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MEDITATION

The Judging King

"And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me."

Matthew 25:40.

The time is coming, and it seems to me, is not far off, when Jesus of Nazareth will return to earth on the clouds of heaven, and then He shall judge the living and the dead. That event is prophesied in the context. We read: "When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory: and before Him shall be gathered all nations: and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left."

All nations shall appear before that throne.

And yet, the point of view is the Kingdom of God as it was coming throughout the ages.

That is plain from the context. It is the King who is judging. And the immediately preceding parables also view things from the point of view of the Kingdom, the church on earth. Attend to the parable of the ten virgins, and that of the talents. They are virgins, the church; they have talents which Jesus the King had given them, and for which they were held accountable to Him, the King of the Kingdom of heaven.

And it is also plain from the text. The King is judging and He is judging His kingdom people. Moreover the subjects of this judgment either served Jesus or they did not. Jesus was near them on earth. So it must be the Kingdom.

It is also taught in other parts of Holy Writ.

In Ezekiel 9 we see a terrible committee of six with their slaughtering weapon in their hand, and they are bidden to execute the command of the king. And the sixth verse says explicitly: "and begin at my sanctuary. Then they began at the ancient men which were before the house."

In Jeremiah 25:29 we read: "For, lo, I begin to bring evil on the city which is called by my name, and should you be utterly unpunished?"

While in I Peter 4:17 we read: "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us what shall the end be of them that obey not the Gospel of God?"

But this scene of Matthew is the end of the ages. And then all nations will include all the nations of the earth since at that time the Holy Gospel shall have been preached unto the ends of the earth.

And then the King shall judge.

And His judgment shall be right!

* * * *

The King shall sit upon the throne of His glory!

And His very judgment shall be glorious. All He says and does, shall radiate virtue and goodness. It shall be a glorious judgment, that is, it shall be a judgment that shall radiate goodness throughout. No matter how we shall fare at the hand of that Judge: when the judgment has fallen and the sentence shall be executed, everyone shall know, feel, and express that His judgment is right, eternally right!

And before the throne there are assembled a great multitude. They are called the sheep and the goats, as in a parable.

They are the people that on earth were called the Church of God.

And that Church of God was His house on earth.

Did you ever consider the strange aspect of that institution which we call the Church of God?

It is strange.

It is a revelation of heaven on earth.

In it are enrolled the happy people that are born of God, born from above, born from heaven.

Look at them and listen to them. They are of the earth earthy, and yet, they have heaven in their inmost heart, and heaven is in their walk. They sing of heaven, they long for heaven, and for heaven's God. The songs of the church are heavenly throughout.

The name which the God of heaven has given unto them is *sheep, sheep of Christ*.

But look again. There are more than sheep of Christ in that church. There is also a very strange people there, intermixed with them, and their name is *goats, goats of the devil*. An enemy came, and he came often, he came continuously. And that enemy sowed tares among the wheat. And the result is that in that house of God you ever found the terrible mixture of children of God and children of the devil.

And yet the name is church of God.

But attend to this: the children of God, that is, the sheep, constitute the kernel of that church, while the others are called the shell, the reprobated shell.

And even as in nature, from which the image is taken, these two kinds of people are thrown into very intimate contact. The Master of the church had said: Let them grow up together. It has happened that two members of that church were formed at the same time in one womb: Rebecca. Yet the one was a sheep and was loved of God; and the other was a goat, and was hated eternally.

All this happens from age to age.

And it all calls loudly for a judgment.

The unerring judgment of the King!

The King will judge! And His judgment shall be right!

* * * *

Now, Jesus walks in that church from age to age.

When the church was small and but few members were found therein, we saw Jesus in the Lamb that Abel killed and burned as an offering to God. Jesus dwelt in the church through types, shadows and symbols.

And with these shadows, types and symbols, He gave His Word to explain them, in order that the church-members might know Him and seek Him and enjoy Him, who is the cause of the songs of the angels.

And with the shadows, and the explaining Word, He also gave His Holy Ghost so that they might taste of all the good things He bestowed on them, even the everlasting love of God and all its accompanying bounties.

And looking, listening and tasting all this labor of Jesus in the church, they would long for God and for His communion.

But not all of them.

The sheep did look and understand; they heard and were obedient; they tasted and longed for more. But the goats, under the same ministry were hard-

ened. The more they saw, heard and experienced, the more they hated God and His Son. Whatever bands and cords were laid around them in that church, they resented. And throughout all history they would sing: "Their dominion let us break, let us cast their yoke away!" A horrible song, a song that would cost them dearly.

For the Jesus of the church would some day be the Judge of the church.

He would summon all the church members of all the ages before His throne of glory.

There they come!

Some anticipate great wonders and their eyes shine with hungering and yearning anticipation. They are the sheep.

Some anticipate a righteous judgment and their eyes begin the weeping that shall be their portion forever and ever. They are the goats.

But the King shall judge righteously. His very Name is the Truth!

* * * *

The King shall judge the church.

And His judgment shall be right.

And yet it sounds so surpassingly strange.

The judgment of Jesus sounds as though the saints of God are saved by their own works.

Listen to the King. He is describing their walk on earth, in the church:

Ye were ministers of mercy!

To the hungry, the thirsty, the strangers, the naked, the sick, and to those that were in prison.

Does it not seem as though their walk in mercy is the very key that opens heaven and the joy of heaven for them?

Jesus says: "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom, prepared for you from the foundation of the world!"

And this speech is followed by the words: "For I was an hungered, etc." So we are inclined to conclude: *because the walk of the church was so wonderfully sweet, they might inherit the Kingdom of God!*

I wonder why the Remonstrant corrupters have not made more of this sweet picture in the prophecies of Jesus.

But there is more that seems very strange in this judgment.

We would ask: Why is the standard for entering heaven the ministry of the poor and miserable?

Why is not that standard the much weightier spiritual exercises of love and hope and faith?

And much weightier still: how about the first table of the law? How about the love for God, His glory, His Name and will?

The Pelagian seems to be justified in this final judgment: the works of the earthlings are the basis for entry into heaven.

The weightier matters of theology seem to go begging in this final judgment.

And yet: the King is just when He judges!

His Name is Verity and Truth!

They are the basis of His glorious throne!

* * * *

The King is righteous when He judges!

His judgment is true and glorious.

Good works are no basis here for the judgment of the King.

Their good works are evidence, proof for the almighty power of God which wrought in them by faith. Their good works proved to the King that they were citizens of the heavenly Kingdom.

Their good works were caused by the blessing of the Father. Attend to the name that Christ gives unto them: Blessed of the Father! If and when the Father blesses you, you cannot but walk in tender mercies.

Their good works were not the cause of their acquittal and the ground of entry into the kingdom, for their name is sheep. They proved in their walk that their Shepherd dwelled in them. Attend to the psalm of David: "Know ye that the Lord He is God: it is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves; His people and the sheep of His pasture."

God made these church members to be sheep of Christ. That is, they revealed the nature of the sheep. And that is the nature of God's own Lamb, Jesus Christ.

Their good works were not the ground of their attending happiness, for they are told that the Kingdom is prepared for them from before the foundation of the world. Note, dear reader, the reward was there already before the worker or his work. Is it not beautiful? Now God will get all the glory.

Oh yes, the judgment is very right!

* * * *

The judgment of the King is right!

But there was another question, namely, why were not the weightier matters of theology advanced as a basis in this judgment?

And the answer is ready: the matters of mercy and loving ministry in misery are the evidence of those weightier matters of theology and the first table of the law. Attend to John: "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us and His love is perfected in us!"

And again: we love mercy toward the miserable, for we see Jesus in them. We recognize Jesus for what He is, the very Face of the Father.

It seems as though the saints did not realize this when they receive their reward. And therefore they ask: But Lord, when did we see Thee an hungered, thirsty, naked, etc.?

But here is the explanation: allow me to put it

strangely: we recognize the glorious God in Christ and in His brethren *spiritually instinctively!*

You might also ask it in this manner: the hidden love of God in our hearts, the regenerated and converted new man in Christ, is drawn like a magnet to all that is of God. He gives a glass of water to the thirsty saints *in the name of a disciple!*

Oh yes, it is all theology!

And the rewarding King judges the work of His Father to be right, right indeed!

* * * *

Oh, why is this reward so great? Entry into the Kingdom of God with all its attending pleasures and treasures?

And the answer: Because they ministered unto Christ!

Return to the earth, dear reader, and look about you. What did you find?

This: a mass of hungry, thirsty, naked, sick and bound strangers!

It is the definition of the church of God. They are accounted by the world as fit for the slaughter.

Surely, they are fitting objects of mercy.

But wait!

Let us listen to the evaluation wherewith God has evaluated them. And He told us by the mouth of Paul. It is this: "Of whom the world was not worthy!" The Christians are so beautiful, so valuable, so worthy that they should really not walk upon this sorry earth!

But why? How is that to be explained?

Because they are housing the Christ of God who dwells in them.

And saying that means also that God, the God of the heavens and the earth dwells in the church, in the church-members, that is, the sheep of Christ.

That makes you so valuable. Valuable in the sight of God.

And the judge realizes that worth, that value, that surpassing beauty in the church. Enter into the joy of your Lord, even the Lord that dwells in you.

And so the Judge is right when He judges!

The righteous Judge of heaven!

* * * *

Minister then, beloved!

Minister to the saints of God. Christ dwells in them.

You may put it this way: Christ Jesus, the Son of God, is very miserable in His people. Jesus is hungry and thirsty, naked and sick, a stranger and in jail—in His people!

Love them then, and in that Divine love, reach out to them and alleviate the suffering of Christ in His body, that is, the church!

And the righteous Judge shall reward such mercy in His just Judgment!

G. Vos.

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EDITORIALS

Nederlandse Bloemlezing

Deze boekbeoordeeling wil ik in 't Hollandsch schrijven, en de reden is doorzichtig. Met groote uitzondering is dit boek alleen bestemd voor hen die het Hollandsch machtig zijn, en eenigzins op de hoogte zijn met de Hollandsche literatuur, en tot op zekere hoogte, ook de Hollandsche literatuurgeschiedenis.

Wat ik in de eerste paragraaf schreef is tevens de reden waarom ik zoo lang gewacht heb met deze boekbeoordeeling, alsook de reden, waarom ik ook nu schroomvallig schrijf: de Hollandsche literatuur, noch haar geschiedenis, ben ik in dier mate machtig om in staat te zijn een waardige boekbeoordeeling te schrijven over het huidige werk: De Nederlandse Bloemlezing.

En toch wil ik er wat van zeggen.

De schrijver is Prof. Henry J. Van Andel, professor der Hollandsche Taal, Literatuur, Geschiedenis en Kunst aan het Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Het boek werd uitgegeven door Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 255 Jefferson Ave., S. E., Grand Rapids 3, Michigan.

De uitgave is goed in, zooverre ik kan oordeelen, alle opzichten. De letter is groot en duidelijk, de druk op bijna zuiver wit papier, met een sterke band, en keurig uitgewerkt met gouden letter op den omslag. Het boek is 288 bladzijden groot.

Een bloemlezing beteekent, dat de verzamelaar (volgens zijn inzicht) de fraaiste en schoonste stukken dichtwerk en proza verkoor uit de schat van de Hollandsche Literatuur. In hoeverre hem dat gelukt is kan ik niet beoordeelen. En dat om de eerder gegeven reden.

Dit geeft mij getroffen: keer op keer bracht hij mij weer terug naar Sassenheim, waar ik als kleine jongen allerlei Vaderlandsche en godsdienstige liedjes hoorde zingen, later meezong, en sindsdien meenam naar Duitschland, Engeland, en later, America. Prof. Van Andel heeft mij, ik mag wel zeggen, sommige verrukkelijke oogenblikken bezorgd bij het indachtig maken van die schoone poezie en proza.

Ik zou dit boek niet gaarne willen missen. Ik zal er vaak in lezen, en dan voorts mijmeren over lang vervlogen dagen. Het eigenaardige genot, dat ik mocht smaken, laat zich moeilijk omschrijven. Groote stukken van mijne jonge leven, die als van zelf saamgevochten waren met de Nederlandsche Literatuur, waren, als 't ware, ondergedompeld en bedolven onder het vele wat ik later hoorde en las van andere volken, en in andere talen; doch door lezing van dit boek zag en luisterde ik weer zooals ik als kleine jongen, opgroei-

ende knaap, en jongeling in levend contact verkeerde met de Hollandsche letteren.

Een ieder onzer lezers die hun jeugd in Nederland nog niet vergeten zijn durven wij gerust aan te raden dit boek zich aan te schaffen. Ge zult ervan genieten.

De prijs is \$3.50.

Het boek bevat twee hoofddeelen: 162 bladzijden handelen over de poezie, en de rest over de proza.

G. Vos.

One-Twentieth Rather Than Four-Fifths

Threse days I read one report and one advertisement.

The report was incorporated in an editorial written by the Rev. Peter De Boer of Edgerton, Minn., in our church paper *Concordia* of August 19, 1948; and the advertisement is found on page 1023 in *The Banner* of August 27, 1948.

The Rev. De Boer noted a quotation from an address delivered by J. A. Van Bruggen, appearing in the Christian School annual of 1947, which quotation, in its turn, was taken from Mr. Fakkema's report on the church affiliation of the children that attend the Christian Schools in America, that is, the Christian Schools that are supported by the Reformed groups.

In that report of Mr. Fakkema we note that 80% of the Protestant Reformed people having children of school age make use of the Christian School, while 50% of the Christian Reformed, 10% of the Orthodox Presbyterian, and 5% of the Reformed people send their children to the Christian School.

It is not my intention at this time to write about this report in the vein of the Rev. De Boer's remarks, although I fully agree with his observations. I would like to add to his remarks that it seems as though we are slipping. I say "it seems", for I do not know whether the statistics of Mr. Fakkema are correct. If, however, they are correct, we must say that the Protestant Reformed people having children of school age are slipping, for I remember distinctly that in a report of Mr. Fakkema of about ten or more years ago, the percentage of children of the Protestant Reformed churches was higher than the more recent one. I do not remember whether the percentage was 90% or 95%, but I do know that it was in the nineties; while now it is 80%.

But, as was said, it is not my intention to write about the comparative percentage of Mr. Fakkema's report as such.

The advertisement to which I alluded states, under the heading *Teachers Wanted*, as follows: "ILLIANA Christian High School, Lansing, Ill.—Teacher for Sep-

tember with social science major and English minor; member of Reformed or Christian Reformed church (I underscore, G.V.). Correspond with C. Van Beek, Lansing, Illinois."

I do not know whether we still follow the approved custom to send a copy of the Standard Bearer to persons whose acts or writings are criticized in our paper. Perhaps our Chicago people will be so kind as to give Mr. C. Van Beek a copy of this issue. I think that certainly Mr. Fakkema ought to have a copy of this issue.

And the reason is obvious.

Just compare the report of Mr. Fakkema with the advertisement of the Illiana Christian High School, and all that is just and true in you that are Protestant Reformed feels itself outraged. Yes, and we may say more. All that is just and true in the Christian Reformed brethren, the Orthodox Presbyterians, and of the Reformed Church in America will feel itself outraged.

Mr. Fakkema risked a great deal in his outspoken conclusions following the report of percentages in the Nineteen Hundred Thirties, when he said something like this: "Note that the Protestant Reformed people have a 90 (or more, G.V.) percentage of children attending our schools, while the Christian Reformed only have a 50 percentage. There is something wrong here with our churches."

What will Mr. Fakkema say regarding this action of the Illiana High School?

It is a matter of public record that the Reformed Church of America is lukewarm, if not antagonistic to our Christian School system. Merely consider the matter of statistics: 5% of their children attend the Christian School, so that 95 of every 100 children of that denomination go to the Public School.

Place overagainst this the fact that 80% of the children of our Protestant Reformed Churches do attend the Christian Schools.

And now make your own conclusions.

Every right thinking man or woman will at once conclude: the Protestant Reformed people are much more Christian School minded than the Reformed people. Conclusion two: It is entirely desirable to have a Protestant Reformed teacher for your children, rather than a Reformed man.

The Illiana High School prefers a Christian Reformed man above a Protestant Reformed man for teaching in that institution. It is anomalous, illogical, partakes of the blindness of prejudice, a closing of the eyes for revealed truth, but—we can understand it. After all, the Boards of all our Christian Schools are composed of Christian Reformed men, that is, they are surely in the majority. So, even though the record of the Protestant Reformed Churches in their practices and writings, prove conclusively that we are more

Christian Education-minded than they are, we can understand their action in preferring Christian Reformed teachers over teachers of our churches.

But what must be said of the action of the Illiana High School with regard to their preference of a Reformed teacher over a Protestant Reformed teacher?

The matter at stake is the love of Christian Education. Well, the Board of the Illiana High School proclaims to the whole world: We would rather have one-twentieth than four-fifths!

It is more than anomalous: that is only a departure from the accepted order and rule.

It goes deeper than illogical behaviour: it is not a mere mistake, a mere quirk of faulty thinking.

It is the expression of enmity: geography plays a part in it. They know us in Illiana!

That they would reject us, we knew. It is grievous. We have tasted this grief for 24 years.

For all of these 24 years they said: we maintain ourselves in our errors and in our heresies, our malconduct in throwing you out and in our perpetuating the breach that separates us!

We knew all this, and have borne it, even though it was bitter. Especially so, when you consider that as far as the principle is concerned we obtained hatred for our love.

But this action is much more shameful, and it really adds insult to injury: they said, we prefer the 5% of the Reformed Churches to the 80% of the Protestant Reformed Churches!

And do not forget that the percentages are a matter of love for Covenant Education.

G. Vos.

IN MEMORIAM

It pleased the Lord to take unto Himself, after a short but very painful suffering, our daughter and sister,

MAGGIE GRACE

aged twenty-one years and two months.

The knowledge that her life was Christ mellows our grief.

Mr. and Mrs. Lammert Holstege Sr.

Mr. and Mrs. Steve Holstege

Mr. and Mrs. Henry John Holstege

Mr. and Mrs. Johannes Bosch-Holstege

Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Holstege

Mr. and Mrs. Arnold Haveman-Holstege

Mr. and Mrs. Gerrit Holstege

Mr. and Mrs. Marvin Haveman-Holstege

Benjamin

Elizabeth

Hudsonville, Michigan.

Freedom From Sin And Death

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.
Romans 8:2.

The first verse of the eighth chapter of the Romans speaks of freedom from condemnation: There is no condemnation for them which are in Christ Jesus. The second verse deals with freedom from the dominion and power of sin and death: "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." And the two are inseparably connected as the little, but significant, conjunction "for" by which this second verse is introduced, indicates. The sinner that is relieved from the guilt of sin, and from the condemning sentence of the Judge of heaven and earth, is also liberated from the power of sin, that he may walk in newness of life. If someone should boast that he is free from condemnation, but should continue to walk in sin, and to have his delight in the unfruitful works of darkness, he would thereby prove that his boasting is vain.

The relation between these two is such that freedom from condemnation is first, and constitutes the legal basis for the liberation from the dominion of sin and death. As long as one is guilty and under condemnation he has no right to be delivered from death's dominion. He must first be made legally righteous before he may be set free. But for this very reason, one's being actually liberated from the slavery and oppression of sin and death, is to him evidence that he was pardoned and justified before the divine tribunal. To this the apostle refers in this second verse by the conjunction "for". No condemnation for me, for I am set free from the law of sin and death! If the decree of his pardon were delivered to a prisoner in his cell, but he were kept in prison, he would have good reason to doubt the genuineness of the decree; but when the doors of his cell are thrown open and he is set at liberty, he can say: There is no longer any condemnation for me, for I am delivered out of prison. The same is true of the sinner. He is not only justified, but also liberated from the bondage of sin. Hence, he can say with the apostle in these first two verses of Romans eight: There is therefore now no condemnation for me, for not only was the decree of my pardon and justification delivered to me in the gospel, but I am also actually set free from the law of sin and death.

Let us consider for a moment from what the sinner is set free according to our text.

The Word of God here speaks of "the law of sin and death". What does this expression mean? According to some it refers simply to the moral law of God, while the words "the law of the Spirit of life"

denote the gospel. The text might then be paraphrased in the words: "The gospel hath set me free from the law." But if this had been the intention, why did not the apostle use these simple words? Besides, the moral law of God as expressed in the decalogue can hardly be called a law of sin and death. Nor is the gospel ever described in the Bible as the law of the Spirit of life.

We will more readily apprehend the meaning of the Word of God here, if in both instances the word "law" is understood as denoting an active power or principle, that operates in orderly fashion, according to certain definite rules. It is in this sense that we speak of laws of nature. There is a law of expansion and contraction according to which bodies grow larger or smaller in proportion to the degree of heat or cold to which they are exposed. There is a law of gravitation that drags the disabled aeroplane inevitably to the ground. In some such sense the apostle had used the word law in the previous chapter. For he there complained of another law in his members that was warring against the law of his mind, and that brought him into captivity to the law of sin which was in his members. 7:23. Law, therefore, denotes some inner, active, directing principle or power that operates in a specific manner.

In this sense the apostle speaks of the law of sin and death, that operates within and upon the sinner, and keeps him in its clutches. Nor is it difficult to discern just what this law is, and in what manner it operates. Sin is the power or principle that controls the natural man from within, an iron-clad law that drags him inevitably down into destruction and eternal desolation. Just as the law of gravitation takes hold of the stone you throw up into the air and drags it down to the ground, so inevitably does the law of sin and death hasten the sinner down into hell. And it does so according to a definite and unbreakable order, the order of the expressed will of God: the soul that sinneth shall die! Sin incurs guilt, and guilt is liability to punishment, and the punishment is death; and death is spiritual darkness, love of the lie, corruption of the heart, perversion of the will, enmity against God. For to be carnally minded is death. And the carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. And spiritual death is the source of more sin, and of more guilt, and of more condemnation and wrath of God upon us, and of more death and corruption. And thus the law of sin and death finally drags the sinner into the darkness of eternal desolation. Such is the law of sin and death: sin, guilt, condemnation, death, more sin, more guilt, the heaping up of treasures of wrath, until the measure of iniquity is full.

The dreadful feature of it all is, that this inevitable law of sin and death, this principle that controls the

sinner and that drags him to destruction, is very really the hand of God that is heavy upon him, and from which he can never escape. For the will of God concerning man, who was originally made after the image of God is that he shall love the Lord his God with all his heart, and with all his mind, and with all his soul, and with all his strength. That law is not a mere code, but the living will of God Himself, that encompasses him on every side, and from which he can never escape, and which he can never violate, even for one moment, with impunity. If he lives and moves and acts in harmony with that law of God, he is the object of God's favor, and the Most High blesses him with life and joy. But if he rebels, and turns against this will of the living God, he becomes the object of God's wrath, and this wrath pursues him, enters into his bones and marrow, into his soul and body, makes him unspeakably wretched, and causes him to experience the dreadful reality of the words: "To live apart from God is death!" Such is the essence of the law of sin and death.

This law of sin and death is operative everywhere in the world of man. It accomplishes its destructive and corrupting work in the individual and in all human relationships. It works in man's body, dragging him to the grave; and in his soul, in his mind and will and all his desires, causing him to sink ever more deeply into the mire of iniquity and degradation. And it reveals its power in every relationship of men, destroying the home, disrupting society, setting nation against nation, causing hatred and envy, war and destruction everywhere. And there is no remedy that is able to cure this dreadful malady. There is no power in man to counteract, to overcome this law of sin and death. Even as there is no physician that is able to overcome the dominion of death and corruption in the body, so there is no moral healer in all the world that has the power to stop the operation of spiritual corruption and death in the heart and nature of the sinner. Education is vain. Moral reform is of no avail. Man is bound from within by the law of sin and death, and there is among men no power to set him free. And as long as the individual is not liberated from the bondage of this law, all attempts to strive for a world free from the ravages of sin and death, free from hatred and envy and covetousness, from disruption and war, a world of freedom, prosperity, and lasting peace must end in utter defeat. War councils, but also peace conferences of men that are in bondage to the law of sin and death, themselves operate under and according to the same law. There is no peace to the wicked, saith my God!

Is there, then, no way out at all? Yes, there is, but it is not man's way in any sense of the word, it is entirely and only the way of God. Divine power alone is able to set the sinner free from the law of sin and death, and divine power alone actually accomplishes

this liberation. This must be maintained in the strictest sense of the word. The situation is not thus that the liberation of the sinner lies at all within the power, or even within the reach of the sinner. When we say that there is a way to liberty we do not at all mean that an opportunity has been created by God for the sinner to liberate himself, or even to determine whether or not, and when he shall be liberated. We mean that the sinner is so dominated by the law of sin and death, that he can never help in or put forth the least effort to his own liberation, that he does not even have the will to be set free, or to seek escape from the bondage of sin and death; but that God sovereignly and freely, by the wonder of His grace sets him free. The sinner is cast entirely upon the sovereign mercies of God. What is impossible with man is possible with God. That is the meaning of the apostle's words: the law of the Spirit of life hath made me free!

Then, then, is the Christian's freedom. He is liberated from one law by another, and to be made subject to that other: the law of the Spirit of life. For freedom is not licentiousness. It is not a condition or state in which man is his own law, his own sovereign, but that in which he is made the willing subject to the law of the Spirit of life. Instead of the power of sin and death, the Spirit of life now has dominion over him, controls him, gives direction to his thinking and willing, to his desires and longings, to all his activity, his seeing and hearing, his speaking and acting, from within, that is, from the heart whence are the issues of life. And being made subject to the power and dominion, to the directing and governing principle of that Spirit of life, he is free indeed. For where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. II Cor. 3:17. He is free from sin unto righteousness; free from corruption unto holiness; free from fear unto joy unspeakable and full of glory; free from death unto everlasting life!

This Spirit is the Spirit of God as the Spirit of Christ, indwelling in the body of Christ and all its members. For Christ, Who died on the accursed tree for our transgressions, was raised again from the dead unto life immortal and incorruptible and heavenly. And the resurrected Lord was taken up into heaven, and enthroned on the right hand of God, clothed with all power in heaven and on earth, with power, too, over life and death. And to this exalted Christ was given the promise of the Holy Spirit, in order that in and through that Spirit He might apply to His own all the blessings of salvation, of righteousness and life and peace, which He obtained for them by His perfect sacrifice and obedience. In that Spirit He returned to His own, on the day of Pentecost, and through that Spirit He takes up His abode with them, indwelling in His Church, which is His body, and imparting Himself to them, so that He fills them with His grace. The

law of that Spirit, that is, the governing and controlling power of that Spirit, now directs them and causes them to stand and to live in perfect liberty.

For this Spirit is the Spirit of life. Life is the very opposite of death. Death is enmity against God, life is the love of God. Death is disharmony with, opposition to God; life is harmony with Him. Death is the reaction of our whole nature against the living God; life is the harmonious activity of our whole being in the direction of God. To be motivated in all our thoughts and desires, in all our aspirations and volition, in all our walk and conversation, individually and in relation to others and to the whole creation by the love of God,—that is life! To have all our thoughts concentrated upon God, to long for Him, to will His will, to seek His glory, to be consecrated to Him, to experience His blessed favor, and to dwell in His fellowship, the fellowship of His blessed friendship,—that is life. For this is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent, John 17:3. To know Him, to see Him face to face, to taste that He is good, and to glorify Him for ever,—that is life. And that life is freedom. All the rest is bondage. Of that life the Spirit is the principle, the Author. Hence, He is called the Spirit of life. And by the governing power of that indwelling Spirit the shackles of sin and death are cut, that we might live unto God in Christ. And that life is freedom indeed.

And as we live in the sphere of that freedom, we know that there is no condemnation for us. For thus the Word of God here teaches us: There is no condemnation for the law of the Spirit of life hath made me free! Do not misunderstand this connection. The meaning is not that I am not under condemnation *because* I am free and walk in liberty. We are not first regenerated, and liberated from the bondage of sin, in order then, on the basis of our indwelling holiness and holy walk and conversation, to be declared righteous before the bar of divine justice. The very opposite is true. I am first justified, declared completely righteous, as if I never had committed any sin, and that solely on the ground of the perfect obedience of Jesus my Lord. He is and remains my only hope. Nevertheless, by the fact of my being liberated from the law of sin and death, I am all the more sure that there is no condemnation for me. For I was in prison, and now I am at liberty. I was in the bondage of sin and death, and now my shackles are cut. And I was set free by order of the supreme Judge of heaven and earth. If a prisoner escapes from his bondage, breaks prison, his liberty is stolen, and he cannot conclude that he is pardoned. But I did not break from my prison, I was legally liberated. God sent His Spirit, and He made me free from the law of sin and death. Moreover, this law of the Spirit of life operates only in Christ Jesus, nowhere else. If, therefore, I am

liberated by that law, I am assured that I am in Christ Jesus. And for them that are in Christ Jesus there is no condemnation! God is for me, who can be against me? He it is that justified me, who is he that condemneth?

But, perhaps, you object that there is so little evidence of this new freedom in your life. Perhaps, you hesitate to appropriate the words of this part of the Word of God and make them your own. For you find that the law of sin is still working in your members. Freedom from sin? Ah, it looks to you like a beautiful, but very distant, and unattainable ideal. Sin cleaves to you. Sin you commit every day. There is not a day, there is not a moment in your life that you live in perfection, so that you could really say: I am free from sin. If, therefore, your being free from the law of sin and death must be evidence of your being free from condemnation, it is but a poor comfort.

And that is true. If freedom from sin reveals itself in a life of perfect sinlessness in this world, then no one can take these words of the apostle on his lips. But listen. Do you hate sin? Are you sorry for sin? Do you fight against the law of sin in your members? Do you need forgiveness? And do you earnestly long for perfection and have a delight in the precepts of your God? And is the cry of the publican yours; God be merciful to me, a sinner? Then you are free in principle, and there is no condemnation for you. And then you may look forward in hope to the day when the inmost longing of your heart shall be fulfilled, and you shall enjoy for ever the perfect and glorious liberty of the children of God!

H. Hoeksema.

CLASSIS EAST

will meet in regular session Wednesday, October 6, at 9 o'clock A. M., at the First Prot Ref. Church of Grand Rapids.

D. Jonker, Stated Clerk.

CONSISTORIES — ATTENTION

I have sent the Acts of the Synod of 1948 to all our consistories. If you have received an extra copy, please sell it and send the money to the undersigned.

And may I urge every consistory to appoint one of its members as agent to sell the Acts and Yearbook of 1948. I am sure every one of our families would like to have a copy. Price \$1.00. There are also a number of Church Orders left which sell for \$1.00.

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

OUR DOCTRINE

God's Covenant and The Promise

(Hebrews 11)

We would conclude our short series of articles on the unconditional character of the promises of the Lord, in connection with the Lord's covenant with His people, by calling attention to Hebrews 11. We could refer to other portions of the Scriptures such as the apostle's epistle to the Romans. In this epistle the apostle Paul develops the truth of the righteousness of God and emphasizes that it is indeed the righteousness of God. In Rom. 1-3:20 the holy writer lays the groundwork for his inspired revelation by establishing the utter and complete condemnation of the world, the whole world, Jew and Gentile, concluding this part of the epistle with the well-known words: "by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin." Thereupon Paul reveals that our righteousness, our justification before God, humanly impossible, was effected by God Himself in our Lord Jesus Christ. Hence, this righteousness is a righteousness of God because God Himself realized it in His Son, our Lord. In the chapters 4 and 5 the apostle develops the truth that this righteousness, realized by God, is also God's righteousness in the sense that He bestows it upon us by faith; and this, let us understand, is presented by the writer as the reward, not of works, but of grace (Rom. 4:4-5). In the chapters 6 and 7 the spiritual calling and struggle of the Christian is vividly described. Fact is, the faith through which the righteousness of God is bestowed upon us is a living faith. Having died to sin we must also conduct ourselves as having risen with Christ unto a new and godly life. And in the seventh chapter we have that stirring description of the inner struggle of the child of God, culminating, however, in that exclamation of triumph that we have the victory through Jesus Christ, our Lord. And in the eighth chapter of this beautiful epistle the apostle rejoices in the fact that the eternal salvation of the Church of God is sure, only because nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord. However, we will conclude this short series by calling attention to Hebrews 11, the well-known Scriptural passage dealing with the Old Dispensational heroes of faith.

*The Relation Between God's Promises And Faith
An Important Question*

The importance of this question is immediately apparent when we notice the Scriptural emphasis which

is laid upon both: the unchangeable promises of the Lord and the activity of faith by the Church and child of God. That the Word of God emphasizes the sovereignty of God is surely well-known to all the readers of this paper. All of Scripture speaks of this sovereignty of the Lord. We need not emphasize this now. Attention has been called in detail to the fact that the covenant of the Lord with His people is unilateral throughout, from the beginning to the end. Scripture also, however, emphasizes the activity of faith. That we must believe is also taught everywhere in the Word of God. Such, indeed, is the keynote of the gospel: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." In the third chapter of Paul's epistle to the Galatians the apostle speaks repeatedly of faith, as in the verses 11, 14, 22, 24, 26: "But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live *by faith*. . . . That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit *through faith*. . . . But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise *by faith* of Jesus Christ might be given to them that *believe*. . . . Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified *by faith*. . . . For ye are all the children of God *by faith* in Christ Jesus." Well-known is the emphasis laid upon the activity of faith in the epistle of James, as in chapter 2:17-18: "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works." In the eleventh chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews the holy writer has recorded the activities of faith of the saints of God in the Old Dispensation. Yea, all of Scripture lays continuous emphasis upon the activity and necessity of faith.

The importance of the question, therefore, relative the relation between the unconditional promises of God and the activity of faith, is self-evident. Must we understand these conceptions as running parallel to each other? Is it true that both must be maintained, however contradictory they may seem and appear, and that they must be embraced as two apparently contradictory truths? In the same vein present day thought would explain the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man. These conceptions are also presented as contradictory. Why does the Lord save us through faith? Is this optional on the part of God? Could He save us some other way? Does the fact that the Lord saves us by faith, as the alone sovereign God, not imply that faith is the Lord's only possible way of salvation? Faith, then, does not contradict the sovereignty of the Lord, but it represents the only way in which that wholly sovereign God can save us. Or, is the matter of our salvation conditional after all? Is it

true that the work of salvation is after all, in some form or another, dependent upon an activity of man? But, how is this possible? Faith itself is a gift of the Lord. Can or should we speak of conditions in the application of salvation when it is God Himself Who alone fulfills these conditions? Is it not true, when we speak of something as being conditional, that we imply that it is dependent upon something outside of ourselves? Conditional salvation implies that it is dependent upon man.

The Importance of Hebrews 11.

Hebrews 11 is important, as far as our present discussion is concerned, because, firstly, it does not treat an isolated case. This chapter covers the entire Old Dispensation. It is by faith that the Church of God, throughout the Old Testament, received the salvation of the Lord. Secondly, this chapter is significant because all the examples quoted here have one thing in common, and this one thing, as we shall see later, is expressed in the very first verse of this chapter. We need not enter at this time into a detailed exposition of verse 1: "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Some would have us believe that this text presents us with a complete definition of faith, tells us exactly what faith is. This, however, is hardly true. On the one hand, the Bible is no dictionary which gives us in various passages the exact definitions of various and several concepts. Besides, faith is defined in this first verse as the power of God but from the viewpoint of its enabling the child of God to bear all suffering and pain, and gain the promise of everlasting life. And all the examples of this chapter establish this truth of verse 1.

Thirdly, and this is certainly important, Hebrews 11 is significant exactly because it defines the relation between faith and the promise. This, let us bear in mind, is exactly what we are discussing in these articles. Hebrews 10:36-39 reads as follows: "For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul." Please notice that the holy writer mentions the promise in verse 36, in the words: "Ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul." Please notice that the holy writer mentions the promise in verse 36, in the words: "Ye might receive the promise." The

idea of the promise in this passage speaks for itself. The promise refers to that which we shall receive after we have done the will of God and after He, who will not tarry, shall have come. The promise here refers to our eternal salvation which we shall receive as an inheritance in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ when all things shall be made new. And, incidentally, this is the content of the promise of God throughout the Holy Scriptures, the solemn and unchangeable pledge of Jehovah to bestow upon them, for the sake of Christ, His eternal glory and salvation. Why, now, do we receive this promise through faith? Why is it that the just shall live by faith, according to verse 38 of the preceding chapter? Is faith *our* condition upon which the Divine fulfillment of the promise depends? Hebrews 11 gives us a beautiful answer to this question.

The Many Examples of Hebrews 11.

Through faith, we read in verse 3, we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear. Of Abel we are told that he by faith offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts. Enoch was translated by faith that he should not see death; and he was not found, because God had translated him. Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, and moved with fear, prepared by faith an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith. Concerning Abraham we are told that he, by faith, when he was called to go out into a place, which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. And by faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise, for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. By faith Abraham and Sarah embraced the promise and Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged Him faithful Who had promised. And by faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said that in him his seed would be called; for he accounted that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure. Isaac, we read, blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come. Jacob, when he was a dying, by faith blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff. By faith, Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones. It was through the

power of faith that Moses' parents hid him when he was born because they saw that he was a proper (beautiful) child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment. By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward. It was by faith that he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured as seeing him who is invisible. By faith the children of Israel passed through the Red Sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned. By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed seven days. And by faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace. This is the Divine record. Lack of time, we read in verse 32, forbids the holy writer to tell of Gideon, of Barak, of Samson, of Jephthah, of David, of Samuel, and of the prophets. By faith these children of God of the Old Dispensation subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens, received their dead raised to life again, were tortured not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, of bonds and imprisonment, were stoned, sawn asunder, tempted, slain with the sword, wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented (of whom the world was not worthy), wandered in deserts and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

What All These Examples Have In Common.

We read in verse 1: "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Hence, all these examples speak of the power of faith, whereby the people of God received the things invisible and that which was humanly impossible. This characterizes Hebrews 11 throughout. By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were *not made of things which do appear*. Enoch, mind you, was translated by faith that he should not see death. He and Enjal are the only children of God who were translated into glory without passing through death. Noah built an ark through the power of faith, when as yet it had never rained, and he *believed* that he would be saved through the destruction of the world. Abraham surely walked by faith, the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen. He left his

native land and journeyed to a strange country, not knowing, we read, whither he went. He looked for a city which had foundations, the heavenly city, surely invisible. He believed that God would raise up of him and Sarah a seed as many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable. And this was surely a faith in the invisible because he and Sarah, as far as the bringing forth of children was concerned, had both died. By faith he offered up Isaac, believing, mind you, that God would raise up Isaac from the dead. Abraham, therefore, believed the invisible, namely, that life would come out of death. Moses believed that the Lord would bestow upon him the recompence of the reward and that at a time when the appearance of things made the realization of that recompence seem utterly impossible. By faith Moses believed the humanly impossible and invisible, namely, that the Lord would cut a path through the Red Sea and grant His people the victory. By the same faith the Lord made the waters of the Jordan part before them and caused the walls of Jericho to fall down. And the same trusting in the invisible God and invisible things characterized the saints of the Lord throughout the Old Dispensation. Thus it is ever throughout the history of the development of God's covenant throughout the ages. The Divine promise of everlasting life, the heavenly city which has foundations, is indeed something which human eye cannot see, human ear cannot hear, human heart cannot conceive of. To obtain that promise by faith means exactly, therefore, that we look forward to the realization of that which is humanly impossible and only Divinely possible.

Why God Saves Only Through Faith.

The phrase "by faith" occurs repeatedly in this eleventh chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews. The idea of this expression is that faith is the means by which these saints obtained the symbolical realization of the promise (I say "symbolic" because the promise of the Lord was granted His people in the Old Testament symbolically). A means we would define as something we use or do, adapted to the obtaining of that which we seek. In this sense, e.g., bread and water are means which we use unto the sustaining of our earthly life. They are adapted unto the sustaining of our earthly existence. Faith, now, is the means wondrously adapted unto the obtaining of our eternal salvation. It is the means which we use and wherein we stand, which the Lord bestows, and through which God operates and realizes in us His salvation.

Let us notice how this applies to Hebrews 11. Faith in this chapter does not emphasize what we can and therefore must do. How could Abraham and Sarah of themselves produce Isaac, inasmuch as both had died as far as the bringing forth of children was con-

cerned? How could Enoch effect his translation into glory without seeing death? How could Abraham effect Isaac's resurrection from the dead after sacrificing him according to the Lord's commandment? How could the children of Israel of themselves make a path through the Red Sea and later through the Jordan? How could that faith of the Israelites, if faith be regarded as a human means, effect the destruction of the walls of Jericho? We understand immediately that faith cannot be interpreted merely as a human means in this eleventh chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews.

Faith, in this chapter, however, is God's means unto the realization of this salvation. God alone does the things, also in Hebrews 11. He brings forth Isaac, makes a path through the Red Sea and the Jordan, causes the walls of Jericho to fall down, etc. Our conscious believing is that spiritual activity whereby we, united with the living God in and through Jesus Christ, put all our confidence and trust in God. Hence, the Lord bestows faith and works through faith exactly because faith looks to the Lord and He is therefore glorified through it.

This also applies to the people of God throughout the ages. God alone is the Worker of our salvation from the beginning to the end. Faith is *His* means of salvation and it is the only Divinely possible means of salvation. Another Divine way of salvation is inconceivable. When the Lord saves us He *must* save us as the only sovereign Lord, as the God of our salvation Who alone is our Saviour. Therefore He saves us and grants us His eternal inheritance through faith. For faith emphasizes, not what we can do but what we ourselves cannot do. When the Lord grants us faith He causes us to be united with Himself, enables us to look away from ourselves and to look exclusively unto Him. When the Lord saves us, of course, saves us all by Himself, and, therefore, through faith. In that faith we recognize the Lord as our only Redeemer and Jehovah is therefore glorified.

Connection Between Faith And Promise.

This also enables us to understand the connection between our faith and the promises of God. They must not be understood as running parallel to one another. It is not true, then, that the Lord is willing to fulfill in us His promise *but* that we must believe. The connection between them is never such that the fulfilment of God's promise is dependent, contingent upon our act of faith. This, we understand, is quite impossible.

Nevertheless, faith and the promises of the Lord are inseparable. The promise of Jehovah is His solemn announcement to the effect that He will bestow upon us the eternal salvation which He has laid away for us from before the beginning of the world. Faith

is that operation of the grace of the living God in our hearts whereby we place our implicit trust and confidence in that God of our salvation. Hence, the promise is realized in us exactly through faith because our salvation is a matter of the promise of God alone. Faith does not stand over against the promise of God; it embraces that promise. Faith does not emphasize what we must or can do; it recognizes the fact that the Lord alone is the Author and Worker of our salvation. Of course, we must fight the good fight of faith; we must hope and pray even unto the end; we must put off the old man and put on the new; we must put on the whole armour of God and resist the power of the devil and all his evil host. This, however, we must do, not because this our calling constitutes the condition of our believing or of God's salvation, but only because faith, the gift of the Lord unto salvation, is a living faith, unites us spiritually with the living Christ, and has therefore *as its fruit* that we walk and conduct ourselves as the party of the living God. Faith and promise—the latter demands the former and the former recognizes the latter.

(to be continued)

H. Veldman.

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

Saul's Climactic Wickedness and Deep Humiliation

(THE WITCH AT ENDOR)

During the last days of David's residence in Philistia the Philistines make a new war against Israel, 28:1. Samuel is dead and was buried in Rama his own city as having been lamented by all Israel. The Philistines either advance along the sea-coast and enter the valley of Jezreel from the west, or else they come right through Samaria, starting from Ephek. It is a general war of all the Philistine princes that is contemplated, and the purpose is to bring about a decisive battle in the plain with the Israelites. Hence, they advance with their whole force in divisions of hundreds and thousands, at the head of their divisions "the princes of the Philistines". Entering the valley of Jezreel, they pitch in Shunem on the western declivity of the little Hermon. Their advance to Jezreel compels Saul to lead his whole force thither, which he does and encamps about four miles thence on Giboa, that is, on the mountain range in the territory of Issachar, which traverses the south-eastern part of the plain of Jezreel. The two armies are therefore en-

camped on the two groups of mountains that enclose the broad plain of Jezreel toward the east. From his elevation of about twelve hundred feet Saul can see the Philistine camp which is only four miles away.

Seeing the host of the Philistines, he is afraid, and his heart greatly trembles. "Saul gathered all Israel together," mark you, *all Israel*, for the pending combat. Why should he be afraid? The question is pertinent. Saul used to be a brave general, eager for war. How his anger had burned when he heard of the reproachful condition offered them of Jabesh-Gilead by Nahash! With an army of three hundred thousand men he hastened to the rescue of his distressed brethren. Coming into the midst of the Ammonite host he cut it in pieces. Samuel commanded him to smite Amalek. Without tarrying he gathered the people together to the number of two hundred and ten thousand and smote Amalek from Havilah to Shur. Already he had fought against his enemies on every side, against Moab, and against Edom, and against the kings of Zobah, and against the Philistines. And no matter where he had turned himself, he vexed the adversary.

We should understand, of course, that his courage in those days was that of a man who trusted in the arm of flesh. He made not God his expectation but put his confidence in those large armies which he headed in battle. When his army failed him so that the only one he could lean upon was the Lord his courage was gone, and he was afraid. This happened shortly after his anointing. There in Michmash a mighty Philistine army was encamped. There were thirty thousand enemy chariots, six thousand horsemen, and people "as the sand which is upon the sea-shore in multitude" poised for battle. At the sight of this host Saul's army melted away. Some hid themselves in caves and in thickets and in rocks and in high places and in pits. Others of the Hebrews fled over Jordan to the land of Gilead and Gath. It can be explained. The people were unarmed. The Philistines had stopped the manufacture of weapons by taking away the smiths. And Saul? As driven by fear he offered the burnt offering contrary to the command of God, his purpose being to hold that army. But he failed.

But let us make no mistake about Saul's natural courage. (That is all he possessed. He was devoid of that valor and spirit that stems from trust in the living God the essence of which is love.) It, too, was of the Lord. This is plainly stated. On the day of his anointing, the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he was turned into another man, 10:6. Further on the text states that God gave him another heart. These sentences have reference to the Spirit's suddenly awakening in Saul the natural abilities and potentialities that lay dormant in his soul and in-

cluding courage in battle. Saul was not a coward. With enough armed forces under his command he was fearless in war like any other great military leader among the godless. And Saul was a godless man, but O how pious. He crusaded against the sorcerers with such vigor that at the close of his reign there was not a wizard to be found in all Israel daring to practice her dark arts in the open. All had been driven underground. There was purpose to Saul's zeal. He was soliciting the Lord's aid for the realization of his personal ambitions. But he had not the witness in his heart that the Lord was with him—how could he have—so that he did not dare to take any risks with God alone. He was brave only when he had an army to lean upon.

Yet now the sight of that Philistine host encamped on yonder mountain range fills this godless, pious, and brave captain of war with fear and great dread. And he has with him there on Gilboa all Israel, every man able to bear arms. And they have arms, too, swords and spears and all the other war equipment except horses and chariots. And still Saul is afraid. What has come over him? To say that he is afraid of the Philistines and to say no more is to shed no light on the real cause of his mental state. The Lord does things to him. Long ago He took from Saul His Spirit in punishment of his disobeying the command to execute God's fierce wrath on Amalek. "The Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward. . . . But the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him" (16:13, 14). In that moment Saul lost his will, the zest and spirit for war. The rest of his days the wars of God were fought by David except this one war in which Saul meets his doom. He cannot avoid taking charge in the battle that is pending. For David has fled the land to escape his persecutions so that there is none to take the lead but Saul. But he is wholly disqualified for God's warfare with the heathen. Not alone that the Spirit of the Lord has departed from him and an evil spirit of the Lord troubles him, but besides the Lord sends the terror of the enemy host upon Saul's heart so that he faints because of the Philistines. And his dread of the enemy at bottom is dread of God. For Saul knows that he is wicked, the Lord having convicted him of sin and the testimony of the Spirit in his heart that God is and is a rewarder of men's works being clearer than ever. This is the explanation of Saul's trembling heart. He is afraid like the doomed in hell are afraid. And every attempt of his to reassure his trembling heart by the consideration that he has with him all Israel, every man able to bear arms, ends in failure.

But take notice of Saul's reactions. "And when Saul inquired of the Lord," reads the text. Saul prays. A godless man praying. Truly, Saul believes

that there is one God. But as the devils he hates God so that all his thoughts are that there is no God except when he is in great trouble as now. For the moment his thoughts are that there is one God and he prays for he needs to be helped and God's arm is strong. The words that Saul directs to Samuel furnish the clue to the content of his prayer. "O God, he prays, "I am sore distressed. For the Philistines make war against me. I beseech thee, make known unto me what I shall do." But the prayer is superfluous. For Saul knows what he shall do. He shall repent of his sins, seek God's pardon in Christ, and forsake his abominations. In a word, he shall humble himself under the mighty hand of God. Thus being clothed with humility, God will give him grace. He will return answer, "Be not afraid of them. I have given them into thine hand."

Saul's sins are truly great. Contrary to the command of God, he offered the burnt offering. He disobeyed the command to exercise God's wrath upon Amalek. Instead of receiving with a believing, penitent, and contrite heart the sentence of God pronounced over him by Samuel, he denied that Samuel spoke God's word and lived out his days seeking the life of the righteous man appointed of God to reign in his stead.

But Saul does not repent. He persists in hardening his heart. For it is God's will to destroy him. His very prayer stems from unbelief and is made under the constraint of sinful egotism and rebellion. "The Philistines make war against me," he wails. That the Philistines make war against God enters not into his considerations. The contending parties in the pending conflict are the Philistines and Saul. At this time the Philistines have him thoroughly worried. They have collected in extraordinary large numbers. And his sole petition is that the Lord show him what to do and help him in the doing that he may overcome *Saul's* enemies. How dare he appear before God's face with such a petition with his sins unconfessed. As the publican in the temple, he should be standing afar off, not as much as daring to raise his eyes heavenward, and smiting himself upon the breast and crying, "O God be merciful to me a sinner." But his sins are a matter that he does not touch on in his prayer. He is occupied solely with the predicament in which he finds himself. And truly the prospect of the adversary triumphing over him and his people is too terrible for words. It is small wonder that Saul inquires of the Lord. But Saul will not repent, so that what he really asks is that God save him as condoning his sins, thus deliver him out of the troubles that beset him by walking with him in his abominations. Hence, "the Lord answered him not, neither by Urim, nor by dreams, nor by the prophets." This silence of the Lord speaks as loud as words can, "Saul, thou shalt repent."

Saul now does a thing of climactic wickedness. Perceiving that he must repent to be saved of the Lord, he bids the Lord adieu and inquires of the idol, the not-god, the devil-god. And to Saul that idol is the departed Samuel. "Wherefore hast thou asked of me," says the seer to Saul, "seeing the Lord is departed from thee, and hast become thy enemy?" Samuel means that, being of the party of God, he, too, is Saul's enemy. Yet Saul claims him as his friend unlike God willing to help him in his present troubles. Though the Lord is against him, Samuel is for him. So he wills to imagine. Forsaking the Lord, he puts his confidence in Samuel and of Samuel he inquires. If the Lord will not save him, except he repent, Samuel will, so Saul reasons. He thus changes the virtues of this departed and perfected saint into an image made like to a corruptible man, to an idol, a devil-god. And before this god, the creature of his imagination, he is now prostrated, the reason being that he will not repent and forsake his sins. Here Saul shows that he is now ripe for judgment. His mind is thoroughly alienated from God.

Necromancy—communication with the spirits of the dead—according to the passage of the law in which it is forbidden (Lev. 19:31; 20:5, 6, 26, 27; Deut. 18: 9-14) was regarded as a wicked dealing with evil powers, which pertain to the domain of heathendom, out of which the Lord has chosen his people to be sanctified to him; and as an apostacy from the living God and a negation of the covenant relation between him and his people. In the light of the workings of Saul's mind, it is easy to see why necromancy was so regarded. The departed spirit was the not-god served, worshipped, trusted in, and consulted in the room of Jehovah and under the constraint of hatred of Him, the Holy One of Israel. Whether the dead actually appeared and communicated with the living, whether such a thing on the basis of the Scriptures is possible is another question. The passages of the law in which necromancy is forbidden only strike at the evil disposition and wicked attitude represented by that black art; they leave unanswered the question whether the dead actually appeared. Though necromancy were sheer deception, which undoubtedly it is, consulting the necromancer were still idolatry, a negation of the Lord.

The devil-god has its prophets and prophetesses to which belongs also that witch at Endor. As it is only through the witch that Saul can communicate with his idol, he orders his servants to seek him such a woman, that he may go to her and inquire of her. There task is not an easy one. For "Saul had put away those that had familiar spirits, and the wizards out of the land." The servants finally locate such a woman there in Endor. Putting on other clothes so as not to be recognized by his royal dress, especially since he was treading a path forbidden by himself, Saul

goes by night in order to escape the notice of his own people and of the enemy's posts, which were not far off. He is accompanied by two men to show him the way. It is to be a journey of about twenty miles both ways.

Coming to the woman, Saul requests that she divine to him by the familiar spirit and bring him up whom he shall name. But the woman is afraid. She wants to know if her visitors are ignorant of what Saul has done, how he hast cut off those that have familiar spirits and the wizards out of the land. She accuses them of laying a snare for her life, to cause her to die. Her words show that Saul's orders for the extirpation of this superstition had been vigorously carried out. Saul swears to her by the Lord that no harm shall come to her. Thus reassured, the woman asks him whom she will bring up to him. Saul requests that she bring up Samuel. Yet it is not truly the seer of whom he would require but of his idol. But the Lord by a wonder brings up Samuel's soul and causes it to appear to the woman in the investiture of the earthy body and clothing of the prophet in order to become visible to her. She is not prepared for this. It is her first and only experience of its kind. Seeing Samuel, the apparition of the seer, she is amazed and terrified, and she cries with a loud voice. Turning to Saul she says, "Why hast thou deceived me? for thou art Saul." How she comes to recognize the king is not indicated in the words. Saul tells her not to be afraid. He asks her what she saw. "I saw gods coming out of the earth," is her reply. The word "gods" is here employed for the general, vague idea of non-earthly. That the word "gods" denotes a single appearance is evident from the singular pronoun "his form" in the question that Saul next puts, "What is his form?" "An old man cometh up; and he is covered with a mantle," is her reply. Perceiving that it is Samuel, Saul stoops to the earth and bows himself.

The Lord now performs another wonder. He gives Samuel's appearance a voice. For the text states, "And Samuel said to Saul. . . ." This cannot be taken to mean, "The woman spoke from the place where she was standing in hollow, dull tones, which Saul supposed to be Samuel's, perhaps in the manner of ventriloquists, the natural result of her excited visionary state, in which she identified herself with Samuel."

It can be explained that Samuel puts to Saul the question, "Why hast thou disquieted to bring me up?" Saul had ruled without God and therefore without Samuel. His attitude toward the seer had not changed. He is just as hostile as he always was.

But Saul is in deep trouble. That makes all the difference. Besides he is not requiring of the Lord by Samuel nor properly of Samuel but of the familiar spirit, the devil-god of his own imagination. This is the sense of the notice in I Chronicles 10:14, which

affords the true insight into the transaction. The sins that the passage lays to Saul's charge includes that "of asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to enquire of it; and inquired not of the Lord." The Chronicler views Saul's doing in the point of view of his intention. It is to his idols that he discovers the state of his heart and addresses his petition, "I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by the prophets, nor by dreams: therefore I have called thee, that thou mayest make known to me what I shall do." Implicit in Saul's complaint is the question what will happen to him on the morrow. But the matter that he puts into words is what he shall do. He is in the need of counsel regarding what action he is to take on the morrow. It is guidance that he seeks not truly with the Lord and with the seer but with the Ob, the idol, the not-gods of his own creation. But it is the Lord by the mouth of Samuel who gives answer, "Why dost thou ask me, since the Lord has left thee and become thy enemy?" If the Lord has left thee, why dost thou apply to me, His instrument? If God is against thee, O Saul, thinkest thou that I am thy friend? If He be thy enemy, who can be thy helper?

Saul must perceive that these are not the words of the familiar spirit. So speak only they—the Lord's prophets—whose desire is to be wholly in the service of God and His Word.

"Why dost thou ask me?" says the seer to Saul. It is the way of the wicked to identify their idols and God, the lie and the truth and thus to pose as lovers of God though they hate him and are prostrated before the shrine of their idol. In this point of view it is true that Saul applies to God and to Samuel though actually he seeks counsel and help with the not-god and his prophetess, that witch at Endor. "Why dost thou ask me?" For reasons just stated, the question is a proper one.

Samuel now identifies himself with such finality as to compel Saul to conclude that the discourse addressed to him originates with God as communicated by Samuel, "And the Lord hath done to him, as he spake by me: for the Lord hath rent the kingdom out of thine hand, and given it to thy neighbor, even to David." All along Saul had denied that Samuel spake God's word. But the prophecies of the seer have come to pass. The kingdom was rent out of Saul's hand and was given to David. It happened before Saul's eyes, so that he cannot but conclude that the seer whose counsel and guidance he spurned was the Lord's prophet and that the voice now speaking to him is that of this very seer. Why did the Lord do this thing to him this day? Samuel gives answer, "Because thou obeyest not the voice of the Lord, nor executeth his fierce wrath upon Amalek.

But Saul has asked that Samuel show him what he shall do, give counsel regarding the pending battle, reveal to him the course of action for the morrow. But Saul is rejected of God. The Lord has no task for him to perform and accordingly no counsel but only a word setting forth what the Lord will do to Israel and to Saul and to his sons. "Moreover the Lord will also deliver Israel with thee into the hand of the Philistines and tomorrow thou and thy sons shall be with me, and the Lord shall deliver the host of Israel into the hand of the Philistines."

Hearing, Saul falls straightway all along the earth, and is sore afraid, because of the words of Samuel, meaning that the Lord spoke Samuel's words in Saul's heart. But however anguished, Saul does not repent.

However, to gain an adequate conception of the hardness of Saul's heart and of the intensity of his rebellion and stubbornness, we must concentrate on the question put by him first to the Lord and then to Samuel, "I have called upon thee that thou mayest show me what I shall do?" The question is revealing. It speaks volumes. It shows, does this question, that, as was just stated, Saul insists he is still in the employ of the Lord in the capacity of Israel's theocratic king, and that therefore he is entitled to the Lord's counsel as he used to be before his rejection.

The Lord, such is Saul's stand, is still obliged to tell him what he shall do. It indicates Saul's attitude. He is willingly ignorant first of the acts of rebellion on account of which he lost the kingdom and soon after was personally rejected. He is willingly forgetful of the sinful course that he pursued since, such as seeking the life of the righteous man appointed to reign in his stead. He is fully aware of the significance of the Lord's telling him what he should do in the present crisis. The Lord's counseling Saul would be a declaration on His part that Saul is still Israel's rightful king. Thus it would imply or even be accompanied by the promise of victory on the morrow. Saul realizes this. It is plain that his prayer for counsel is the expression of amazing obduracy. Saul deliberately shuts his eyes to his past abominations. He asks God to do likewise. His petition is that God deal with him as though he had no sin. And what about Samuel who had commanded him in the name of the Lord and brought him under God's sentences? Saul's petition verily implies the request that the Lord declare the seer a false prophet and drive him into everlasting desolation by His curse.

Saul's prayer, it is plain, was a denial of all God's virtues. Saul thus prayed to an idol, a not-god. Only in the sense that he identified his idol with God can it be said that he prayed to God.

The meaning of the Lord's not answering Saul is evident. Saul must repent. But he cannot will to repent. For it was the Lord's will to destroy him.

As was explained, Saul's turning from the Lord to Samuel was a doing of climactic wickedness. (It is not correct to say that Saul once more turned to the Lord but this time through Samuel). Let us consider once more his petition to the seer. "God is departed from me and answereth me no more." This was meant as an accusation so that here Saul slanders God before Samuel. The seer points out the folly of Saul's inquiring after him, seeing that God has become his enemy. It shows that Saul deifies Samuel and opposes him to God. Samuel takes God's side against Saul. He sets Saul's rebellions before him, points him to the punishments already inflicted according to the seer's word, and reveals the doom that awaits Saul on the morrow. However great Saul's anguish at hearing, he hardens his heart.

But there is yet another angle at which the matter can be looked. If Saul in times past always has spurned the Word of God, why should he now be imploring the Lord and Samuel to show him what he should do? Saul is greatly afraid. The Lord has sent the dread of the Philistines on his heart. Never yet has Saul known such fear. And for the first time, he beseeches the Lord and Samuel for guidance in the present crisis. The proud, rebellious, stubborn Saul is humbled. For the first time he takes cognizance of God in his sinful way, and by his imploring Samuel to show him what he should do, he for the first time declares the seer to be God's prophet again in his own sinful way. Thus it is correct to speak of Saul's climactic wickedness and at once of his deep humiliation in this present crisis. In a sense it is true that not any longer is he the actively rebellious and stubborn Saul. The Lord has humbled his pride and cast him in the dust before Himself and Samuel.

There are several schemes of explanations of the transactions at Endor. The explanation that sees here the real appearance of Samuel—the one given in this writing—is according to the text. Not the others. This is a point for the next article.

G. M. Ophoff.

— NOTICE —

The 24th Annual Meeting of the Reformed Free Publishing Association will be held on Thursday evening, September 23, 1948, at the First Protestant Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan. Rev. C. Hanko will speak on the theme, "Prospering in the Lord". The public is cordially invited to attend.

—The Board.

SION'S ZANGEN

Israel's Liefdevolle Heiland

(Psalm 105; Derde Deel)

Het Woord Gods dat we naar Zijne aanbiddelijke voorzienigheid deze keer moeten behandelen, begint met een waarheid die zeer zwaar is: "Hij is de Heere onze God: Zijne oordeelen zijn over de geheele aarde."

Dit Woord zit vast aan het Woord, dat we de vorige keer behandelden: "Gij zaad Abrahams zijns knechts, gij kinderen Jakobs, zijne uitverkorenen."

Daarom: de genetief "onze God" is meer dan bezittelijk. Het is de relatie van eeuwige liefde die ook zat in dat "uitverkorenen". De Heere is de God van Zijn volk van eeuwigheid tot in eeuwigheid, want Hij heeft hen liefgehad met een eeuwige liefde.

Dan ook dit: Hij is onze God, zoodat Hij absoluut zeggenschap heeft over ons. God is onze Souverein: Hij gebiedt en wil gehoorzaamd.

En ten slotte: Hij is onze God, zoodat Hij ook onze Wreker is tegenover onze en Zijne vijanden. Staat er daarom in het tweede lid van dit vers: "Zijne oordeelen zijn over de gansche aarde"?

Zijne oordeelen zijn over de gansche aarde!

Paulus heeft daar een andere editie van. Die Godsman zegt: "Want de toorn Gods wordt geopenbaard van den hemel over alle goddeloosheid en ongerechtigheid der menschen, als die de waarheid in ongerechtigheid ten onder houden." Toch zeggen die twee schrifturen hetzelfde. God doet Zich gelden temidden van het gewoel der heidenen. Hij oordeelt alle dagen, zegt een andere schriftuur. God zegt van alle dingen, dat ze of goed of kwaad zijn. Het behoort tot Zijn Godheid om zulks te doen. En Hij laat Zich dagelijks gelden ten overstaan van alle menschen. We kunnen het nu nog niet ten volle zien, omdat eens iegelijks hart voor zijn metgezel verborgen is, maar het kan geen twijfel dulden, dat God Zich laat gelden tegenover alle zonde, tot in het diepe hart toe van elk mensch. Denkt b.v., aan de schriftuur: "En Die gekomen zijnde, zal de wereld overtuigen van zonde, en van gerechtigheid, en van oordeel." Joh. 16:8. En nu is het wel waar, dat deze laatste waarheid van toepassing is op het werk van den Geest van Christus, na Zijne uitstorting, maar het is even waar, dat God Zich ook in de vorige dagen niet onbetuigd liet in des menschen hart. Zie b.v., Hand. 14:17. En als men ons zou tegenwerpen, dat dit getuigenis een boodschap was van Godswege aangaande Zijne goedheid, dan zou ik willen zeggen, dat spijs en vroolijkheid in het diepe hart ook een boodschap achterlaten van oordeel, als we den God die zulks gaf niet loofden en prezen. Zie ook:

Rom. 1:20. Van het begin der schepping af aan heeft God tegen alle heidenen gezegd: Ik ben God en niemand meer! En het is juist vanwege dit veroordeelend spreken van God in het hart der goddeloozen, dat dezelfde goddelooze zegt in *zijn hart*: Er is geen God!

Gods oordeelen zijn over de gansche aarde!

De oordeelsdag zal doen blijken hoe ver dit woord zich uitstreckte. Er is een aanvankelijk oordeel in het hart van elken zondaar aangaande alle zonde die bedreven werd. Er is een gedurige handhaving Gods in het hart van elk mensch.

Doch de tekst zegt meer. Zijne oordeelen zijn over de gansche aarde. En de geheele geschiedenis der menschenkinderen heeft die oordeelen gezien. In klimmende mate. Denkt aan den laatsten wereldbrand. En ziet het komen van den derden wereldoorlog. En siddert. Ja, God oordeelt alle dagen. En het wordt al duidelijker.

En nu verder.

“Hij gedenkt aan Zijn verbond tot in eeuwigheid, aan het Woord dat Hij ingesteld heeft, tot in duizend geslachten; het verbond, dat Hij met Abraham heeft gemaakt, en Zijnen eed aan Isaak; welken Hij ook gesteld heeft aan Jakob tot eene inzet, aan Israël tot een eeuwig verbond, zeggende: Ik zal U geven het land Kanaän, het snoer van ulieder erfdeel.”

Dat zal ons tot troost zijn temidden van den oordeelenden God. Want zoo ligt het verband. God sprak van Zijn oordeelen die over de gansche aarde zijn. En dan slaat ons de schrik om het hart. Wie zou niet vreezen, wanneer we lezen van Gods rechtvaardige oordeelen? En waar zal een iegelijk mensch verschijnen, als God oordeelt? Ja, ook de uitverkorene siddert als hij staart op Zijn gerichten. Zij kunnen niet dan vreeselijk wezen. En naar onze oude natuur zijn wij niet beter dan de goddeloozen die zonder God en zonder hoop in de wereld zijn.

Doch dan spreekt de Heere van Zijn verbond, van Zijn eeuwig verbond. En dat is troost voor Gods volk. Wat is er toch al veel gesproken en geschreven over het Verbond! En hoe uiteenlopend zijn de gedachten en overtuigingen!

Het zou niet passen om hier een breede behandeling op te zetten van het verbond. En daarom zullen we er niet veel van zeggen hier. Alleen dit volgende: eerst, God is Zelf en in Zichzelf, de verbondsGod. Dat leert de Heilige Schrift duidelijk. Denkt, b.v., aan al de teksten die spreken van “Mijn” verbond. Of denkt aan dien heerlijken tekst in Jesaja (54:10) “het verbond Mijns vredes zal niet wankelen”. En al die teksten leeren, dat God een verbondsleven leeft in Zichzelf; tweedens, dat het verbond Gods een relatie is van liefde en vriendschap tusschen de drie Personen in het Goddelijke Wezen, en tusschen den DrieEenigen God en Zijn volk in Christus; derdens, dat dit verbond een eeuwig relatie aanduidt tusschen God en Zijn volk,

dat volk hetwelk Hij van alle eeuwigheid wilde, zag en liefde in Zijn raad. Denkt hier, b.v., aan een tekst zooals Jer. 31:3: “Ik heb U liefgehad met een eeuwig liefde, daarom heb Ik u getrokken met goedertierenheid.” En, vierdens, daarom is dat verbond dan ook absoluut particulier en niet gemeen. Men mag in de sfeer van het eeuwig verbond geboren worden, zooals Kain, Ezau en Judas, evenwel hadden zij geen deel aan het verbond. Gaat terug naar dien eerder genoemden tekst uit Jeremia. Daar gaat het over Israël. Leest vers 1 tot 4 en ge zult zien, dat het verbond particulier is. Zou er iemand zijn die vers drie zou willen toepassen op meer dan het getal der uitverkorenen? Vers 1 spreekt van alle geslachten Israels. Vers 2 spreekt van het volk der overgeblevenen. Vers drie van Gods eeuwig liefde voor hen. Vers 4 van de jonkvrouwe Israels. Zou er nu iemand zijn die een eeuwig liefde Gods zou willen toekennen aan de verworpenen onder Israël? Des neen.

Vijfens, dit is de belofte des verbonds: Ik zal u geven het land Kanaän, het snoer van ulieder erfdeel. Het is mij hier geoorloofd vrijuit te spreken, en te zeggen, dat Kanaän de hemel is, daarboven bij God. Indien niet, dan is de belofte uitgevallen, en dat kan niet. God is God en kan niet liegen. Neen, God zwoer aan Abraham, Isaak en Jakob, dat zij Kanaän zouden hebben tot hun land. Welnu, zij hebben het op dit huidig oogenblik. Zij zijn in het hemelsche Kanaän. En zoo is het met al degenen die in het verbond zijn, naar zijn kern. Zij hebben zelfs dat Kanaän nu hier op aarde, doch geestelijk, in het hart, dat vernieuwd is, waarin God door Jezus Christus woont. Het aardsche Kanaän was niet dan type en schaduw. Dat heeft Abraham geweten, want de schrijver aan de Hebreëen zegt, dat Hij uitzag naar een beter, dat is, een hemelsch vaderland.

Zesdens, dat deze belofte een erfdeel is, dat wil zeggen, dat het onze bezitting wordt door Jezus Christus die stierf en verrees. Wij zijn erfgenamen van den hemel en van den God des hemels door den dood van Christus, doch dan zoo, dat Jezus Christus zelf eerst de erfgenaam is die eerst van Zijn eigen dood profiteert. Leest weer Hebreëen, waar ons vermeld staat, dat Hij de schande verachtte en het kruis verdroeg vanwege het loon, dat Hem voorgesteld was. Jezus is de eerste en de belangrijkste erfgenaam. En dan die van Christus zijn, en let wel, dat dit alle verworpenen buitensluit. Men tracht vandaag weer om de dingen die eeuwig particulier zijn, gemeen te maken.

Laat mij het ten slotte eens heel duidelijk zeggen: Het Verbond, het eeuwig Verbond, de God des Verbonds, de groote Erfgenaam Jezus Christus, de Belofte en het Beloofde Goed, namelijk, de hemel der zaligheden, die allen zijn voor niemand dan voor de uitverkorenen. Zie op het verband. Het ging juist over de uitverkorenen, vers 6. En let ten slotte op het

9de en 10de vers. Wie worden daar genoemd? Deze: Abraham, Isaak en Jakob! En dat zijn uitverkorenen!

Nog één ding moet ik er bij zeggen, en het is dit: Al die zaligheden van het Eeuwig Verbond Gods zijn het deel van Gods volk *onvoorwaardelijk*. Dat zegt Gods Woord ook duidelijk. Let vooral op Heb. 8:10. Daar staat: "Want dit is het verbond dat Ik met het huis Israels maken zal na die dagen, zegt de Heere: Ik zal Mijne wetten in hun verstand geven, en in hunne harten zal Ik die inschrijven; en Ik zal hun tot een God zijn en zij zullen Mij tot een volk zijn."

Ik zou willen vragen in allen ernst: Wat is het voorrecht van een belofte van allerlei zaligheid, indien ik de voorwaarde tot vervulling der belofte tot in der eeuwigheid toe niet kan nakomen?

Neen, maar de belofte houdt geloof in! Want God schrijft in mijn hart Zijn wet en Hij geeft dat gebod in mijn verstand, zoodat ik niet meer van noode heb, dat iemand mij leere. Alle uitverkorene kinderen Gods zullen van den Heere geleerd zijn. Hij liefde hen met een eeuwige liefde.

En nu weten we, dat dit verbond tot bewuste, ethische en zedelijke schepselen komt, zoodat er ruimte is voor "een ingesteld Woord" en een "inzetting" in Jakob, zoowel als vermaning en bestraffing. Maar dit doet het onvoorwaardelijke karakter van het Verbond niet te niet. Het "tweede deel" van het verbond maakt het Verbond niet tot een "akkoordje", noch ook geeft het ons recht om te spreken van "twee partijen in het verbond". Maar zóó werkt het: God zegt in mijn hart door Zijn Woord en Geest: Zoek Mijn aangezicht! En dan zegt het volk van God: Ik zoek Uw aangezicht, o Heer!

En zoo, en zoo alleen, krijgt God alleen de eer!

En al die heerlijkheden ontvangen zij "Als zij weinige menschen in getale waren, ja, weinigen en vreemdelingen daarin."

Dat maakt het zoo onuitsprekelijk benauwd bij tijden en perioden voor de Kerk Gods op aarde. Zij zijn zoo weinigen.

Weinig te zijn is smartelijk.

De mensch wil gaarne verkeerren temidden van de duizenden en tienduizenden.

Als ge met weinigen zijt is niet zoo erg, als er niet meer zijn dan gij. Dan zijn immers de weinigen alles? Maar om weinigen te zijn die tezamen tegenover de massa's staan: ziet, dat is erg. Ik denk hier direkt aan Jezus, temidden van de stieren van Basan, temidden van het oprukken der honden.

Gods volk zijn altijd in de groote minderheid geweest. De massa's zijn bij de verworpenen. Denkt hier aan het ééne huisgezin van Noach, toen er miljoenen van menschen waren op de aarde. Die man moet een zeer groot geloof gehad hebben om het uit te houden tegen de publieke opinie.

Wie denkt hier niet aan het snoeven der verworpenen: Dat hoopje amechtige Joden?

En, let er nu op, dat tot de uitverkoren Abraham, Izaak en Jakob gezegd werd, dat zij het geheele land Kanaän zouden hebben tot hunlieder erfdeel, toen zij weinige in getale waren! Is dat niet wonderlijk? Als God het gezegd had tot een volk, dat ten tijde van Zijn belofte verreweg het grootste gedeelte uitmaakte van de bevolking, dan zouden we de belofte gemakkelijker gelooven. Maar het is slechts een handvol volks. Ten tijde van hun vertrek naar Egypte eenige tientallen.

En zoo is het altijd.

Stelt het U voor: het geheele heelal, zooals het straks vernieuwd, verjongd, verheerlijkt te voorschijn zal treden, behoort aan het "bundelken der levenden"! Jezus zeide: "want zij zullen het aardrijk beërven"!

Bovendien zijn zij vreemdelingen.

Vreemdeling te zijn maakt U tot een lijder.

En dat is Uw roeping. Wij zijn uitverkoren om vreemdelingen te zijn op aarde.

En dat vreemdelingschap van Gods volk raakt alles. Gij staat geheel en al vreemd tegenover alles en iedereen. De oorzaak van Uw vreemdelingschap ligt in Uw geboorte van God, van boven, van den hemel. Ge zijt in 't diepste van Uw bestaan een hemeling, een kind van God. En dat gaat zoo strikt en absoluut door, dat de Bijbel zegt, hoe Uw wandeling in de hemelen is. En ge wordt toegeroepen om gedurende Uw gansche leven de dingen die boven zijn te gedenken en te zoeken, niet die op de aarde zijn.

Zoo woonden Abraham, Izaak en Jakob in tenten.

En zoo woont Gods volk temidden van de goddeloozen als vreemdelingen en bijwoners.

En dat is zoo vanwege het beginsel des nieuwen levens. Vanuit het hart zijn de uitgangen des levens. Welnu, sindsdien Uw hart rein is (Matth. 5) zoekt dat hart de reinheid, en die reinheid is alleen te vinden bij God in den hemel.

Dan zeggen de goddeloozen, dat ziende: Gij dwazen! En het lijden is Uw deel. Ze kunnen U niet verklaren, omdat zij het geestelijke leven niet kunnen onderscheiden. Gij zijt wandelende raadsels voor de goddeloozen, wiens deel aardsch en op aarde is. Straks wordt ge afschrapsels der wereld in zeer letterlijken zin, als de Antichrist zijn volle gedaante zal ontvangen hebben. Dan zullen we ons geheel vreemd gevoelen op aarde.

Zoo vreemd is Gods volk, dat als men uitermate leeft naar dit nieuwe, reine beginsel, zooals een Henoch, men door het goddelooze rot gezocht wordt om gedood te worden. Weg met zulk eenen!

Maar zij worden door God bemind; het verbond is hunner met zijn belofte, en zij zullen het aardrijk tot in eeuwigheid bezitten. Dan niet meer vreemdeling, doch dan tehuis bij God, met Zijn volk en Engelen tot in eeuwigheid.

G. Vos.

IN HIS FEAR

About Catechism Again

I hope you have read what brother Rev. Doezeema wrote in our column last time. Better re-read it or re-call it otherwise you won't know what I am going to try to write about now.

While on my vacation we came into contact with John Calvin, and, believe it or not, he had something to say about doctrinal catechism for ten-year-olds (Institutes IV, 19, 13). He said it would be a good thing if we should observe the methods of ancient days when ten-year-olds studied the system of Christian Religion and made public examination thereof in the presence of parents and especially in the presence of the church.

This, however, just by the way.

At least Calvin thought that ten years old was not too early to train them in the doctrines of the church. Besides, he had something to say also about how lax parents would be put to shame if at ten years old their children were ignorant of the vital doctrines.

This, however, just by the way.

I believe that Rev. Doezeema and I agree perfectly on the fact that our children should receive doctrine. He states "we should teach doctrine through history". Hence, we should teach doctrine. The difference between us seems to be that of method. And after all the method depends upon the instructor or catechist. I certainly believe in teaching history, but not in the sense of using our time in catechism for telling and re-telling Bible stories. The brother would not want to do that either. He, too, would like to acquire some system whereby doctrine is taught through history. We were looking for that system. When the children come to the age where they will study the Heidelberg Catechism or the Essentials or what have you, they will study doctrine but through history also.

I believe as I wrote before that children in their early years are very receptive, and if we will but come to them with that which is calculated for young minds, they will grasp tremendous things.

Another question is, have we tried it?

We ought not to say: it can't be done, we must say: let's come to the children in such a way that they can understand. Then the method will be left to the instructor.

Timothy from a child knew the Scriptures.

Brother Doezeema is afraid that such a system as I outlined makes us vulnerable to the charge of being more interested in Creeds than the Bible. Answer: In the eyes of those who cry "no creed but Christ" we

are vulnerable when we study from the Creeds at any time, also when we preach the catechism on Sundays. I believe rather "no Christ without a creed". How much we disassociate the Creeds from the Bible, and thus become guilty of studying creeds instead of the Bible depends upon how we preach the Catechism and how we teach it in our classes. If we use catechism books we are also vulnerable. I like studying direct from the Bible, but history and experience has taught us that we need compendiums, etc. The Creeds are not the Bible, I know, but if we should interpret the Bible contrary to the Creeds. . . . what would we have? If our children follow the system which we outlined, and they have grace in their hearts, I believe they will have a good conception of the Bible.

Next, the brother states that a detailed study such as we outlined will not indoctrinate the youth but rather give them to know the language of the Confessions. Answer: The language of the Confessions is the vehicle through which the doctrines of Scripture are transmitted. It is very essential that our youth know the language of the Confessions and we instructors must teach them what that language means. A generation which no longer knows the language of the confessions is ready to learn a strange language.

The Heidelberg Catechism is beautiful, but it is only ONE of the THREE Forms. Besides, the Catechism is preached continually in our churches, and except we be careful we will have generations who know nothing about the THREE Forms. Along with the Catechism we should study also the other two. Who could ever object to that?

Next the brother says that experience and psychology show that much of the confessions cannot be assimilated before the age of twenty. Answer: I know people three times twenty years old who haven't assimilated the truth yet, and I know some, half-twenty years old that are assimilating as rapidly as it is presented to them in digestible form. All depends upon how we present things, that is, if there is faith present to understand spiritual things. The doctrine of Justification is intensely difficult, especially for adults. We assimilate it by faith. Children also have faith and they have minds which are logical and receptive. And as for the psychology of giving children doctrine at say 11-13 years of age, I know famous psychologists who are catechizing children at six years of age.

Our friend from sunny California comes next to say that my system runs the danger of abstracting history from doctrine. Answer: It might appear that way. The method of teaching would have to decide that. To abstract history from doctrine is as wrong as to abstract doctrine from history. How much we in all our catechism teaching teach history doctrinally

and doctrine historically depends upon the method used. If, as the brother suggests, we will use history as our text book, good and well, but who will create us some system? And what system of doctrinal study could ever prepare our youth for making confession of the Christian Faith quite like our Confessions? Our young people will never learn the reformed faith unless we present them a system of that faith. I believe we have that system in our Creeds, at least basically.

And our colleague says that Scripture says beginners should be fed with milk. Answer: The true doctrine is milk. How much it becomes digestible for the youth depends, under God, upon how it is presented to them.

In conclusion: Rev. Doezeema does not write in order to maintain his point over against, say, my point (if I have any), but he writes because he wants people to weigh things carefully when it comes to catechism endeavour.

And that is excellent advice. The "religious" world in which we live requires in ever-increasing measure that our young people be equipped to distinguish carefully. We do not pretend that contact with the truth merely will fortify them, of course not, the Grace of God fortifies them, but God empowers His people through the Word and their knowledge of the Word. After Paul tells his listeners what weapons belong to the armour of the Christian, he tells them also that they need the sword of the Spirit. . . and that is the Word of God.

The time is short!

The recently begun Draft tells us that the time is still shorter. Part of the precious time of our youths will be spent away from any catechism contact, unless we put forth some effort as churches to keep contact with our draftees. But the quiet of the catechism room at least is broken up, and our youth have to face the world in a way which calls for preparedness.

Can we then begin TOO early to indoctrinate?

And what system have we which is better than the system which our Christian Faith itself proposes?

By the way, we have sent out some Methodologies; they give the scheme according to which we operate our system. If you want one we will send it to you. And Rev. Cammenga is getting his presses ready to provide more Easy Steps, Primers, etc.

I hope you may have enjoyed our little debate as much as Rev. Doezeema and I did, and may have been edified. And as for catechism, let's accept nothing less than the best.

M. Gritters.

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Report of Classis West — Convened Sept. 1, 1948 at Pella, Iowa

Classis West convened at Pella, Iowa, on Wednesday, Sept. 1, 1948.

The meeting was opened with the usual devotionals, conducted by the Rev. A. Cammenga, president of the former meeting.

All the churches of the Classis were represented by their respective delegates, Redlands and Bellflower each sending one delegate. Those present for the first time signed the Formula of Subscription. Thereupon the meeting was declared constituted.

According to rotation Rev. P. De Boer presided and Rev. A. Cammenga recorded the minutes.

Having taken the chair, Rev. De Boer spoke a word of welcome to the delegates.

The minutes of the previous meeting of Classis were read and the recording approved.

The church visitors for Manhattan, Revs. L. Vermeer and P. Vis gave a report on their work done there, reporting that everything is in good order.

The Stated Clerk informed the Classis that he had carried out the work he was instructed to do.

The matter of publishing another set of sermon books as per instruction of Doon of the last Classis was then discussed. After a rather lengthy discussion it was decided not to comply with this request.

Manhattan now comes with a request that ministers filling classical appointments there be reimbursed only for their expenses, not for their preaching services, since expenses for such appointments run very high. The instruction is declared out of order since in the instances of classical appointments we do not speak of remuneration but rather of an honor-

arium and is therefore left to the jurisdiction of the consistory in question.

Manhattan further requests the Classis to consider the eligibility of calling one of our ministers who has been called by them less than one year ago. Classis decides that Manhattan has advanced no weighty reasons nor presented a definite case for Classis to depart from the Rules of Order.

Upon request classical appointments are given to Pella and Manhattan. Manhattan requests that ministers filling classical appointments there remain for three successive Sundays. Classis decides to abide by its former decision of two successive Sunday. Later in the day the committee appointed to arrange these reports. Appointments are as follows:

Manhattan:

Sept. 19 and 26 — Rev. P. De Boer
Oct. 17 and 24 — Rev. L. Doezeema
Nov. 14 and 21 — Rev. A. Cammenga
Dec. 12 and 19 — Rev. J. Van Weelden
Jan. 9 and 16 — Rev. J. Blankespoor
Feb. 20 and 27 — Rev. L. Vermeer

Pella:

Sept. 12 — Rev. A. Cammenga
Sept. 26 — Rev. J. Van Weelden
Oct. 10 — Rev. A. Petter
Oct. 24 — Rev. J. Howerzyl
Nov. 7 — Rev. P. De Boer
Nov. 21 — Rev. J. Blankespoor
Dec. 5 — Rev. P. Vis
Dec. 19 — Rev. J. Blankespoor
Jan. 2 — Rev. J. Van Weelden
Jan. 16 — Rev. A. Petter
Jan. 30 — Rev. J. Howerzyl
Feb. 13 — Rev. P. De Boer
Feb. 27 — Rev. L. Doezeema

Rev. J. Howerzyl is appointed to be moderator of Pella.

A letter from our Grand Haven, Mich. congregation is read regarding permission to ask for collections from the various churches. This request had been at the last Synod but due to some oversight was not treated. In the light of this oversight Classis recommends the cause of Grand Haven to the consistories of Classis West.

The credentials of Rev. L. Vermeer were examined and approved.

Rev. P. De Boer is chosen to be a member of the Classical Committee; Rev. P. Vis is elected to be assistant treasurer for Classis West.

Classis decided that the California ministers shall serve as church visitors for the churches in California. Also to eliminate church visitation in Manhattan this year in view of the fact that the Church Visitors have just completed their work there. For Iowa and Minnesota for church visitation are chosen Revs. P. De Boer and J. Blankespoor with A. Petter as alternate.

Rev. J. Van Weelden is appointed to thank the Pella ladies for their excellent catering services. It is decided to meet in Edgerton next March, D. V.

The president spoke a few fitting words in closing whereupon Psalter No. 371 was sung and Rev. L. Vermeer closed with prayer.

J. BLANKESPOOR, Stated Clerk.