Ik heb U liefgehad vet een eeuwige liefde, en daarom heb ik U getrokken. . . .

Wat onuitsprekelijk heerlijk als we mogen zeggen: Mijn God! Laat het dan maar stormen en razen om mij heen. Dan ben ik niet bang meer. Als God mijn God is, dan mag ik met Paulus zeggen: Zoo God voor ons is, wie kan dan tegen ons zijn? Hij voert immers op de wolken ter onzer hulpe en met Zijne heerlijkheid op de bovenste wolken?

En dan gaat hij aan 't loven.

Gij zijt zeer groot.

Soms sta ik in mijn catechisatie klas met een mond vol tanden. Dan kan ik het de kinderen maar niet goed genoeg uitleggen hoe groot de Godheid is. Hij is groot, en wij begrijpen Hem niet. Neen, maar wij weten, dat Hij ontzaglijk groot is. Denkt het U aan: Hij is zonder grenzen. Grenzeloos is Zijn Wezen, Zijn deugden, Zijn heerlijkheden. Zijn liefde is van eeuwigheid en tot in eeuwigheid. Hij is eindeloos in Zijn wijsheid en verstand. Gaat met Uwe gedachten in de hoogte, in de diepte, in de breedte, in de lengte: overal zult ge God vinden, en dat is zoo tot in het oneindige toe. Houdt maar op, keert maar weder van vorschen, want er is geen doorgronden van Zijn verstand. Waarmede zouden wij dan God vergelijken. Wie zou met denken God kunnen begrijpen?

Gij zijt bekleed met majesteit en heerlijkheid.

Majesteit is het uitstekende, het naar U toetredende, hetgene wat uitkomt en zich aan U opdringt tot in het overstelpende toe.

Majesteit in den formeelen zin, ik zou haast zeggen, in machinalen zin, is wat men in het Engelsch "embossed" noemt. Ik geloof, dat het Nederlandsche woord *relief* is, of *gedreven werk*. Dat is de idee van majesteit. Het treedt naar U toe op de plaat. Het staat uit. Het is uit-stekend. En zoo is God altijd. God staat uit, is de Uit-stekende. Hij treedt op U toe in alle Zijne werken, tot in het diepe hart toe.

En Hij is ook heerlijk.

Heerlijkheid is uitstraling van deugden. Het is het schitteren van de zonnestralen. De heerlijkheid van de zon zijn haar stralen die naar U toe komen om U te verwarmen, te koesteren. De heerlijkheid is het stralende gelaat van een gelukkig mensch.

De heerlijkheid Gods is de uitstraling van Zijn Goddelijke deugden. Overal waar God is daar is die uitstraling. Tot in het diepe hart van Zijn volk. Daar giet Hij Zijn deugden als mededeelbare eigenschappen in Uw hart, en dan wordt ge vol van God. En daarom leest ge zoo vaak in de Heilige Schrift, dat men den Heere heerlijkheid gaf. Het is het teruggaan van de eerder gegeven deugden Gods in Uw hart. Dan gaat ge aan 't loven.

Doch hier heeft de dichter het over de uitstraling van Gods deugden zooals die verspreid zijn over de werken van Zijn handen.

De dichter zal ons dicht bij God brengen door op Zij werken te wijzen. Overal waar hij de schepselen ziet, daar ziet Hij ook de alomtegenwoordige heerlijkheid van Zijn God.

Ja, ja, de Heilige Geest is in den beginne begonnen met de openbaring van de herkomst van het licht. Immers, de Heere zeide: daar zij licht, en daar was licht. En nu hier: Hij bedekt Zich met het licht als met een kleed.

Ergens heeft iemand van Hem gezegd, dat Hij het ontoegankelijk licht bewoont. Het behoort tot Zijn Wezen om Licht te zijn. Hoe passend dan ook om van het geschapen licht op aarde te zeggen: Heere, Uw kleed is het licht!

Dat opent heerlijke perspectieven.

Ik ga er aan denken als ik in het zonlicht wandelt. Dan is mijn God heel dicht bij mij. Neen, niemand heeft ooit God gezien. Niemand kan God zien en leven. Maar Hij is toch dicht bij een iegelijk van ons. Wij zien Hem niet, maar wij zien Zijn kleed. Het is het licht van de zon, de maan en de sterren. Dat is de kleeding van God. En het is schitterend schoon.

Ik heb van jongsaan gehoord, dat wij ons bewegen in God. Dus Hij is altijd rondom mij. Ik kan het nu ook zintuiglijk waarneembaar beredeneeren. Dat mag ik doen, want Hij openbaart mij, dat Hij mij omgeeft als het zonlicht. En als ge zoudt zeggen, dat bij de-

zelfde redeneering God afwezig moet zijn als de donkerheid mij omhult, dan moet ge toch niet dezelfde wetten die mij binden aan mijn God opleggen, want hetzelfde Woord van God zegt ook, dat de duisternis voor God licht is. Hij is altijd rondom mij. En ik moet Hem herkennen als Hij door het licht op mij toetreedt. En er van zingen. Dat is vroom.

Hij rekt de hemel uit als een gordijn.

Men vertelt mij, dat als groote heeren in het Oosten zich willen terugtreken in het privaat, dat zij gordijnen laten ophangen, rondom hun hoog vertrek. En die gordijnen zijn dan van het allerkostelijkste fabrikaat.

Welnu, God heeft Zijn Eigen fabrieken. Hij maakt Zijn Eigen fabrikaat. Hij heeft Zijn Eigen hoog vertrek. En dat is de hemel. Hij treedt U tegemoet in het kleinste en het nietigste schepseltje hier op aarde. Hij vertelt U hier ook van Zijn private kameren. Dat is het blauwe gewelf daar boven U. Er zullen plaatsen blijven in dat ontzaglijke heelal waar de goddelooze hun vuile voeten niet zullen kunnen zetten. Ik word soms angstig gestemd als ik hoor, dat men zóó ver, en zóó hoog gegaan is. Wacht U, hoogmoedig mensch! In het Oosten zou men U eenvoudig afmaken, als ge het wagen zoudt om het private vertrek van de grooten te verstooeren. Zoudt ge dan niet bang worden om God te verstoren in Zijn heerlijke private kameren, behangen met hemelsch-blauwe gordijnen? Hij rekt de hemel uit als een gordijn. Tracht toch niet om achter dit gordijn te turen. De Heere heeft ons de aarde gegeven. Laat dat genoeg zijn. Weest tevreden om wat te vliegen in de atmosfeer waar ge ademen kunt. Ik zou toch denken, dat als men geen adem meer kan halen in de ijle hoogten, dat het toch een vingervijzing moest zijn voor elk mensch om schielijk terug te treden. Daar boven in het blauwe staat met vurige letters: Verboden Toegang! Hier is het private vertrek van God die Zijn stoel op starren sticht!

Die Zijn opperzalen zoldert in de wateren!

Ja, dat brengt met zich een mooi probleem om eens over te praten. De kinderen in de catechesatie kijken altijd eenigzins vreemd op, als ik gewag maakt van de wateren boven het firmament. En dan kan ik het voorlezen uit het eerste hoofdstuk van Genesis, maar dat helpt ook al niet. Het klinkt zoo vreemd, om aan water te denken boven het blauwe. En toch staat het er. De Heere maakte scheiding tusschen de wateren die boven het uitspansel zijn en die onder het uitspansel zijn. En het uitspansel noemde Hij hemel. Dus daar zijn wateren boven den hemel en onder den hemel. Het is ook duidelijk uit den zondvloed. De Heere opende de sluizen des hemels, staat er.

Nu dan, de Heere zoldert zijn opperzalen op die wateren die boven het uitspansel zijn. Weet ge, waaraan ik dacht bij het bestudeeren van deze clausule? Dit: wat is de Heere algenoegzaam. Als ik daar wonen moest zou ik het spoedig zat zijn. Maar de Heere is de

Algenoegzame. Hij verlustigt Zich daar boven het blauwe in Zichzelf. En zoo is het ook, als ik hoor hoe er plaatsen zijn op bergen en in hooglanden, waar voor eeuwen bloempjes gebloeid hebben die nooit door een mensch gezien werden. Waar is dat voor noodig? God ziet ze, en dat is genoeg. Hij verheerlijkt Zich in Zijn Eigen werken. De bloempjes op hoge bergen, de stille ijsmassa op de gletchers zijn er om Gods wil. En zoo is het in het luchtledige, stille, (zoo-men-zegt) zwarte van het bovenste uitpansel. De Heere gebruikt het voor de zoldering van Zijn opperzalen. En daar verlustigt God Zich in Zijn werken. God verveelt Zich nooit. Want Hij is ook de Volzalige! Is Hij niet groot van majesteit en heerlijkheid?

Die van de wolken Zijn wagen maakt!

Mozes zong van denzelfden God: "die op den hemel vaart ter Uwer hulpe, en met Zijne hoogheid op de bovenste wolken!"

Wij maken ook onze wagens. En de eene wagen overtreft de andere wagen in schoonheid, in vlugheid, in paardekrachten. En wij snellen daarhenen.

Gaat nu met mij naar Gods wagens!

Ge zingt ervan: Gods wagens boven 't luchtig zwerk, zijn tien en tien maal duizend sterk, verdubbeld in getale! Och, houdt maar op! Wat geknoei met ons broddelwerk! God alleen kan het en doet het. Hij rijdt op de wolken als op een wagen. Hij schiet te hulpe, en Hij snelt naar den goddelooze om hem te verdelgen. God is zeer snel met Zijn wagens.

Die op de vleuglen des winds wandelt.

Een wandelende God.

Ge komt Hem gedurig tegen. Als de zachte zomerkoelte U tegenwaait, denkt dan aan God. Hij loopt, Hij wandelt tegen U aan. Als het stormt en raast, dan hoort ge de voetstappen van Uw lieflijken Vader die in de hemelen, ja, ook in de hemelen is. Hoe wonderlijk zijn Uwe werken, o Mijn God! Weest nog niet bang, gij arme reizigers op de baren en de golven, als de stormen razen en het bootje trachten te verzwelgen. Het is de wandelende God. En Hij doet alles goed. Weest niet bang. En als ik zou spreken in de taal der Schrift, dan zou ik zeggen: Vreest niet, gelooft alleenlijk.

Hij maakt Zijn Engelen geesten, Zijne dienaars tot een vlamvend vuur. Hier liggen vreeselijke dingen. Hier gaat het over dingen waar ik niet veel van weet. Ik heb nooit een Engel van God gezien. Maar toch ken ik ze. Ik verlang er naar om de Engelen Gods te zien, en met hen te spreken, zooals Maria en anderen dat gedaan hebben. In het bijzonder, verlang ik om Gabriël en Michael te zien. Die laatste heeft een mooie naam. Het beteekent: Wie is als Jehovah-God? Wat een naam om mee rond te loopen en te vliegen in den hemel. En bij hem is de naam zijn wezen. Dus zijn wezen, het wezen van Machael vraagt gedurig, triumpantelijk: Wie is als mijn Jehovah-God?

God heeft ze tot geesten gemaakt, en ook tot vlam-

men des vuurs. We hebben ervan gehoord, en we zullen er nog meer van hooren, als straks de Engelen Gods uitgezonden worden om de boozen te vergaderen. En we hoorden er al wat van. Denkt aan Sodom en Gomorrah! En het thema van den psalm leert het ons: Die Engelen en vlamvende wezens zijn er alleen maar, om de majesteit en de heerlijkheid van God te vertoon. Loof den Heere, mijne ziel! G. Vos.

IN HIS FEAR

As A Thief In The Night

Are you asleep?

What a foolish question. If you were asleep you could not read these lines, and the above question would never reach you.

Yet, is the above question so foolish? Are you spiritually asleep? Coming to those who are physically awake, the question deals with your spiritual condition. Are you then spiritually awake? Do you know what time it is? Are you aware of what is going on around you? God's regenerated people are not blind. They have been given eyes to see and have received ears to hear. Being born again they can see the kingdom of heaven. And they can likewise see it grow and come. Once having received their sight they never go blind again. God will not allow those to happen to His elect people. But are you asleep? Are you exercising that wonderful faculty of seeing by faith? Are you looking at all things that occur about you from the viewpoint of the promises God has given us in the Scriptures? Is the promise and reality of the coming of Christ before you day after day?

"Behold I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments." So speaks Christ in Rev. 16:15. "But of the times and the seasons brethren, ye have no need that I write you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night." Thus the Apostle Paul wrote to the church at Thessalonica. Peter similarly writes to the church that begins to wonder why the Lord tarries, "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night", II Peter 3:10.

The thief comes at night when all in the house are fast asleep. Had he seen a light in the house indicating that all had not yet retired, he would not have entered. His visit can be a surprise and is such simply because the dwellers in that home were not aware of his entrance due to their slumber.

Only in this later sense can we interpret that little

word "as" in the expression, "As a thief in the night". Christ's return is not withheld until it is a certainty that *all*, or for that matter any, shall be surprised.

In his second epistle Peter had laid down the truth once again for the church that Christ's return is determined by God with just exactly one thing in view. That one thing is, according to II Peter 3:9, that the last of His elect people may be saved. Christ tarries until the last one of those chosen from before the foundation of the world is born and regenerated. Before that moment, He cannot come. Only in that sense does God tarry. His return will be a surprise (and indeed also a disappointment) for many. It will be as a thief in the night. He will be here before many are aware of it, that is, the day of the Lord will be here before many realize it. Suddenly they shall realize it. All shall know it for, as Peter also declares, "the day of the Lord cometh as a thief in the night; in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise." Whether this passing away of the heavens takes place as the dawning of the day of the Lord or whether it occurs toward the end, has nothing to do with the fact that it will come as a thief in the night. It does show that even as the fact that the thief has been there is discovered after the sleeper has been aroused, so, though the day of the Lord comes as a thief in the night, and though it therefore will for some come unnoticed, its reality will soon be impressed upon the minds of all men. When the heavens pass away with a great noise, the most hardened reprobate, the most avowed atheist will in his heart know what day it is. The coming of that day, however, will be a surprise to many. Christ does not say in this expression that He will *be* a thief in the night. He does not come to behave as a thief. He comes *as* a thief only in the sense that as the thief comes unnoticed, so He will be here before many realize it and when many are still behaving and talking as though it is still way off in some very remote future. Thus Paul further explains the matter when in I Thess. 5:3 he writes, "For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them." This he states in connection with his remark in verse 2 that the day of the Lord cometh as a thief in the night.

Hence we again ask, are you asleep?

It is not the teaching of Scripture that the day of the Lord shall come as a thief in the night for all men. No, even as the figure implies, He comes as a thief only to those who are asleep. For does not Paul continue in I Thess. 5:4, "But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober." Does Christ not also through the Apostle John declare?, "Blessed is he that watcheth, and keep-

eth his garments clean". The army has its sentries. The factory has its watchmen. They are not caught unawares when the thief or the enemy approaches. They have been placed there just to watch for these things. The people of God likewise watch for the day of the Lord. Physically they may sleep and must sleep. Spiritually they are always alert, looking, waiting, watching in hope.

The child of God remaining awake is not looking for a thief. He is looking for his Lord. He is not on guard against some foe who might destroy him and his family. He has nothing to fear concerning that day. His watch is not for his protection. His watch is for his glorification and redemption. He stays awake, he counts the days, the hours with an eager expectancy.

Indeed, the day of the Lord will be a dreadful day for some! And from a fleshly viewpoint it will be a tremendous day. The heavens shall pass away with a crackling noise. The stars shall fall, the moon be turned to blood, the sun becoming darkened. The latter shall no doubt be first. We may perhaps expect a rather rapid execution of all the things mentioned in Scripture in regard to that day of the Lord. It is a day, yet not at all necessarily a day of twenty-four hours. It is a day because it begins at a definite moment of a definite day in a definite week and month and year of our present world. It is a day, not an hour, nor a week, nor even a year. It is a relatively short period of time at the end of which the dead are raised and in their new resurrection bodies both elect and reprobate shall in the twinkling of an eye see the Lord as He descends from heaven. The whole period is His day, and as He comes, perhaps at the passing away of the heavens, He ushers in the eternal day and the new heavens and the new earth. At the early part of the day we may perhaps expect that of which Joel speaks, namely, that the sun shall be darkened and the moon turn to blood before the day of the Lord come. Shortly thereafter the heavens shall pass away with a crackling noise and the stars shall fall. The earth and all that it contains shall melt with a fervent heat. Every thing that man has made and owns shall disappear and be destroyed. Indeed it will be a terrible and a dreadful day. It means the destruction of all that the flesh needs and craves. It will truly be the day of the *Lord*. All man's works shall disappear. All he has achieved over the years and through the centuries will be wiped out. Nothing of man shall remain.

Woe unto the inhabitants of the earth! The Lord is coming! He Who is the Creator and the King of all that man employs is coming to reward every man according to what he has done. You cannot take a breath of air but you are using His creation. No grain of sand can you claim as your own. The earth and its

fulness belongs to the Lord. And what has man done with it? The Lord of all these things is coming again. And He comes to reveal His Lordship.

You would think that man would indeed be watching for Him to come. The army has its sentry, the factory its watchman, and should not then the world be on guard against the return of the Lord? Futile it would be and likewise impossible. The world does not recognize His Lordship, nor does it believe in His return. To the world it will undoubtedly come as a thief in the night. The world goes to sleep, yea, the world is spiritually dead. For the world it is preposterous to speak of His return. That this world will come to an end, the world will in no wise dare to deny. Its scientist will even predict that fact. But a day of the Lord!!? No need to watch for that. Besides to watch would be of no avail. The world can never get ready for that day. And did the world know that it was coming tomorrow, it could not escape its horrors. It cannot wash itself clean of its guilt. The Lord comes in judgment! He comes in wrath!

And what of you? You who confess the Lord, you who claim to belong to His church and kingdom, are you asleep? Or are you waiting for Him to return in the full consciousness that the day of the Lord will come and that it is for you the day of redemption and glory? Do you claim the washing away of all your guilt through His blood? Then you will look for Him to come and bring you home to glory. You who say that your only comfort in life and death is that you belong to your faithful Saviour and confess Him to be your Lord and Master, are you *interested* in His return? Yes, but are you interested in it? Or do the things spiritual bore you and put you to sleep?

Indeed that sleep is there always. The eyes are heavy. The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. But what do you do about that sleepy feeling? Do you go to bed and succumb to it? Still worse, you are not taking sleeping pills are you? Many a time it becomes necessary to take a cup of strong coffee to keep awake in order to finish a work that interests us. Is it that way with us and the coming of the day of the Lord. Sleepy? Of course, we all are. But interested? Are you anxious enough for its arrival, are you eager enough for it to come to want to stay awake?

We find a beautiful text in II Peter 3 in regard to this. Peter puts the full responsibility of deciding how we ought to live in view of the coming of that day by asking his readers the question, "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of the Lord?" What manner of persons ought ye to be? Ought ye to sleep? Dare you sleep? Nay, the elect of God will not perish in that day. But if you are asleep now and are not interested enough in His coming

to stay awake, can you say that you are such an elect child of God? On what passage of Scripture can you base your contention? Consider such texts as James 2:20, ". . . faith without works is dead", John 15:2, "Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit He taketh away". What manner of persons ought ye to be? And what manner of persons are ye now? In the next issue we hope to continue our consideration of this question.

J. A. Heys.

FROM HOLY WRIT

In Vain

There are two words that spell the depth of despair, the complete disillusionment of the sinner shackled in the bondage of sin and death. They are the two words, "In Vain". It is the verdict of the righteous Judge of heaven and earth upon those who set their hearts and affections upon the things of this earth. In large, bold letters Gods writes over a world of wickedness, as it exists under His curse: In vain, vanity. It ends in eternal desolation of hell.

Vanity is Deceptive Emptiness.

The basic idea of "vanity" in Scripture is that the thing is empty, and therefore vain. It means that the thing is devoid of content, like a breath, a shadow, a mist that fades away in a moment. A thing may be vain because it is done without good cause, rashly, foolishly. Or it may be vain because it lacks sincerity and truth, because it is evil. Or again, it may be empty because it is deceiving, misleading for those who put their trust in it. Or even, it may be vain because it fails to meet the expectation and thus proves to be a delusion.

From a spiritual, ethical aspect, vanity is devoid of truth, it is the lie. Since God is the true and living God, all idols are vain. They have eyes but cannot see, ears they have but they fail to hear, and mouths but they cannot speak. Anyone who seeks or sets up a vain idol does so before the face of the only true God. As the Lord says of Israel, "They have moved Me to jealousy with that which is not God; they have provoked Me to anger with their vanities." Deut. 32:21.

There are also vain things, lying vanities, that deceive men with their tinsel brilliance and false allure.

The devil made the tree of knowledge of good and evil such a lying vanity in paradise. He deceived our first parents into believing that the tree had power to make one wise, so that they were lured into death by

its appeal. Ever since that the things of this world have had their appeal to a sinful, rebellious humanity. The more the world develops, the more man strives after vanity. He pursues earthly riches, vain glory of men, power, success, carnal pleasures. The rich fool boasts that he has much goods laid up for many years, so that he can eat, drink, and be merry for a long time to come. He trusts in his wealth and glories in his treasures imagining that his house will continue to stand forever, and his dwelling place unto all generations. Psalm 49:6-11. He who has forsaken God loves the world and the things of the world; the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. Yet all these things are vanities and vexation of spirit, for their end is destruction. Psalm 39:6, "Surely every man walketh in a vain show; surely they are disquieted in vain; he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them." Therefore Israel is admonished, "And turn ye not aside (from following the Lord): for then should we go after vain things, which cannot profit nor deliver, for they are vain." I Sam. 13:21.

Wicked men who strive after vain things are also themselves vain. "Man is like vanity; his days as a shadow that passeth away." Ps. 144:4. Therefore he also lives in vanity. "They conceive mischief, and bring forth vanity, and their belly prepareth deceit." Job 15:35. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips; their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness. "They speak vanity every one with his neighbour: with flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak." Ps. 12:2.

The Cause.

The cause of all this vanity lies in the curse which God has pronounced upon the fallen human race. The righteous judgment of God upon sin has brought the terrible verdict: In Vain!

Paul assures us in Rom. 1:20, "Because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations and their foolish heart was darkened." And the complaint of the psalmist is always true, "Behold, Thou hast made my days as an handbreath, and mine age is as nothing before Thee; verily, every man at his best state is altogether vanity." Ps. 39:5.

When the king of this earthly creation fell in paradise, he brought his whole earthly kingdom with him under God's curse. God's judgment upon sin has subjected all things to vanity, as Paul writes in Rom. 8:20, "For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him Who hath subjected the same in hope."

This causes the wise Preacher of Ecclesiastes to cry out, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." And because the Preacher was wise, he added, "What profit hath a

man of all his labor which he taketh under the sun? One generation passes away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth ever. The sun ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose. The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returned again according to his circuits. All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again. All things are full of labor; man cannot utter it: the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done; and there is no new thing under the sun. Eccl. 1:3-9.

It all runs in a vicious circle of wearisome monotony. The sun rises and sets day after day, the wind runs its course over and over again, the seasons follow one upon another in endless repetition. Sunshine follows rain, and rain follows sunshine, day follows night and night follows day, without ever getting anywhere. One generation dies and another is born into the same world of vanity, only to join the one, long, endless procession that moves toward the cemetery. We see new inventions, new discoveries to ease the burden of life, and to lift away, if it were possible, the curse. But the result of all these improvements is, that we live faster, more intensely, more dangerously, and die faster. It all ends in the grave, for there is never anything new in a world of vanity.

This is expressed very succinctly in Ps. 127:1, "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain."

This does not mean that the builders do not venture to build without God. Wicked men always do exactly that. But the Lord, Jehovah, the Almighty, immutable, sovereign God, Who keeps covenant with His people forever, is not with them, but against them. While they are building the wall it crumbles down under their hands. Or, worse, they succeed in getting the wall up, only to discover on the next day that it has fallen and broken. Or, still worse, they manage to get the walls built and the roof spread over them, but before they can really enjoy the pleasures of their new home, destruction comes. With their goal in sight they meet with disaster.

Nor does it mean that the watchers fall asleep during the long night of waiting. They diligently keep watch, ever on the alert throughout the wearisome night, even until break of day. But in the meantime the enemy stages a surprise attack from an unexpected direction, or at the last moment catches them off guard, so that the warning of danger comes too late. They have watched the whole night through, but God wrote over their watching: In Vain.

It means that the wicked do all things in vain. Their eating and drinking, their striving to make a success, their struggle to get on top, to provide for the future of themselves and their families, it all is branded with vanity. Its end is death and eternal destruction.

It reminds us of the handwriting on the wall at the feast of Belshazzar, catching him unawares even while he was feasting with a thousand of his lords and drinking from the golden vessels that had been dedicated to the Lord in the temple in Jerusalem. It is most disconcerting to be called to account in the midst of the confusion, the stench and the rubbish of a man's drunken orgies. It is a rude awakening to suddenly stand exposed amidst the lameness and vanities of sin.

This is but a picture of the world that makes its measure of iniquity full, always striving for the vain satisfaction that the treasures and pleasures, the pomp and splendor of this world have to offer. For the Lord will appear suddenly, even as thief in the night, while the vain builder is still working on his house, and the weary watcher is still keeping his watch. With this goal seemingly almost in his grasps, he appears before the judgment seat of Christ. The number of man is the number of vanity, six hundred and sixty and six.

The Only Escape.

The only possible escape from this vanity is by the grace of God, Who delivers His people in Christ unto eternal salvation. Jehovah builds His house and guards His city, in which the righteous shall dwell forever.

Christ is the only one in a world of sin and death, Who can fulfill the requirements of ascending the hill of the Lord and of standing in His holy place. Christ has clean hands, and a pure heart. He has not lifted up His soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully." Ps. 24:3, 4. He brought the perfect sacrifice for sin by His obedience on the cross. He merited salvation, and calls His people to repentance, saying, O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved. How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee? Jer. 4:14.

As a result of His efficacious calling through the Spirit, He causes His people to cry with the Psalmist, "Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity, and quicken Thou me in the way." Ps. 119:37. Therefore His saints are also assured that their strivings, their toils and sufferings in the flesh will never be subject to vanity. They are God's workmanship, created in Christ unto those good works, which God has eternally prepared for them, that they should walk in them. The Word of God always admonishes them, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, immovable always abounding in the work of the Lord," assuring them, "For ye know that your labor is *not in vain* in the Lord." I Cor. 15:58.

Not in vain, for in heaven they are perfectly de-

livered from all vanity. "They shall not labor in vain, nor bring forth trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them . . . The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock; and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy Mountain, saith the Lord." Isaiah 65:23, 25.

C. Hanko.

PERISCOPE

Released Time Religious Instruction:

Recently the Supreme Court of the United States decided that all religious instruction in the public schools even on a voluntary basis was unconstitutional. This decision was made in connection with an appeal of a woman and mother from Illinois protesting such "released time" religious classes in that state. It is not our purpose to comment on this decision as such except in so far as it brings home to us once more the neutrality (?) overagainst religion in our public schools. For the plaintiff in this case was a self-announced atheist. And where neutrality is the rule, the one with the least religion, in this case the atheist, controls the instruction!

Rather in connection with this it is our purpose to call attention to the matter of "released time" religious instruction as it is being promoted in many places by concretely calling attention to the attempt made to begin this program as it was carried out in Oskaloosa.

We quote the Oskaloosa Dail Herald from an article entitled "Time out for Religious Instruction": "The Oskaloosa Parent-Teacher Association is endeavoring to get some kind of religious services for pupils in the public schools. In order to avoid any differences of opinion, one suggested plan is to give the pupils a short period of free time to attend services in the churches of their choice. . . ."

"A good many years ago Dr. David James Burrell, speaking on the broader subject of Bible readings in the schools, said: 'We are not carrying on our public schools as they are in some countries, for the sake of pouring information into the minds of young people. Our schools are the bulwark of our national security. We are making citizens. We cannot afford not to have public schools because every young boy is a sovereign in his own right. But the three R's cannot make a good citizen. They do not affect moral character one way or the other. The Bible is our only textbook of morals; and we have taken it out of the public schools. Nor have we anything there to take its place. What do our educational authorities mean by undertaking to make

citizens in America without teaching them the Decalogue or the Sermon on the Mount? If the Bible must be removed what textbook on morals shall supplant it? We must put something else in. We shall not complain if you can find it. Shall it be the Analects of Confucius? Shall it be the three Baskets of Buddhism? Our public schools cannot be left without some textbook of morality; for we are making citizens there and the welfare of our country depends upon it."

In connection with this plan the following letter was sent to all the ministers of the locality: "A delegation of ladies representing the local PTA groups, appeared before the school board last evening. This group asks the board to consider a plan of week-day religious instruction."

"Under the plan proposed, school children in grades 4-8 would be released from school for one hour on Wednesday afternoon, if they desire to attend a class for religious instruction. Attendance at the class for religious instruction would be optional, and those who did not go would be retained at school for the regular time. The children would attend their regular church or any church of their choice if they had no former church connections."

The board is now considering the suggested plan. They need the opinion of the local ministers, and feel the most satisfactory way to secure this opinion is through an individual conference. . . ."

To this letter of the school board we replied as follows: "Thank you for your recent letter regarding the proposed plan for week-day religious instruction."

"I am indeed sorry that I cannot give my wholehearted approval to the plan outlined in your letter, which I understand to be in the nature of a supplement to the present religiously-neutral instruction offered necessarily in the public schools. As you perhaps know the group with which I am affiliated has taken the position, to which I also fully subscribe, that, strictly speaking, there can be no neutrality, especially not in the educational field. To quote the words of our Savior, 'He that is not with me is against me. . . .' For this reason we have opened our own 'School for Christian Instruction' in which our children may be given Christian training in every branch of the curriculum. This we believe to be the only answer to the problems which I feel your group also detects in the present set-up."

"Incidentally, such classes for religious instruction we already possess, meeting every Saturday afternoon."

"I shall, however, be at your service at any time to meet with you in individual conference in order to more fully explain the position outlined above."

"Sincerely yours,"

The above we believe explains itself.

* * * *

Who Makes Divisions in the Church?

To this our mind was directed when we read the following paragraph from an article entitled "That they may be one" by Rev. Jacob T. Hoogstra in the March Calvin Forum: "Woe to the man who doesn't hesitate to start rifts in the church! He is doing more than cutting the seamless robe of our Lord, to use the language of Cyrian. He is toying with the holy Trinity."

It is not our purpose to review this article but rather to use this opportunity to point out a few things in connection with the question above.

Oftentimes the one who by God is called upon to start a new denomination is automatically looked at askance and his work is considered to be of the devil because he was found guilty of splitting the church. Nor do I mean to defend every and each division which is caused and split that takes place within the bosom of that which is called church. But fact is that, as far as the true and faithful church is concerned, the mother denomination is usually the one who is guilty of causing rifts in the church. And the true church goes on, through the process of reformation while the old becomes the false church and while claiming to be the church has really become a sect—a group guilty of heresy.

We are glad that this is seen, at least to a certain extent, by Mr. Hoogstra as is evident from another paragraph which we quote, "Denominations have been under God of immense value. They have broken impersonal, anti-spiritual church machinery that raised the organization above the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart of a believer. They have kept the torch of religious liberty undimmed in the night of inquisitions. Through them a great diversity in the expression of Biblical truths has come to light. They have called the church back to the one source—the Word of God. Let no man call our liberators sinners! Bigoted men? But may not our very criticism be a token of our own bigotry, perchance?"

* * * *

From the same Forum we wish to quote from an article by Henry R. Van Til, Associate Professor of Bible, Calvin College, entitled "Doctrine: A Scriptural Evaluation". "The same spirit of unconcern for matters of truth, i.e., doctrinal issues, the same listless complacency may also be found in the Christian Reformed Church. Its members no longer welcome and appreciate doctrinal preaching when it is controversial. By the latter term I refer to the type of preaching in which some form of the modern denial of the truth is scored, or the positive principle is concretized by the simple expedient of pointing out the ecclesiastical heresies that must be avoided. Another evidence is the fact that our men's societies, which have been organized

to study the doctrines of Scripture, no longer attract more than a fraction of the male membership of the church. Bowling is far more popular. Besides, one never hears our members discussing doctrine; we are interested in methods and programs and campaigns but to implicate ourselves into the truth, to grow in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus has very little appeal today. This general lethargy is certainly not discouraged but rather abetted and promoted when ecclesiastical dignitaries issue a ukase (a command, a proclamation or imperial order having the force of law—hence any official decree—J.H.) warning consistories not to permit our Dutch cousins to present their doctrinal differences lest we should become embroiled in the issue. The fact that no protests are forthcoming is mute evidence either that thought control is almost complete or that doctrinal indifference is so strong that we no longer are alert or interested to know what the truth of the matter is. However, this docility, this seeming readiness to think only by hierarchical decree may well prove a boomerang for the church. As a result the individual's consciousness of the integrity of his office of believer and his consciousness of being called and restored to the office of prophet are undermined. Consequently the apostolic admonition to try the spirits to see whether they be of God becomes a dead letter or must be turned over to Synodical committee. Indeed, this procedure of maintaining a death-like silence on controversial issues in order that we may have peace may perhaps achieve its objective; but, to my mind, it will result in the silence of the cemetery, the stillness of the tomb."

To begin we would point out that we are simply quoting from the introduction of Mr. Van Til's article and do not intend to discuss or evaluate it as a whole.

With regard to the above paragraph however we would first of all extend a word of commendation to the author, both for the clear evaluation of the danger present and for the stand which he takes. And if this article together with one to which we called your attention in a recent number of the Standard Bearer is an indication that there is a growing awareness of and opposition to the hierarchical actions of recent time in the Christian Reformed Churches we can only rejoice. And once again we would repeat and emphasize—except there be free and open discussion on every subject bound only by the Word of God and the Confessions, the church dies.

However, it seems to me that much of what Mr. Van Til writes in the above paragraph can also be applied to the Protestant Reformed Churches and as such it should also be a warning to us. When I think of the impatience, even in our own circles, with 'doctrinal' sermons and the greater attraction of sports overagainst the study of the Word of God I believe we also should read and take warning and "Remember

therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent."

J. Howerzyl.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On May 2, 1948, the Lord willing, our dear parents

MR. AND MRS. D. JONKER

hope to celebrate their 30th wedding anniversary.

In this celebration we, their children, join them in thanksgiving to our covenant God for the blessings of life in the sweet consciousness of His nearness, and in prayer for His continued guidance and blessing during their earthly sojourn.

"Oh satisfy us in the morning with thy lovingkindness, That we may rejoice and be glad all our days." Ps. 90:14.

Mr. and Mrs. Homer C. Hoeksema
Mr. and Mrs. Cornelius R. Jonker
Thelma M.
James D.

Grand Rapids, Mich.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On Thursday, May 7, 1948, our dear parents,

JOHN CAMMENG SR.

and

BEATRICE CAMMENG — Bergsma

will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary, the Lord willing.

It is our desire and prayer, that the Lord, who has kept them these many years, may in His loving care provide for them in the future, and that the "sure mercies of David" may constantly be their portion.

Mr. and Mrs. A. C. Boerkoel
Mr. and Mrs. John Cammenga, Jr.
Rev. and Mrs. A. Cammenga
Mr. and Mrs. P. Cammenga
Rev. and Mrs. S. Cammenga
and 20 grandchildren

Open House May 7 from 1:30 to 5 and 7 to 10 o'clock P.M., at 1036 Logan St., S.E., Grand Rapids, Michigan.

ECHTVEREENIGING

1888 — Zestig Jaren — 1948

Den 18den April herdachten wij met onze geliefde ouders,

CORNELIUS KLAVER

en

ALICE KLAVER—Verwoerd

dat zij 60 jaren door den band des huwelijks vereenigd zijn geweest.

De Heere die hun deze jaren goed en nabij is geweest, zij hun verder tot troost en sterkte.

Hunne dankbare kinderen:

Mr. and Mrs. Sake Klien
Mr. and Mrs. Chas. Reitsma
Mr. and Mrs. Peter H. Klaver
Mr. and Mrs. Simon Miersma
Mr. and Mrs. John Klaver
24 kleinkinderen

Grand Rapids, Michigan

15 achter-kleinkinderen

REPORT OF CLASSIS EAST

April 8, 1948

The delegates of the twelve churches of Classis East met at the Protestant Reformed Church of Holland, Michigan at the above mentioned date.

The opening devotionals were conducted by Rev. B. Kok, who later served as clerk, while Rev. J. A. Heys served as chairman.

The credentials were read and accepted showing that all the churches were represented by two delegates. The president expresses a few words of gratitude that the Rev. Geo. Lubbers, although not yet fully restored, is nevertheless able to meet with us again; and also that elder N. Yonker has been restored to health again. He also extends a word of welcome to the Rev. G. Vos, who has just come to us from Classis West, and welcomes all the delegates who are with us for the first time.

The Stated Clerk reads the minutes and further reports that he had written a letter of sympathy to Rev. G. Lubbers in behalf of the Classis.

The following ministers were given advisory vote: the Revs. W. Hofman, E. Knott and D. Jonker.

Three instructions in re the overture of Creston are read and received for information. These instructions come from the First Church of Grand Rapids, South Holland, and the Second Church of Grand Rapids. The latter two expressed full agreement, while the former recommends some changes.

The Classis decided to treat Creston's overture seriatim.

The motion to adopt the first suggestion failed to carry; namely that opportunity be given to the churches to discuss all matters that come before Synod, including assessments, salaries, etc.

The second suggestion, that a rule should be made that decisions involving a considerable outlay of money should not go into effect until the following year, also failed to carry.

So too, suggestions three and four failed to carry; namely, that under no circumstances does a standing committee have the power to raise assessments, and that Synod be very sparing in allowing a standing committee "use its own discretion" in determining or raising the amount of salary of brethren that are paid by the churches.

Two motions explaining to Synod the reasons for the preceding decisions of Classis failed to carry.

Classis decided to grant the requests of First Church and Randolph for Classical Appointments, and that Randolph be granted the appointments on the same basis as last January.

The following committee was appointed to draw up a schedule: Rev. G. Vanden Berg, Rev. M. Gritters, and Elder T. Elzinga. They later proposed the following schedule which was adopted by Classis.

Fuller Ave. — Apr. 11, evening, J. A. Heys, Apr. 18, afternoon, B. Kok, Apr. 25 evening, G. Vos, May 2, afternoon, R. Veldman, May 9, evening, H. Veldman, May 16, afternoon, J. De Jong.

Randolph — Apr. 18, G. Vos, Apr. 25, J. Heys, May 2, B. Kok, May 9, J. De Jong, May 16, M. Schipper, May 23, M. Gritters, May 30, G. Vanden Berg, June 6, H. De Wolf, June 13, H. Veldman, June 20, R. Veldman, June 27, S. Camenga.

Classis recommended that Synod grant the following requests for subsidy: Oak Lawn, \$1200.00; Grand Haven, \$2000.00; Randolph, \$1500.00.

The president of the Immigration Committee, Rev. J. De Jong, received permission to address the Classis for a few minutes in behalf of the work they are doing. This committee requests the co-operation of all our people. If you have any friends or relatives coming to the U. S. or Canada, please give their addresses to

this committee so that they may be contacted.

Classis decided to send the following overture of Grand Haven to our next Synod:

"We request Classis to overture Synod of 1948 to instruct our Theological School Committee to execute its mandate as outlined in Acts of Synod 1946, Article 57, in re the expansion of our Theological School curriculum for pre-seminary course.

The following brethren were delegated to our next Synod:

Ministers:

Primi:	Secundi:
M. Gritters,	J. A. Heys,
J. D. De Jong	B. Kok
H. De Wolf	M. Schipper
R. Veldman	H. Veldman

Elders:

Primi:	Secundi:
D. Langeland	A. De Borst
H. Meulenberg	H. De Jong
G. M. Ophoff	G. Koster
N. Yonker	F. Van Baren

The names of Primi and Secundi are placed in alphabetical order. Classis also decides that if the regular secundus cannot go, the next in line will be asked.

For church visitors Rev. J. De Jong and Rev. B. Kok were chosen, with Rev. G. Vos as secundus.

The next meeting of Classis will be held at Fuller Ave. July 14, 1948.

The questions of Art. 41 of the Church Order brought a request for advice from one consistory in respect to a discipline case. Classis advises this consistory that their request is out of order because they themselves have not taken a decision in this matter and further Classis refers them to the definite stand of the Classis in this matter.

The minutes are read and approved. A motion to adjourn is carried. Rev. G. Vos closes with thanks unto God.

D. JONKER, Stated Clerk.