

THE STANDARD

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MEDITATION

Called To The Waters

"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price."

—Isaiah 55:1.

The viewpoint of the prophet is very peculiar.

Isaiah lived in a time of prosperity of a certain kind.

It is somewhat like the prosperity which we have now. There is peace, of a kind. And a great plenty.

And so it was during most of the time Isaiah prophesied in Judah.

But the first chapter of his prophecy tells us that there was a terrible condition spiritually. They had become a very sinful nation. With their mouth they praised God, but they kept their heart very far from Him.

And their sin had followed the one upon the other, until they had to be punished as a nation, and sent into the Babylonian captivity.

And that bondage, which was very cruel to the real child of God, was terrible. Hear them sing in the psalms that were made during that bondage: By Babel's streams we sat and wept. . . .

But that sadness of God's people was not the worst which they would experience in Babylon. There was the danger that they would lust after Babylon's plenty, and forget their peculiar calling in the world, namely, to turn, to always turn to their Lord and their God, and to ask Him for His precious Word and grace, so that they might live, and live forever. For a man doth not live by bread alone. If he has no more than the earthly things, he will die and doth die every moment he exists upon this earth. But only those that

feed on the Word of God will live forever.

And against that tendency, in the midst of this danger to lust after the things of this world in Babylon, the Lord God comes and calls His people to the fountain of living waters: Come unto Me and drink of the water of life freely.

This psalm has an historical application first of all.

Ho, every one of my people Israel that suffer in the Babylonian captivity, and that are thirsty for Me and for My covenant blessings, come ye unto the Fount of living waters, and drink to your heart's content!

It is first of all the Gospel call of the Old Testament.

* * * *

But there is a far wider application of these beautiful words of Isaiah.

You see that at once when you remember how Jesus would often employ the same figure in His sermons among the people of God during His sojourn on earth. Take, for example, the occasion when He said on the great day of the feast: "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink!"

Or think of the sermon He preached to the Samaritan woman at the well of Jacob: ". . . whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

Or when Jesus spoke to John after His glorification: "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

Oh yes, the call to the waters in Isaiah is of equal force today, after so many years. In fact, it is of greater force since his day and age, for since then Jesus our Lord has come, and has given an even deeper content to the concept of water.

Today, and every day the Lord God calls from the heavens and says to His people: Come ye to the waters and drink!

* * * *

The speech of water and of thirst is very clear.

Thirst is symbolism for a great, for an extreme want and need.

That this is so does not become as clear to us in lands where there is water and to spare at all times. We do say: I am thirsty, but we do not really know what we say. We do not know the real meaning of physical thirst.

That is different in the land where this text was written. The Israelite knew of desert heat and desert thirst. And that is the real picture in the text. Attend to psalm 42: As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God!

With us, in our complex and rich civilization, it is entirely different. When we note that we would relish some water, we simply turn on the faucet and drink. And the result is that none of us is every really thirsty.

But think of the traveller in Death Valley in California, who has walked for miles in a desert heat of 125 degrees or more, without water. It has happened that men dropped dead of thirst after only a few hours of that desert heat. All the moisture of their body dried up in those few agonizing hours of intense suffering of thirst.

Imagine a man in such extremes, his throat and mouth and lips are cracked with heat and thirst: he staggers as he falls. And then he hears the cry: Come ye to the waters and drink! And he rushes to the fountain of living waters and drinks and drinks from the life-giving waters.

That is the picture which we must see.

* * * *

But who are so thirsty?

Everyone, is the answer of the church today. Every one is thirsty for God and for His blessings. And when Jesus stands with His hands and arms outspread, and says: Come ye unto Me and drink! He means every one that comes within the audience of His voice.

But that is not true, and for a very evident reason. And here it is: there is no correspondence between the thirst of the world and the water of the Fountain which God has opened at Jerusalem for sin and uncleanness. (Zach. 13:1).

Oh, I agree that the whole world is thirsty. That is very evident to anyone that knows the world. They are in great thirst for the things of this present life. They thirst for man and for humanity and for the things of this time, for sin and for uncleanness, and every sort of abomination.

And the more they drink of those things the more they thirst.

A very terrible process has been set in motion since man fell away from God. Refusing to drink of the real Fountain of water, they turned under the instigation of the devil to the world and to its riches and they would drink them instead of the things of God and

His covenant, and the result is that they thirsted still more. Then they drank more of the things of the world and of sin and they thirsted still more, and this shall go on, and on, and on.

And the end is in hell where they will thirst forever. O father Abraham, send Lazarus, that he may dip his finger in water and come here to relieve me of my thirst! For I suffer in this flame. We have heard the words of Jesus in the story of the rich man and Lazarus.

There is a great shortage, and absolute famine of water in hell.

But our text speaks of an entirely different kind of thirst. Certainly you will agree that there must be correspondence between the thirst and the water. If a man is really thirsty, and then I mean the natural thirst for natural, created water, and if anyone offers water to him, you may be sure that he is going to drink.

Now then, if the world, and every one in the world is really thirsty for God, they would also drink when the refreshing and healing waters of God and of His Christ are placed within their reach. In that case they would never reject the Gospel.

Ho, every one that thirsteth!

Yes, it is addressed to "everyone", but know surely that a very particular sort of people are meant here. They are those that are in harmony with the waters. They thirst for the waters of life, whatever they are.

And they are made thirsty because of the operation of the love of God through the Holy Ghost in their hearts. The Lord has made them taste Himself. And since then they say: "And nought can satisfy!" Or they say with David: I thirst for God!

They are called and they only are called.

Come ye to the waters! It is the call to God's people that have learned to know that they must have the living God and His communion if they are to be happy for time and for eternity.

* * * *

What are the waters?

Judging from Isaiah 44:3 it is the Holy Ghost and His blessings.

According to Psalm 42 it is to appear before God and to see His face.

Reading John 7:37 to 39 we would say it is the receiving of the Spirit of Christ.

But Matthew 5:6 speaks of thirsting for righteousness, and that seems to be the idea in this passage too, for in the preceding chapter, in fact in the last clause of the last verse of that chapter, immediately preceding our present text, we read: "and their righteousness is of Me, saith the Lord. And in verse 14 we read: "In righteousness shalt thou be established." And with regard to the last Scripture, we must remember

that it is the summing up of all the glories of salvation that shall be given to God's people.

And then comes this invitation to come to God and to drink of the waters He will give them.

What are the waters?

I think that we must combine all the ideas which we found in various Scriptures.

The water of the Fountain of life is the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ which is ours by faith, and which faith is wrought in our hearts through the Holy Ghost. And to have that faith and the righteousness of God, is the blessing of the Lord.

That is the water of life.

And that is the water for which we thirst.

And that is the water which we drink from time to time.

And they satisfy, oh how they satisfy!

* * * *

Note that the figure of water is enriched by the mention of wine and milk.

Together they constitute all that we really need.

By nature we are dead, fallen into the depth of degradation, and vain with the vanity of emptiness and idleness.

But the Gospel brings us quickening, exaltation and nourishment.

For such is the speech of water, wine and milk.

Water is the quickening and refreshing power of God's righteousness in Jesus Christ the Lord. Righteousness is that state and condition where all our life, in thought and word and action is done from the purest motive of love and according to the only standard of goodness. And that standard is God. That is righteousness. And that is the quickening gift which is symbolized here as water. You thirst for righteousness and you are filled.

Wine is the symbol of exaltation.

It points to the exaltation with which we are crowned through the work of Christ. He does not restore us to the state which is called the original state of righteousness, but to the much higher state of the glory of the Lord in heavenly places. And that is symbolized in the wine which exalteth the heart of man.

Milk is the picture of feeding and nourishment. The righteousness of Christ *fills*. Read Matthew 5:6. There we read that if you hunger after the righteousness of Christ, you shall be *filled*. It is the element here that feeds us unto eternal life.

Now offer (but it is nonsense!) this water, wine and milk to the world, or to the worldly, nominal, unregenerated people that gather with God's people in church. And what is the result?

They hate the water that makes man good.

They hate the very idea of glorification to heavenly places. They sing and they joke and they have their

God-provoking titles: "Heaven can wait!", but they will have nothing of the wine of Jesus.

They hate the milk of the word of Christ's righteousness. They prefer the crookedness and the crime of their natural estate, and they wallow in it.

But the real church of Christ is built up and refreshed, exalted and fed by the water of life, the wine of the heavenly Kingdom and the milk of the Word.

The thirsty have come and they drink!

Hallelujah!

* * * *

But what is the price?

Nothing.

In the store of God you may, no, you must come with nothing, and then you may "buy"! Wondrous grace.

What does it mean? Why does Isaiah and Christ emphasize that we must buy without money, and take freely of the water of life?

This is the meaning: you must come with the humble confession on your lips and in your heart: I have nothing, O Lord! I am dreadfully poor. But I love Thee, and I long for the dainties which Thou hast prepared in Jesus Christ. But I have no right to them, and I have nothing in order to pay for them. I come here to buy the righteousness of Christ without money and without price, for I am tired of laying out money for that which is not bread and my labor for that which satisfieth not. I want Christ Jesus the Lord!

And that is the way it is. The Gospel and all its blessings are bestowed on us free, gratis, without money and without price.

From that point of view the Gospel is a work of indescribable grace and goodness of God.

But do not draw the mistaken conclusion that these goods are therefore without worth, just because we get them gratis, free, without money!

For nothing is farther from the truth.

The water of life is very expensive. My mind is in a whirl when I think of its infinite worth.

Jesus paid the price. And the price is His life which ebbed away in His heart's blood. The water of life is paid for, every drop is paid for. And the price is really nothing less than the death of the Son of God. God bought these waters for you with His own blood.

From that point of view the Gospel is a Divine act of strictest justice.

And together they are the adorable wisdom of God. He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord!

He produced the living waters! And that is the Lord our righteousness!

He produced the thirst! And that is my longing heart!

And drinking I receive a well of water springing up into everlasting life!

G. Vos.

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EDITORIALS

Reunion?

II.

The fourth proposition of the Rev. Bos in re possible reunion between the Liberated Churches and the Synodicals reads as follows:

"To take care that with every consistory a motion is made pending declaring one's readiness to reunion of all that, according to the Word of God, belongs together under the sole kingship of Jesus Christ, in complete stringency to the Word and on the basis of the Three Forms of Unity and those only, with mutual recognition of the offices."

This is probably the most important point of the five, and also the most impossible of realization. On this point the whole attempt to reunite will undoubtedly suffer shipwreck.

It is easy, indeed, to cause a schism in the churches; but it is extremely difficult to heal the breach once it is caused. One cannot set the clock of history back. History was made in the years 1936 to 1946, and during that history several mistakes were made. It was a mistake that the synod of 1936, without any overtures from consistory, classis, or particular synod, took up the question of "differences of opinion", "meenings-geschillen", and accentuated them until they became real doctrinal differences. It was a mistake that the same synod appointed a committee in order to discuss these differences of opinion and to report to synod of 1939. It was a mistake that the Synod of Sneek-Utrecht at a time of stress and war, when many voices in the churches could not be heard because of their papers being suspended by the Nazis, and in spite of many requests to the contrary, nevertheless officially acted upon these differences of opinion. It was a serious mistake that the same synod made their doctrinal decisions binding, especially the one that concerned the covenant of grace, and that they decided that no one was allowed to teach anything in the churches contrary to those decisions. It was another very serious mistake that on the basis of these decisions further steps were taken to suspend and depose two professors of the theological school, to bar a candidate for the ministry from the pulpit to which he had received a call, and to depose many officebearers from the local churches. This last was probably the most serious error of all, but it was simply the end of the way which the synod of 1936 began to walk.

Thus, finally, the schism was caused, not so much because of serious doctrinal differences as because the churches refused to take the yoke of hierarchy on their

neck and submit to binding decisions, that were not binding according to the Word of God and the Confessions.

And now it seems easy to say: we belong together; we ought to undo what was done. It may be easy to assume the attitude expressed in the slogan: let us forgive and forget. And on that basis it ought to be easy to come to a reunion.

But virtually this is impossible.

Of course, in the abstract it is entirely possible that either or both parties make a clean slate and confess their sins and come to a reunion and reconciliation. But in actual fact this is not as easy as it might seem. And the fourth proposition of the Rev. Bos, as is even now already evident from the reaction against it, plainly proves how unlikely it is that a reunion will ever be accomplished.

Let us analyze this proposition.

The Rev. Bos proposes that a motion with a view to reunion will be made pending with every consistory, liberated and synodical. The question may be asked here, first of all; what right does the Rev. Bos have to make such a proposition within his own churches? The question concerning reunion was made pending with the Synod of the Reformed Churches (art. 31); and, therefore, even if it could be done otherwise, it certainly cannot be dealt with locally now. Deputies have been appointed by synod, and they were limited by the condition that they first correspond in writing with the Synodicals' deputies. Rev. Bos, however, in this fourth point proposes evidently to ignore the synod and to ignore their appointed deputies, in order to make the question of reunion a problem for the local consistories. And this is not only improper, but it is also dangerous: for in this way Rev. Bos creates a division within the ranks of his own churches.

But this is by no means the worst difficulty.

Notice that the Rev. Bos proposes in this fourth point to recognize nothing but the Word of God and the Three Forms of Unity as the basis for reunion. He makes his meaning very plain when he adds: "and those only". That is, only the Three Forms of Unity shall be recognized as the basis for reunion. This implies, evidently, that the Synodicals will recant their own decisions of 1942 and 1946, and, what is more, set aside the Conclusions of Utrecht of 1905. Thus the Rev. Bos virtually invites the Synodicals to reunite with them on their own basis, that is, on the basis adopted by the Reformed Churches under art. 31. Now, in the abstract such a basis must be considered perfectly sufficient and proper, of course. It is simply the basis of the Word of God and the Reformed Confessions, and whatever is more than these certainly cannot be considered Reformed. If a reunion, therefore, be established, it certainly must be on the basis proposed by the Rev. Bos. This is true, however, only

when we consider the question in the abstract. Concretely considered it is quite different. The history of 1936 to 1946 simply makes it impossible that such a proposition for reunion would be acceptable to the Synodicals. Already several voices are heard even now that give a very plain refusal and negative answer to the call issued by the Rev. Bos. Even Rev. Nawijn, who otherwise is earnestly desiring to establish the reunion, has several objections to this proposition of the Rev. Bos. Even if the Synodicals would accept the proposed basis, the difficulties and problems would not be solved, according to him. Writes he: "When we limit ourselves, first of all, to this one point, I see quite a few difficulties, regardless of the question whether such a decision will have proper results. O, indeed, the Word of God and the Three Forms of Unity are our basis; but does that mean that we are ready by taking such a step? Do you not then open the door for a new controversy among brethren, such as raged in 1893 to 1905?" And other Synodicals meet this proposition of the Rev. Bos with a determined negative answer.

The last element in the proposition of the Rev. Bos will no doubt meet with no less serious objections from both sides than the former. He proposes a reunion between the two groups "with mutual recognition of the offices." Also this would be quite conceivable in the abstract, that is, if one could only disregard the history of the past few years. But this is, of course, impossible, especially in view of the fact that several officebearers have been deposed from office on the basis of Arts. 79 and 80. How is it possible that consistories of the Synodicals now can simply recognize officebearers that have been deposed from office because they have committed a gross sin? Does not the proposition of the Rev. Bos tacitly assume that the Synodicals were wrong and that they will admit their wrong, not only in as far as the material judgment upon the deposed officebearers was concerned, but also in as far as they pursued an hierarchical method and principal of Church Polity? This is the plain implication and the tacit assumption on the part of the Synodicals as proposed by the Rev. Bos in this final point. Now it is plain that local consistories certainly cannot assume this standpoint apart from the major assemblies. But it is equally certain that the major assemblies, that the synod of the Synodicals will never accept such a proposition or proceed from such a tacit assumption. And even if it would proceed from such an assumption and be willing on their part to recognize the officebearers in the Liberated Churches, the latter certainly would not be satisfied with such a silent admission of guilt but would insist on a confession of sin and an official reinstatement of the deposed officebearers.

And so one sees how difficult, if not impossible, it is to heal the breach in a proper way.

I predict that the whole attempt at reunion will be a failure.

And to my mind the cause of the failure lies with the deputies *ad hoc* of the Synodicals, who will not commit themselves to a written correspondence before they start the colloquy, and who refuse to answer the five questions which the deputies of the Liberated Churches propose to put to them.

And the contents of these questions can very easily be surmised.

H. H.

Correspondence

Rev. A. Cammenga,

Dear Brother,

Your interesting article in reply to my "A Tendency To Individualism" I read. I say "interesting" exactly because your article strongly corroborates my main contention.

I do not know as yet whether I should go into a rebuttal. Perhaps it is not necessary, since I think that I stated my objections rather clearly. But for my information I would like to have an answer to a few questions.

1. Where is that quotation from Calvin to be found? I would like to check up on it.

2. Will you please publish the letter I wrote to you in August last in full? I would like to have our readers be in a position to check up on that letter.

3. What exactly do you mean in this connection by the statement: "We must not always lean on one and the same staff, neither look in just one direction?"

With brotherly regards,

H. Hoeksema.

IN MEMORIAM

The Young People's Society of the Second Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan hereby wishes to express its sincere and christian sympathy to the Van Solkema family in the death of their wife and mother

MRS. RALPH VAN SOLKEMA

May the God of all grace comfort and sustain the bereaved in their sorrow.

The Young People's Society,

Kay Bouma, Secretary.

THE TRIPLE KNOWLEDGE

An Exposition Of The Heidelberg Catechism

PART TWO

LORD'S DAY 25

2.

Preaching As A Means Of Grace. (cont.)

What is true preaching in the Biblical sense of the word? And what is a preacher?

We find the great importance of preaching as well as of the preacher expressed in Rom. 10:14, 15: "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent?"

It is evident that in these words the importance of the preacher and his mission are emphasized. And it is well that we, too, emphasize these, especially in our day. Our age is characterized by gross ignorance in regard to fundamental questions; and the nature and importance of preaching is very little understood. To-day everybody preaches, except those, perhaps, whose specific calling it is. Many that call themselves ministers of the Divine Word have become unfaithful to their calling, and devote themselves to lecturing on sundry subjects rather than to the preaching of the Word of God. On the other hand, there are in our day not a few that pretend to preach while they have no mission and that utterly disregard the truth expressed with emphasis in the words of our text, in the question: "How shall they preach except they be sent? Not only men, but women and children preach. Societies, institutes, and other groups that exist and operate apart from the church prepare and send out preachers; and one of the chief purposes many of these preachers seem to have in view is to draw a crowd, and to this end they are frequently employed by some churches, when the fountains of sensationalism in the local preacher run dry, to create that temporary stir of religious emotions which is called a revival. These preachers advertise themselves in the local papers; they announce the strangest topics as to the theme of their sermons; they sometimes offer a more entertaining show than the theaters; they accompany their philippics by the wildest gesticulations; they even perform acrobatic stunts that are worthy of a circus; they one and all hawk the Christ, as if He were the cheapest article on the market. And the fruit of their

labors is a wave of sensationalism that passes over as quickly as it is aroused. And when many people speak of a "nice sermon", they mean not at all a sermon that served as a vehicle to bring the Word of God to them and that is a means of grace to them, but one that for approximately forty minutes could entertain them and play on their emotions.

Hence, it is not at all superfluous to ask the question: what is a preacher, and what is a preacher in the Biblical sense of the word?

And then I would first of all give the following definition. Preaching is the authoritative proclamation of the gospel by the Church in the service of the Word of God through Christ. In this definition we call attention to the following four elements: first, that preaching is authoritative proclamation; the preacher must be sent. Secondly, that it is proclamation of the gospel, that is, the whole Word of God as it is revealed in Christ. Thirdly, that it is by the Church, for only the Church is able to send the preacher. And fourthly, that it is in the service of the Word of God through Christ, for only Christ through the Spirit can make preaching of the Word powerful and efficacious as a means of grace.

Let us begin by considering the last element of the definition, for that is indeed most important and fundamental in the preaching of the Word. Through the preaching it pleases God through Christ, the exalted Lord, the Chief Prophet of God, Who alone gathers His Church, to speak to His people unto salvation. This is rather plainly expressed in the text already quoted from Romans 10:14, 15; only I must call your attention to an apparently small and insignificant mistake in the translation as we find it in the King James Version that was corrected in the Revised Version. In the former you read: "How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?" while the latter renders: "How shall they believe in him whom they have not heard?" The former evidently misunderstood the genitive of the relative pronoun that appears in the Greek, overlooking that the genitive in Greek is the direct object of the verb "have heard". The proper translation, therefore, is not "of whom", but "whom" they have not heard." And you will understand that the difference is important: when you hear *of* someone, he is not present; you do not hear his own voice but the voice of someone else who tells you something about him. But when you hear someone, you hear his own voice; he is present with you; he is addressing you. Thus the difference in the translation is evidently quite significant, though it concerns only one little word. In the one case the text really asserts in question form that it is impossible to believe in Him unless we have heard about Him; and this is, of course, quite true, but it does not convey the full meaning of the text. In the other case, however, the text teaches us that

you cannot believe in Christ unless you have heard Him speak to you, unless you have heard His Word addressed to you. This is exactly the meaning of the text: "How shall they believe in him whom they have not heard?"

And this is quite in harmony with other parts of Scripture. The Lord says in John 5:24: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." And in the twenty-fifth verse of the same chapter we read: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live." Of His sheep, whom the Father hath given Him, the Lord says in John 10:3: "To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out." And in verse 4 of the same chapter: "And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice." And again in verse 27: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me."

The word of man is not sufficient to serve as a basis for that certain knowledge whereby I know that all my sins are forgiven me, and that for that perfect confidence whereby I rely in life and death on my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ. How shall they believe in Him Whom they have not heard? We must hear "the word of God, (which) is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." Heb. 4:12, 13. But how shall they hear this Word unless they hear it from Him, unless they hear the voice of Christ? And how shall they hear this Word without the preacher? This is the point of the text in Rom. 10:14, 15. Anyone can tell you about Jesus and about His Word and work, about the cross and the atonement, about the resurrection and justification. And to do this, to be witnesses of Christ, is certainly our calling; the Christian must be a witness for Christ in the world, must confess His Name, must extol His Name and tell all about Him. But this does not make anyone a preacher, for a preacher is not a person who merely speaks concerning Christ, but one through whom it pleases Christ Himself to speak, to cause His own voice to be heard by His people. The thing that matters in any sermon is whether we hear the voice of Jesus say: "Come unto me and rest"; whether we hear Him say: "Repent and believe"; whether His voice resounds in our deepest soul: "Your sins are forgiven, and I give unto you eternal life."

Christ is *the* office-bearer in God's house. He must build the house, not we. The task to gather His people is committed to Him; it is, and remains, His; never can it become ours. Even though it pleases Him to gather His flock and to build His Church through the instrumentality of men so that they become co-workers with Him, the work still remains His. All that is merely our work, not the work of Christ, shall be burnt: "And I, when I shall be lifted up, shall draw all unto me." And when it pleases the Lord Jesus Christ to gather His flock, to cause His voice to be heard, so that His sheep hear it and follow Him,—when it pleases Him to do this through a man, then you have a preacher and in no other instance. It is in the consciousness of being such a preacher that the apostle could write in II Cor. 5:20: "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." That is preaching.

It follows, with respect to the contents of the message which a preacher brings to the Church or which he brings to any audience in the heathen world, that it may never be anything else than the Word of Christ. For the Lord will not speak through anything but His own Word. He gave His own Word correctly to the apostles, as Paul declares in II Cor. 5:19: "And hath committed unto us (posited in us, according to the original) the word of reconciliation." It was in this way that Christ made preachers out of the apostles: He put His own word in them. Just as when an ambassador from one government to another delivers a message he takes the word of his government along, so Christ gave His Word to the apostles; and this same Word of Christ is committed unto the Church in the Holy Scriptures. And preaching as to its contents is strictly limited to the Word of Christ in the Bible. The preacher has nothing of his own to deliver, strictly nothing. Whenever he delivers a message of his own, apart from the Word of Christ, he ceases to be a preacher. If an ambassador to a foreign government has a definite commission and a definite message from his own government to deliver, and after having delivered it begins to express his own views and opinions on the matter in question, he cannot do the latter in his capacity as ambassador. The same is true of the preacher. In the measure that he goes outside of the Word of God, he ceases to be a preacher. This may be applied to modern social and political preaching: many preachers today use the pulpit to express their views on various social, economic, and political questions. When you listen to one of these men, you are perhaps hearing a well worked out lecture on the subject under discussion; perhaps,—and this is more often the case,—the attempt is very amateurish; you may agree or disagree with the speaker; but the man was not a preacher. And if he offered his social or political

views under the pretext of his being a V.D.M., a minister of the Word of God, he is a deceiver, too: for a preacher has nothing else than the Word of Christ to bring; and although this Word of Christ may throw light upon the calling of a Christian with respect to social and political life, a mere lecture on social and political topics is no preaching.

Moreover, it must be remembered that a preacher must bring the Word of Christ *concerning Himself*: Jesus Christ as the revelation of the God of our salvation,—that is the central theme of all preaching. Hence, the apostle speaks in the latter part of verse 15 of Romans 10 of the preacher that brings the gospel of peace, the glad tidings of good things. It is the gospel of God concerning His Son; the Word of faith; the Word that God through Christ has blotted out the handwriting of sin that was against us, has reconciled us unto Himself, has justified us in Christ; the glad tidings of such good things as the forgiveness of sins, the adoption unto children and heirs, the deliverance by almighty grace from the bonds of sin and the dominion of death, regeneration, sanctification, the hope of eternal life and glory,—it is that Word of Christ which the preacher must bring. He may preach that Word of Christ from different angles, in many different ways, with application to different phases and spheres of life; he may cause the light of that Word of Christ concerning Himself as the God of our salvation to shine upon the Christian's calling and attitude in and over against peace and war, prosperity and adversity, sickness and health, fruitful and barren years, life and death, the home and society, Church and state; in fact, he must preach the whole counsel of God. But always it must be the Word of God in Christ concerning Himself, the glad tidings of good things, which he preaches.

This already implies that the word of the preacher must be authoritative. Preaching is authoritative proclamation of the gospel. The word for preaching in the New Testament really means "to speak as a herald". The preacher must bring his message, nothing more; and he must deliver it in the name of Christ and with authority. He must clearly leave the impression that the audience is under obligation to hear and to do the Word that is preached, that they and he together must bow before that Word just because it is the authoritative Word of Christ. He must not say: "Now, listen; this is my opinion, and I will show you why", nor must he beg his audience: "Will you not please agree with me and accept what I say?" He must say: "Thus saith the Lord!" For a preacher is an ambassador, and as such he must speak. No false show of humility nor fear of men may keep him from addressing his audience with authority, provided he brings the Word of Christ and nothing else. Pride and conceit it would be indeed, were he to bring his own word, the philosophy of

men, with a note of authority. Man's word has no power, neither has it any authority. Conceit, too, it is if the preacher does not include himself in his message: for he also is a sinful man. But if he stands in the consciousness of his calling, and if he brings the Word of Christ, it is only a matter of humble and fearless obedience if he brings his message with authority. The fruit of preaching,—and it is well that the minister of the Word remembers this,—depends solely on Christ, who speaks through the sermon. No preacher must ever leave the impression in his preaching that it really depends on his efforts, on his ability to move the audience to tears or to make them tremble with fear and damnation, whether souls shall be won for Christ or not. I consider what is known as the “altar call” in our country as a great evil. It is delivered when the sermon is finished, when the preacher can break loose from his text; it is a strong and prolonged play upon the emotions, often accompanied by a soft strain of music and a few appropriate hymns; always it consists of presenting Jesus as a poor beggar, Who would fain save a few souls if they would only come to Him before it is too late. Always it consists of hawking Jesus in its worst form. This travesty on true preaching always impressed me as a burlesque caricature of the preaching of the apostles. Will He Who declared: ‘No man can come unto me, except the Father draw him’; and: “All that the Father giveth unto me shall come unto me” speak and cause his voice to be heard through such a travesty on preaching, through such burlesque presentations of Himself? God forbid! I do not hesitate to say that this is no preaching. There are several examples of preaching in the Holy Scriptures. The prophets of the old dispensation preached. Christ Himself delivered His discourses when He sojourned among us. The apostles went into all the world and preached the gospel to every creature. But in vain does one look for any indication in all their preaching that they hawked the Saviour and played upon the emotions of men as is done in the modern altar call. And therefore, a preacher may apply all his God-given powers and talents to the preparation and delivery of his message. In fact, he should, for the Word that he preaches is worthy of his very best. But he must be fully conscious of the fact that the fruit of his preaching is the work, not of himself, but of Christ. And it must become clearly evident in the very form of his preaching that he expects none of self, but all from Him.

Finally, we must still call attention to the fact that the preacher must be sent, and that, therefore, strictly speaking it is only the Church that is authorized to preach.

It is very evident that it is essential that a preacher be sent. This is true of all preachers, whether they proclaim the Word of God in the established Church,

or preach the gospel of peace in the heathen world. In this strict sense of the word all preachers are missionaries: they must be sent. And this is emphasized in the words of Rom. 10:14, 15, for the apostle writes: “And how shall they preach except they be sent?” The sending is indispensable to the preaching. Without the former the latter is impossible. One may witness for Christ; one may have an answer to anyone that asks him a reason for the hope that is in him; one may confess his faith; one can tell others all about Christ. But one cannot preach unless he be sent. Such is the plain implication of the question which the apostle asks. And this indispensable requisite of the sending is easily understood, if we only bear in mind that preaching is the *authoritative* deliverance of the Word of Christ, the gospel of peace, the glad tidings of good things; the vehicle upon which it pleases Christ to carry His own Word to His people. You can have two men that virtually say the same thing, while yet there is a wide difference between the word of the one and of the other as far as its power and authority and significance is concerned. Suppose, if I may use that illustration of an ambassador once more, that there are two men in Washington that know that our government determined upon a declaration of war upon another country. Suppose, for the sake of the illustration, that both these men have their information from the president, so that they are equally well informed. Suppose, further, that one of these men is officially appointed to bring in person or write or telegraph this declaration of war to the government of the country upon which war is declared. And suppose that also this other person, that was equally well informed about the declaration of war, makes a trip to the government of that foreign country and arrives there and spreads the news, even informs the government about the declaration of war, before the ambassador arrives to deliver the official declaration. Then, of course, the message of the unofficial informant has no power beyond mere information. Only the official word, by the officially appointed ambassador, weighs. The former spoke the truth, but his word had no authority, did not actually change the state of things, for the simple reason that he was not sent. Thus it is also with the preacher: he is one that brings the authoritative Word of Christ; he must be very definitely sent. How shall they preach except they be sent?

Our fathers always made a distinction between speaking an edifying word from the Scriptures and official preaching. The former may be done by any Christian; but for the latter one must be sent. And to be sent implies, first of all, that one has received the official commission from Christ to preach, to speak His Word, the gospel of peace; to proclaim the glad tidings of salvation. It implies, in the second place, the promise that Christ will be with that preacher,

empower him by His Spirit to preach, and that He will surely speak His own irresistible Word through the ministry of the one that is sent. And it means, in the third place, that it is Christ also Who sends, not only whomsoever He will, but also wheresoever it pleases Him, as the Canons of Dordt have it in II, 5: "Moreover, the promise of the gospel is, that whosoever believeth in Christ crucified, shall not perish, but have everlasting life. This promise, together with the command to repent and believe, ought to be declared and published to all nations, and to all persons promiscuously without distinction, *to whom God out of His good pleasure sends the gospel.*"

For this reason we emphasize that preaching is properly the work of the Church alone.

H. H.

OUR DOCTRINE

The Names Of God

As stated in our previous article, we prefer the distinction between the proper names of God and His attributes. The Name of the Lord, we remarked, is not merely an idle sound, a human word, but a living reality, the revelation of the living God, or, the living God as He continuously reveals Himself, His continuous Self-revelation. The names of the Lord which we use, such as: God, Almighty, Jehovah, etc., have meaning only because they are expressions of and speak to us of God as He revealed Himself (and continuously reveals Himself) in all the works of His hands and in our Lord Jesus Christ. That we prefer the distinction between the Lord's proper names and His attributes is due to the fact that we can thereby better distinguish between those names which are attributes and the proper names which we use when we speak of the living God or address Him. We do not address the Lord as: Mercy, Grace, Love, Wisdom, etc., but as: God, Father, Almighty God, Most High, etc.

In this article we will call attention to the several names of the Lord as they appear in Holy Writ. In the Old Testament we have the names: El, Elohim, Adonai, Shaddai and El-Shaddai, Jahweh and Jahweh Tsebhaath. And in the New Testament the following names appear: Theos, Kurios, Pater, Pantokrator, Despotēs, Sabaoth.

The Names of God in the Old Testament.

El and Elohim.

The Hebrew word "El" is the original word for

"God". It is generally accepted that this name is derived from a word which may mean: to be first, to be lord, or: strength, to be mighty. El is, therefore, the strong, the mighty One. This name appears often in Holy Writ. We quote but two passages in which this idea of the mighty God is clearly expressed. In Numbers 12:13, where Moses intercedes before the Lord in behalf of the leprosy stricken Miriam, we read: "And Moses cried unto the Lord, saying, Heal her now, O God (Mighty One), I beseech thee". And in Numbers 23:22 we read: "God brought them out of Egypt; He hath as it were the strength of an unicorn." The implication of this latter text is plain. It is the mighty God Who brought Israel out of Egypt; in fact, it is stated that He has the strength of an unicorn. That God is the Strong One surely receives the emphasis here.

The name "Elohim", too, is translated "God" in the Scriptures. We immediately recognize the name "El" in this name. Hence, also this name expresses the idea of strength and of great power. Only, Elohim emphasizes this idea of strength and power from the viewpoint of the impression which it makes upon the creature. Elohim is, therefore, the mighty God Who impresses us with His majesty and power and is the Being Who must be feared and served and honoured.

Elohim, as far as its form is concerned, is plural; literally translated, it reads: Gods. As one might expect, various interpretations have been given of the name "Elohim". Modern criticism, of course, has also used this word to undermine the authenticity and truthfulness of the Holy Scriptures. These modern critics regard it as a remnant of earlier polytheism. Heathendom is polytheistic, believes in many gods. This conception of many gods also characterized, it is said, the early writers of Holy Writ. Hence, the form "Elohim" is to be ascribed to this early polytheistic conception. This interpretation of Elohim, we understand, is impossible in itself. The Word of God is the inspired, infallible revelation of the living God from the beginning to the end. "All Scripture", we read in 2 Tim. 3:16, "is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness". The Word of God, the whole Word of God, speaks to us with undeniable authority, is therefore profitable also for reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness, exactly because it is in its entirety the Word of the living God and therefore bears the seal of Divine authority. Moreover, the polytheistic conception of Elohim is to be rejected in the light of the striking fact, that later investigations have disclosed that, outside of Israel, this name was later in use to designate the one and only God.

Another interpretation of Elohim which must be rejected is what is called: Pluralis Majestatis. Digni-

taries, in their correspondence, often speak of themselves in the plural. Kings and rulers often refer to themselves in the plural, as "we". Thus some would interpret the plural form of Elohim. However, that the Lord speaks of Himself as "we" does not find any support in Holy Writ. Isaiah 43 strikingly illustrates this. I have already called attention in a previous article to the repeated use of the personal pronoun "I" in this chapter. One cannot read this beautiful chapter and not be impressed by this fact. "Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee. . . . I will be with thee. . . . for I am the Lord. . . . I gave Egypt for thy ransom, etc. The idea, therefore, of a Pluralis Majestatis is foreign to the Scriptures.

The meaning of Elohim, as far as its plural form is concerned, is clear, we believe. It is to be regarded as intensive, and indicates a fulness of power. Elsewhere in the Old Testament this intensive idea is expressed in the form of a repetition, as, e.g., in Isaiah 6 where we read: Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord. The twice repeated "Holy" emphasizes the holiness of the Lord. Thus we must also understand the plural "Elohim". The singular "God" is repeated, as it were, to emphasize that the God of heaven and earth is full of majesty and power, is God alone, and, therefore worthy to be served and feared.

Eljon. (Most High)

This name of God, which appears often in the book of Daniel, we may read in the following passages: "And Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God"—Gen. 14:18; "He hath said, which heard the words of God, and knew the knowledge of the most high, which saw the visions of the Almighty, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open."—Numbers 24:16; "I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most high."—Isaiah 14:14.

The name "Eljon" designates God as the Transcendental, the highly exalted God. That the Lord is the transcendental God does not merely imply that He is above us in the local sense of the word, as if He is in the heavens whereas we are upon the earth. Even the heaven of heavens, we are told in Holy Writ, cannot contain the Lord. The Lord is transcendental in the absolute sense of the word. He is essentially the Transcendental One, infinitely and eternally and therefore absolutely exalted above us, is the Wholly-Other, the one and only God, the Creator who alone lives in an inaccessible light. As such He is absolutely exalted above every creature, and is therefore also exalted above the gods of the heathens, which gods, of course, are no gods.

Shaddai and El-Shaddai (The Almighty).

This name appears, e.g., in Genesis 17:1: "And

when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before Me, and be thou perfect." Shaddai or El-Shaddai appears repeatedly in Holy Writ in connection with the Old Testament patriarchs: Gen. 28:3, 35:11, 43:14, 48:3, 49:25, Ex. 6:3, Num. 24:4. This name also appears in the book of Job, in a few psalms and in certain prophecies. That the name, Shaddai or El-Shaddai, is used as a proper name is evident from its use in the book of Job.

Shaddai or El-Shaddai designates the Lord as the Almighty One. That God is the Almighty One signifies that He is the alone mighty God. The Lord is not merely the mightiest. We must not conceive of His power in a relative sense of the word. He is not comparatively mightier or superlatively mightiest. We must not conceive of the development of His kingdom and the realization of His covenant as a struggle between the Lord and the powers of darkness in which struggle the Lord will ultimately gain the victory. God is the Almighty, the alone-mighty One. It is true that a struggle is being waged throughout the ages between the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of light, between the serpent and the seed of the woman. The powers of darkness oppose the Lord in *His revelation* even as He is revealed in His Church and in the Christ. However, even in this struggle the Lord is the alone-mighty One. All power and strength is of the Lord, also the power and strength of the devil and all his host. God knows no opposition. The Lord never *struggles* to realize His kingdom and covenant. The devil and all his host must not be regarded as evil forces who "enjoy" their existence apart from the Lord. The Lord does not merely realize His purposes in spite of them but also through them. They are His instruments, as far as the Lord's power is concerned. He uses them unto the realization of His eternal and blessed Kingdom. In God they, too, move and live and have their being, Without Him they can do nothing. And although this does not relieve them of their responsibility (which must be strictly maintained), we nevertheless believe that the devils cannot even move without His will, and that He also uses them unto the eternal realization of His counsel. God's purpose alone is realized and His will alone is done. The Lord, therefore, is not only the Faithful One Who is willing to save, but He is also the Almighty One Who is always able to save. His is the sum total of all might and power, and He does all His good pleasure and will maintain His covenant and cause, not only in spite of all the powers of sin and darkness but also through all the forces of darkness and hell.

Sabaoth (Lord of Hosts).

The name "Sabaoth" is a pluralis, a plural noun, as is the name, Elohim. This appears from the word

"hosts". Some would interpret the word "hosts" as applying to the armies of Israel. This, however, is extremely unlikely. In the first place, the army of Israel is regularly indicated by the singular. And, secondly, a passage such as 2 Kings 19:31 seems to militate against this view. In this passage we read: "For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and they that escape out of mount Zion: the zeal of the Lord of hosts shall do this." In this passage the Word of God speaks of a *remnant*, not armies therefore, that shall go forth out of Jerusalem. It is generally agreed that the Word "hosts" refers primarily to the angels, although the word also appears to designate the stars. The name of the Lord of Hosts appears repeatedly in connection with the angels: 1 Sam. 4:4; 2 Sam. 6:2; Isaiah 37:16; Hosea 12:5, 6; Ps. 80: 2, 5; Ps. 89: 6-9. Besides, the angels are repeatedly described as an host which surrounds the throne of God: Gen. 28:12, 13; Gen. 32:2; 1 Kings 22:19; Job 1:6; Ps. 68:18; 89:8; 103:21; 148:2; Isaiah 6:2. The Lord is called in Scripture the Lord of Hosts undoubtedly to designate Him as the Lord of glory, full of glory and majesty, surrounded by His angelic hosts, to Whom all things are subject, the angels and the stars and all that moves, breathes, and has being. This name, therefore, expresses solemnly the royal glory of the Lord, refers to Him as the only mighty King, full of majesty and glory.

Adonai (Lord).

This name is derived from a word which means to judge, to rule, and therefore designates God as the Almighty Ruler, Judge of heaven and earth. This name appears, e.g., in Gen. 18:27: "And Abraham answered and said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord (Adonai), which am but dust and ashes." And in the preceding verse these words occur: "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" God is Adonai because He is the Absolute Ruler and Judge over all, to Whom all are subject and whom all must obey.

Jahweh (Jehovah).

It is essentially in the name "Jehovah" that God reveals Himself in all the glory and beauty of His covenant relationship to His people. The Jews had a superstitious dread of this name and, in reading the Scriptures, would substitute either Adonai or Elohim for it. The name, Jahweh or Jehovah, means literally, "I Am That I Am" or "I Shall Be What I Shall be", and it is also thus explained by the Lord Himself in Ex. 3:14: "And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and He said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you."

Of interest, in the first place, in connection with this name, Jehovah, is the passage of Ex. 6:2-3. This

passage reads: "And God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I am the Lord: And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by My name JEHOVAH was I not known to them." The meaning of this passage certainly cannot be that the name JEHOVAH as such was not known to the patriarchs. This is evident, e.g., from the following passages, where the name "Lord" in the translation is JEHOVAH in the original: "And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lift up mine hand unto the Lord, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth"—Gen. 14:22; "And He said unto him, I am the Lord that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it."—Gen. 15:7; "And I will make thee swear by the Lord, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell."—Gen. 24:3. In addition to these passages we can also refer to the following: Gen. 28:13, 16; 15:28; 32:9. It is clear from all these passages that the name JEHOVAH as such must surely have been known to the patriarchs. The meaning of Ex. 6:3 is undoubtedly that historically the significance of this name had not as yet appeared upon the foreground. As the Almighty God the Lord had appeared unto Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But now the people of Israel was suffering affliction in the land of Egypt. The oppression was extremely heavy and Israel's position in that land of bondage appeared to be hopeless. Would the Lord remember His covenant, His word which He had spoken to Abraham, Isaac, and to Jacob? The bush which burned without being consumed is not a symbol of Israel in the land of Egypt but of the Lord. This is evident from the entire incident. It is the Lord Who addresses the Mediator of the Old Testament out of that bush. And the Lord declares to the man of God that His name is Jehovah, THE I AM THAT I AM, the unchangeable God. Hence, that bush which burns but is not consumed is obviously a symbol of the Lord God. As that bush is not consumed although burning, so that Lord, too, burns with zeal and love for His own and is not consumed. It is this unchangeable aspect of the Lord God which now appears historically upon the foreground; the Lord will reveal unto His people that He has not forgotten them or His word unto their fathers, but will reveal Himself unto them presently in all His faithfulness and unchangeableness.

JEHOVAH is the unchangeable covenant God. He is THE I AM THAT I AM. Hence, He is the unchangeable God, first of all, in Himself. The Lord Himself is THE I AM. He is the I AM, the Rock in distinction from the creature. We cannot say of ourselves: We are, but: We became. We do not owe our existence to ourselves. We do not exist of ourselves. We have our being, live, and move in the Lord.

Secondly, we become also in the sense that we are daily subject to change. We are ever becoming. But the Lord is the I AM. He possesses eternally the origin of His eternal and infinite existence within Himself. Hence, He never increases or decreases, inasmuch as He is eternally the Fount of infinite and eternal perfection. This also explains why the Lord is in Himself the unchangeable God. And for this reason He is also the unchangeable God in His relation to His people. Having loved His own from before the foundation of the world, He loves them with an everlasting and unchangeable love. Yea, a mother can forget her sucking child, but the Lord can never forget His own. He would surely remember the word which He spake to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and redeem His people out of the Egyptian house of bondage. And throughout the ages the Lord will ever remember His covenant and save His people unto the uttermost until they all shall stand before Him without spot and without wrinkle.

The Names Of God In The New Testament.

The New Testament name for El and Elohim is Theos (God). This name, of course, is very common in the New Testament and need no further elucidation. Eljon is translated by "Hupsistos Theos" (Most High God) as in Mark 5:7, Luke 1:32, 35, 76; 8:28. We read in Mark 5:7: "And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the Most High God? I adjure Thee by God, that Thou torment me not." The idea of "Most High" is also expressed by the expression: "en tois houranois" (in the heavens).

The name "Adonai" is translated "Kurios (Lord)" and also by Despotees and Pantokrator. The name "Kurios" appears very frequently in the New Testament and is also frequently used with respect to the Christ. Christ is our Lord because He bought us with His own precious blood and made us His very own, Who commands us and Whom we must obey, and also because He is responsible for our welfare and will protect and defend us to the uttermost. The name, "Pantokrator" occurs in 2 Cor. 6:18, Rev. 1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7, 14. To quote merely the first of these passages, 2 Cor. 6:18: "And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons, and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." The name, Pantokrator, means literally the Almighty, to which we have already called attention in connection with the Old Testament El-Shaddai. The name "Adonai" is also translated in the New Testament by the word "Despotees", and the implication of this name is clear in the following passages: 1 Tim. 6:1; 2 Tim. 2:21; Titus 2:9; 1 Pet. 2:18. We quote the first two passages: "Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters (despotees) worthy of all honour, that the name of God and His

doctrine be not blasphemed. . . . If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's (despotees) use, and prepared unto every good work."

Finally, a common name in the New Testament is "Father". This name also appears in the Old Testament, and it is therefore hardly true that it is confined to the New Testament, in the following texts, e.g.: Deut. 32:6; Ps. 193:13; Isaiah 63:16; 64:8; Jeremiah 3:4, 19; 31:9; and Malachi 1:6; 2:10. Besides, Israel is called the son of God in the following passages: Ex. 4:22; Deut. 14:1; 32:19; Isaiah 1:2; Jeremiah 31:20; Hosea 1:10; 11:1. In the Old Testament this name expresses the special, theocratic relation in which the Lord stands to Israel; in a wonderful way He had brought that people forth out of Abraham. The fundamental idea of "Father" is not that of love but that of generation, bringing forth; and in a wonderful way the Lord had been a Father to His people and had brought them forth out of the house of bondage, yea, out of Abraham, and had led them into the land of Canaan. In the New Testament, however, in which God's covenant relation to His own in Christ is, of course, more clearly revealed, the name expresses the relation in which the covenant God stands to His people, His children whom He loved from before the foundation of the world, redeemed in Christ, and will save unto the uttermost when He shall tabernacle with them in the new heavens and upon the new earth.

H. Veldman.

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

The Song Of The Bow

We now must have regard to David's lamentation over Saul and Jonathan. If we are to understand this elygy, our approach to it must be right. Certainly the Song is truly religious both in the objective and subjective sense. For it is the expression of a grief that as to its essence is love of God and His people; and over this people as the Israel of God it is lamented, is this song. This is proved by the statement occurring at verse 12 that David (and his men) "wept and mourned and fasted until even. . . . for the people of the Lord and for the house of Israel."

As to the first lament, "The glory, O Israel, on thy heights is slain," it forms the superscription to the whole song. What is now to be understood by "the glory"? The answer is contained in Deut. 28, a chapter that lists the blessings for obedience and the curses

for disobedience. If the people of Israel hearken unto the voice of the Lord their God to do all His commandments, the Lord will set them on high above all nations of the earth, and the Lord will bestow upon them an earthy abundance including early earthy good. He will make them plenteous in goods, in the fruit of their body, in the fruit of their cattle, and in the fruit of their ground. He will open to them his good treasure, the heavens to give rain to their land in his season. The Lord will cause their enemies that rise up against them to be smitten before their face: they shall come out against them one way, and flee before them seven ways (verse 7). They shall chase their enemies and they shall fall before them by the sword. One man of them shall chase a thousand (Jos. 23:10); and five of them shall chase a hundred, and a hundred of them shall put ten thousand to flight. For the Lord will fight for them (Lev. 23:8). He will raise them up and endue them with courage and will lay their dread upon the hearts of the enemy.

What then is Israel's glory? That earthly abundance, that success of arms, and those mighty men of war putting ten thousand of the adversary to flight. For that abundance and success in arms formed the evidence to the heathen that the people of Israel were called by the name of the Lord (Deut. 8:10) and that, accordingly, they hearkened unto the Lord. (That was true then. For it was the dispensation of shadows. Today the glory of the church is the *spiritual* abundance that is her's in Christ; it is her mighty men—every true believer—fighting God's warfare as armed with the weapons of the spirit and overcoming by their faith the world. And this is now also the sole evidence of God's love of His people—not earthly riches and worldly success of which they have little or nothing, but that spiritual abundance and that victory—a victory that is their's in Christ and toward which they fight).

On the other hand, when the people of Israel went aside from the Lord's words to go after other gods, they were overtaken by the Lord's curses. Cursed were they in the city and in the field. Cursed were their baskets and their store, the fruit of their land and the increase of their kine, and the flocks of their sheep. Disobedient, they were cursed in all that they set their hand to. They were smitten with all manner of diseases and likewise their land. The heaven over their head was brass and the earth under their feet iron. For the Lord sent no rain. They were smitten before their enemies. Going out one way against them, they fled seven ways before them. That was Israel's ignominy, shame, namely those curses coming upon them in times of apostacy, those droughts, diseases and military reverses and mighty ones fallen in battle. In their totality they formed, did those calamities, the evidence that the Lord's anger burned against His

people and that, accordingly, they had broken His covenant by their abominations.

In the light of these observations it is not difficult to perceive the reasons back of David's grief. Israel's glory was slain. The mighty were fallen. They had fled before the Philistines and fallen down slain. Should not David weep? Those mighty in their military achievements were Israel's glory. For they were the signs of Israel's obedience and of the Lord's favor and thus in their fall just as certainly the signs of Israel's apostacy and of the Lord's fierce indignation enveloping the nation through the triumph of the Philistines over the nation's mighty. How the uncircumcised rejoiced in their vain imagining that with the help of their idol—Dagon—they had triumphed over Israel's mighty God. How they mocked and blasphemed as the treatment they afforded the corpses of Saul and his sons testified. From the heart of what true Israelite would not the consideration of such happenings wring the cry,

“How are the mighty fallen!

Tell it not in Gath,

Publish it not in the streets of Ashkelon,

Lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice,

Lest the daughters of the uncircumcised
triumph.

It was the Lord whom they made the butt of their derisions. It was Israel over whom they gloried. Yet it would be a serious mistake to suppose that David's grief was the sorrow of despair, a kind of bitterness of spirit rising from the thought in his soul that the Hebrews' catastrophic defeat in their recent war with the Philistines was the commencement of a permanent bondage, as if the Lord had cast off His people. This certainly, could not be true. The Philistines triumph over the Hebrews was of the Lord. He had sovereignly willed it, His purpose being to reveal the riches of His love over His people by delivering them from the dominion of the adversary and leading them through their apostacy, defeat, and bondage to the glory that characterized the reign of Solomon, himself the typical king of glory. In pursuance of this purpose, the Lord took David from the sheepcote, even from following the sheep, anointed him ruler over Israel, set him upon His holy hill of Zion, and gave him for his inheritance not only the Philistines but all the heathen nations that dwelt inside Israel's ideal boundaries. Nations they were who all along had been raging and imagining a vain thing. Their kings and rulers had continually set themselves and taken counsel together against the Lord and His people Israel and His anointed, saying, “Let us break their bands asunder, and cast their cords from us.” But God in heaven had laughed. Once on the throne, David, with the Lord's help, broke them all with a rod of iron. And

they became tributary to Israel, Ps. 2. (David and the events that pivoted on him form the typical basis of this psalm, which on this account is a wonderful prophecy of Christ's exaltation at the right hand of God and His actual triumph over all his enemies).

The fact of the matter, then, is that Israel's apostasy, defeat, and bondage were God's own means to a glorious end—Israel's deliverance and exaltation to the praise of Jehovah, Israel's redeemer-God. Those calamities, therefore, were curses indeed but curses changed by the Lord into blessings for His people, so that David could say as he must be held to have said in his grief, "Hitherto the Lord hast holpen us." Why then was David grieved? Why did he weep? Because of the character of God's means. Apostasy, sin, the mighty in Israel fallen and slain, the heathen blaspheming God, the Lord's heritage spoiled and defamed by the uncircumcised are terrible phenomena. The fact of their being subservient to an alwise, almighty, and sovereign counsel; of their coming forth from the womb of a sovereign providence as agents of God through which He works in achieving His purpose with His people do not make them less terrible. These things are enemies. They will be destroyed when they will have served their usefulness in God's scheme of things. Thus the day of the Lord's vengeance for the mockers of God and the spoilers of His people will come without fail. God is grieved in His heart on account of them. His ban is upon them.

David understands and believes and the lament to which he next gives utterance shows that he believes,

"Ye mountains of Gilboa, be neither dew nor
rain upon you,
Nor fields of first-fruits."

We listen here to words of cursing. Let Gilboa's fertile mountains by the lack of that which makes them green and fresh be changed into a desert and a waste, a region of death. Such is his prayer. And its reason?

"For there was cast away the shield of the
mighty ones,
The shield of Saul not anointed with oil",
that is, as though he had not been anointed
with oil.

This doubtless is the correct rendering and not, "For there was *defiled* the shield of the mighty, the shield of Saul, not anointed," namely, Saul's shield. The Hebrew verb, Ga-al, which this class of commentators render "defile", does not have this latter meaning neither in the Kal nor in the Niphal in which it here appears. *Cast away* is the correct rendering. The shield of Saul, too, was cast away by himself in his flight as though he had not by God's anointing been elevated to the theocratic throne. The shame

of it! The disgrace of it for Israel and Israel's God! How the heathen would rejoice and mock! Cursed therefore be ye, O mountains of Gilboa. For your fields were the scene of the sad happening. The Philistines were included in the curse. For they were the real offenders and not Gilboa's mountains. David's cursing Gilboa's mountains only serves to bring out the terribleness of the event and the depth of David's grief and the enormity of the offence of the uncircumcised. But God will ease Himself upon them. For, though as murderers of God's people and defilers of His heritage they served God's counsel and came forth from the store of His providence and were therefore the lash in God's hand for the chastisement of His people, they were none-the-less responsible.

In his grief David's mind reverts to the time when Saul and Jonathan together with all the mighty ones were still the glory of Israel in their miraculous military achievements. Then the facts were these,

"From the blood of the slain,
From the fat of the mighty,
The bow of Jonathan turned not back,
And the sword of Saul returned not empty.

The military prowess of Saul before his rejection was well known. He had fought against his enemies on every side. And no matter where he had turned himself, he vexed his enemies. And how the Lord had worked for Jonathan in his daring exploit against the Philistine garrison at Michmash (1 Sam. 14). Truly, in those days these heroes were successful in every military undertaking, however hopeless from the point of view of nature. For the Lord fought for them. How as viewed against the background of the glory of those better days Israel's recent defeat stands out in all its horror and shame! But Israel deserved that stroke. For Saul disobeyed the Lord's command. He had trodden the paths of wickedness, of selfwill and rebellion to the end. And the people were held co-responsible. For they had walked with him in those forbidden paths.

But Jonathan, too, was numbered with the slain,—Jonathan, the lovely and the pleasant. Why did he have to die, perish with the disobedient?

"Saul and Jonathan, the lovely and the
pleasant, in their lives and in their death
were not separated".

This is the answer. With eyes enlightened by a living faith, Jonathan had clearly perceived that David was destined to rule over Israel in Saul's stead. For who could do the works that David was doing, as an officer in Saul's army, except the Lord be with him. He had slain the Philistine Goliath for one. What an demonstration of implicit trust in the Lord that had been. The day following the two were thrown into

each other's presence in Saul's house. Laying his eyes on David, Jonathan's soul was knit with the soul of David, and he loved him as his own soul, 1 Sam. 18:1. The two made a covenant that selfsame day. It meant that Jonathan waived his claims to his father's throne and embraced David as his lord and as the saviour of Israel. And what a friend in need Jonathan had proved to be! How he had comforted and encouraged David in his moments of despair. How he had availed himself of every opportunity to cooperate with David in bringing to nought Saul's attempts to rid the earth of him. Well might David say of him, "Jonathan, the lovely and the pleasant," and utter over him the lament,

"Jonathan is slain upon thy heights!
I am distressed for thee, my brother
Jonathan:
Thou wast very kind to me:
More wonderful than the love of women
was thy love to me!"

The love of the latter was natural and marital; that of Jonathan, spiritual and therefore as translated into sanctified action surpassing the love of women indeed. Jonathan and David were one by a common faith in Christ. But the friend of spiritual loveliness had perished. He, too, had fallen down slain. Had he quitted Saul's court and presence and attached himself to David in the wilderness, he would have escaped that death. As it was he had abided with his father in spite of the fact that the evil spirit in Saul had burned in hot anger also against him on account of his loyalty to David of which Saul had been well aware. On this account he was now numbered with the slain. United with Saul in life; united with him in death was Jonathan. The lament is not to be regarded as criticism but as a statement of fact and a word of praise for Jonathan's filial love. And David might speak this word, there having been no clash between Jonathan's loyalty to Saul and his loyalty to David. He abided with Saul in the firm belief, certainly, that he followed the line of duty. And who will want to maintain that he was mistaken in his belief? David had been just as loyal to Saul, despite the king's designs upon his life.

"Saul and Jonathan were lovely in their lives and in their death they were not divided." So reads this line in our English versions of the Bible and in the Commentaries. But it is a wrong translation. The correct rendering is, "Saul and Jonathan, *the* lovely and the pleasant, in life and in death they were not divided." The article *the* is found in the original and the comma is in place after the word "pleasant" and not after the word "life". The two attributes "lovely", and "pleasant", apply only to Jonathan. But the commentators apply them to Saul as well and trans-

late, "Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives. . . ." Thus making David ascribe loveliness also to Saul, they wax eloquent in their descriptions of David's generous heart. So Blaikie (in *The Expositor's Bible*), "The death, and especially the sudden death, of a relative or friend," he writes, "has usually a remarkable effect on the tender heart, and especially in the case of the young. It blots out all remembrance of little injuries done by the departed; it fills one with regret for any unkind words one may have spoken, or any unkind deeds one may ever have done to him. It makes one very forgiving. But it must have been a far more generous heart than the common that could so soon rid itself of every bitter feeling toward Saul—that could blot out, in one great act of forgiveness, the remembrance of many long years of injustice, oppression, and toil, and leave no feelings but those of kindness, admiration and respect, called forth by the contemplation of what was favorable in Saul's character. How beautiful does the spirit of forgiveness appear in such a light!"

That David was a man of true Christian generosity, bearing no grudge but inclined to forgive and actually forgiving the penitent, no one, loving God's people, will want to deny. He was that kind of a man. But on this very account he was not the man to attribute loveliness to a wicked one in a public lamentation, even setting him forth as *the* lovely. Nor was David the man to forgive such who are unforgiven of God. And such a one was Saul; he had perished in his sins.

That the attributes "lovely", and "pleasant" must be applied only to Jonathan is indicated by the context. In the second strophe (verses 25 and 26) David is occupied with the loveliness of Jonathan alone which he in passing only mentions in the first strophe (verse 23).

It is not true nobility of spirit that David attributes to Saul but only strength and courage and eagle-like swiftness and agility. So again in verse 23.

"Lighter than eagles were they;
stronger than lions."

Successful in war before his rejection, Saul had bestowed upon the women costly clothing and adornment, brought along in the spoil of war. Hence, David's appeal to the women in Israel,

"Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul,
Who clothed you in purple and with
delight;
Who put a golden ornament upon your
apparel!"

This appeal to the women would be grossly materialistic were it not that the victorious Saul returning from battle as laden with the spoil of the enemy was indicative of the Lord's favor toward His people and

on this account Israel's glory. Also this appeal rises from sanctified emotion. It is for the loss of these material things as tokens of God's love of the true Israel that the women shall weep.

The third strophe again sounds the key-note of the whole (verse 27), and in it the Ode ends,

"O how are the mighty fallen,
The instruments of war perished!"

G. M. Ophoff.

David's Return

At the time of the expiration of the events narrated in chap. 1 and in 1 Sam., David and his company still dwelt in Keilah, a city that was located in Philistine territory and that had been given him as a permanent abode by Achish, king of Gad, to whom he had fled to elude Saul, who sought his life. But Saul was now dead, and the logical move for David was to remove to his own land and rejoin his people, that the promise of the kingdom might be fulfilled to him. David's mind turned to the tribe of Judah. In anyone of the cities of this tribe he would be welcome to take up his abode. This was his confidence. Judah was his own tribe. There he had long found a refuge. Only recently he had done the tribe a great service by routing an Amalekite horde that had been raiding and plundering its southern border. Besides, the northern part of the land was held by the Philistines.

But how were the people taking his alliance with Achish and his following him to the battle? To all appearance all that had stood in the way of his taking up arms against his own brethren was the jealousy and the distrust of the Philistine lords. Had that doing shaken the confidence of his people in him? His own tribesmen would be least likely to show themselves resentful. The right-minded among them would think no evil. They had seen with their own eyes what an effort it had cost him to prevent himself from falling into Saul's hands while he was keeping himself to his own country. They knew that it was only by a miracle that he had escaped the wrath of the king against whom he was not allowed to defend himself by force of arms. That in his desperation he had finally fled the land and sought peace and quiet with Achish was sinful of him to be sure. But he knew he had done wrong. The Lord had made this plain to him by the calamity that had overtaken his defenceless company in Keilah during his absence. And He had confessed his sin. And the Lord had forgiven him and likewise God's people. Certainly, they did not believe that he would have turned against his own country in that battle. Not one among God's people, it may be assumed, could conceive of him doing such a thing.

But there were others in Judah and in the nation at large, men like Nabal, whom the Lord had slain, unprincipled, vicious men, haters of God and His people, always on the alert for occasions to vilify God's servants. Under what dark clouds of suspicion were they not bringing David? Perhaps they accused him of treason and on the ground of that charge advocated that he be not readmitted in that he had forfeited his right to citizenship in God's country. Perhaps they accused him of having furnished the Philistines with a road map of northern Canaan and of having given valuable assistance to the adversary in other respects and were therefore holding him jointly responsible for Israel's defeat in the last war with the uncircumcised. And the sad part of it was that by his affiliations with Achish and especially by his accompanying Achish's army to the plain of Esdraelon he had laid the foundations of such vile slanders. And who could shame the slandering tongues into keeping silence by proving that he had no intention of unsheathing his sword against his own brethren in the faith. The wrongness and the folly of that flight. He was resolved that henceforth he would do nothing without first learning God's will. Accordingly, he inquired of the Lord, "Shall I go up to the cities of Judah?" The Lord gives answer, "Go up." But he had need of a more detailed knowledge of God's will. So he put this question to the Lord, "Whither shall I go up?" Again the Lord returned answer, "Unto Hebron."

The city of Hebron was situated in a valley (Gen. 37:14) in the most mountainous part of Judah about eighteen miles to the south of Jerusalem. It was so ancient that it is said to have been built seven years before Zoan in Egypt (Num. 13:22). It was one of the principle places in Judah and a priestly city (Josh. 12:10; 21:11). The place abounded in venerable associations. Abraham had often pitched his tent under its spreading oaks and among its hills Isaac had meditated at eventide. There Sarah had died by Abraham; and there he had purchased from the sons of Heth the sepulchre of Machpelah, where first Sarah's body, then his own, then that of Isaac were laid to rest. There Joseph had brought up the body of Jacob, laying it beside the bones of Leah. There the twelve spies when they went up to search the land had halted. In the division of the land it had been allotted to Caleb. The selection of this place by the Lord must have raised the faith of David. It was like a promise that the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob would be the God of David and that his career as king would prepare the way for the mercies in the prospect of which they rejoiced.

In accordance with the will and direction of God David went thither with his whole company. Mention is made of his two wives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail Nabal's wife, his men that were with him, every

man with his household. "And they dwelt in the cities of Hebron".

At that time the Lord gave him another token of His favor and goodness. No sooner had he settled in Hebron than the men of Judah came and there they anointed him king over Judah. Judah was the principle tribe. God had dealt graciously with his servant. Could there be among his psalms one that voices his hearts response to these tokens of the Lord's favor toward him. Internal evidence points to the hundred and first Psalm.

G. M. Ophoff.

SION'S ZANGEN

Liefdevol, Schoon Zwaar Getergd

(Psalm 106; Eerste Deel)

In dezen psalm wordt bezongen het aanbiddelijke heilsfeit, dat God Zijn volk bemint, niettegenstaande hunne zonde en ongerechtigheden. We zullen daar keer op keer van hooren. Hij wordt verbitterd door hunne zonden; Hij wordt zeer grimmig; Hij wordt menigmaal tot toorn verwekt; maar het einde is toch, dat Hij de zonde vergeeft, blijft zegenen, en het einde is Hallelujah! Hij is de liefdevolle Heiland, schoon zwaar getergd. Dat is het hoofdthema van dezen psalm.

HALLELUJAH!

Dat is het begin.

Maar het is ook het einde van dezen psalm.

En de vertaling volgt: *Looft den Heere*, want Hij is goed, want Zijne goedertierenheid is in eeuwigheid.

Gij looft den Heere als gij Zijn deugden ziet, uitspreekt, roemt en er van zingt in Uw leven. Dat is het loven van God.

En de drangreden is "want Hij is goed, want Zijn goedertierenheid is in eeuwigheid."

Hij is goed.

Wat wil dat zeggen?

God is het Inbegrip van alle deugd, heerlijkheid en schoonheid. En Hij is de Eenigste die goed is, en buiten Hem is er geen goedheid. Hij is dan ook de Goede voor Zijn creaturen. Als zoodanig hebben onze vaders Hem de overvloeiende Fontein geheeten van alle goeden.

Indien ge Hem nu liefhebt, moogt ge gaarne zingen van Zijn goedheid. En zoo komt het, dat Gods volk de Hallelujah's zingt.

En Zijn goedertierenheid is tot in eeuwigheid.

De eeuwigheid is lang, zeer lang. Zij strekt zich uit tot in alle eeuwen, is van alle eeuwen, en ook dan hebben we nog niet genoeg gezegd. Want de eeuwig-

heid gaat boven allen tijd uit, kan met den tijd niet vergeleken worden. En wij zijn zoo zeer creaturen en tijd-kinderen, dat het moeilijk is om ons een voorstelling te vormen van de eeuwigheid.

Hoe zou het ook anders. De eeuwigheid is een deugd van God, en als zoodanig is God de Eeuwige, want God is Zijn deugden. Hij is liefde, goedheid, almacht, enz. En zoo is Hij ook de Eeuwige. En wij begrijpen het niet!

Maar dit weten we wel: zoo oud als God is, en zoo lang als God zal zijn, zoo oud en zoo lang is Zijn goedertierenheid over Zijn volk. En dat wetende, gaat Israel aan 't zingen: Hallelujah!

De zanger van dit lied heeft dezelfde moeite die wij hebben in dit eerste vers. Is het daarom, dat hij zegt: "Wie zal de mogendheden des Heeren uitspreken, al Zijn lof verkondigen?"

Hier hebt ge een van die soort vragen, die het antwoord in zich verbergen. Het antwoord is: Niemand. Er is niemand die al de mogendheden van God, den Heere, kan uitspreken, of al Zijn lof verkondigen. Stelt het U voor: tot in alle eeuwigheid zullen de schare van Gods uitverkoren volk zingen in den nieuwen hemel en de nieuwe aarde, en die nieuwe schepping zal steeds ruischen van de Hallelujah's. Hoe zou er dan een mensch zijn die al die heerlijkheid zou uitspreken.

Zijn mogendheden zijn Zijn wondere daden die Hij gewrocht heeft, nog werkt, en eeuwiglijk werken zal. Het is Zijn mogendheid, dat Hij het heelal uit het niet riep. Wie zal dat wondere werk der schepping eventjes uitspreken?

Het is Zijn mogendheid om die wondere schepping te onderhouden door het Woord Zijner kracht in de voorzienigheid. Dat gebeurt op ditzelfde oogenblik terwijl ik schrijf. Wie zal het verhalen?

En het grootste werk Zijner mogendheid is wel het roepen van leven uit de dooden: het werk der verlevendiging, vernieuwing, verheerlijking, verhooging aller dingen in Christus Jezus. Daar weten wij *nu* meer van dan de zanger van dit lied in die vroege eeuw. Want de mogendheid des Heeren hebben we zien schitteren in de opstanding van Jezus uit de dooden. En wie zal de schittering van dat Goddelijke werk ooit uitspreken?

We zijn begonnen Zijn lof te verkondigen, en dat is goed. Indien *wij* niet spraken, zoo zouden de steenen van den weg hun mond openen. Want God is zoo goed!

Wij zullen voortgaan Zijn lof te verkondigen, want God laat niet varen de werken Zijner handen. Die lof van God gaat voort van geslachte tot geslachte.

Maar niemand kan *al* Zijn lof verkondigen. Dat kan het gansche Koninkrijk niet; dat zou ook een eeuwigheid nemen, en ook dan zouden we nooit *al* Zijn lof verkondigen. Want er is niemand, en er zal nooit iemand zijn, die de diepten God doorspeuren kan. Al-

leen God kent God tot in de diepten Gods. O diepte des rijkdoms beide der wijsheid en der kennis Gods! Hoe ondoorzoekelijk zijn Zijne oordeelen, en onnaspeurlijk Zijne wegen!

Looft dan maar den Heere. Het is zalig om te loven, want daarin vinden we onze eeuwige bestemming.

“Welgelukzalig zijn ze die het recht onderhouden, die te aller tijd gerechtigheid doet.”

Dat is een zwaar vers.

En wij zien het verband met het voorgaande vers.

De heerlijkste soort van loven is, dat ge de deugden Gods die ge looft, ook betracht in Uw leven. Daar heeft God het meeste genot in.

Wat geeft het als ge bloote woorden uitspreekt, en de goedheid Gods niet doet? Want dat is recht onderhouden en gerechtigheid doen. Het is de goedheden Gods doen.

Recht en gerechtigheid zijn die deugden Gods waardoor Hij in alle Zijne werken in volkomen overeenstemming is met Zijn heerlijk Wezen. Wezen en werken Gods passen op elkaar. Dat is Zijn gerechtigheid. Zijn gedachte, woord en werk is volgens de eenigste maatstaf van goedheid, en die is Hijzelf.

Nu ziet ge ook, wat het beteekent, dat een mensch recht onderhoudt. Hij wandelt in overeenstemming met het hoogste en eenigste goed, en dat is God.

Zulk een mensch is welgelukzalig.

Welgelukzalig! Wat een schoon woord!

Zalig is vol te zijn van datgene hetwelk ge behoeft overeenkomstig Uw wezen. Geluk geeft inhoud aan datgene hetgeen ge behoeft. En het woordje *wel* versterkt die gedachte van geluk. Het is een heerlijk geluk, dat deze mensch vervult.

En de reden is duidelijk.

God is de Volzalige in Zijn leven van alle deugd en goedheid. En als ge nu hetzelfde betracht van wat God geduriglijk doet, zijt gij ook zalig, welgelukzalig.

Wilt ge een voorbeeld der Heilige Schrift? Leest de eerste twee verzen van Efeze 5. Daar staat, dat we volgelingen, letterlijk *nadoeners* van God moeten zijn, en *in de liefde wandelen*. En dan volgt daarop, dat God in Christus dat ook gedaan heeft. En dat doende zijn we den Heere een lieflijke reuke.

Maar wat beteekent het als er hier gezongen wordt van de zaligheid dergenen die *te aller tijd* gerechtigheid doen? Wie is er die van oogenblik tot oogenblik het goede betracht?

En dan is het antwoord, dat elk kind van God dat doet *in beginsel*. Denkt er toch aan, dat de Heere God een volmaakt werk in U begonnen is: het leven der wedergeboorte. In den dag der dagen, als God de harten van alle menschen binnenst buiten zal keeren, dan zullen wij het allen zien, dat in dat nieuwe leven Gods volk altijd gerechtigheid deed. Leest 1 Johannes 3:6,

9; 5:18.

Hoe zalig is het volk, dat naar Uw klanken hoort! Dat is altijd waar van de duur gekochte kerk van Jezus Christus.

En dan gaat de zanger denken aan zijn eigen aandeel met dit volk van al die heerlijkheden waarvan hij gezongen heeft tot hiertoe. Hij zegt: “Gedenk mijner, O Heere! naar het welbehagen tot Uw volk; bezoek mij met Uw heil.”

Het gelijkt wel een beetje op zelfzuchtigheid: Gedenk mijner! En toch is het niet zoo. Let er op, dat hij deze bede onmiddellijk vastmaakt aan al Gods volk. Hij vraagt om door God bedacht te worden *naar het welbehagen tot Uw volk!* Er is geen zaligheid voor Gods kind, dat niet gesmaakt moet met al de kinderen des Allerhoogsten.

Er is een welbehagen Gods tot Zijn volk.

En dat welbehagen is, eerst, om hen te kennen met het eeuwig kennen der liefde Gods. Dan, om hen in die eeuwige liefde te verordineeren den beelde Zijns Zoons gelijkvormig te zijn. En, derdens, om dat lieflijke welbehagen te openbaren in den tijd, aan de eene zijde, door hun schepping en onderhouding, en ter anderzijde, door hun verlevendiging en verheerlijking in Jezus Christus.

En nu vraagt de zanger of hij zijn deel, zijn bescheiden deel, mag hebben in die heerlijkheden van Gods welbehagen tot Zijn volk. Knielt voor Zijn troon, en vraagt om Uw deel, O volk!

Bezoek mij met Uw heil!

Wat is Gods heil?

Gods heil is wat we hierboven al afschreven: wanneer ge hebt wat ge behoeft volgens Uw wezen. Ons wezen is, dat wij geschapen menschen zijn naar Zijn beeld en naar Zijn gelijkenis. En als ge nu die God waarnaar ge geschapen zijt in U mag hebben, naar de mate der gave der genade, en naar de mate van het creatuur, dan zingt ge tot in eeuwigheid. Dan hebt ge heil.

Heil te hebben in dit smartelijke, zondige leven op aarde, in deze tegenwoordige bedeeing is dit: dat alle dingen medewerken ten goede voor U. En als een ding ten goede is voor U, dan brengt het U naar God. Kanker in Uw maag is goed voor U als het U naar God brengt. En dat doet het. Dat doet het altijd *in de ware kerk van Christus*.

Stelt het op den proef.

Kanker in de maag ontvingt ge. En, o wee! Ik ga sterven van dien kanker. Welnu, dan brengt die kanker U tot in de armen Gods, daarboven in den hemel. Dat is heil voor U.

En zoo is het met alle dingen. Alle dingen werken U mede ten goede. Dat zegt God, en dan is het zoo.

De reden voor zijn bidden om het heil met Gods volk wordt ons in het volgende vers geteekend:

“opdat ik aanschouwe het goede Uwer uitverkore-

nen, opdat ik mij verblijde met de blijdschap Uws volks, opdat ik mij beroeme met Uw erfdeel."

Ziet ge wel, dat die man niet zelfzuchtig was? O ja, hij zegt: Denk toch aan *mij*. En dat klinkt zelfzuchtig, doch we moeten verder lezen. Let er op, dat in dit laatste vers het verband tusschen hem en Gods volk schoon gelegd is.

Hij wil zien het goede van Gods uitverkorenen.

Vandaag haat men om te spreken, te getuigen en te belijden de onuitsprekelijk zalige waarheid van de uitverkiezing. Men haat die waarheid. O neen, men zegt het niet zoo, maar zoo is het toch wel. Bewijs? Men werpt uit die deze waarheid willen belijden. Denkt aan het verschrikkelijke Kalamazoo! Onze vaderen noemden het leerstuk van de verkiezing het hart der kerk. Maar dat hart klopt allang niet meer, gelijk te voren. In de eeuwen die men den bloeitijd der Gereformeerde theologie noemt, beleed men om strijd die waarheid, maar vandaag schaamt men zich voor die waarheid. En van de verwerping moet men, indien mogelijk, nog minder hebben.

Ik kan het ook wel begrijpen. De leer van de verkiezing is de doodsteek voor den trots der menschen, die hun eigen heil willen verkiezen.

Maar de uitverkorenen, indien levende uit het bewustzijn van hunne verkiezing, willen hun eigen heil niet verkiezen, maar dat volk rust in den verkiezenden God.

Hij wil het goede van Gods uitverkorenen volk aanschouwen.

Wat is het?

Het is dit: dat wij den beelde des Zoons Gods mogen ontvangen. Dat we op Jezus mogen gaan lijken. Dat we als Jezus mogen spreken, handelen, wandelen. Dat is het goede voor Gods volk. En dat wil deze man zien.

En dan zal hij zich ook verblijden met dat volk. Ware vreugde wordt alleen genoten in den weg der heiligmaking. Zondigt, en ge zult lijden. Heiligt U door de genade Gods, en ge zult blijdschap smaken.

En dan gaat men aan 't roemen. Opdat ik mij beroemen met Uw erfdeel.

En die roem sprak hij al uit in het eerste vers: Hallelujah! Looft den Heere!

Stelt het U voor, dat Gods volk van onzen dag zóó wandelde als deze man. Wat zou dat schoon en heerlijk zijn.

Ik heb zooveen gezegd, dat een ieder van Gods volk gerechtigheid doet. Uit kracht van het nieuwe leven, dat zichzelf nooit kan verloochenen.

Maar dat is slechts zoo in beginsel. En het is duidelijk, dat dit beginsel bij velen vandaag zeer klein is.

De verzen vier en vijf zijn een heerlijk gebed. Dat wij ze dan bidden. Want als wij ze bidden, dan zal God ook hooren. Zijn naam is Hoorder der gebeden.

G. Vos.

IN HIS FEAR

Training For Life's Calling

Training in the History Class. (continued)

When we stated in the last installment of this department that the child should be trained in the history class to see all things as God's work whereby He fulfills His counsel, we mean that single historical events as well as the complete picture history gives us must be used to impress the child with and lead him in the contemplation of the infinite greatness of God and thus train him to worship this infinitely great God.

(Our attention has meanwhile been called to an error in the last paragraph of the principles we submitted according to which history ought to be taught. The phrase "not to worship" which appears in the third line of this last paragraph of the October 15 issue should be deleted. The sentence then reads, Hence then as Calvin also says, the final purpose of looking into history must be to lead us to contemplate, not the achievements of man, but the infinite greatness of God; and to worship, not men of countries, but to worship our God).

It is fundamental therefore that the covenant child be taught, from the beginning, the beginning of history. There is not a history book written by an unbeliever, there is not a class in history that is taught by an unbeliever that begins at the beginning of history. The hand of God in making this earth, His work of placing man on that finished earth are ignored by the unbeliever and denied as being historical fact. Both the beginning of history and the end of history are denied by the unbeliever, and yet he thinks that he can properly interpret what happens in between. In the Christian school, and there only, for all religious education is forbidden in the public schools by federal law, is a real course in history taught. A history course that begins in the beginning, that begins with Genesis 1:1 should be taught to the covenant child to train him for life's calling. So accurate and detailed is the history course taught in the Christian school that, in distinction from the children of the world, your child knows about the *first* human beings who dwelled on this earth and, he can even tell you the names of these individuals. Pick up any history book written by an unbeliever, listen in to any history class, dealing with the first ages of history, being taught by an unbeliever and you will have to go a long way before any name of an individual is mentioned. You will read or hear of cave men but not of individual cavemen, of Egyptians and Chinese perhaps too, but not of individual Egyptians or Chinese. You will find the writer or teacher dealing with generalities and

nothing more. We have at hand two such history books which are alike in their generalities and denial of the beginning of history which bear out the above statements. The one—this book, *Man's Great Adventure*—does not mention any name of an individual till on the 39th page it speaks of King Menes of Egypt who is presented as having lived about the year 3500 B.C. That is a wrong date, we know. He must have lived after the flood and therefore following the chronology of Scripture must have lived much later. All that lies between Paradise and creation and the reign of King Menes is silently passed over as unknown. The other history book even gives expression to this unbelief when it begins by speaking of "the hazy dawning of history".

But the point we wish to make is that the very inception of history must be shown to the covenant child as God's work. His instruction and training in the history class must not clash with what he is taught in catechism and at home. And there surely is a crying need for a Christian history text book that starts from the beginning, shows the child that God created time, brought man on this earth and by His providence leads all things to the end He had in mind when He started man down the corridor of history. Then the child can be trained for his life's calling on this earth while he passes with his fellowmen, believer and unbeliever, through time till presently he enters the eternal kingdom of which he is now already a citizen.

Further when the unbeliever presents Egypt and Mesopotamia as cradles of civilization, the Christian school teacher can go a step further and show how *God* drove man out of the plain of Shinar, made him scatter into these valleys and regions and how *He* confused their speech and brought about the various races and people we now know. And where the unbeliever teaches his child that it was a struggle continuing for thousands of years before man advanced from primitive and barbarous conditions to civilization, the Christian school teacher can and should point out that man came upon this earth from the hand of God as a creature created in His image, a creature who could name the animals for God, a creature that reflected the glory, the wisdom and the holiness of God. Taking only these three things, the beginning of all things as God's work, the creation of man as king of all creatures and as God's image bearer and the origin of the races as God's work at the tower of Babel, you can indeed lead the child in the contemplation of the INFINITE greatness of God. Properly presented these historical facts, for such they are, belonging to this history of this earth, the child will indeed see that he cannot measure the greatness of God. He will then receive the proper impression of the God he is called to serve in this life. Indeed the history class can train him for his life's calling.

Into detail we cannot go. We mentioned the above because these historical facts are denied by the world. But you may follow the line of history and time and time again there will be special places to point out that this too is God's work. The idea of chance must be ruled out. The idea that a thing very fortunately or unfortunately just happened to go this way or that way must be avoided. That this king dies just before he is able to establish his world-wide empire, that the son of this king is a weak, vice-driven soul out of whose hands the kingdom slips, that the winter was exceptionally severe so that the enemy was exhausted and stopped in its bloody conquest and such similar things must not be lightly passed over as just happening that way. God has an eternal plan, and that plan is a very detailed one. According to it ALL things great and small occur. Never for a minute let the child lose sight of the fact that God is infinitely GREAT. Always teach him that God is INFINITELY great. No incident in history however large or small limits His greatness. The devil, the antichrist, the enemies of the Church do not even temporarily curb or limit His greatness. He is above them all, and all their deeds are due to the fact that He is fulfilling His counsel. The hearts of kings are in his hand, Proverbs 21:1. He makes peace and creates evil, Isaiah 45:7. He gave Nebuchadnezzar his kingdom, Daniel 5:18. He gives the book with the seven seals to Christ at His ascension. This book contains that phase of God's counsel which deals with the things which must shortly come to pass from the time of Christ's ascension—another historical event the world denies and ignores though the moment He left this earth belongs to the history of this earth—until the end of time. That the horses of war, of pestilence and of death run through the earth is His work as well as that the white horse of the victory of the Gospel runs when four of the seals on that book are opened. That the Antichrist and Gog and Magog come is God's work. And every incident of history is due to the fact that the infinitely wise God is fulfilling His counsel.

How then shall history be taught to our covenant youth? It shall be taught so that, as the principles we submitted present it, the child sees God's power, His wisdom, His goodness, His justice, His mercy and His truth. Show him what men have done, what nations accomplished, but by all means show Him that God is the Lord. Talk about men, speak of nations, but be sure that you end with the Lord because you yourself have begun with the Lord and seen all things as a believer.

Therefore those things which the world calls calamities and says no more about them should likewise be presented as God's judgments upon the world. Shall the last two world wars simply be presented from the viewpoint of those leaders in Germany or even England

and America who played such important parts in these opposing nations? Are we then doing justice to such tremendous upheavals? Are we not to see and trace the steady departure of nations from the fear of the Lord and God's answer to these things? How else will we prepare our children's minds for the judgments of God which shall shortly come to pass? How else shall we teach them that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom? How else shall we teach them that God is just and sovereign?

And as we already remarked not only the single historical event but even the over all picture of history is to be used to impress upon the mind of the child the infinite greatness of God. History is involved for man. There is a settlement of men in the valley of the Euphrates, a settlement about the Nile in Egypt, a settlement over in Asia and one in China with a record of history that perhaps goes farther back than any other nation can produce outside the Word of God. There are nations that are practically dormant for thousands of years contributing little or nothing to the general trend of things. But suddenly they awake and as the worldly historian would say, "they change the whole course of history for ages to come". But the covenant child should be shown that God brought those nations there and that at His appointed time they take their place to do that which He eternally decreed, so that at God's time a Menes, a Hammurabi, a Caesar, an Alexander, a Hitler, and a Stalin are born while certain conditions are prevalent in their own land or in a neighbouring kingdom. History is involved, and certain events apparently occur without rhyme and reason. But they must not be presented so, for they are not without rhyme and reason, and the child should always, though he cannot and even we cannot see the need of the thing or event, be impressed with the infinite greatness of God Who planned all these involved and intricate things and executes it all exactly as decreed in justice, wisdom and power. As Rev. Gritters states in these principles, "As the Church preaches Him and the Scriptures teach Him, He must become the God of the school-room through the instruction given in this important subject of history." If God is not in your class-room it is not a Christian school. A neutral (so-called) school leaves Him out of the picture, it is an atheistic school.

We had intended in this issue also to add two more suggestions as to the proper approach to the teaching of the subject of history, but this will have to wait. Thus far we stated that the child must be able to see history as God's work, and we have somewhat in detail explained what we meant by this. To this can be added that he must also see history *as God sees it*. And he must see in as far as possible *God's purpose* with historical events. These things we hope to discuss in a following issue.

(to be continued)

J. A. Heys.

FROM HOLY WRIT

Beholding God's Face *

As for me. . . . I shall behold Thy face.

Simple, yet infinitely reassuring is the expression of the hope of the believer. Reassuring in life, as we wend our earthly pilgrimage through the midst of this present world with all its sufferings and trials; but also at death, when we finally arrive at our journey's end.

"As for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness." Psalm 17:15.

Thereby we confidently affirm that we have no part with the world of wickedness that surrounds us on every hand. Gratefully we acknowledge that God has set us apart, made us distinctly different from sinful men.

They have their portion here below. Their God is their belly. They set their hearts on earthly treasures, all of which they must leave behind at death for the generation that follows. "Dust to dust, the mortal dies, both the foolish and the wise. . . . Death shall end his fleeting day, he shall carry naught away."

Their end is destruction, utter disillusionment and despair.

"But as for me, I shall behold Thy face in righteousness!"

* * * *

Blessed hope.

For God's face is His Self-revelation in Jesus Christ.

Also among men we know and recognize one another by our facial features and expressions. Our character, but also our inner thoughts and feelings are written upon our faces. Therefore the face of a departed dear one lingers long in our memories. Fondly we recollect the distinctive features, the expressions of love and joy, friendship and fellowship, even sorrow and sympathy.

Thus God reveals His face to us in Jesus Christ. As yet we see His face but dimly in the mirror of His Word, for we are still of the earth earthy, so that our eye is fit only to see earthly things. Yet in the mirror of the Scriptures, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, we behold the Triune God, father, Son and Holy Ghost, Who is Jehovah, the almighty, sovereign, unchangeable, covenant God. We see Him in all His endless perfections as the only true God, all-sufficient, eternal,

(*) This sermonette was delivered in approximately this form at the funeral of Mr. G. Pastoor. Upon the request of the relatives, we take the liberty to publish it in this department.

omnipresent, righteous, holy, full of knowledge, infinitely wise, almighty in power, unfathomably good, the Fountain of love and grace. In fact, His face is turned toward us in love and grace, mercy and compassion.

Now we still behold in a mirror darkly, but what we see floods our souls with the blessed hope that we shall see Him face to face.

And that eternally without any dread.

Surely God's face is terrible, even a consuming fire, when it is turned in wrath against the wicked. Israel felt something of this at Sinai, for they fled in terror even at the sound of His mighty voice. The wicked in hell grind their teeth in horror at His very presence. For the Lord is holy and just to duly recompense every man according to his evil works. Also Christ experienced this in bitter anguish of soul while God's face was turned against Him because of our sins in the consuming darkness of the cross.

But we shall behold His face with gladness. For we shall behold Him in righteousness.

Not with our own righteousness shall we appear before Him, but in the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

Although we ourselves are worthy of condemnation, we shall stand in His presence as altogether sinless, perfectly righteous, as if we had never transgressed any of His commandments. Nay, He will smile His approval upon us as those who have perfectly fulfilled all righteousness and merited eternal life. He will declare us worthy to be sons and daughters in His house, even the heirs of His glory.

He will look upon us with that love whereby He loved us in Christ from eternity. His countenance will shine on us in favor. His smile will fill our souls with all the blessings of infinite salvation.

We shall see His face; we shall stand in His presence; we shall delight in His fellowship; we shall be filled with His blessedness.

In that assurance we say to Him even now, "I shall behold Thy face in righteousness."

Blessed hope in life and at death.

* * * *

As for me. . . .

I shall undergo a glorious transformation.

For I shall awake!

We cannot fail to ask, "what makes all the difference between the sinner who dies in utter despair and the believer who passes on to that blessed hope?"

Apparently they are very much alike in this life and in death. They both live their earthly life in the flesh. They see and hear, speak and act, live and work in much the same manner, as far as their earthly existence is concerned. In this life they are someone's husband or wife, father or mother, brother or sister,

son or daughter. And at the end of the way, they both die. When death gathers its forces together against them, they are cast into its throes and breathe their last. All earthly contact is broken; all human ties are severed.

Yet, what a difference! The wicked pass from death into death, unto eternal desolation. While the hope of the righteous is: I shall awaken.

The cause for that difference must be sought already in this life. By nature we are all alike, born in trespasses and sins. Yet the righteous have been renewed according to their inward man. Although they are still in this flesh, they have become new creatures. In principle old things have already passed away, and all has become new. For the regenerated sinner possesses the resurrection-life of Christ within his heart, which is the beginning of the heavenly life already in this present time. Therefore he lives by faith, and not by sight. He opposes the sin that wars in his members. And he professes the blessed hope of the life to come. Living in this body he expresses the desire to be delivered from this present body of sin and to be with Christ, which is far better.

For him death is swallowed up in victory. As a sleeper arouses from his sleep, bestirs himself and awakens to consciousness, so the righteous man awakens as he passes through death's door. He closes his eyes here, only to open them in glory. The natural fades from view, the spiritual opens before his wondering gaze. The weary night of sin and death is past, the morning of the eternal day has dawned. The inward man, which is renewed in Christ as a new creature, is now fully delivered from the outward man of sin, to be with the Lord forever.

That amazing change the Psalmist expresses by saying, "I shall awake in Thy likeness."

This cannot possibly refer to the final change, when the body will be raised in incorruption to be conformed to the likeness of the glorious body of Christ. Also that change lies within the scope of the expectation of the believer, and will be realized at the end of time, when Christ shall return with the clouds of the heavens. For the trumpet will sound, and we shall all be changed, even in the twinkling of an eye. But already before this final change, immediately at death, we shall pass through death into life, to awaken in the likeness of our God.

For this likeness must refer to God. We shall be like Him, bearing a creaturely reflection of His glory as His sons and daughters in His house. This is the hope expressed by the apostle John, when he says, "Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God. . . . Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know

that when it does appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." (1 John 3:1, 2).

Then we shall bear the perfect likeness of our heavenly Father, in as far as is ever possible for a mere creature to bear that likeness. We shall be sons in the full and complete sense of the word. For then we shall be fully fit to dwell in His house, to stand in His presence, to behold His face, to delight in His fellowship, and to enjoy the blessedness of His covenant life forever!

"I shall see Thee and dwell with Thee face to face".

When I awake. . . .

* * * *

As for me. . . .

I shall then be satisfied.

Not as if this is the final glory and full perfection of the saints. More must still follow.

For one thing, the bodies of the believers, which are now laid away in the graves, must still be raised. Those who have passed on before us are in heaven without their glorified bodies. How they exist, see, hear, speak and sing without their bodies, God has not deemed necessary to reveal to us. But they await with eagerness the day when they will return with Christ to receive their resurrection bodies.

Moreover, they are waiting for all the rest of the saints who must still be joined with them before the throne. Their glory is not complete until the whole church has been delivered from tribulation to be perfected in the presence of Christ and of God. Therefore Revelation speaks of the souls under the altar that do not cease to cry, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" And they are told to wait a little while.

Furthermore, they are also awaiting the new heavens and the new earth, the new creation in which righteousness will dwell forever, and they will lay their crowns before the throne of Him, Who lives and reigns forever and ever.

Yet the life immediately after death is the fulfillment of all the longing that fills the heart of the believer during his earthly pilgrimage.

Here he must still bear the sufferings of the flesh, pains, sorrows and losses. He must even suffer for righteousness sake. But there all tears will be wiped from his eyes.

Here he still fights the battle of faith against all the powers of darkness that wage war against him, even in his sinful flesh. There he will wear the victor's crown forever.

But above all, here he is still in the body, and therefore lives apart from the Lord. He is a citizen of the

heavenly kingdom, and therefore a pilgrim and stranger upon the earth, with an unsatiable yearning within him for his heavenly home.

And therefore with an eye of faith he looks to the hope to come. In life, in sorrows and bereavements, in pain and in suffering; but also at death, as he passes into the valley of the shadow of death, he has this hope: Soon I shall be satisfied. For I shall behold His face in righteousness.

When I in righteousness at last
Thy glorious face shall see,
When all the weary night is past,
And I awake with Thee,
To view the glories that abide,
Then, then I shall be satisfied.

C. Hanko.

"READ IT THROUGH"

"I supposed I knew my Bible,
Reading piecemeal, hit or miss,
Now a bit of John or Matthew,
Now a snatch of Genesis;

"Certain chapters of Isaiah,
Certain Psalms (the twenty-third),
Twelfth of Romans, first of Proverbs,
Yes, I thought I knew the Word.

"But I found a thorough reading,
Was a different thing to do,
And the way was unfamiliar,
When I read the Bible through.

"You who like to play at Bible,
Dip and dabble here and there,
Just before you kneel weary,
And yawn out a hurried prayer;

"You who treat the Crown of Writing
As you treat no other book—
Just a paragraph disjointed,
Just a crude, impatient look—

"Try a worthier procedure,
Try a broad and steady view,—
You will kneel in very rapture,
When you read the Bible through."

by Amos R. Wells,
Southern Presbyterian Journal.

J. Howerzyl.