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MEDITATION

Salvation Is Of The Lord

"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish; neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand. I and My Father are one."

John 10:27-30.

The occasion for these words of my text must be sought in the curing of the man who was born blind.

That this is so, is evident from the answer which Jesus gives when His disciples ask Him: "Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?" To this query Jesus gives answer: "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him."

And then follows the curing of the man and the resultant struggle with the pharisees. And these two events constitute a manifestation of the works of God: that is, the curing of God's people from death to life and the hardening of the reprobates that stumble at the curative works of God. But both together in their relation to one another constitute the work of Jehovah-God.

That this is so is further demonstrated at the end of the 9th chapter, where Jesus comes to the blind man and heals him spiritually, and where the former blind man worships Jesus. Then Jesus says: "For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and they which see might be made blind." And this fundamental statement of the works of God through Jesus is followed by the taunt of the reprobates: "Are we blind also?" And the answer of Jesus: "If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but

now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth."

And this manifestation of the works of God through Jesus, a work that is the saving of the blind, on the one hand; and the hardening of the reprobates who say they see, on the other hand, is carried on further by Jesus in chapter 10 by the preaching of a parable of the shepherd, the sheep, the door, the hireling and the wolves. Each has his proper place.

And my text constitutes the conclusion of that discourse of the sheep and the shepherd. You may also call it a restatement of the works of God.

And its theme is this: Salvation is of the Lord!

* * * *

Salvation is of the Lord!

You hear of that wonderful truth in my text three times. Salvation is of the Lord! This truth is evident in the actions of the sheep, in the hand of the Good Shepherd, and in the almighty love of the Triune God.

The sheep themselves show that it is God that worketh salvation.

They hear the voice of Jesus!

And that is a miracle.

No matter how sweet the voice of Jesus Christ, and no matter where and how He may speak, the natural tendency of our heart and mind is to stop our ears and to corrupt ourselves in the midst of this chorus of the voice of the Lord.

The speech of Jesus!

It is rich and manifold in form.

There is a universal speech of Jesus as He is the Logos in creation.

From the beginning of creation He has spoken in created things. Psalm 19 and Romans 1. Also John 1.

Our fathers have listened to that speech of the Son of God in creation, and they have said of it that "the creation, preservation and government of the universe . . . is before our eyes as a most elegant book, where-

in all creatures, great and small, are as so many characters leading us to contemplate the invisible things of God, namely, His power and Divinity."

And this book is written by Jesus Christ, but then as the Logos of creation: And God *said*. . . ! The *speaking Voice* of God is the eternal Son!

But who among men hears that voice of the Son?

None of us as we are by nature!

Oh yes, we *notice* the things which are characters in the book of God, and we take them and use them and enjoy (?) them, but without giving God the glory. Terrible thought: we will even use these things of God's voice against Him! Thinking that we can make war against the God supreme!

Most wanton godlessness: not to listen to the voice of God's emissary.

And in the fulness of time the Voice of God came on earth, and He spoke again. And the words of Jesus are precious beyond compare.

They are different from the characters of the most elegant book of nature, and yet they are the same in essence. The Source is the same.

The difference lies in this that this second speech of the Son of God is relative the work of God in recreation, in the rebuilding and exaltation of all things.

If one thing was plain in the fulness of time it was this: humanity had corrupted its way in the earth.

And there comes Jesus in the midst of the darkness of man!

Listen, He is about to speak!

I am the Light of the world!

Do you see the similarity, and the difference?

Similarity, for God also said at the dawn of the history of the world: Let there be light!

Difference, for Jesus is the Light of the world in a spiritual sense. Paul spoke of it in II Corinthians: For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness hath shined in our hearts. . . . There is the difference! God spoke in the midst of the chaotic darkness, and the result was natural light for the natural world. God spoke again in the midst of the dark heart of man, and the result was spiritual light for the spiritual world of His goodpleasure.

And the record of this speech of God anent spiritual things is found in the Word of God, the Bible. It is the voice of Jesus.

And notice: it is of the Lord, whether you listen to His word in nature, or to His word in the realm of His kingdom. God speaks!

Without that voice the darkness remaineth.

Salvation is of the Lord!

* * * *

And the miracle of salvation becomes manifest in this that there are men who hear.

That is the miracle of grace in the heart of man.

Without that grace, you will always corrupt yourself, even in the midst of the beautiful symphony of the voice of God in Jesus Christ.

But when grace enters the heart, we take heed to the voice of Jesus. We hear. My sheep hear My voice.

The objective voice of Jesus penetrates the hearts of man, illuminating him in that heart, so that he sees God in the face of Jesus Christ. Only if and when "God shines in our hearts", do we receive "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

The firstfruit of such hearing of the voice of Jesus is regeneration. And regeneration is the light of the world in your heart, dispelling, centrally, the darkness of corruption. You become a new man in Christ.

And the second result is that you follow Him.

You leave the city of corruption and you begin your journey to the City of God, the New Jerusalem. And you will principally use all things to go to that City of God.

They leave the darkness, the sphere of guilt, doom, corruption and death, and they travel to the realm of light and truth, goodness and spiritual power, everlasting love of God and the life that is eternal.

For that is salvation.

Do you not see that salvation is of the Lord?

He found us in our darkness, and that is death and corruption. And He speaks! And how He speaks. He speaks so that the dead hear His voice, and they leave the sepulchre, and are loosed from the grave-clothes that bind them about. They shed them and walk. They see the light of His mercy, and they travel to the Face, to the Face of God. You cannot keep God's children from walking to heaven.

And going, travelling, marching to Zion, they sing: This God whom we see in the Face of Jesus Christ, is the strength of our strength! His is all the glory!

Salvation is of the Lord!

* * * *

Salvation is of the Lord!

"And I know them!"

What unutterable sweetness is in these words! Jesus Christ, the Son of God, knows me!

This knowing is no mere intellectual knowing, but it is the same "knowing" of Romans 8. It is because of this "knowledge" wherewith God and Christ know us that we arrive in eternal glory. This knowledge is the beginning of the chain of salvation of Romans 8. "And whom he foreknew, He also did predestinate. . ."

Can you fathom this? Jesus knew His sheep from all eternity in a knowledge of indescribable love. He knew them so intently and so wonderfully that for the

sake of the loving foreknowledge He went to hell for them.

And note that the loving knowledge wherewith Jesus knows His sheep is the manifestation of the love of God. Note that the "love of Christ" in verse 35 of Romans 8, becomes "the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus the Lord" in verse 39!

And it is because of this knowledge wherewith Jesus knows His sheep that "they shall not perish unto eternity"; you must read the text that way. They shall not perish unto all eternity, no, for Jesus did perish for them. He perished unto eternity, that is, He died the eternal death for them. You see: your Jesus is the Good Shepherd. And your negative pasture is this, that He died the death for His sheep.

It means that He took upon Himself all your guilt, and death, and damnation. And coming from the tomb, He sang into your ears: There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Me! They shall nevermore die!

And no one shall be able to pluck them out of the hand of the Good Shepherd!

Who would attempt to do that?

Oh, but there are many that would if they could. There is the devil and his devils.

They would love to pluck you out of the hand of the Shepherd.

Jesus has revealed to us that Satan would like to have sifted the apostle Peter like wheat is sifted. But Jesus prayed. And Peter stayed in the hand of the Shepherd. You can tell that. For when it seems as though Peter was lost, Jesus takes one look at him, and Peter weeps, he weeps bitterly and goes weeping into the night. Oh God, be merciful to me the sinner! It is the strength of the loving hand of Jesus that keeps Peter on the way to the city of God. Judas weeps too, but he takes the cord and hangs himself. And the deepest reason is that Jesus did not pray for Judas, did not know him in love, and did not prepare his pasture.

There is the world, inspired by the devil and his hosts of hell.

And they, too, would like to spoil the sheep of Christ with an eternal spoiling. They hate you, for you exhibit Jesus, and God. Him they hated before they hated you, and they hate you for His sake.

But Jesus has overcome the world, and He continues to overcome the world by the implanting of a living faith in your hearts. Your faith overcomes the world.

And so: the world is not able to pluck you out of the hand of Jesus.

And there is the power of sin in your heart, inspired by the world and the devil who dwell there by nature. And even though your inner heart is renewed by the power of grace of which we spoke above, there

are the remnants of sin in your members, and they, too, would spoil you, and pluck you out of the hand of Christ. Let us put it this way: if Jesus did not hold you firmly in His hand, you, yourself, would try to get out of His hand! You, as you are by nature, are in league with the devil and the world he inspires.

But Jesus loves you, and He holds you. "The Lord my Saviour holds me!" Remember? How you sang that song? Well, He does. And He does it through the almighty power of His grace which becomes evident in faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God!

For: Salvation is of the Lord!

* * * *

Salvation is of the Lord!

And I give unto them eternal life!

It is tantamount to saying, as He does later: My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand."

Eternal life is to know God, Triune, and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent.

To have eternal life, therefore, is to have the knowledge of the living God in your inmost heart.

Eternal life is more than enduring life. Adam had this in Paradise. But he could lose it. And he did lose it. Moreover, it was only earthly knowledge of God.

Eternal life is to know God, deeper than Adam in Paradise. It is to know more of God's virtues in a qualitative and also in a quantitative sense. Qualitative: we know God as the God of our salvation who would go to hell for us. I ask you: what did Adam know of that kind of a God? Quantitative: I ask you: what did Adam know of the *riches of the wisdom and the power of God*? Through the cross, as a prism, the "white" rays of the virtues of God are broken into the variegated beauties of the knowledge of God in goodness, patience, longsuffering, forgiveness, grace for grace, and what more would tell us of the story of the indescribable love of God in the Face of His Son, groaning and crying in eternal darkness. Will you measure the greatness of the love of God? Well, go stand before the cross during the three hours darkness, and listen to the sighs of the Lamb.

Creation, history, providence, the Bible, Jesus and God Triune unite to sing one song: Salvation is of the Lord! Are you prepared to sing its Choruses? To do so is heaven.

G. Vos.

A struggling church is not dead at any rate.

—Selected.

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EDITORIALS

Prof. Dr. S. Greijdanus

Notice of the passing of this man of God in the Netherlands came to us on the 25th of last month, that is, on the day the forms of our Standard Bearer closed, and we could insert the notice as such, and no more. There was no time or room for a proper editorial expressing our sympathy both to the bereaved family, and the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands.

Hence, this editorial at a later date.

But even now, we are severely handicapped when we set ourselves to write about the death of our departed brother. We know next to nothing of his history. Both our reading public here, and the brothers and sisters in the Netherlands will kindly remember this, when evaluating our humble efforts.

Above we said that we feel that we should express our sympathy to the *Reformed Churches*, and we did not specify whether we meant the Reformed Churches that are called the Synodicals, or the Reformed Churches, Art. 31. And we did so purposely. For although we know next to nothing of the precise details of the Dr.'s life, we do know that he was a man who was held in high esteem in the Reformed Churches. The very fact that he served the church as Professor at Kampen for fully thirty years would bear out this testimony. He received this distinction before the deplorable break which occurred in the years 1942-46.

A man that was held in high esteem!

Those are the words which I used.

And they were borne out when we listened to the evaluation of Dr. Greijdanus from the mouth of Prof. Dr. K. Schilder, especially during his last visit to our shores. Whenever he spoke of him we noted a warm friendship, grateful appreciation, and most of all, a distinct note of reverence for the departed brother's personal piety which, according to Dr. Schilder, was outstanding in his life and walk.

If we take into account the wonderful fruits of his enlightened mind, such as are reflected in his published writings, coupled with his primary position at the Theological School at Kampen, we realize that his passing is a great loss to the cause of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands.

However, we hasten to add that we speak as a man. We are of yesterday and know nothing. We talk about shocks, and losses, and catastrophies, but God is God. He is the All-wise God and covenant Jehovah. He always knows what He is doing. And He doeth all things well. The passing of this brother, who might occupy

such an exalted position in His church on earth, was nothing but adorable wisdom. And that is so from *every* point of view: for him, his sorrowing relatives, the Reformed Churches, maintaining art. 31, the Reformed Churches in ecclesiastical bondage, and for the Church at large.

At the sounding of the trump when the Arch-angel of God shall usher in the judgment, we shall see more clearly than we do now. And then we shall see that the darkest hours of the church, when tears and blood and untold suffering were her portion, were really the golden hours, the hours when the eternal mystery of Godliness would shine the brightest. Just one example: the crucifixion of our Lord! The instituted church thought that it was the end of everything. And all the while the loss, the shock of the Cross, the catastrophe of a crucified Jesus was really the central ray in the ocean of light that beams from our Father's mercy!

Sorrowing relatives of brother Greijdanus! Sorrowing churches of the Netherlands! Arm yourselves with the same thought! It is sweetest consolation.

The brother now sings in jubilant tones of the mercy of His God!

But we are still in the shadows.

Let us work while it is day that no one take our crown!

G. Vos.

A Helpful Speech

These days I received a letter from the Board of our paper, asking me to publish a speech which the Rev. H. Veldman spoke at a recent meeting of our paper. The brethren of the Board opine that this speech may help them in the work of propagating our paper among our people. And they are right. We gladly do so. And since in this issue there is no room anywhere else, we gladly give the space of our editorials for its publication.

The Rev. Herman Veldman spoke as follows:

OUR CALLING AS THE R. F. P. A.

The Standard Bearer, as all of us or most of us probably know, did not appear after the ministers, H. Danhof, H. Hoeksema, and G. M. Ophoff were deposed. These ministers were deposed at the beginning of the year 1925; our association, known as the Reformed Free Publishing Association, was born in the latter part of the year 1923. Secondly, our Standard Bearer is not a church paper. A church paper, such as The Banner or De Wachter, is controlled by the church—their editor, for example, receives his appointment from the Synod of the Christian Re-

formed Church. The Standard Bearer, however, belongs to this association, the R. F. P. A. We are FREE because we are not bound by ecclesiastical ties. This does not mean, however, that we may run amuck. Fact is, we are also a REFORMED association and have therefore pledged ourselves to advance and propagate the strictly Reformed truth. We are a PUBLISHING association because it is our desire to publish, to proclaim the blessed Reformed heritage which has been committed to us. And we are an ASSOCIATION because we are not bound synodically but represent a group of brethren who have pledged ourselves to preserve and proclaim the blessed truths of the Word of God. This association, the R. F. P. A., was organized because the official organs of the Christian Reformed Church were closed to us and we were denied the privilege to publish our views. With this brief history we are, and if not we should be, acquainted.

I have been asked to address you this evening on a very pertinent question. The question which we face this evening is not whether we are proclaiming or publishing the truth. This, I am sure, is certain among us. I have not been asked to fire you anew with zeal for the Reformed truth. Neither do we face the question whether we must proclaim that truth. This, too, lies in the very nature of the case. The exhortation of Holy Writ to proclaim the virtues of God Who called us out of darkness into His marvellous light is known and clear to all of us. What other calling could we possibly have than to proclaim the virtues and the knowledge of the alone blessed God?! That we must proclaim the truth and condemn whatever opposes the Word of God is surely beyond dispute. However, I am addressing you on the subject: Our calling as the R. F. P. A. The question is not whether we have the truth, or whether we must proclaim that truth, but whether we have that calling as an R.F.P.A. Let us understand and face this question. That the Church of God, institutionally, must proclaim the truths of the Word of God, we all understand. But, may we also as an association be engaged in the propagation of the truth? Do we, as an association, usurp the calling of the Church of God? Have we taken upon ourselves a task which is not rightfully ours? Should not the Standard Bearer become a church paper, controlled and supervised by our synod? Are we not trespassing in the undertaking of this work? Should we not disband? It is this question which I ask this evening and to which I would call your attention a few moments.

We need not emphasize this evening the calling of the Church of God. Indeed, the Church, yea, only the Church may *preach* the gospel. Preaching we define as the official proclamation of the Word of God through which it pleases Christ, the King and sole Missionary of His Church, to speak by His Spirit unto His own.

From Sabbath to Sabbath the Church preaches the Word of God. Also in our catechetical instruction we have official instruction in the Word of God. The preaching of the gospel to others outside the pale of the church is also a task entrusted to the Church of God. Besides these, however, are several other media of instruction which can be traced, directly or indirectly, to the Church. We certainly owe our Bible to the Church. Through the apostles the Lord gave us His inspired Word. And the Church is surely responsible for the translations of the Word in all the languages of the earth. We would have no Bible were it not for the Church of God! Then, we could also refer to the abundance of spiritual literature which has been written by the preachers of the gospel. And, finally, we would call attention to the task of the theological training of prospective ministers of the Word, also entrusted to the Church of God. However, to the Church's task of preaching of the gospel we need not call attention. None disputes this calling.

May we as an association, however, be engaged in the propagation and advancement of the truth? And to this question I would answer that, as believers, maintaining the office of the believer, we may certainly speak, witness of and to the truth. If we may not *preach* the gospel, we may certainly be *witnesses* of that gospel. In the first place, I would remark that, as believers, we *must* witness of the truth. A believer *must* be a witness of the Word of God. Believing and witnessing are related as cause and effect. What else can we do as believers but witness?! Does not the flower open up to the sun and is not this action spontaneous? Does not the point of the compass point to the north because it must? Water rises from the earth in the form of vapor, does it not, because it is irresistibly drawn by the sun? As believers we must witness to the truth of the Word of God. Yea, to this we would add that, as believers, we must be witnesses especially of the Protestant Reformed truth which we love and profess. To believe implies, does it not, that we have learned, by the grace of God, to reject and deny ourselves, to confess our own sin and utter unworthiness, and to rely and trust solely in the living God of our salvation as revealed in our Lord Jesus Christ. This is also the heart and core of our Protestant Reformed doctrine, viewed from the viewpoint of the Church's subjective, spiritual experience. The blessed heritage of our churches emphasizes, does it not, that salvation is of God alone, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and that according to the Lord's eternal and sovereign good pleasure. That is the truth we profess. That is the truth held before us in the Word of God. That is also the living, glorious experience of the living Child of God. As believers, we live out of Christ, are solely dependent upon that Christ, live the very life of Christ and unto the glory of Christ. And, as believers,

we *must* speak! We *must* witness! And we must witness particularly of our Protestant Reformed truth! We are witnessing believers—of course, we must be such!

Secondly, as believers we *may* witness of the truth. The Word of God supports me in this contention. Acquainted are we all with that short but beautiful word in Isaiah 43, verse 21: "This people have I formed for Myself; they shall *shew forth* My praise." Or, permit me to call your attention to the word of our Lord in Matthew 10:33: "Whosoever therefore shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father, which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in heaven." Or, I am reminded of the Word of God in Romans 10, verse 9: "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." To believe in our hearts that God raised Christ from the dead implies, therefore, that we must confess Him with the mouth. And the apostle, John, declares to the Church of God in I John 2:20-21: "But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things. I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth." The last passage of the Word of God which I would quote we read in the gospel of Mark, chapter 5, verses 18-19: "And when He was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil, prayed Him that he might be with Him. Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee." We are all acquainted with the Scriptural narrative connected with these words of Mark. We recognize the man from whom the Lord had cast the devil. He is known in Scripture as Legion. Having been delivered by the Saviour of his fearful plague he would ever remain with the Lord and depart with Him to the other side of the lake. The Lord, however, suffered him not, we read, but commands him to go home to his friends, and to tell them what great things the Lord had done for him. He must be a witness of his Lord and speak of the greatness of His power and grace. We may, therefore, be witnesses of the truth.

But, if we may be witnesses of the truth, then we also *must* be witnesses of the Word of God. In this matter we have no choice. And we surely can be witnesses of the truth also by giving this association and our Standard Bearer our active support. The Standard Bearer is a wonderful medium through which we may proclaim the clear and unadulterated truth of the Word of God. Permit me to give you three reasons why we should consider it our privilege and calling to support the R. F. P. A. First of all, our churches have

received a glorious heritage. We proclaim an unspeakably blessed truth. We may proclaim the truth that God is God alone, also in the work of His salvation. We consider it to be the heart and core of our faith that the Lord establishes with His people in Christ Jesus His own covenant-fellowship and communion and that He will complete it in eternal and heavenly glory according to His eternal and sovereign good pleasure. To this fact the Reverend H. Hoeksema calls attention in his pamphlet "The Standard Bearer as a Witness".

Secondly, we not only have a glorious truth but also a unique truth. I refer to the fact that the truth of the Lord's sovereign realization of His covenant is being attacked today on many fronts. The Christian Reformed Churches denied us their fellowship because we would proclaim the sovereign glory of our God. They would have their people believe that the gospel is an offer of salvation to all that hear it, that the natural man can do good without regenerating grace, and that there is a restraint of sin, not only in the life of the community but also within the life of the individual man. We, on the other hand, hold fast to the Faith of our Fathers, proclaim that the gospel is a power of God, in those that are saved and also in those that perish according to the Lord's good pleasure, that in us as we are of ourselves no good dwelleth, yea, that salvation is exclusively of the Lord. Need I at this time call attention to the general distortion of the truth of God's sovereign grace? Over the radio and in literature of every sort the truth of the Word of God is being attacked from every quarter. Let us be witnesses of the truth that God is God alone, also by giving our full support to the Standard Bearer, our banner by means of which we give testimony to the truth of God's sovereignty, and that in the midst of a world and church which are becoming increasingly hostile to the Word of God.

Thirdly, I would conclude by reminding you of your responsibility. We occupy a responsible position. Unto us has been entrusted a glorious heritage. We *must* confess it. We *must* proclaim it. We *must* safeguard it. God calls us unto this task. We have no choice. May we be true to this calling, and recognize the Standard Bearer as a wonderful means to safeguard the heritage which the Lord has entrusted unto us.

H. Veldman.

— NOTICE —

The Board of the R. F. P. A. is considering the matter of a part time business manager for our publication. This position would be permanent and subject to election, and would have a regular salary.

Anyone interested or having any suggestions to offer, please confer with: A. Wychers, 900 Watkins St., or Chas. Doezeema, 1242 Orville St., S. E., City.

THE TRIPLE KNOWLEDGE

An Exposition Of The Heidelberg Catechism

PART TWO

Lord's Day XXIII

3.

FAITH AND JUSTIFICATION.

The sixty-third question of the Heidelberg Catechism treats of the relation between justification and faith. "Why sayest thou," the Catechism asks, "that thou art righteous by faith only?" And the answer is twofold: negatively, the Catechism replies, "Not that I am acceptable to God, on account of the worthiness of my faith;" and, positively, the answer is, "but because only the satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ, is my righteousness before God; and that I cannot receive and apply the same to myself any other way than by faith only."

And this answer is Scriptural.

Already in the Old Testament we read of this righteousness by faith. When the Word of the Lord came unto Abraham, that not the one born in his house, but "he that shall come forth out of thine bowels shall be thine heir," and God pointed him to the stars of heaven as an illustration of the multitudinousness of his seed, it is said of Abraham that "he believed in the Lord and he counted it unto him for righteousness." Gen. 15:6. To understand this properly we must bear in mind that the faith of Abraham was faith in the promise of God, the one and the same promise essentially that was already given by God in the protevangel of Paradise. It was the promise of the seed of the woman, and the seed was Christ. It was this promise that was the object of Abraham's faith. His faith, therefore, was saving faith. Abraham believed through Christ in God. And let us not overlook the fact that God accounted Abraham's faith for righteousness. We must come back to this relation of faith and righteousness a little later. But even now we must remark that this passage presents that relation not as merely subjective on the part of Abraham, so that he was justified *in foro conscientiae*, but that it speaks of an objective act of God: God counted Abraham's faith as righteousness. True, as the Catechism correctly remarks, that does not at all imply that faith as an act of man is in itself worthy of righteousness; nor can it mean that God reckons arbitrarily faith as righteousness, for God cannot reckon what is not true; but it un-

doubtedly does mean that all our righteousness is in Christ only, and that faith is the bond that unites us with Christ, so that through faith we are righteous in Christ even before God.

Thus the apostle Paul explains the relation between faith and justification especially in his epistle to the Romans. In chapter 4, verse 3, ff. the apostle refers to and elaborates upon the text of Genesis 15:6: "For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." The apostle shows emphatically that justification by faith is opposed to justification by works, so that even faith itself cannot be accounted as a work-basis for righteousness. Already in verse 2 the apostle had written: "If Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God." And in verses 4 and 5 he continues to emphasize that justification by faith is of mere grace, for he writes: "Now to him that worketh the reward is not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."

Moreover, the apostle in this chapter shows that it was not only the faith of Abraham, nor of his seed only, but also the faith of all that believe, whether of the circumcision or of the uncircumcision, that is counted for righteousness. For, the apostle argues, Abraham received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had before the circumcision, that he might be a father of all them that believe, and righteousness might be imputed to them also.

Even the promise that Abraham and his seed should be the heir of the world was through the *righteousness of faith*. vs. 13.

And this faith was imputed to him for righteousness, not because of the worthiness of his faith, but because it was strong to believe the promise of God, and through the promise to cling to Christ. "Before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were. Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body, now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither the deadness of Sarah's womb: He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness." Rom. 4:17-22. It is plain, therefore, that faith is imputed by God unto righteousness, because it believes the promise, through the promise clings to Christ Who is the promise, and

through Christ relies wholly on God, Who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were, the God of our complete salvation. And all this is not only true for Abraham but holds for us who believe in the same God of our salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord. This the apostle expresses at the close of this beautiful chapter: "Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him; But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification."

The same truth is evident from Romans 3, verses 20 to 31. There the apostle writes: "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference." We may interrupt the quotation here to call attention to the expression in verse 21, "the righteousness of God". It is plain that by this expression is not indicated righteousness of God as an attribute, but as a gift of God to us. It is a righteousness which God from eternity has conceived in His sovereign counsel, a righteousness which He realized for us in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and which God Himself bestows upon us by the gift of faith. It is, therefore, from the beginning to the end a righteousness, not of man, but of God alone.

And now we continue the quotation.

"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith. Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law." Here, too, the truth of justification by faith only is emphasized throughout. And it is also evident that the Heidelberg Catechism expresses the relation of faith and justification correctly, when it declares that we are not justified because of the worthiness of our faith, but only because faith lays hold upon the satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ. He is our

righteousness before God, and we are justified freely by His grace.

In Rom. 5:1 the relation of justification and faith is conceived of rather from the subjective point of view. There we read the well-known words: "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." The expression "being justified by faith" is literally, according to the original, "being justified out of faith". The emphasis, therefore, seems to fall on faith as being the source of our justification. And this certainly can only refer to our justification *in foro conscientiae*, that is, in our own consciousness.

The same truth is taught in Gal. 2:15-17. There we read: "We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid." And again, in Gal. 3:5-11, the apostle teaches the truth of justification by faith only as follows: "He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith." And once more, in verses 22-24 of the same chapter, we read: "But the scripture have concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterward be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith."

And this gospel of justification by faith only the apostles proclaimed in the world both to Jews and Gentiles. In the synagogue at Antioch the apostle declares: "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe

are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses."

We could quote more. But this is sufficient. For from all these passages it becomes abundantly evident: first of all, that we are justified by faith only; secondly, that this faith whereby we are justified is not another work: it stands opposed, not only to the work of the law, but to all merit: it is not meritorious in any sense; thirdly, that, nevertheless, it is accounted by God for righteousness; fourthly, that the basis of this imputation on the part of God is the promise to which faith clings, and the promise is Christ, so that His righteousness and holiness is the only and ultimate ground of our righteousness before God.

From all this it ought to be rather plain how we must conceive of the proper relation between faith and justification.

It is certainly not the ground or part of the ground of our righteousness before God. For it is not another work. That this is the relation is, however, virtually the view of all that deny the vicarious nature of Christ's satisfaction and atonement. Thus, for instance, the governmental theory maintains that Christ died, not to atone and to pay for the sins of all the elect, but as a setting forth of the justice and righteousness of God, as an expression of what God might justly do to all sinners. If now they acknowledge the justice of God and repent, God is satisfied because His moral government of the world is maintained and vindicated in the consciences of men, and He freely forgives them their iniquity. It is plain that according to this view faith becomes a work, the work of man, rather than the complete reliance upon the righteousness of Christ.

Virtually all Arminians, who deny particular atonement, that is, the truth that Christ died only for the elect, and who for that reason must ultimately deny vicarious atonement altogether, present this view of the relation between faith and justification.

A few illustrations of this fact we have in the condemnation of the errors in the Canons of Dordrecht, II, B, 2-4. We read there that the Synod rejects the errors of those:

"Who teach: That it was not the purpose of the death of Christ that he should confirm the new covenant of grace through his blood, but only that he should acquire for the Father the mere right to establish with man such a covenant as he might please, whether of grace or of works. For this is repugnant to Scripture which teaches that Christ has become the Surety and Mediator of a better, that is, the new covenant, and that a testament is of force where death has occurred. Heb. 7:22; 9:15, 17.

"Who teach: That Christ by his satisfaction merited neither salvation itself for anyone, nor faith, whereby this satisfaction of Christ unto salvation is effectually

appropriated; but that he merited for the Father only the authority or perfect will to deal again with man, and to prescribe new conditions as he might desire, obedience to which, however, depended on the free will of man, so that it therefore might have come to pass that either none or all should fulfill these conditions. For these adjudge too contemptuously of the death of Christ, do in no wise acknowledge the important fruit or benefit thereby gained, and bring again out of hell the Pelagian error."

"Who teach: That the new covenant of grace, which God the Father, through the mediation of the death of Christ, made with man, does not herein consist that we by faith, inasmuch as it accepts the merits of Christ, are justified before God and saved, but in the fact that God having revoked the demand of perfect obedience of faith, regards faith itself and the obedience of faith, although imperfect, as the perfect obedience of the law, and does esteem it worthy of the reward of eternal life through grace. For these contradict the Scriptures: 'Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood,' Rom. 3:24, 25. And these proclaim, as did the wicked Socinus, a new and strange justification of man before God, against the consensus of the whole church."

Especially in the last-named article, in which the grievous error of the Socinians, which was followed by the Arminians, is exposed, it is plain that faith is presented as a work of man, acceptable to God. It is not faith in the merits of Christ by which we are justified before God, but faith as a work, and the works of faith, though they are imperfect in themselves, are regarded by God as perfect obedience, and worthy of eternal life.

All this is clearly contradictory to the plain teaching of Holy Writ. It denies both the satisfaction and vicarious atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ and salvation by pure grace as over against all works and merit of man.

H. Hoeksema.

Van Boeken

Christus De Heiland, onder redactie van Prof. Dr. F. W. Grosheide. Uitgever J. H. Kok, Kampen, Nederland.

Dit is in vele opzichten een boek, dat geheel eenig in zijn soort mag heeten. Ook is het een mooi boek. Het is semi-wetenschappelijk, maar op zulk een wijze wordt de stof behandeld, dat we het aan het lezend publiek gerust aan bevelen kunnen. In vijftien hoofdstukken behandelen even zoovele schrijvers het centrale onderwerp *Christus De Heiland* als volgt: I, De Profeetie; II, In De Wereld Gezonden; III, Christus In De

Brieven; IV, De Strijd Om Het Dogma; V, Het Koning-schap Van Christus; VI, Jezus Christus En De Moderne Tijd; VII, Christus En De Wereld Van Het Oosten; VIII, Christus In De Schilder—En Beeldbouwkunst; IX, Christus In De Literatuur; X, Christus In De Muziek; XI, Christus In De Apocriefe Evangelien En Brieven; XII, De Christologie In De Mystiek En De Philosophie; XIII, Christus En De Psychologie; XIV, Christus En Zijn Tijdgenooten; XV, Losse Uitspraken Over Christus.

Natuurlijk wil de aanbeveling van een boek als dit niet zeggen, dat we het met alles, wat de schrijvers ons bieden eens zijn. Zoo zijn wij het b.v. niet eens met Dr. Dijk, wanneer hij schrijft, dat Christus in de relatie van een "werkverbond" tot God stond, en dat Hij gedaan heeft, wat Adam had moeten doen, want Adam kon onmogelijk ons naar de eeuwige heerlijkheid geleid hebben. Ook zijn we het niet eens met hetgeen dezelfde schrijver zegt over Christus' Koning-schap in verband met de z.g.n. gemeene gratie. Maar dat neemt niet weg, dat de schrijvers ons een interessant boek bieden, dat het lezen waard is. Het boek beslaat 477 paginas. De prijs bedraagt f. 8.90.

H. H.

Het Boek De Prediker, door Dr. G. Ch. Aalders. Uitgever, J. H. Kok, Kampen, Nederland.

Dit boek is zeker niet bestemd voor het algemeen lezend publiek, maar is een wetenschappelijke commentaar op het boek *De Prediker*, dat we echter al onzen predikanten aanraden zich aan te schaffen. In eene *Inleiding* behandelt de schrijver: de Naam, de Schrijver, de Tijd en Plaats van ontstaan, de Eenheid van compositie, en de Plaats en beteekenis in den Kanon van het boek *De Prediker*, om dan over te gaan tot de verklaring van het boek zelf.

Wat betreft de schrijver van *De Prediker* is Dr. Aalders het eens met Delitsch, e.a. dat deze niet koning Salomo geweest kan zijn, maar "een ongenoemde wijsheidsleeraar, die zich bediende van de litteraire figuur om Salomo voor zich te kunnen laten spreken."

En wat de beteekenis in den Kanon betreft, ziet de schrijver het boek als "Evangelie, omdat het in de ziel van den in het aardsche leven met al zijn zorgen en moeiten teleurgestelden mensch het verlangen wekt naar Hem, die de onvergankelijke parel van zeer groote waarde schenkt, en omdat het in het wekken van dat verlangen tevens de belofte biedt, dat het vervuld zal worden in den Verlosser, dien God geven zal."

In betwijfel of dit laatste waar is van het boek *De Prediker* op zichzelf genomen.

De verklaring die Dr. Aalders ons biedt kenmerkt zich door grondige studie en degelijkheid. Het beslaat 262 paginas. De prijs bedraagt f. 9.75.

H. Hoeksema.

OUR DOCTRINE

God's Covenant and The Promise

(Hebrews 6:16-18)

Romans 9, we have seen, surely establishes the particular and wholly unconditional character of the promise or promises of God. To this we called attention in the two previous numbers of our paper. The apostle Paul, we noted, was struggling with a great problem. He was confronted, on the one hand, with the word or promise of Jehovah that the Lord would bestow the salvation of His eternal covenant upon Abraham and his seed. And, on the other hand, he was troubled because of the rejection of Israel. We do well to bear in mind that this constituted for the apostle a great problem, that it caused him great heaviness and sorrow of heart. The perishing of many Israelites according to the flesh was painful and distressing to Paul. And the same heaviness and sorrow of heart must characterize the people of God throughout the ages. Reprobation is not a doctrine which can accord anyone personal and carnal satisfaction.

Nevertheless, the truth of God must be proclaimed. Whatever our personal wishes and desires may be, never may we detract one iota from the sovereignty of God. Hence, according to the apostle, one thing is sure: it is not true that the word of God has taken none effect. Such would be impossible. God cannot lie. If, therefore, the promise of the Lord was not realized in many Israelites according to the flesh, this is due only to the fact that this promise of Jehovah is particular, was never intended for all, and is realized by the alone sovereign Lord in those whom He has loved from before the foundation of the world. To substantiate this truth the apostle directs us, successively, to the examples of Isaac, Jacob and Esau, the many Israelites who perished in the wilderness, Pharaoh, the figure of the potter and the clay. And it is especially the example of Pharaoh, as well as the figure of the potter and the clay, which illustrates the truth, not only that the Lord is merciful to whom He will be merciful, but also that whom He will He hardeneth. The Lord, therefore, not only grants life; He also inflicts death. He not only makes alive; He also killeth. He not only calleth some unto eternal salvation through the preaching of the gospel; He also causes that same gospel to be a savour of death unto death. He not only wills the salvation of some; He also, according to His eternal good pleasure and unto the greatest manifestation of the glory of His name, wills the damnation of others. The Lord not only performs

all His good pleasure in those who are saved; He is equally sovereign and irresistible with respect to the others who never know the way and the precepts of Jehovah. This is the pure and unadulterated truth which the holy writer holds before us in the ninth chapter of his epistle to the Romans. And now we will turn to other passages of the Word of God.

The passage which will engage our attention in this article, Hebrews 6:16-18, reads as follows: "For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of the promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us."

The Context.

A key-word in this chapter of Hebrews, especially in the verses 11-20 is the word "promise." Another word of great significance in this passage, closely related to "promise", is the word "hope". This must be obvious to anyone who reads the latter half of Hebrews 6. Hope and promise, in this part of Holy Writ, we quickly surmise, are intimately related. Both refer to the same thing: our eternal salvation. The one views this salvation from the viewpoint of God, Who has promised it. The other regards this eternal glory from the viewpoint of the Christian as he hopes for it. And the question is of supreme importance, "How can we with certainty hope for that eternal salvation?" Is the promise conditional or unconditional? This question is of the greatest significance.

In verses 1-3 the apostle exhorts the church of God "to go on unto perfection." We must not remain with the principles, the beginnings of the doctrine of Christ. We cannot remain young catechumens and continue satisfied with "Borstius Primer". We must advance beyond the foundation stage. When engaged in the erection of a building we are not satisfied merely with the foundation; we continue our labors until the entire structure has been completed. We, too, as Christians, must go on to perfection; we must advance and grow, intellectually and spiritually. This we will do, we read in verse 3, if God permit. Our growth depends upon the Lord. Fact is, all do not advance, and this, too, is dependent upon God.

Fact remains, according to verses 4-8, some who were once enlightened fall away. We need not at this time quote these verses, 4-8. Of these people we read that it is impossible that they be renewed unto repentance. It is definitely the thought of the holy writer here that it is impossible for God to renew them unto repentance. Only God can renew unto repentance. If, then, we read that it is impossible that they be

renewed unto repentance, the implication of the expression is surely that such is Divinely impossible. Hence, their spiritual renewal and advance the Lord does not permit. However, according to verse 9, the apostle is persuaded better things of the Hebrews, things that accompany salvation.

Hereupon the apostle proceeds to exhort the church of God once more unto spiritual diligence. He admonishes them in verses 11-12, that they be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises. Notice, "as in all covenants there are contained two parts" this is our part, namely, that we be not slothful but followers of them who inherit the promises. Upon this calling and obligation of the people of God, that they must fight the good fight of faith and conduct themselves as the party of the living God, Scripture surely lays abundant emphasis. And now, to comfort this struggling church of God, to assure her of the certainty of her victory, the holy writer concludes this chapter by directing her to the living God, Who, to show unto the heirs of the promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed that promise with an oath.

Heirs Of The Promise.

Evidently, the promise in this passage must not be understood in the subjective sense of the word. Emphasis does not fall upon the promise as the solemn declaration of the living God, promising them eternal glory and salvation. The promise here must be regarded objectively, that which has been promised. The apostle is referring us to the promise of everlasting life. Notice also that the holy writer speaks of the heirs of the promise, not heir of the promise. Hence, it is evident that he does not merely refer to Abraham but to all the people of the Lord throughout the ages, also to the people of God of the New Dispensation. This fact surely establishes the heavenly character of the promises of God, also of the promise given to Abraham. Abraham, therefore, is but one of the heirs of the promise and shares it with all the people of God of all the ages. We all are heirs of the same promise. Hence, the promise given to the father of believers was not earthly, as the Chiliasts would have us believe. That promise was heavenly. The one God proclaims only one promise. We all are heirs of the promise of the Lord unto eternal and heavenly salvation and glory.

And we are *heirs* of the promise. The apostle does not say that we are children of the promise. That expression, we know, occurs in the ninth chapter of Romans. Children of the promise are the people of God because they are brought forth through the irresistible and almighty power of the promise, the power of God whereby He realize His promise in the hearts of His own. We, according to this passage in Heb. 6,

are heirs of the promise, as we also read in Romans 8. We are all, more or less, acquainted with the idea of an heir. An heir is one who has obtained a legal right to a certain possession. To be an heir does not necessarily imply actual possession. One can be an heir and be as poor as a church mouse. An inheritance is a *legal* possession. And an heir is he who has obtained legal rights to such a possession. God's people are heirs of the promise of everlasting life. They are entitled to, have a right to that eternal glory. They are heirs of that glory because Christ redeemed them out of the power of the devil and merited for them eternal happiness and glory. Hence, we are co-heirs with Christ, heirs together with Christ. He is *the* Heir of eternal life. He merited it, surely also for Himself. And we are co-heirs with Him, in fellowship with Him, and because he merited it for us.

God's Confirmation of the Promise With an Oath.

We should note the connection between verses 16 and 17. To quote these verses again: "For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. *Wherein* God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of the promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath." Verse 17 is introduced by the word, "wherein" we read: "*Wherein* God, willing more abundantly. . ." The expression, translated "wherein", may also be translated "wherefore" God, then, confirmed His promise with an oath. Why? What prompted the Lord to do this? To this question we have an answer in the verses 16 and 17. On the one hand, the Lord, in behalf of His people, desired to shew them more abundantly the immutability of His counsel, the counsel of His salvation. We read "more abundantly" because the Lord had already given them the promise. And the promise is in itself an abundant proof of the unchangeable character of the counsel of His salvation. But now, to shew this immutability the more abundantly, He adds the oath to the promise. Fact is, according to verse 16, the oath is the end of all strife, of all disputing and opposition. An oath always implies three things. Firstly, in an oath the Name of God is used to witness to the truth of what is said or testified. Secondly, when a person is placed under oath such a person is called into the conscious presence of the Lord. Of course, we are always in the presence of God. In the Lord we move and live and have our being. And it lies in the very nature of the case that no man can remove himself out of the presence of the Lord. God always beholds all the children of men. Besides, man is always obliged to speak the truth whether or not he is placed under oath. This, however, does not necessarily imply that every man, although really always in the presence of the Lord, is therefore also *consciously* in that Divine presence.

The contrary is true. Hence, an oath places a person, at that very moment, consciously and sharply before the very face of God, directly in the presence of the date preceding, the oath implies that God is called in Lord. And thirdly, in close connection with the immediate preceding, the oath implies that God is called in as a witness; the Lord of heaven, Who knoweth man's heart, will Himself reveal the truthfulness of his testimony. Now we can more readily understand verse 16, that "an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife." Fact is, when an oath is sworn, man verily swears by the greater, by the living God, and declares that He is Witness of what is said or testified and will confirm the testimony. It is for this reason that, when an oath is sworn, not only man's but also God's truthfulness and veracity is involved. The oath is God's institution; He instituted it. Hence, the God of truth must condemn him who lies under oath because He must maintain His own unchangeable holiness and truthfulness. The use of the oath was the end of all strife and dispute. The matter was simply given into the hand of the Lord. God, now, to shew more abundantly the immutability, unchangeableness of His counsel, His eternal decree to save, and also to establish His people in the faith, also made use of the oath; and, inasmuch as His is God and there is therefore none greater than He, He swore by Himself: "As truly as I live, saith the Lord. . . ."

Notice, this Divine oath shews more abundantly the immutability of His counsel. We do not read here of the Lord's "immutable counsel" but of "immutability of His counsel". The reason is evident. All emphasis is laid upon the unchangeableness of the Lord's decree. His counsel is immutable, cannot be revoked or changed. According to our Confessions, and specifically our Canons of Dordrecht in their rejection of errors, the Arminians taught exactly such a changeableness in the counsel of God. They taught a Divine decree which adapted itself to conditions among men, so that God's counsel to save in the Old Dispensation differed from His decree to save as in the New Dispensation. Be this as it may, the counsel of salvation is immutable, can never be revoked or changed. And this immutable character of the counsel, we read, is evident from the Divine oath. God's counsel, we remarked, is His eternal decree to save His people even to the uttermost. God's oath is the word of the Lord whereby He swears by Himself to fulfill His promise. The Lord, the holy writer continues in verse 18, cannot lie. We do not merely read that He does not lie. The Lord cannot lie. It is impossible for God to lie. He is *God*. As God He is the Absolute Good, the Eternal, and Self-Sufficient, and Self-Existent Fount of purest life and perfection. He is a light and in Him is no darkness whatever. He is pure holiness and righteousness. He *is* such a light. Holiness and righteousness

and truth constitute His very being. As, in a faint and creaturely sense of the word, it is impossible for fire not to throw heat, for water not to moisten, for the sun not to give light, so, in an absolute sense of the word, it is impossible for the Lord to lie. To lie would constitute a violation, a denial by the Lord Himself. And as the eternal and overflowing Fount of all good God cannot deny Himself. When He speaks He always speaks of Himself, as the infinitely good and perfect God, in Whom is no darkness but infinite and perfect light. The very fact that the unchangeable God swears by Himself, "backs up", guarantees His own promise by appealing to Himself, is evidence that His decree to save is as unchangeable as He Himself is unchangeable. The Lord, therefore, to shew unto us the immutability of His counsel, did not hesitate to support His promise with His infinite Self, as a guarantee of the unchangeableness of His decree, His counsel to save His own even unto the end.

A Powerful Consolation.

What a strong, mighty consolation, what a powerful comfort this particular Scripture presents unto the fighting and struggling people of God! This mighty consolation of the people of God constitutes the purpose of this Divine pledge. We read in verse 18: "*That* by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." The word "*that*" or "*in order that*", '*hina*' in the original, signifies purpose and result. That we might have a mighty consolation is, therefore, the purpose of the Divine oath but also the result. Result and purpose are always one, identical in all to the works of the Lord. We do not always attain unto our purpose. The Lord's purposes, however, never fail. It is well that we always bear this in mind. When, therefore, some are hardened through the preaching of the gospel the Lord, also with respect to them, attains unto His purpose. God, then, confirmed His promise with an oath in order that we might have a strong comfort in the midst of our struggle in the world.

No wonder this is a mighty consolation! We have, so we read, two immutable things here of a God Who cannot lie. The one immutable thing is the Divine promise. That word of the Lord is itself unchangeable. God cannot lie. Hence, His word or pledge to save His own is unchangeable. And in addition to His promise He gave us the oath. He did this because of our weaknesses. The word of the promise should have been sufficient. If, however, we should at times experience the feeling of despair, and complain that the Lord has forgotten His promise to save, we may remember the solemn oath of the Lord whereby He swore by Himself to fulfill unto His people His

pledge to save.

Hence, what a mighty consolation we have! The apostle declares that we have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us. We have fled for refuge from the wrath to come! The love of God He has poured out into our hearts! We earnestly seek His face and long for the blessedness of His fellowship which is everlasting life. Hence, we have fled for refuge from the wrath to come, have sought safety and everlasting peace. And we have fled for refuge and safety unto the living God in Christ Jesus our Lord. We have sought peace in the blood of the cross and have tasted that the love of God in Christ has fully blotted out all our sin and merited life and eternal glory for us. And having fled for refuge from the wrath to come we now lay hold upon the hope set before us. Hope in this text must not be understood in the subjective sense of the word, as an activity within us (our hoping), but in the objective sense. The object of our hoping, of our longing and expectation is meant here. That hope is set before us, is always before us. It does not consist of the things of this world, is not earthy. Hence, it is always before us. We never obtain it in this life. It belongs to the world to come, is heavenly and, therefore, other-worldly, and will not become our's until the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. And we lay hold upon it by faith. It is the object of all our longing and expectation. It sustains us in all our suffering and afflictions. It enables the child of God to endure all the afflictions of this present evil world, gives him strength and courage to suffer for Christ's sake, and to run with patience and faith even unto the end.

In this we have a powerful consolation, a mighty force which supports namely, the promise of eternal life. And this promise has been further confirmed by the Divine oath. This promise of God can truly comfort and strengthen us. Because it is contingent, dependent upon us, and therefore conditional? God forbid! Please notice that we are *heirs* of the promise. As heirs we have a right to eternal life, are entitled to it, through and because of the blood of Jesus Christ, our Lord. And, as heirs of everlasting life, we will surely obtain it. Fact is, that promise is anchored in the immutable counsel of the Lord. And it has been promised unto us by the unchangeable God. It is not what we do or must do which comforts and strengthens us in the battle; it is not our willing and running, although it is true that we must will and run even unto the end; it is never of him that runneth or of him that willeth; it is God, God alone, and what *He* will do which strengthens us in the fight. Let us therefore take hold of the promises of the Lord, fight the good fight of faith unto the end, and cling unto Him Who cannot lie. Then, then only will we be assured of the eternal crown of glory. Such is the glorious teaching

of the Word of God in Hebrews 6:16-18. It proclaims unto us the particular and unconditional character of the promises of Jehovah. Nothing less can comfort us. God's faithfulness can fully strengthen us. May we, too, be followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

H. Veldman.

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

Nabal Is Smitten

It was not so much anger as fear that prompted David to take immediate action against Nabal. David was worried about what that "very great" (verse 3) and bitterly hostile man might do to him, were he permitted to live. The sacred text makes this clear. First, David was decided to slay only the males of Nabal's household (verses 22, 34). Second, in reproving David, Abigail speaks of the Lord's withholding him from saving himself with his own hand. So reads the original text and not, "from *avenging* thyself with thine own hand," as the English version has it. David thought it prudent to rid the earth of Nabal and his servants without a moment's delay. That in his unbelief he was afraid as thinking that Nabal might become actively hostile is plain from the whole thrust of Abigail's discourse. She advised him not to "set his mind" on Nabal, meaning, as appears from the sequel of her discourse, that he must not allow that wicked man to destroy his peace of mind and drive him to take recourse to weapons of violence in dealing with his enemies (verse 25). The Lord is against Nabal. Hence, he is doomed and will be destroyed. And all David's enemies and they that seek his soul will be like him (verse 26). David must consider that there is no possibility of his perishing by the hand of his enemies, it being that his soul is bound in the bundle of life with the Lord, but that "souls of his enemies shall be slung out, as out of the midst of a sling" (verse 29), and that, accordingly the Lord will surely build him a house in fulfillment of all the good that he has spoken to him. He shall appoint him ruler over Israel (verse 30). Let David believe the Lord's word, make God his expectation and refrain from securing his position in Israel by the employment of the forbidden weapons of the flesh. He must let God take care of his enemies. The added priceless advantage of his heeding her advice is that he comes into his kingdom with a good conscience before God (verse 31).

The implied rebuke of her discourse is that, whereas the Lord has not authorized that contemplated kill-

ing, David has set out on a forbidden mission and that, if he carries out his intention, he comes to blood. Her proof is that the Lord impedes his progress by placing her on his path—her, Nabal's god-fearing wife. She had nothing to do with Nabal's contemptuous behavior. She esteems David for what he is:—Israel's anointed king by whose hand the Lord saves His people and for whom He will build a sure house. This is her firm belief; for she has taken notice that he fights the Lord's battles and that no evil has been found in him all his days (verse 28). She being a believer, Nabal and his household *must* be spared for *her* sake. For she belongs to that household; in it she occupies the position of Nabal's wife. Any injury done to him is done to her. Hence, David must return his sword to its scabbard as far as Nabal is concerned. It is the Lord's will.

There are three gross sins in which David involves himself if he goes through with his resolve. First, killing Nabal he comes to blood without divine authorization; and that would be murder. Second, killing Nabal he saves himself with his own hand instead of looking in faith to God to deliver him from his enemies. Third, killing Nabal he hurts the righteous Abigail. By confronting David with this believing woman, the Lord keeps him from committing these sins. David understands. He is grateful to God, and blesses His name, the woman, and her advice by which, to quote David, "the Lord kept me this day from coming to blood: from saving myself with mine own hand; and from hurting thee." He ends with affirming under an oath that he would have committed these sins, had she not hasted and come to him (verse 34).

Not so long ago the Lord tempted David by delivering Saul into his hand. Now the Lord tempted His servant by exposing him to the vile treatment of Nabal. Both temptations were endured and thus the Lord's purpose is plain. His purpose was to teach His servant anew that for him the God-appointed way to the throne was the way of cross-bearing, the way of suffering, the way of his enduring the persecutions of wicked men and of looking in faith to God to deliver him out of their hands; and to teach him, too, that in running this way, he runs the way of faith, of spiritual warfare and of victory over all his foes. And David learned these lessons. For by the mercy of God he endured temptation.

Having been dismissed in peace by David, Abigail returns to her place as intending to report to her husband immediately. But it will be a waste of time to report to him now. Her words will make no impression. For Nabal has been feasting in his house with his sheepshearers all during her absence and is very drunken, in the words of the text. But morning comes. Nabal again is sober and Abigail tells him all. Hear-

ing, Nabal is seized with a paroxysm of fear and wrath so great that he suffers a complete loss of all his powers. In the language of the text, his heart dies within him and he becomes a stone. Eight days thereafter he dies. Unbelief says that Nabal's death was the natural result of a violent emotional disturbance caused by his wife's report. But the sacred narrator affirms that the Lord smote him. The narrator speaks the language of faith, and likewise David when he exclaims at hearing of Nabal's death, "Blessed be the Lord, that hath pleaded the cause of my reproach from the hand of Nabal and has kept his servant from evil: for the Lord hath returned the wickedness of Nabal upon his own head." It is clear that David is overjoyed, and with reason. He has received new and striking evidence that the Lord is his God and is for him however ill-deserving he may be in himself. The Lord in His mercy kept His servant from evil. Second, the Lord cleared him of all Nabal's charges by smiting that evil-doing man in punishment of his wickedness; and David blesses the Lord, is thankful to his God. It would be a sad mistake therefore to say that his reply to Abigail's counsel was inspired by a carnal delight in the sudden destruction of an adversary. Such replies rise not from sinful flesh but are inspired by the Spirit of Christ. Noteworthy is the statement, "For the Lord kept His servant from evil." It bespeaks a lively awareness on the part of David that by himself he is just as guilty and vile as is Nabal; so that all his righteousness and goodness is of God. It thus bespeaks, does this statement, a humble spirit, and true contrition of heart. That David spake by the Spirit is clear, too, from Psalm 37, which he wrote at some later period, doubtless with the case of Nabal (among other cases perhaps) in his full view. The psalm contains statements such as these, "Fear not thyself because of evil doers- neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass. . . . Trust in the Lord and do good. . . . Commit thy way unto him. . . . and he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday."

The chapter closes with a detailed account of Abigail's marriage to David. We are told, at the same time, that he took another wife, Ahinoam of Jezreel, and that Saul had given Michal his daughter, David's wife, to one Phalti the son of Laish. These sentences indicate a lack of self-restraint in David's marriage relations that was sinful. His polygamy, though a form of adultery and thus included in the class of sins at which the seventh commandment strikes, was not imputed to him as a crime. It was tolerated in him, as it had been tolerated in Jacob and others. But God did not fail to reveal his displeasure. David never knew the ideal of family happiness. He never knew the ideal of marital love. His polygamy bred strife and con-

tention and the most fearful crimes among his children.

* * * *

Some way back, perhaps a year and a half, Saul had received absolute proof that David was not seeking his life. It happened in the wilderness of Engedi. Saul was pursuing David. Alone the king entered a cave to cover his feet, the very cave in the deep recesses of which David and his men abided, all unknown to the king. David was urged by his men to kill Saul. He cut off the skirt of Saul's robe privately, but he spared Saul. Rising out of the cave, Saul went his way. David followed. Gaining Saul's attention, David told him what had just taken place. The Lord had delivered Saul into his hand, but his eyes had spared the king. This was evidence that he sought not the king's life. And it was evidence that the king could not question. For he saw with his own eyes in seeing himself walk out of that cave alive. Thus, he could no more truthfully deny the genuineness of that evidence and with it David's guiltlessness, than he could honestly doubt the reliability of his own senses, of his eyes and ears. And he could not gainsay that he had been in David's power in that cave. For he saw the cut-off skirt of his robe in David's hand. From that day on Saul was, must have been, as convinced in his inmost heart of David's innocence as he was convinced of his own existence in the flesh. And on that occasion he had also confessed to David, "Thou art more righteous than I: for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil. . . ." Yet, a year and a half later, when the Ziphites come to Saul, to tell him that David hides himself in the hill of Hachilah, the king again bestirs himself and with three thousand chosen men of Israel, sets out to seek David's life to take it. Saul plainly has now developed into a moral monster. His hatred of David is so bitter that he cannot suppress it even though he has seen with his own eyes that he seeks the life of a righteous man.

(to be continued)

G. M. Ophoff.

The fact that a law is violated is no argument for repealing it. Otherwise all of the ten commandments should be repealed.—from the *Church Herald*.

* * * *

Here, then, is the principle of the thing,—it is schism to leave a church if that church is true to the Bible, but it is not schism if that church is not true to the Bible.—*J. Gresham, Machen*.

SION'S ZANGEN

Majesteit En Heerlijkheid

(Psalm 104; Vierde Deel)

Dit is de psalm die de heerlijkheid en de majesteit van den God des hemels en der aarde bezingt.

We zijn toegekomen in ons laatste artikel bij het vers dat sprak van den wijn die verheugt, van olie die doet blinken van welzijn, en van het brood, dat het hart des menschen sterkt.

We gaan nu verder, en hooren dat "De boomen des Heeren worden verzadigd, de cederboomen van Libanon die Hij geplant heeft."

Hier zien we duidelijk, dat de hoofdgedachte van den psalm wel degelijk Gods heerlijkheid en majesteit vertolkt. De ceder is de majestieuze onder de boomen. Reden dan ook, waarom hier gezongen wordt van "de boomen Gods"; en ook, dat zij door Hem geplant zijn. Dat kan niet beduiden, dat de andere, de mindere boomen, niet door God geplant zouden zijn, of dat die andere boomen en struikgewassen niet van God zouden zijn. Alles, letterlijk alles, is van God. Maar hier zit het hem: de cederboom is de heerlijkste onder de boomen, en zoo kunnen we zien, dat de cederboom bij uitstek, en symbolisch, God openbaart, zijn herkomst verraad, en doet zingen van God, den Schepper.

In hoogte, in omvang, in duur, en in kwaliteit is de cederboom gemakkelijk eerst onder de boomgewassen. En er stonden vele van die ceders op den berg Libanon. Keer op keer lezen we daarvan. En zelfs nu nog, op zoo laten datum, zegt men ons, dat de ceders er nog steeds gevonden worden, alhoewel niet meer in groote getale, noch ook in grootte en kwaliteit van weleer.

Die boomen Gods worden verzadigd.

En zij worden door God verzadigd. Letterlijk staat er dat zij vol zijn. God zorgt er voor, sinds hunne planting, dat er voedsel is voor de boomen des wouds. En hoewel die ceder zich verheft tot den hemel toe, stijgen de sappen die leven aanbrengen tot het hoogste blad en twijgje. O zeker, God zorgt voor Zijn schepsel.

En: alles zit aan alles vast. De heerlijkheid van den ceder is ook goed voor de "vogeltjes". Want daar komen zij aan! Ze gaan hun nesten bouwen! De Heere zal voor hen zorgen: Hij heeft de ceders voor hen gemaakt, en door de ceders met het noodige sap te vervullen, zorgt Hij én voor den ceder, én voor de vogeltjes die in zijn takken nestelen.

En "des ooievaars huis zijn de denneboomen."

De ooievaar is de statige onder de vogels. Ook weer een aanduiding van de schepping die de hand eens Schepper's toont!

En die deftige, statige vogel zoekt zijn nest in de denneboomen. Die boomen zijn geheel en al geschikt voor de groote en zware nesten van takken waaruit ze vervaardigd zijn: de denneboomen zijn sterk, de takken strekken zich horizontaal uit, en ze zijn hoog genoeg voor den smaak van den ooievaar die gaarne hoog bouwt.

Hoe wonderlijk, o Heere, zijn Uwe werken! Ook weet het mijn ziel zeer wel! Gij zorgt voor boom en vogel: ze hooren bij elkaar. Straks zingen zij in de takken. En de mensch zou hooren naar het lieflijke gekweel van het gevleugelte. Als we slechts niet zoodom en dwaas waren.

Maar God zorgt. Al is er dan ook niemand meer die luistert. Hij doet het, ter eerster en ter laatster instantie voor Zichzelf. Gods boomen, en Gods ooievaar!

En het is zaligheid dat te zien, te belijden, en zooals de dichter, er van te zingen. Loopt zóó door de natuur henen. Overal zult ge de voetstappen van Uwen God zien en hooren.

“De hooge bergen zijn voor de steenbokken, de steenrotsen zijn een vertrek voor de konijnen.”

Ook hier weer: het eene schepsel dient het andere, en zoo is de geheele schepping een “kosmos”, eene door God bestelde orde, waar ieder schepsel zijn plaats inneemt, het geheel vertoonende de hand des Scheppers.

De hooge bergen.

O ja, die hooge bergen zijn van God, en zij vertellen ons van God.

De hooge bergruggen vertellen ons van den Onveranderlijke, van den Eeuwige Zijnde. De geslachten komen en gaan, doch de bergen? Zij beklijven van geslachte tot geslachte. Men komt te voorschijn op dit benedenrond, eet en drinkt wat, stort wat tranen, en barst uit in lachen, nog wat levens, nog wat stervens, en dan? Men is er geweest. Doch de bergen, de hooge bergen die God gemaakt heeft, blijven. Denkt aan het Erzgebirge in Duitschland. Het stond er onder de lange redevoeringen van Wilhelm II; stond er toen de eerste wereldbrand geopenbaard werd; stond stille toen Hitler zijn dwaasheid uitkraamde in het Sports-palast; en blijft staan nu hij weg is.

O ja, de hooge bergen spreken hun eigen taal. Alles spreekt van God, maar de bergen hebben een hun eigenaardige taal. Bizonderlijk spreken zij van den grooten, machtigen, onveranderlijken God. Onze oogen gaan heen naar de bergen, als we hulp verwachten.

Die groote, grootsche bergen nu zijn een toevlucht voor de wilde geiten, voor de steenbokken. Ik heb ze gezien in de diertuinen. Het is of die beesten altijd aan 't spelen zijn. Het is huiveringwekkend om hen gade te slaan. Zij springen *van* plaatsen en *op* plaatsen, waar het schijnt dat geen standplaats is. Maar God gaf hun wijsheid om juist te springen. En zij spelen van den vroegen morgen tot den laten avond.

Want God zorgt ook voor de steenbokken.

En in de holen en spelonken der bergen is nog een ander leger. Het zijn de berg-konijnen, die door God verzorgd worden. God geeft hun een vertrek. En zij zijn veilig.

Wat is God toch goed!

Doch hier is de schaamte, dat waar die stomme (?) beesten spelen en onbewust God verheerlijken, wij het zien, hooren en opmerken, maar niet loven en prijzen den ganschen dag. Want wij zijn de priesters van ceders, bergen, ooievaars, steenbokken en konijnen. Wij moesten de dingen die een konijn en een bok niet kunnen uitspreken, in ons hart opnemen, en dan voorts gaan zingen, gaan zingen!

Neen, maar wij stroopen de konijnen de vacht af en schieten de steenbokken, zoodat zij neerstorten van hunne hoogten. En dat alles met een hart, dat hard en goddeloos is.

Ook zelf het konijn en de steenbok wachten op een oordeelsdag.

Want dan zullen die beesten deelen in de vrijheid der heerlijkheid der kinderen Gods. Rom. 8.

De wijze spreukendichter heeft eens gezegd, dat de rechtvaardige het leven van zijn beesten zal kennen. Die rechtvaardigheid is zoek, als ons beeld gevonden wordt in de courant: een triumfantelijke lach, terwijl we het doode “ding” omhoog heffen. We vergeten zoo vaak dat snakken, dat hijgen van het brute schepsel naar boven, naar God, wachtende op de openbaring van onze vrijheid en heerlijkheid.

“Hij heeft de maan gemaakt tot de gezette tijden, de zon weet haren ondergang.”

Ik weet niet veel van de hemellichamen. Ik heb er nooit veel studie van gemaakt.

Er zijn geleerden der Heilige Schrift die zeggen, dat deze gezette tijden slaan op de ring van feesten onder Israel, omdat de maanden ingericht werden naar de wentelingen der maan. Anderen zien in dit woord niet anders dan dat de maan de verandering van dag en nacht ons doet zien. De gezette tijden van den tekst slaan dan alleen op de dagen en de nachten, naar Gen. 1:14.

nemen. Vergeten we niet, dat dit vers gedicht is in en

Ik denk, dat we beide gedachten te zamen moeten voor Israel.

En dan die zon die haar ondergang weet.

Hier zou een deist te gast kunnen gaan, en zeggen: ziet ge wel, er zijn natuurwetten, waarnaar het schepsel luistert. De zon weet haren ondergang. De Heere heeft alles op gang gegooid bij den aanvang, en nu loopt alles zijn eigen en bestelden gang.

Zulk een deist vergeet, dat er een verband is, en dan welk een verband! Keer op keer lezen we immers van den Heere die doet, en doet en doet! En zie dan ook naar het onmiddellijke verband. God is het die de duisternis *beschikt*! Onvoltooid tegenwoordigen tijd!

O neen. God is vlak bij ons, en bij alles. En Hij is het die alle dingen doet.

De zon weet haren ondergang. Het beteekent, dat de stomme schepselen Zijn wil doen van oogenblik tot oogenblik. Het is God die elk oogenblik die zon beetneemt en henenslingert door het heelal. En God gaat mee met die heengeslingerde zon: Hij kan niet één schepsel of schepseltje loslaten, ook niet voor een klein ondeelbaar oogenblik. De zon weet haren ondergang. Dat zal waar wezen. Ge kunt het elken avond weer aan zien. En als die zon, ook naar het voorspelde en door den mensch geprofeteerde woord der almanakken, dan ondergaat, dat moet ge steeds zeggen: De Heere doet de zon neigen naar de kimme. Ik de Heere doe alle deze dingen! Want Hij is groot van heerlijkheid en majesteit! Amen.

"Gij beschikt de duisternis, en het wordt nacht, in dewelke al het gedierte des wouds uittreedt; de jonge leeuwen, brieschende om eenen roof, en om hunne spijs van God te zoeken. De zon opgaande, maken zij zich weg en liggen neder in hunne holen."

Ziet ge wel, dat het Gereformeerde kind God gelijk heeft, wanneer hij aanbiddende leert, dat God alles doet? God beschikt de duisternis. God doet de nacht komen. God staat klaar om de jonge leeuwen van roof, van voedsel te voorzien.

Luistert! Het is tijd, dat de dieren gevoed worden.

Ik heb zoo vaak de dierentuinen gezien, in Amsterdam, Berlijn, London, New York, Chicago, en Los Angeles. Maar ik had nooit bijgewoond, dat de wildste dieren gevoed werden. Tot op verleden jaar in Chicago. En toen heb ik het gezien. Ik zal het nooit vergeten.

De jonge leeuwen brieschen. Dat staat in den tekst. En ik heb het gehoord. Er zit iets majestieus in. Men gevoelt het dat de koning der dieren aan het woord is.

Hij werd wakker gemaakt door God. God beschikte de duisternis des nachts. Dat was een boodschap aan de wilde dieren van Godswege: treedt uit! Ik heb Uw maaltijd klaargemaakt. En zij werpen zich op koeien, herten, en allerlei andere beesten. Ze scheuren den strot open, slorpen het bloed en vreten het nog warme vleesch van hun slachtoffer. Ze zochten, en vonden hun voedsel van God.

En als ze straks vol en zat zijn van het geslorpte en het verscheurde, dan komt er een andere boodschap van God in het rossig gekleurde Oosten. De zon komt op! Spoedt U naar Uwe hollen, gij leeuwen en tijgers! De Heere spreekt!

En zij doen het, gehoorzamende het Woord Zijns Monds. Het is het krachtige Woord Zijner voorzienigheid. En de dieren luisterden nu al voor 6000 jaren.

Zegt het mij: wanneer zal men dan eens ernst nemen met het veel grooter en veel lieflijker Woord van den vreeselijken God? Ik doel op het Woord dat

vleesch wierd. "Dewijl Ik geroepen heb en gijlieden geweigerd hebt!"

De jonge leeuwen hebben geluisterd. Zij zijn wakker geworden en hebben gevreten. Zij werden verzadigd, en toen God zeide tot hen: slaapt nu! toen zijn ze in slaap gevallen. Er is gehoorzaamheid bij de dieren des velds.

Maar Mijn volk heeft Mijner niet gewild!

Er zit een groote en een verschrikkelijke dreiging in die woorden.

Ze roepen om den dag, den DAG, den "joom" van Jehovah. Dan komt er weer een nacht. Doch die nacht is dan eeuwig.

En voor hen die Hem gehoorzamen is er dan een dag die niet meer gevolgd zal worden door een nacht. Want er zal geen nacht meer zijn. De zon zal eeuwig aan den trans des hemels staan.

"De mensch gaat dan uit tot zijn werk, en naar zijnen arbeid tot den avond toe.

Hoe groot zijn Uwe werken, o Heere! Gij hebt ze alle met wijsheid gemaakt; het aardrijk is vol van Uwe goederen!"

God eindigt het aardsche leven Zijner schepselen met den mensch. Hij begon deze cirkel ook met den mensch.

God komt naar Uw bed toe in den vroegen morgen. Neen, dat is eigenlijk niet goed. Ik moet dat zóó zeggen: God stond den geheelen nacht bij Uw bed, toen de wilde dieren op jacht waren naar hun voedsel. En toen het morgen werd, toen zeide de Heere tot in Uw slaap toe: Kom aan, het is tijd voor U om op te staan. Hebt ge er wel eens aan gedacht dat het ontwaken uit den slaap iets zeer wonderlijks is? En ook het in slaap vallen? Hebt ge wel eens kunnen zeggen: Nu, in dit oogenblik, val ik in slaap? En hebt ge ooit kunnen zeggen: Ik ontwaak in dit oogenblik, want ik wilde het alzóó? Ge weet het wel beter. De Heere God is het die U in slaap zingt, en die U ook zonder hand, en zonder aanraking, toch aanraakt, en zegt: Het is tijd! Wordt wakker!

Ge geeuwt dan nog wat; rekt U wat uit, en trekt Uwe kleeding aan. Het is morgen geworden.

Vrage: hebt ge dan direct weer aan God gedacht en gezegd: Heere! hoe wonderlijk zijn Uwe werken?!

Dat te doen is wandelen met God!

Gelukkige Henoch, en Noach!

G. Vos.

CLASSIS EAST

will meet in regular session at the First Protestant Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan, on Wednesday, July 14, at 9 o'clock A. M.

D. Jonker, S. C.

IN HIS FEAR

About Catechism, Etc.

I'll never forget the man who thought that the Canons of Dordt were implements of war, manufactured in Dordt. Evidently mistaking Canons for canons, and thereby revealing how totally ignorant he was of the Canons.

Our people by and large are not that ignorant.

But I wonder what percentage of our people are actually well acquainted with the Canons for instance, or the Belgic Confession. The Heidelberg Catechism fares a bit better because it is systematically preached every year in our churches. But suppose once that the Catechism was not preached, I wonder how many of our people would know much about it?

And the question arises: how many of our young people have a working conception of the Canons by the time they make confession of their faith. I don't mean whether they had a few weeks of intensive drilling in what is sometimes called a preparatory class for making confession, but whether they have had a quiet, systematic study of the Canons before they were twenty-one.

And how many of our young people became well acquainted with the Belgic Confession before they became communicant members of the church?

Or even do they have a living conception of the Heidelberg Catechism? Have they actually memorized the Lord's Days, or its equivalent?

In short, do their catechism years give them a course of study which covers the Three Forms of Unity? I sincerely believe that this should be the case, and for it there is no substitute.

Now if any of us think such a course is not desirable nor necessary, there isn't much to be said. . . . except that such people stand in danger of bringing our Confessions under the dust. The American way of life is very unsympathetic toward definite creeds. Let us never be swallowed up by this antipathy. That we are Protestant Reformed is all the more reason why we and our young people should know and appreciate them.

But if we think it is highly desirable and even necessary that our youth know their creeds, at the time they make confession of their faith, we ought to consider carefully how this can be realized.

The Issue As Such.

We repeat, we do not know how many of our young people, by the time they make public confession of faith, have covered the material contained in our

creeds. We have no way of finding out, neither is that our business. That is the business of the parents and no less of the church. Our consistories surely know how far the young people come in their study of the Reformed Religion, that is, in how far they have acquainted themselves with the Three Forms of Unity.

But from observation and investigation I believe the number of them who cover the Three Creeds, before they come to the age of confession, is very small. Many of them have studied a synopsis of the catechism, often in very abbreviated form, but of the other two creeds they know very little, at least they have made little or no study of them.

This cannot be due, I hope, to disregard for our Foundation. It cannot be due to the fact that men consider the Creeds old fashioned or highly incomplete, nor to the fact that they are vague and indefinite.

But why then?

Certainly our Protestant Reformed Churches are not making new creeds, nor are they adding (three or six points) to the creeds. What we glory in is that God has placed us on the line of Protestant. We stem from the Protestant Reformation, and along with the reformed fathers, aim to champion and confess and defend the scriptural truth as expounded in the Three forms.

Our Creeds are therefore basic.

But how come we work so little with these literal bases?

Certainly we borrow from them, lean upon them and look up passages in them once in a while, but why not study them directly in catechism?

I believe that the Church in this modern American world must cling more tenaciously than ever to the definite lines of the Protestant truth as summed up in the Three Forms of Unity. If it was necessary in 1900 it is three times more necessary yet in 1948—because of the age in which we live.

We all know this.

I have not discovered anything new. I cannot "eureka!"

But if we all know this, just why, I wonder, do we have the situation that many of our young people, when they make public confession, have never studied all the creeds? Most of them, all of them I would say, have faithfully covered the Heidelberg Catechism, and that is wonderful. But this is only one of the Three. It is the center of the Three, but it is not all three.

All of us will admit that we in this country are always in grips with Arminianism (grandfather of Modernism), and where would we ever find the lines of distinction between Arminianism and Calvinism more clearly drawn than in our Canons? The answer is: nowhere.

But it is totally unnecessary to emphasize how important is a knowledge of the Canons, we all know that.

And how precious are the Belgic Confessions. How doctrinally simple yet profound, how warm, how soul-stirring, how edifying, how they lead us to stand in the midst of this world and confess the faith of the fathers.

But why write about this, you all know how excellent they are.

No Time.

If then so far I have said nothing new, we are still confronted with the actual situation that so few of our young people have made a study of the Three Forms prior to their public confession.

We could perhaps debate a little while about whether this is necessary *before* confession is made.

They should have had study of the Creeds by the time they make confession, because their communicant membership in the church requires exactly that they confess the Reformed religion. (Cf. Art. 61 of the D.K.O.) Moreover, at about that time they reach marriageable age, and little comes of catechism once they are married. This perhaps should not be the case, but isn't it? And above that all, many young people discontinue catechism once they have made public confession. They should continue longer, and many of them do, but many don't. The ideal time is therefore plainly indicated.

The great hindrance seems to be that there is no time.

This is incorrect.

There is time enough.

The question is much more whether we want to arrange the catechism years in such a way that the Creeds have been covered. If we utilize our time, there is time enough. If we waste it, we run time short. If only we make wise and diligent use of our time there is time a plenty.

A Matter Of System.

It becomes therefore a matter of system in our catechism work.

In a following article we hope to indicate a general course of Catechism Over The Years. Before we do that it might be well to point our various present usages and methods which ought to be reviewed or, I think, removed if we shall attain a complete instruction in the creeds.

First of all there is the habit of studying a certain book when they come to, say the age of seventeen, and then repeat that book year after year until they finally drop from the class. Every year new members

are added to the class. The class as class never advances. If they go to catechism no matter how many years, they always stay in the same book. This is not only unpedagogical, it is tiresome. It is contrary to the ambition of youth. Youth wants to develop, to advance. It is much better to follow the methods used in all schools, that is, class advancement. They pass through the various grades. Why not let our young people advance from grade to grade until they have covered the Creeds completely?

In the second place we are of the opinion that privately made catechism books can never take the place of a study direct from the Creeds. Such books can be used as compendiums and guides to the material contained in the Creeds, indeed, but then the Creeds themselves should be studied before, or along with that. It is necessary, as we hope to show later, that in the early years they must have certain primary books in doctrine (and we have some of them already, thanks to the efforts of of Rev. A. Cammenga), but I doubt whether we are giving our youth a full instruction if we use catechism books instead of the Creeds. Hence we would suggest that we ought not to spend our catechism years on private books at the expense of a study of the Three Forms.

Neither should the catechumens be put into grades which are beneath or beyond their years. A pity I think when fifteen to twenty-one years olds are crowded into one class. There can never be an excuse for such a thing.

If our young people shall attain to a living conception of our Precious Heritage therefore, we shall have to use the time which God allows us wisely, efficiently, and systematically. If we do I am sure every youth who reaches the age of public confession will have had a study in the Three Forms.

Concerning this Course of Catechism Over the Years we hope to write more fully the next time.

M. Gritters.

IN MEMORIAM

The Ladies' Society of the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church hereby wishes to express its heartfelt sympathy to our fellow member, Mrs. Gerrit Lubbers, in the loss of her,

MOTHER

May the Lord comfort her heart in the loss sustained, and may the bereaved family draw comfort from the Word of God which says that blessed are the dead that die in the Lord.

In the name of our Society:

Rev. Gerrit Vos, President

Mrs. C. Spoelman, Secretary.

PERISCOPE

Church Discipline. . . .

In the following paragraphs are truths which we all know and recognize as such and yet of which we may well be reminded from time to time; and which it is always well to emphasize:

"Now we must keep in mind that the purpose of church discipline is not to destroy, but to save. In practice it often becomes evident that discipline is regarded as a rule for punishment. For that reason it happens again and again that people are offended at the office bearers when they are compelled to deal with them in an ecclesiastical manner, as though the minister and the elders delighted in having found a stick to hit them with. It also happens sometimes that when discipline must be exercised, one withdraws from the congregation.

"It is a bad sign when people refuse to submit to ecclesiastical admonition. We should at all times keep in mind what the Apostle Paul wrote concerning those who draw back: 'My soul shall have no pleasure in them'.

"Those who are called to exercise discipline must also take care in what spirit that work is carried on. All haughtiness should be barred from the heart, and action should be taken only in the spirit of love and meekness, while at all times we are mindful of the truth: 'Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall'. We must do all in our power to save those members who in doctrine or life have drifted away, and at the same time we must uphold the truth. Let us then love peace and truth. *The whole congregation is in reality called to maintain discipline.* (I underscore—J.H.) There are several expressions in Scripture which teach this. Paul wrote in Col. 3:16: 'Teaching and admonishing one another. . . .' and also in Heb. 10:24: 'And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works'.

"The Lord Jesus, who is King of the church, has also prescribed the rules for that purpose in Matt. 18: 'Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone, etc.' For many it is as though that passage were not in the Bible. Some complain directly to the consistory or to their neighbor; in fact they divulge to friend and enemy alike what they have seen or heard. How often false reports are credited and accepted! David was most afraid of himself, and it was from the experience which he gained in life that he sighed: "Lord, set a watch before my mouth, keep the doors of my lips."

Quoted from "A Portion For All", by Rev. W. C. Lamain, in the Banner of truth.

Minced Oaths:

"A minced oath is a profane oath uttered by a person who hesitates to go quite the whole way in imitating the profane speech of the sinful world. The use of minced oaths is peculiarly a sin of Christian people, who often deceive their own conscience into thinking that they are not doing something wrong because they do not exactly duplicate the world's brand of profanity. Some example of common forms of minced oaths are: 'Gosh' (instead of 'God'); 'darn' (instead of 'damn'); 'heck' (instead of 'hell'); 'gee' (instead of 'Jesus'); 'the deuce' (from the Latin Deus, meaning 'God', used instead of 'the devil'). The use of all forms of minced oaths is forbidden, not only by a right understanding of the third commandment, but also by our Lord's command in Matt. 5:34-37, 'Swear not at all. . . but let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil'." Quoted from "Studies in the Larger Catechism of the Westminster Assembly", in Blue Banner Faith and Life.

Dramatic Fever:

"Yet, our Church has caught the sickness, too! A poster in one of our local store windows reads as follows: Church presents a comedy! At local public high school auditorium. Time, place, price of tickets, etc.

"Our Christian Reformed Church has also become so undignified as to stoop to these means of raising necessary funds."

"It's not a missionary rally—would that there were as much zeal for mission work as for dramatics—it's not a religious musical program, to be given in our church auditorium, but a comedy! Something in a lighter vein to satisfy both young and old, church and unchurched. After all it doesn't always need to be something spiritually uplifting. Our church people need something less depressing once in a while. And besides, it's an easy way to make money. The response is wonderful. . . .

"This could be a lengthy article, but everything I'd say would be challenged. . . . Let's not be careless about these 'harmless' things. Let's not be afraid to be called 'strict' and 'narrow-minded' if that which we teach is the truth. . . ."

We take this article over, which appeared in the Banner's "Voices in the Church," not because there are Protestant Reformed Churches that sponsor dramas, but to point out the end of that which is tolerated. After all, what else can you expect with 'Junior' and 'Senior' plays in the Grand Rapids Christian High

School (perhaps in other Christian High Schools too?) and with a Thespian Club in Calvin College? We wish to congratulate the writer, who merely signs himself 'A concerned church member', on his stand and only hope that the advice is received. In this connection, however, we must not forget that also in our own circles this evil is penetrating through the avenue of the Christian School plays, whether sponsored directly by the societies or by the numerous aids, mother's clubs, or auxiliaries that also raise money for the purpose of Christian Education. "Let's not be careless about these 'harmless things'." J. Howerzyl.

Synod In Session

This is being written while Synod is still meeting and will be a brief review of work thus far accomplished.

The usual pre-Synodical service was held on Tuesday evening, June 1, in the Fuller Avenue auditorium. The Rev. J. De Jong, president of the Synod of 1947, delivered the sermon. Rev. De Jong chose as his text, II Timothy 4:1-4.

The following morning the first regular session of Synod convened at our Fourth Church in Grand Rapids. Synod opened its meetings with the singing of Psalter No. 403 and the reading of I Corinthians 12 and prayer by the Rev. De Jong. The following officers were chosen to serve this Synod:

President — The Rev. L. Vermeer,
Vice-president — The Rev. H. De Wolf,
Secretary — The Rev. M. Gritter,
Assistant Secretary — The Rev. J. Howerzyl.

The newly elected president of Synod, the Rev. L. Vermeer, then read the Public Declaration of Agreement with the Forms of Unity; the members of Synod standing during this reading to express their conformity. Synod then decided that its regular sessions would be from 9 to 12 each morning and from 1:30 to 5 o'clock each afternoon. Following the appointment of a committee for committees Synod adjourned until this committee has opportunity to prepare its report. Later in the morning this committee reported and its advice, that the matters to come before Synod should be distributed among three committees of pre-advice, was adopted. These committees of pre-advice study material of Synod which is given into their hands and serve Synod with advice and directives to expedite its work. Following the appointment of these three committees of pre-advice the Synod adjourned for the day and during the afternoon and evening of Wednesday these committees worked and prepared their reports.

The following morning the Synod met at Fuller Ave. The first committee of pre-advice was ready to deliver its report. The following material had been considered by this first committee: 1. The report of the Mission Committee; 2. The report of the Committee for Foreign Correspondence (that is, for correspondence with other Churches); 3. The Overture of Creston.

Hence, the first matter to be considered by Synod was the report of Mission Committee and the action of Committee I of pre-advice in respect to this matter. We might state here that practically the entire time of Synod on Thursday and Friday was taken up with the first item, the Mission Committee report as treated by the committee of pre-advice. The Mission Committee report contained information and recommendations regarding fields of labor for our mission work, foreign mission work and a few lesser matters.

Regarding foreign mission work the following decisions were made by Synod:

1. That our Churches raise a fund of \$10,000 with a view to seeking out and establishing a Foreign Mission work of our own.
2. That this fund should be raised by asking all our Churches to take two offerings per year, and by free gifts from our membership.
3. That this fund, after its establishment, may be used to support some other form of mission endeavour in case it becomes impossible to establish a foreign mission work of our own.
4. That the Mission Committee continue to investigate the whole matter of foreign mission work with especial regard to field, and ways and means to seek out and encourage young men to present themselves for this work.

The next matter taken up in connection with Mission Committee report was the selection of a field of labor for our mission work. The committee of pre-advice, having considered the matters related to this as reported by the Mission Committee, advised that Canada be chosen as a field of labor and that Synod consider to seek to obtain a Holland-speaking missionary in the place of one of our present missionaries.

Before treating this advice the missionaries' reports of their investigation of various fields were read in their entirety on the floor of Synod. These reports contained information concerning Byron Center, Michigan, South-eastern Iowa, Northern Michigan, Lynden, Washington and Ontario, Canada.

With considerable discussion and deliberation the following action was taken by Synod:

1. Synod rejected the advice to seek to obtain a Holland-speaking missionary in the place of one of our present missionaries and to continue with our present missionaries.
2. To advise to send our present missionaries to Lynden, Washington.

3. That we continue our Missionary endeavour in Canada and the Mission Committee in conjunction with the calling consistory make provision to do so.

Synod next treated the report of the Committee for Correspondence with other Churches. This Committee had sent a letter to the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands (Art. 31) suggesting that preparatory work be done towards establishing closer relationship. An answer received from the Netherlands indicated that the Netherlands Churches, by their Committee, had received and considered the letter and would take the matter to their Synod which is to meet in September of this year. Our own Committee was continued.

The final matter with which Committee I dealt was the Overture of Creston. The four points of conclusion or recommendation of the overture were discussed and the following action was taken:

Point 1 of the overture reads: "That, if at all possible, the Churches should be given an opportunity to discuss all matters that come before Synod, including financial matters like proposed assessments, salaries, etc. Under our present set-up our classes do not even have this opportunity, and at the classical gatherings we have at least representatives of the local consistories." Decision of Synod re this point: That Synod refers them to the Rules of Order of Synod, articles 4, 6 and 9, pages 55 and 57 of the Church Order of the Protestant Reformed Churches. Grounds: a. These rules have proved satisfactory in the past. b. That the suggestion of Creston militates against our Reformed set-up with respect to authority of Synods reflected in Articles 30, 31 and 51 of our Church Order. c. That Reformed Churches in the past have not worked according to this suggestion of Creston.

Point 2 of the overture reads: "That it should be made the rule that decisions which involve a considerable outlay of money be proposed to the Churches, stating the definite sum, and that such decisions do not go into effect until the next year. That would give opportunity for deliberation, suggestion, counter proposals, protest, etc." Decision of Synod: In re point 2 that Synod express that in concrete cases Synod act according to its own discretion in this matter.

Point 3 of the overture reads: "That under no circumstances a standing committee has the power to raise the assessments for a particular fund during the course of the year. We had a glaring example of this in the past year when the Mission Committee raised the assessments for the Mission Fund from \$5 to \$12 per family. That this figure was subsequently lowered to \$6 per family is due to the consistory and congregation of Fuller Ave. But we feel that the principle of the thing is wrong. Other committees might do the same thing, and where would be the end?" Decision of Synod: In re point 3: a. That there is no case

on record where a standing committee has done this. b. That under the circumstances the Mission Committee could do nothing else than inform the consistories as they did. (N.B. The point is that the Mission Committee did not raise the assessment, as implied in the overture, but informed the consistories that a raise would be evident due to increased expenditures.

Point 4 of the overture reads: "That Synod be very sparing in making decisions to the effect that a standing committee 'use its own discretion' in determining or raising the amount of salary of brethren that are paid by our Churches". Decision of Synod: In re point 4, that Synod express that it is in agreement with this point although it fails to see where it has ever acted to the contrary.

The next material to be treated by Synod was that presented by the second committee of pre-advice. Regarding the matters placed in their hands we present the following light and action of Synod:

Synod spent much time and deliberation on matters dealing with our Theological School. The greatest of these was in connection with the answer of the Rev. H. Hoeksema to the proposition of the Synod of 1947 and the future position of Mr. H. C. Hoeksema. In regard to Mr. Hoeksema the committee of pre-advice suggested that Synod inform the Churches that he was eligible to receive a call since his year of post-graduate work had been completed. In close connection with this the Rev. Hoeksema addressed a letter to Synod containing his answer to the proposition that he release himself from Fuller Ave. and spend all his time with the school. He informed Synod that since it seemed to be the desire of his son and also of the Synod that Mr. Hoeksema accept a call from one of our Churches, he (Rev. Hoeksema) would not be able to accept the position offered him last year. Further, the Rev. Hoeksema informed Synod that he could not promise nor did intend to take up his school work for the coming year without the help of his son.

After much discussion and deliberation the Synod finally decided to address the following to both the Rev. Hoeksema and his son, Mr. H. C. Hoeksema: "I. To express to Rev. Hoeksema our appreciation for his most valuable labors in our theological school, and also that we remember these labors before our Father in Heaven as His gift to us for our welfare. We desire and pray that he may be spared for the welfare of our Churches, and especially for our Theological school, and that he may regain his strength. If at all possible we would like to have him labor and help us in the Theological School this coming year. We feel that his labor is indispensable to us. We urge him therefore, to reconsider his letter to us. The situation is very difficult, we realize, because of the personal relations that are involved. We understand his desire to labor



further with the help of his son Homer. Although we are of the conviction that it would be to the welfare of his son that he enter the active ministry, nevertheless, if his (Rev. Hoeksema's) labor is contingent upon his son's help and assistance we recommend that he be appointed to continue his studies and instruction for another year, under the same financial arrangement as in the past year. Further, that we pledge our cooperation to help build our school's reputation for we are also of this same conviction, as he is, that the school is most important. We also will furnish him with other needed assistance such as a dictaphone to further produce material for future use in the Churches.

"II. We further advise Synod to empower the Theological School Committee to seek the best means to maintain instruction of our students the coming year."

The above propositions were also adopted by Synod.

The report of the rector, Prof. G. M. Ophof, which informed Synod that the students had done good work and that good relationships existed between professors and students, was accepted.

The Theological School Committee had investigated the expansion of our school and stated: "there is nothing we can recommend to Synod for a pre-seminary course beyond those subjects which have always been taught in our school." The Synod adopted the advice of the committee of pre-advice in this matter "that it is not advisable to extend our curriculum at this time beyond the present curriculum".

Synod instructed the Theological School Committee to make a thorough investigation as to the cost of building a suitable building and/or also the price of purchasing a suitable house for this purpose.

The Theological School Committee reported that they had received a letter from the Society for Protestant Reformed Education asking to what extent the facilities of the Theological School can be made available to prepare persons interested in the teaching profession to qualify them for teaching in schools of our own. The Synod decided to reply as follows: that Synod advise the Society for Protestant Reformed Education that we have no facilities for a complete normal course. However, that we can supply, we hope, the very necessary Protestant Reformed point of view by having prospective teachers study principles of education and read specified outside literature upon educational subjects, as produced by our men and others.

Mr. George Lanting, a member of our South Holland congregation, and Mr. Marvin Koerner, of the German Reformed Church at Sutton, Nebraska, were granted permission to attend our Theological School. The request of Mr. Jack Van Dyken, of our Fuller Ave. congregation, was referred to the Theo. School Comm.

In reply to an overture from the Second Church in

Grand Rapids, which suggested that Synod appoint a committee to compile a work-book on the Heidelberg Catechism for use in catechism instruction, the Synod replies that it does not consider it necessary for Synod to provide our Churches with a work-book at this time.

Synod decided to again publish a year book this year and to include this material in the book which will also contain the Acts of Synod; as was also done last year.

After accomplishing many routine matters such as voting for committee members etc., Synod had finished its work. In his closing remarks the president, the Rev. L. Vermeer, correctly stated that a spirit of unity and love had prevailed and that many weighty problems had been discussed freely and openly with brotherly kindness.

W. Hofman.

25th WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On Monday, June 28, 1948, the Lord willing, our parents

JAMES KOK

and

GERTRUDE KOK (nee Kunst)

hope to celebrate their 25th wedding anniversary.

We, their children, are indeed thankful to our Covenant God for sparing them for each other and us. May the Lord continue to bless them in the future as He has in the past.

"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits."

—Psalm 103:2.

Their grateful children:

Mr. and Mrs. Edward Kok

Mr. and Mrs. Richard Velting

James R.

Harold L.

Roger A.

Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Philip J.

25th WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On Monday, June 21, 1941 my beloved parents

HENRY B. HOLTROP

and

SUSANNA HOLTROP (nee De Borst)

hope to celebrate their 25th wedding anniversary.

I thank our Heavenly Father with them for having kept and sustained them together through the years, and pray that the Lord may grant them His Peace in their remaining years.

"Blessed be the Lord who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation."—Psalm 68:19.

Janet Arlene.

Grand Rapids, Michigan.