

THE STANDARD *Bearer* A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

VOLUME XXV

May 1, 1949 — Grand Rapids, Michigan

NUMBER 15

MEDITATION

Maasceeni!

“... trek mij, wij zullen U naloopen.”
Hooglied 1:4a.

Maasceeni!

Trek mij!

En wij zullen U naloopen!

Wie spreekt hier, en wie is de aangesprokene?

Om daar een volledig antwoord op te geven is niet zoo gemakkelijk, en het past ook niet bij den aard van dit stukje. Dan zou ik veel moeten argumenteeren.

Ik ben er zeker van, dat ik “naar het hart van Jeruzalem spreek” als ik zeg, dat hier de Kerk van Jezus Christus aan het woord is, en dat zij haar hunkerend vragen richt tot God in Christus Jezus.

O ja, ik erken, dat er vele andere antwoorden gegeven zijn op de twee vragen hier boven gesteld. De antwoorden hebben zich vermenigvuldigd, en vele van die antwoorden zijn het bestudeeren eigenlijk niet waard. Er zijn er die gezegd hebben, dat we in het Hooglied van Salomo niet anders hebben dan een lofdicht op de liefde der seksen. Ik walg van die opvatting. Het verlaagt de Heilige Schrift hier tot een gewoon minnelied.

Maar de Kerk van Jezus Christus is het er over eens, dat we hier hebben een schoon gedicht op de eeuwige liefde die eerst in Jehovah woont, en dan diezelfde liefde zooals zij in het hart woont van Gods volk aller eeuwen. Daarom spreekt dit gedicht ons toe in alle eeuwen, in het Nieuwe zoowel als in het Oude Testament.

De weinige woorden van den tekst passen zoo schoon bij de klank der Heilige Schrift in andere plaatsen.

Denkt aan de klassieke tekst in Jeremia 31:3: “De Heere is mij verschenen van verre tijden. Ja, Ik heb

u liefgehad met eene eeuwige liefde, daarom heb Ik u *getrokken* met goedertierenheid.”

Jezus Christus kent den Vader en daarom dan ook de trekking der eeuwige liefde Gods. Op aarde komende om die eeuwige liefde te openbaren, zegt Hij tot het kleine kuddeke: “Niemand kan tot Mij komen, tenzij, dat de Vader hem *trekke*; en Ik zal hem opwekken ten uitersten dage.” Joh. 6:44.

Of ook: “. . . en Ik, zoo wanneer Ik van de aarde zal verhoogd zijn, zal ze allen tot Mij *trekken*.” Joh. 12:32.

Paulus heeft van die wondere trekking gehoord in het hemelsch gezicht; wat zeg ik? Hij heeft die trekking ervaren op een geheel wondere wijze op den weg naar Damascus, en zoo hooren we hem zeggen: “. . . die ons *getrokken* heeft uit de macht der duisternis, en overgezet heeft in het Koninkrijk van den Zoon Zijner liefde.” Coll. 1:13. Let er op, dat die trekking dezelfde is als waarvan Jeremia spreekt: het gaat naar het Koninkrijk des Zoons der liefde Gods.

O die trekking naar God heen!

Maasceeni!

Trek mij!

* * * *

Maasceeni!

Het is het roepen om de trekking der eeuwige liefde.

Die liefde is eeuwig want God is eeuwig. Zoo oud God is, zoo oud is die liefde die eeuwig Hem bewoog.

Hij zag die schare die zekerlijk getrokken zal worden, Hij zag hen van eeuwigheid, en zal op hen blikken in groote liefde tot in alle eeuwigheid.

Hij zag hen als schoon, lieflijk, aantrekkelijk, gelijk een duif in 't zilverwit, pralende met de schoonheid der bruid die in de armen geleid wordt van den Bruidegom, en dat is Jezus, de Minnaar der zielen.

Het is het roepen om de ervaring van die liefde.

En dat roepen is een verlangend, een hunkerend roepen.

En dat hunkeren moet verklaard uit het feit dat dit

volk woont in de schaduw des doods, in de sfeer van wrevel en haat, het tegenovergestelde van de onuitsprekelijke liefde des Vaders.

Het is dan ook een belijdenis van totale onmacht.

Maasceeni! Want ik kan zelf niet tot U komen.

Maasceeni! Want ik ben zeer zwart, en mijn wijngaard heb ik verwaarloosd. Ik ben zwartachtig geworden, omdat mijn woonplaats in de woestijn was. Dat was het element mijns levens van nature.

Maar, o mijn God! ik ben zeer moede geworden van deze bange, angstige zwartheid. Ik lijd zoo'n smart in deze zwartheid. Sindsdien Gij mij iets te smaken gaaft van wat het zeggen wil om God te minnen, kan ik het hier in deze doodsvalei niet meer staan. Ik wil naar U toe! Ik verlang naar U in een land dor en mat waar geen water is.

Want zoo staat de zaak.

Dit volk heeft iets geproefd van wat het zeggen wil God te zien, God te smaken, gemeenschap te mogen hebben met Hem die de blijdschap der Engelen is.

Maasceeni! zegt niemand die nog wandelt in de duisternis van zijn aangeboren natuur. Een onwedergeboren mensch zal dit gebed van slechts één woord nooit bidden. En een wedergeboren mensch, die nog niet gekomen is tot die eerste bekeering, zal dit gebed óók niet bidden. Om *Maasceeni!* te kunnen bidden moet men God kennen. Men moet geproefd hebben de gemeenschap met God. Men moet iets weten van wat het zeggen wil om met God te wandelen.

Een natuurlijk mensch zegt nooit *Maasceeni!* omdat hij geheel en al tevreden is met den staat en toestand waarvan Paulus zegt, dat hij zonder God en zonder hoop in de wereld is.

Wilt ge kommentaar op den staat van dat hongerend roepen? Leest, neen, zingt dan den onvergelyken psalm 42. Ge zoudt gerust *maasceeni!* mogen schrijven boven dien psalm, en dan hebt ge den inhoud van dien psalm zuiver weergegeven.

David wist wat het zeggen wil om met God te wandelen. Er waren tijden in zijn leven geweest waarvan hij stilte, o zoo gerust kon zingen: De Heere is mijn Herder, mij zal niets ontbreken. Hij doet mij nederliggen in grazige weiden. Hij voert mij zachtens. . . .

Doch er kwamen andere tijden. Het werd bang en angstig in zijn ontruste ziel. Hij wandelde in de schaduwen des doods. Hij ervoer groote honger en dorst voor zijn hart en ziel. En er waren slangen die sisten, en hun venijn uitspuwden: Waar is nu Uw God, o David?

Toen weende David en schreide tot God en zeide: *Maasceeni!* O mijn God, trek mij vanuit deze droeve en dorre wildernis! Ik dorst naar U!

De twee-en-veertiger is hetzelfde als het *Maasceeni!* van zijn zoon Salomo.

Trek mij: o mijn God!

* * * *

Maasceeni!

Trek mij tot U, o Fontein van levend Water!

Hoe zouden wij dat in Nieuw Testamentische taal toch zeggen?

Het is opmerkelijk, dat Johannes, de Apostel der liefde, ons hier het antwoord zal geven.

Hij is bijna aan het einde van die wondere Openbaring die Jezus hem gaf om Zijn dienstknechten te verhalen van de dingen die haast geschieden moesten.

En aan het einde gekomen, is het Johannes die ons vertelt hoe de Heilige Geest van God en van Christus in de gemeente het Oud Testamentische *Maasceeni!* bidt. Luistert naar hem: En de Geest en de Bruid zeggen: Kom!

Even later herhaalt Johannes die zuchtende bede tot God in Christus, zeggende: Ja kom, Heere Jezus!

Keer op keer heb ik het Hebreeuwsche woord voor *Trek mij!* neergeschreven. Welnu, let op de laatste letter van dat vreemde woord, de letter "i". Die kleine letter beteekent "mij". Het is een door en door persoonlijke zaak. Zoo was het met de Bruid in het Hooglied. Zoo was het met Johannes op Patmos. Eerst vertelt hij ons, dat de Geest in de Bruid (en dat is de geheele Kerk van Christus) zegt: Kom, Heere Jezus! Maar hij voegt er zijn persoonlijk gebed aan toe: Ja kom, Heere Jezus!

Dat heeft ons iets te zeggen.

Het bidden om de zaligheid is zeer zeker een werk, dat door de geheele kerk gewrocht wordt. Ge doet dat vooral in het "lange" gebed op den Sabbat, wanneer de geheele gemeente smeekt in het bidden van den voorganger. Dat doen wij in navolging van de gemeente die op den Pinksterdag door den uitgestorten Heiligen Geest onderwezen wierd. Let er toch op, dat er staat, dat zij eendrachtelijk hunne stem ophieven tot God, en zeiden, maar er was slechts één man die bad.

Dat is zoo, maar diezelfde zaak van zaligheid is ook een persoonlijke zaak.

Getuige het *Maasceeni* van den tekst.

Getuige het smeekend bidden van Johannes.

Getuige ook het gedurig persoonlijk smeecken van David: Heere gedenk *mij!*

O neen, het is niet genoeg, dat ge geboren zijt in een "godsdienschtig land". Of ook, dat gij geboren zijt uit een godvreezend geslacht, opgaat met Uw vromen vader naar Gods Huis, stilte, U nederzet in Gods Huis, de handen vouwt, de oogen sluit wanneer de dienstknecht Gods bidt, ook in Uw naam. Dat alles is niet genoeg. O, die kleine letter "i" in het *Maasceeni* is zoo belangrijk. Ge moet zelf, persoonlijk, bidden: O mijn God, ik bezwijk van verlangen naar U!

O God, ik, persoonlijk, ik kom tot U om het U te vertellen, dat ik het zonder U niet kan stellen op aarde.

Niets is er waar ik in kan rusten. Ik verlang naar U en Uw gemeenschap!

O God: *Maasceeni!*

* * * *

Maasceeni!

Als ge dat bidt, bidt ge tot God in Christus Jezus, en door Zijn Heiligen Geest.

Ziet ge, God had door Jeremia Zijn volk verteld van een eeuwige liefde in Hem. En ook, dat Hij gedrongen door die eeuwige liefde Zijn volk zou trekken met goedertierenheid.

Nu dan, die goedertierenheid is eigenlijk de openbaring van Jezus Christus, met alles wat die Naam beteekent voor ons in het Nieuwe Testament.

Die naam beteekent, dat God neerkwam in ons midden gedurende dien eersten Kerstnacht. Het was Gods goedertierenheid die al maar trekt toen Jezus opgroeide en al meer begon te lijden. Al het smartelijke lijden van Jezus is de trekking Gods. Die trekking wordt al krachtiger. Hij rukt U uit den staat der schuld als Jezus verworpen wordt aan het kruis en eindelijk het moede hoofd buigt om te sterven. Ik hoor onze vaders het zeggen: "waar Hij verlaten werd, opdat wij nimmermeer verlaten zouden worden".

Dat wordt duidelijker op den dag, wanneer Jezus naar den hemel getrokken wordt. Want het "wegrukken" van het kindeken (Openb. 12:5) is eigenlijk het optrekken van de geheele gemeente. Waar Jezus Christus gebracht wordt, daar is ook de gemeente, want Hij is haar Vertegenwoordiger, Hij is haar Hoofd. En waar het Hoofd is, daar is, of komt, ook het lichaam.

Dat wordt veel duidelijker als de Heilige Geest van den Heere Jezus Christus uitgestort wordt op den Pinksterdag.

Let op de duizenden! Ze roepen allen *Maasceeni!* Want de Geest der trekking woont in hen. Als die Heilige Geest in U woont, blijft ge roepen: Trek mij! totdat geen maan meer schijnt. Want die Heilige Geest, die het lieflijke Woord van God U toepast, doet U smaken wat het zeggen wil om God tot zijn Vriend te hebben.

Als de Pinksterdag U vindt, dan woont God in U.

Doch slechts in de mate der gave der genade.

En de allerheiligste heeft slechts een klein beginsel van die genade.

Doch zij hebben zooveel van God in hen, dat zij naar meer verlangen. Zij hebben zooveel van God, dat zij nooit in der eeuwigheid meer kunnen thuisvoelen in de zonde, op de aarde, onder het wroeten der duivelskinderen.

Zekerlijk, Jezus Christus is het object van het roepen van *Maasceeni!*

Hij beloofde het vooraleer Hij heenging: "Ik zal er voor zorgen, dat al de gekenden opgetrokken worden tot Mij in den hemel, daar boven bij God."

Dus wij zingen deze bede ietwat anders, en toch weer niet anders.

Anders, want wij zeggen *Maasceeni!* Jezus, mijn Zaligmaker!

Toch weer niet anders, want gindsche Oud Testamentische man ligt zijn *Maasceeni!* uit te snikken bij een bloedend lammetje, dat hij zooveel opgeofferd heeft. Hij roept zijn bede uit bij het gestorven, bloedende offer. En dat wijst ook op Jezus die komen zou.

Dus de stijl van het Hooglied is ons niet zoo heel vreemd. Het dient nog in de vergadering der Christgelooovigen.

Het lieflijke *Maasceeni!* past ons. Het past lieflijk. O God! Trek mij!

* * * *

Maasceeni!

En wij zullen U naloopen!

Eerst was het een persoonlijke bede, maar nu slaat de hunkerende zanger over in het meervoudige *wij*.

Daar zit een schoone gedachte in.

Ik moet persoonlijk naar God toe, in den Heere Jezus Christus. Ik moet in Hem gelooven.

Maar als mijn bede verhoord wordt, weet ik, dat er straks een groote schaar rondom mij gevonden wordt. Dan trekken wij tezamen op om naar God te wandelen.

Elia maakte een fout toen hij zeide: Ik ben maar alleen overgebleven.

Alleen? Ja, als het gaat om die persoonlijke zaligheid, om het persoonlijk contact met den Liefhebber der zielen. Ge moet persoonlijk gelooven.

Maar als ge dit korte gebed gebeden hebt door het geloof, dan is de verhooring wonderbaar. Dan ziet ge het aan de menschen die U omringen, en die op hun beurt die persoonlijke bede gebeden hebben. Ge krijgt tezamen Uw antwoord: ge trekt als het lichaam van Jezus op om naar den hemel te reizen.

Wij zullen U naloopen!

Wat wondere geloofsvrijmoedigheid!

Hoe kan die man dat zoo maar zeggen?

Trek mij, en ik ben er zeker van, Heere, dat wij U zullen naloopen!

Dat is stoute taal.

En toch, zoo is het.

Als God ons trekt door Jezus' Woord en Geest, dan gaan we zeker naar den hemel wandelen.

Dan loopen we Jezus na.

Doch waarheen loopt Jezus?

Johannes geeft hier het antwoord. In zijn Evangelie zegt hij: "en het Woord was bij God. . ." Het kleine woordje "bij" in dien tekst beteekent, dat Jezus altijd naar den Vader toewandelt. Er zit beweging in het Grieksche woord *pros*, vertaald door ons woord "bij". Jezus' eeuwige verlangen is om naar den Vader te gaan. En is Jezus in U, dan gaat ge met al Gods volk, achter Jezus aan, naar den Vader henen.

O, daar te zijn!

G. Vos.

The Standard Bearer

Semi-Monthly, except Monthly in July and August

Published By

The Reformed Free Publishing Association

Box 124, Sta. C., Grand Rapids, Mich.

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Communications relative to subscription should be addressed to MR. J. BOUWMAN, 1131 Sigsbee St., S.E., Grand Rapids 6, Mich. Announcements and Obituaries must be mailed to the above address and will be published at a fee of \$1.00 for each notice.

Renewals:—Unless a definite request for discontinuance is received, it is assumed that the subscriber wishes his subscription to continue without the formality of a renewal order.

(Subscription Price \$2.50 per year)

Entered as Second Class Mail at Grand Rapids, Michigan.

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EDITORIALS

Propositions Concerning The Covenant Of Grace

The sixth proposition agreed upon by the Rev. E. G. van Teylingen and Dr. F. L. Bos reads as follows:

“That the demand of faith and repentance (conversion) which in the gospel comes to all that are comprehended in the covenant and congregation of God is completely founded on the covenant promise and is dominated and determined thereby according to the word of the Lord: “Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it”.

Regarding this proposition we remark the following:

1. By “all who are comprehended in the church and covenant of God” the subscribers to this proposition mean in the light of proposition 3 “all the children of the congregation, head for head”. Concerning this we have written before.

2. To all these children comes the demand of faith and repentance. To this we have no objection; in fact, this demand does not only come to all the children of the church and to all that are comprehended in the covenant of God, but also to those that are without, to all that hear the preaching of the gospel. This is plainly taught in Canons of Dordt, 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 and without distinction to whom God of His good pleasure sends the gospel.” And it is also implied in Canons III, IV, 8: “As many as are called by the gospel, are unfeignedly called. For God hath most earnestly and truly declared in His word, what will be acceptable to Him; namely, that all who are called, should come to Him. He, moreover, seriously promises eternal life and rest to as many as shall come to Him, and believe on Him.”

3. But the question is: what do the brethren mean by the last part of this proposition in connection with the first? Is the demand of faith and repentance completely founded upon, dominated and determined by the promise for all the children of believers? Of course, they cannot mean this, especially not in the light of the text quoted and in the light of the next proposition, which plainly speaks of the fact that the promise of God is not fulfilled in all the children of

the covenant, that is, in all the children of believers. For if the promise of God were so completely fulfilled in all the children of believers, they would surely come to faith and repentance and would surely be saved. And this cannot possibly be the meaning of the proposition.

I am afraid, therefore, that also in this proposition we have a mixture as the result of a compromise between the Rev. van Teylingen and Dr. Bos.

Dr. Bos, of course, would insist as a liberated man upon the theory that the covenant promise is for all the children of believers. At the same time he emphasizes that the realization of the promise demands on the part of the covenant children faith and repentance.

On the other hand, the Rev. van Teylingen suggests emphatically that the Lord God will surely fulfill His promise; and this promise includes the Holy Spirit and faith, whereby the children of the covenant are led to repentance.

And so they subscribe together to the wrong and impossible proposition that God surely fulfills the promise of faith and repentance to all the children of believers.

I would suggest that they rewrite this proposition clearly as follows:

"The demand of faith and repentance certainly comes to all the children of believers without exception, but they never will or can fulfill this demand unless the promise of God is first fulfilled in them, a promise which He will surely fulfill in all the elect children of the covenant, for 'faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.'"

Proposition seven reads as follows:

"That the sovereignly dominating promise of God only is not being fulfilled to and in those who 'have counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith they were sanctified, an unholy thing, and have done despite unto the Spirit of grace' (Heb. 10:29), and thus break the covenant of God; something which presupposes in its deepest sense the awful truth that God in His good pleasure has determined in regard to some to leave them 'in the common misery into which they have wilfully plunged themselves, and not to bestow upon them saving faith and the grace of conversion' (Canons of Dordt I, 15), as it is written, 'The stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner. And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.' (I Peter 2:7, 8)."

With this proposition we can have no dispute, of course. It speaks entirely the language of our confessions and of Scripture. And although that language, as far as the quotation from the Canons is

concerned, is entirely infralapsarian, while we prefer the supra view, yet, as far as it goes we can very well agree with it. Nevertheless, we would call attention of the Rev. van Teylingen and Dr. Bos to the fact that this proposition is not in harmony with proposition six. It clearly states that the promise of God, including the Holy Spirit and faith unto repentance, is not fulfilled in all but only in the elect children of the covenant.

The eighth proposition refers to the Canons of Dordt I, 17, speaking of the salvation of infants that die in their infancy.

"That the children of the Church dying in childhood must believingly be reckoned to belong to the elect, 'while we are to judge of the will of God from His word, which testifies that the children of grace, in which they, together with the parents, are comprehended' (Canons of Dordt I, 17), even as they 'are graciously delivered by God out of this life before they broke the conditions of the covenant' (Netherland Theologians, Dordrecht, 1618-19)."

Also this proposition in the main quotes an article of the Confession. But it must be noted that in the proposition the article of the confession is not only quoted but also interpreted. And with the interpretation we cannot agree. A proposition like this is a good example how certain interpretations of the confession may gradually take the place of the confession itself. The confession in its positive statement really declares something about godly parents. It says that they "have no reason to doubt of the election and salvation of their children, whom it pleaseth God to call out of this life in their infancy." And this to my mind is something quite different from what the proposition declares, namely, that all the children of the church without exception that die in their infancy must be considered as belonging to the elect.

And the quotation from the Netherland Theologians certainly does not improve the proposition.

It is plain that those Netherland Theologians intend to furnish a certain ground or reason for the article of the Canons, the reason being that God graciously delivers out of this life the children of the covenant that die in their infancy before they break the conditions of the covenant. And I am glad that this opinion of the Netherland Theologians was not included in the article itself. To speak of conditions of the covenant is hardly Reformed. There are no conditions in the covenant of God. He establishes His covenant unconditionally. What is referred to as conditions is probably expressed in the second part (not parties!) of the covenant as described in the Baptism Form: "Therefore are we by God through baptism admonished of and obliged unto new obedience, namely, that we cleave to this one God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; that we trust in him, and love him with all our

hearts, and with all our souls, and with all our mind, and with all our strength; that we forsake the world, crucify our old nature, and walk in a new and holy life." But these are not conditions of God's establishing His covenant with us, but rather the fruit and manifestation of the covenant of God in and through us. And therefore we do not believe that the opinion of the Netherland Theologians improves this proposition at all.

H. H.

THE TRIPLE KNOWLEDGE

An Exposition Of The Heidelberg Catechism

PART TWO

Of Man's Redemption

LORD'S DAY 26

2.

The Institution Of Baptism.

In our exposition of the idea of the sacraments we emphasized the fact that a certain rite or ceremony in order to partake of the character of a sacrament must be divinely instituted. Bread, wine, and water are in their very nature symbols of nourishment and of purification; but this does not constitute them as sacraments. Sacraments must be divinely appointed or ordained and instituted in the Church. Also the latter element, namely, that they are instituted in the Church as a whole and must be observed by the Church, is undoubtedly essential to sacraments. The washings and purifications among Israel were certainly instituted by divine law; and in a sense the washings that were thus ordained may be said to be foreshadowing the sacrament of baptism. At least it may be said that when the sacrament of baptism was instituted the idea that washing with water symbolized a spiritual purification was not strange to Israel. But all these purifications and washings had no sacramental value for the simple reason that they were not instituted to be observed by the whole Church but regulated special cases, such as a woman after child-birth, contact with a corpse or carcass, or eating that which died of itself. The same may be said of the baptism of proselytes. Proselytes were baptized as a sign together with circumcision of their incorporation into the Jewish nation. And also this indicates that baptism as such was

by no means an unknown rite or ceremony. But in order to raise it to the level of a sacrament it must be instituted by Christ to be observed by the whole Church.

The importance of this is realized also by the Heidelberg Catechism. Hence it devotes an entire question and answer to the institution of baptism, as follows: "Where has Christ promised us, that he will as certainly wash us by his blood and Spirit, as we are washed with the water of baptism? In the institution of baptism, which is thus expressed: 'Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,' 'he that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned.' This promise is also repeated, where the scripture calls baptism the washing of regeneration, and the washing away of sins."

Indeed, that baptism is an institution of God through Christ must be emphasized; and it is important that this is clearly shown. Many in our day attach no significance to baptism as a sacrament. To them it is a mere formality: the baby must be christened. At best it means that the child is marked as a member of some church and that it is not a mere heathen. Others deliberately reject baptism altogether and contemptuously speak of "water baptism"; and water baptism, according to them, has no significance whatsoever: one must simply be baptized with the Holy Spirit. It is, therefore, very important that attention be called to the institution of baptism as of divine appointment and ordination.

And then we may first of all call attention to the baptism of John which also was a divine institution.

The Romish Church rejects the idea that the baptism of John is essentially the same as the Christian baptism. In the Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent, Session 7, On Baptism, Canon I we read: "If anyone saith, that the baptism of John had the same force as the baptism of Christ: let him be anathema."

Others also, even among Reformed theologians, deny the identity of the two baptisms. They point out, for instance, that Acts 19:1-6 clearly speaks of a case of some that were baptized by John and were rebaptized by Paul. But it is, to say the least, very questionable whether this view does not rest on a mistaken interpretation of the passage.

In the passage referred to we read: "And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples, He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they

said, Unto John's baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Jesus Christ. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied." Now the question is: where in the passage must be found the extent of the address of Paul to these men? If the end of that address is found in verse 4, then the twelve men addressed were indeed rebaptized by Paul. But if verse 5 is included in the words of Paul, the apostle simply teaches that the baptism of John was identical with the baptism of Jesus. And the latter interpretation seems to be the most probable. The clause in verse 5, "when they heard this," may indeed, although not necessarily, leave the impression that when these men heard the words of Paul they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. But in the original we have only the simple participle (*akousantes*), so that we have the perfect right to translate instead of, "when they heard this," "and hearing" or "having heard him". And in that case the speech of Paul to the men addressed reaches unto the end of verse 5, so that we may translate: "Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is on Christ Jesus; and those that heard John were indeed baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus." In that case the text does not refer to any rebaptism by Paul, but rather tells us that Paul instructs those twelve men that the baptism of John had the same significance as the baptism of Jesus and that therefore when they were baptized by John they were at the same time baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. In favor of this interpretation is also the fact that Paul is not presented as taking any action until the sixth verse, which informs us that when Paul had laid hands upon them the Holy Ghost came upon them and they spake with tongues and prophesied. If the text had meant to teach that Paul rebaptized those men, it would undoubtedly have read as follows: "And when Paul had thus spoken to them, he baptized them in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when he laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came upon them, and they spake with tongues and prophesied."

Now as to the identity of the baptism of John and the baptism of Jesus we must remark in the first place that it must be admitted that baptism was not formally instituted until the glorification of Christ and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Only then we read definitely that the disciples are commanded: "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy

Ghost." Matt. 28:19. Besides, at the time when John was baptizing circumcision was still the sign and seal of the righteousness which is by faith; and that sign was not yet replaced by baptism, as in the days of the new dispensation. John indeed, as the greatest of all the prophets, stood on the threshold of the kingdom of heaven; but he belonged nevertheless still to the old dispensation. For the same reason John baptized only Israelites and that evidently only adult Jews: children were not yet baptized by the baptism of John. Yet, the fact remains that the baptism of John had essentially the same significance as the baptism of Jesus. It was the baptism of the remission of sins, for we read in Matt. 3:5, 6: "Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins." And in Mark 1:4 we read: "John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins." Besides, the baptism of John was certainly divinely ordained. Of this we read in John 1:33: "And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost." And the same is implied in the question which Jesus put to the chief priests and elders of the people when they questioned him about the authority upon which He did those things, that is especially, cleansing the temple: "And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching and said, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority? And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him? But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet. And they answered Jesus, and said, We cannot tell. And he said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things." Matt. 21:23-27. Besides, we read that Jesus and John baptized for a time simultaneously: "After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judea; and there he tarried with them, and baptized. And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized." Also this shows very clearly that the baptism of John at the time was the same as the baptism of Jesus Himself.

It is important too that a word be said about the baptism of Jesus by John. Of this we read in Matt. 3:13-17: "Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbade

him, saying, I have need to be baptized by thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he suffered him. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo, a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

On the face of it there is a paradox in this baptism of Jesus. We remember that the baptism of John was the baptism of repentance and of the remission of sins. This presupposes, therefore, sin on the part of him that was baptized. And, not only so, but it presupposed consciousness of sin on the part of him that sought to be baptized and the earnest desire for forgiveness and for sanctification and righteousness. All this, it seems, was not applicable to Jesus Christ. He knew no sin; He was the person of the Son of God in human nature. He was holy and undefiled, separate from sinners. He had, therefore, no consciousness of sin whatsoever. How could He then properly receive the sign of forgiveness, He, Who certainly had no need of forgiveness and no consciousness of repentance?

We are not surprised, therefore, that John at first refused to baptize Jesus. He could not understand how it was possible that he should be called to baptize his Lord. And the word used in the original indicates that he was not so easily persuaded to baptize Jesus; in our text we probably have only the gist and the essence of the conversation, and John seemed to have had a very valid reason to refuse. Says he: "I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?" John evidently felt, especially in the presence of Jesus, that he himself also was a sinner and that a sinful man certainly could not baptize his sinless Lord.

Yet the paradox in all this was only apparent. In reality it was very proper and necessary that also Jesus should be baptized. True, considered as an individual He was not a subject for baptism, for He was without sin, holy and undefiled, had no need of repentance and forgiveness at all. But it is different as soon as we conceive of Him as the Head of His Church. With that Church He was legally one, representing them before the face of God. The sins of all His people were upon Him. Hence, as being under the law He was circumcised; and as being the end of the law it was necessary that He should be baptized. His baptism was unique in this sense, that it was a sign of baptism in His own blood. This was His real baptism, of which the baptism of John was but a sign. As He said later to the sons of Zebedee when they approached Him with the request that He would grant unto them that they might sit one on His right hand and the other on His left hand in His glory: "Ye know

not what ye ask: Can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" Mark 10:38. Baptism is a sign of submerging into death that the justice of God is fully satisfied. And therefore it is a sign also of rising again unto a new life. And thus Jesus was baptized indeed. He descended into the depths of God's wrath, into the deepest darkness of death, and tasted death for all His people. And He rose again, justified by the very sentence of God upon Him in His glorious resurrection. And of this baptism into His own blood He received the sign when John baptized Him. He was about to enter upon His public ministry. In that ministry He was to announce the kingdom of heaven. Like John He was to preach that the kingdom of heaven was nigh; but unlike John He was to preach in word and work that He Himself would bring that kingdom of heaven. He is the Good Shepherd, the King, the Anointed of God, the Life, the Bread of life, the Water of life, the Door, the Way into the everlasting tabernacle of God. He was to enter into the sheep-fold and lead out His sheep. But all this was concentrated around His death. If He would not die, He would be none of all this. His death was therefore the essential element of His whole ministry. And therefore it was very proper that He should be baptized by John as a sign of His ultimate baptism into death.

This is emphasized in the answer of Jesus to John: "Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness." The righteousness of God must be fulfilled, and that, too, that righteousness of God with relation to sin, to the sin of His people. His people must have forgiveness; but if sin is to be forgiven, it must be blotted out. And in order to blot out sin there must be an act of perfect satisfaction, the willing bearing of the wrath of God and of the punishment of sin. That is the fulfillment of all righteousness to which Jesus refers in His answer to John. Hence He says "thus",—"in this way, by my being baptized of thee, in the way of all that baptism signifies we must fulfill all righteousness." And notice too that the Lord does not say, "it becometh me", but "it becometh us" to fulfill all righteousness. Also for John it was necessary that Jesus should be baptized, in order that John might fulfill the righteousness of God. The reason for this is very plain: John had preached the forgiveness of sins and baptized with the baptism of repentance; but that baptism would be a lie if John would not function as the porter that openeth the door and by confessing that his baptism is significant only because of the baptism of the Lamb of God.

Thus we can understand the baptism of Jesus by John. He descended into the Jordan as a pledge that as the obedient servant He will fulfill all righteousness and presently descend into the Jordan of His own

death. Small wonder, then, that in the account of this baptism by Luke we read that as Jesus descended into the Jordan He was praying, consecrating Himself, no doubt, as the servant of the Lord, and praying too for the Spirit of God without measure. And again, no wonder that especially at the occasion of this baptism of our Lord Jesus Christ a voice sounded from heaven: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

Thus, then, the sacrament of baptism was begun to be instituted by John the Baptist. For God Himself sent John to baptize, and to be baptized by him had the same meaning essentially as to be baptized into Jesus Christ. And the baptism of John was sealed by Christ Himself when He came to John to be baptized of him. And finally, this institution of baptism was sealed for the whole Church of the new dispensation by the specific command of Christ: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Or according to the version in the Gospel according to Mark: "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

H. H.

OUR DOCTRINE

The Love Of God

The Word "Love" In Holy Writ

In the Old Testament there are particularly two words which are of interest to us in connection with the concept, "love". The first word which we would consider is "gashak". The fundamental meaning of this word seems to be: to join, to fasten together, to adhere, to stick together. Hence, this word is used in the Scriptures in the sense of spiritual attachment, to cleave to someone, and in that sense, to love. And, finally, as far as the conscious expression of this bond of fellowship is concerned, the word is also used in the sense of: taking delight, longing for the object. This word appears, e.g., in Isaiah 21:4 and Ps. 91:14. We read in the former text: "My heart panted, fearfulness affrighted me: the night of my pleasure hath he turned into fear unto me." Delitsch offers us the following translation of this text: *My heart beats wildly; horror hath troubled me: the darkness of night that I love, he hath turned for me into quaking.* We should note the tremendous agitation in this text: "*My heart beats wildly; horror hath troubled me:*" Besides, the

text speaks of the darkness of night which the writer loves, and that this night has been turned for him into quaking. The expression, "darkness of night that I love", or literally translated from the original, "the night of my pleasure (love)", suggests the element of longing, delight, tremendous attachment—the Hebrew word used here in this text is "gashak". And in Ps. 91:14 we read: "Because he hath set his love upon Me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known My name." The word "gashak" also appears in this text, in the expression, "Because he hath set his love upon Me," and, as is evident from the words that follow, this love of the child of God is the longing which he directs towards and fixes upon his God. The psalmist declares does he not, that he (the psalmist) has set his love upon the Lord, and that the Lord will deliver him and set him on high. Hence, this love of the psalmist must be the intense longing of the child of God which he directs unto the Lord in the midst of his misery and trouble, his longing for deliverance.

The second word which is of interest in the Old Testament is the word, "ahabh". The original meaning of this word is: to breathe after, to long after, desire,—it is the living expression of love. We read in Deut. 4:37: "And because He loved thy fathers, therefore He chose their seed after them, and brought thee out in His sight with His mighty power out of Egypt." We should notice the expression in this text: "and *because He loved thy fathers.*" Hence, the Lord's choice of their seed after them, and His bringing of them in His sight with His mighty power out of Egypt, is rooted in His love of their fathers, is prompted by this desire, longing for them. And the same thought is expressed in Isaiah 63:9: "In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them: in His love and in His pity He redeemed them: and He bare them, and carried them all the days of old." We should notice, in this text, that the Lord *in His love and in His pity* redeemed them. Also here the word evidently means or signifies: to long after, to breathe after, to desire.

We may, therefore, assert that the word "love" in the Old Testament expresses in the first place, a spiritual bond, affinity, union, causing two or more persons to adhere to one another. And, secondly, because this love is such a spiritual bond, union, affinity, the consciousness and operation of this bond reveals itself as a constant longing of the subject for the object.

In the New Testament two words are used which are of interest to us in the determining of the meaning of the concept, love. These words are AGAPAO and PHILEO. The distinction between these words is clearly expressed in John 21:15-17: "So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son

of Jonas, lovest (agapao) thou Me more than these? He saith unto Him, Yea, Lord; Thou knowest that I love Thee (phileo). He saith unto him, Feed My lambs. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest (agapao) thou Me? He saith unto Him, Yea, Lord; Thou knowest that I love (phileo) Thee. He saith unto him, Feed My sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest (phileo) thou Me? Peter was grieved because He saith unto him the third time, Lovest thou Me? And he said unto Him, Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love (phileo) Thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed My sheep." We should notice in this passage the use of the words, agapao and phileo. When the Lord addresses His disciple the first and second times He uses the word, agapao, but uses the word, phileo, when He speaks to Peter the third time. His disciple, on the other hand, uses the word, phileo, throughout.

In connection with the distinction between these words, the late Prof. Bavinck declares that "phileo" expresses the love between kindred, whereas "agapao" is exactly adapted to the full, pure, divine love of God. Trench sees in "phileo" the emphasis upon the emotional, feeling, whereas "agapao" expresses a love which is deeper. In our appraisal of these terms, we remark, in the first place, that "phileo" is more emotional, sentimental, and "agapao" is deeper, more abiding. This, we believe, is clearly established by John 21:15-17. Peter's use of the word, love, must surely be explained by the fact that he does not dare to use the word which the Saviour employs. We understand, of course, that the Lord's three-fold question is a reminder to the apostle of his three-fold denial of the Christ during the recent trial of the Saviour. Then the disciple imagined himself strong, so strong that, even if all the disciples would desert the Lord, he would never deny Him, but would be willing and ready to die for Him. And, incidentally, Simon Peter meant this, and would surely have given his life in defence of his Master. However, Peter did not understand the spiritual nature of the struggle of his Lord, and imagined that he, in his own strength, would be able to cope with any situation that might present itself. However, the apostle had shamefully denied his Lord; in fact, he had denied Him thrice. This explains his use of the word, phileo, when now questioned by the Christ at the sea of Tiberias. He uses a word which is less strong than that used by the Lord. He uses a word which primarily emphasizes the expression of feeling or emotion. Jesus asks him, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?" Hereupon the disciple answers Him, and we may express it as follows: "Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I like Thee." Peter dares not to use the word which the Saviour employs, but does say, as it were: I do feel it, and Thou knowest it Lord; I like

Thee. That Jesus in His third question directed to His disciple, uses the word, phileo, which Peter has used is undoubtedly due to the fact that the Lord would spare His disciple any unnecessary anguish, and, besides, He knows that what the apostle would rather call "phileo" is fundamentally "agapao". John 21:15-17 clearly establishes the truth, therefore, that "agapao" is a stronger word than "phileo". Secondly, whenever the Scriptures exhort us to love God, they never use "phileo", but always "agapao". This also seems to indicate that the word "agapao", is stronger than "phileo". Thirdly, although Holy Writ does use "phileo" to express the love of the Son by the Father, the word "agapao" is surely the word generally used to express the love of God. Hence, we believe that whereas "phileo" emphasizes the emotional, sentimental aspect of love, "agapao" emphasizes its deeper, more abiding character.

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The Various Uses of Love in the New Testament.

The New Testament is more abundant in its use of the word, love. This does not mean that its use does not occur frequently in the Old Testament. However, it lies in the nature of the case that the New Testament would be more abundant in its use of it. Fact is, the New Testament is the Dispensation of the revelation of the love of God in Jesus Christ, His Son, our Lord.

The first use of "love" in the New Testament to which we would call attention is that love has moral perfection for its object—we can love only that which is morally, ethically perfect. We read, e.g., in Heb. 1:9: "Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows." In John 3:19 we read: "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." And in John 12:43 we read: "For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." Notice in these passages that righteousness, light, and the praise of God are the objects of love, whereas iniquity, darkness, and the praise of men are the objects of hatred. These passages, we understand, can easily be multiplied. Hence, we can love only that which is morally, ethically perfect, and, therefore, only persons can love. Love is possible only by a moral ethical being. Animals cannot love, and we cannot love animals, or delicacies, such as pie, cake, candy, etc. Love is a personal activity, is rooted in the living God, and can be exercised only by God and by that creature which has been created in the image of God. The concept, love, is, therefore, a purely ethical concept, and presupposes a

sphere of ethical perfection. This is also true of hatred, only in the antithetical sense of the word. If we love righteousness we hate unrighteousness; conversely, if we hate the light we love the darkness.

Secondly, the word, love, occurs in Holy Writ as expressing a definite choice or preferment, or distinction. This appears from passages such as Rom. 9:13, Matt. 6:24, and Rom. 11:28. In the first of these passages we read the familiar words: "As it is written, Jacob have I loved but Esau have I hated." In Matt. 6:24 we read: "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon." And in Rom. 11:28 we read: "As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes." The second half of the last text may be translated: "but as chosen, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes." Hence, they are beloved of God, not as they appear in history, but only as they are elected of God. For the Lord to love Jacob and hate Esau, for us to hate the one and love the other, for those of Rom. 11:28 to be beloved of God as the chosen of the Lord evidently implies an act of the will, expresses a definite choice, distinction, preferment. To love or hate is, therefore, definitely an act of the will. We love or hate people volitionally,—we definitely choose to do either, or.

Thirdly, inasmuch as the concept, love, is ethical, spiritual, we find that this word is constantly used to express the relation between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This appears throughout the Word of God, e.g., in passages such as John 3:35, John 10:17, and John 14:31. In the first passage we read: "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into His hand." In John 10:17 these words occur: "Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again." And in the last passage we read: "But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave Me commandment, even so do I. Arise, let us go hence."

Fourthly, the same word is also used to express the relation of love between God and man. John 8:42: "Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love Me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of Myself, but He sent Me."—John 14:15: "If ye love Me, keep My commandments."—also verses 23, 24, 28: "Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. . . . He that loveth Me not keepeth not My sayings: and the word which ye hear is not Mine, but the Father's which sent Me. . . . Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved Me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for My Father is

greater than I."—I John 4:10, 20: "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. . . . If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen."—also verse 21: "And this commandment have we from Him, That he who loveth God love his brother also." These passages, which speak of the relation of God between God and man, using the word, "agapao," can be multiplied.

And, for the same reason, this word, "agapao," is also used to express the highest relation of friendship and fellowship between the brethren. We shall quote just a few passages. We read in John 13:34, 15:12, 17: "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. . . . This is My commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. . . . These things I command you, that ye love one another." And in I John 3:10, 11, 14, 23: "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. . . . For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. . . . We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. . . . And this is His commandment, That we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as He gave us commandment." Particularly the writings of the apostle, John, abound in these expressions.

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Colosians 3:14.

We read in Col. 3:14: "And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness." The word, translated "charity," is "agapao," love. In this text love is called the bond of perfectness, a bond which is defined as perfection. Perfection, therefore, binds, unites; for this reason love can be a bond only for them that are perfect. Love, fundamentally, is, therefore, the bond of perfection which binds two or more persons. And the exercise of this bond of love implies that we, united unto one another by this bond of perfection, seek one another, rejoice in one another, as perfect, and do all within our power to strengthen and establish one another in the enjoyment of that perfection which characterizes us in principle. In Galatians 5:22 we read: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith." We should note, in connection with this text, that love is called the fruit of the Spirit, and also that it appears

in this text at the beginning of all spiritual, ethical virtues. It reminds us of I Cor. 13:13: "And now abideth faith, hope, charity (love), these three; but the greatest of these is charity."

* * * *

God Is Love.

We are all acquainted with the passage of I John 4:8, especially the last part: "He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love." This text undoubtedly expresses the deepest principle of love. In this text the apostle expresses the essence of God's Being. He is love, i.e., His Divine Being with all the fulness of ethical perfection of which it is the absolute comprehension is a bond of perfect fellowship. For this reason the love of God is absolute. God is absolute. His love is, therefore, absolute; we refer, of course, to the love as it in God Himself is the bond of perfection. The Lord is the Subject and the Object of His own love. He is surely the Subject of His own love. He is the eternal Source of His own infinite perfection. The Lord does not owe His existence to anything outside Himself. Neither does He owe His life of love to anything outside Himself. *God is love.* Love did not come to Him, was not brought or given unto Him; He is the Subject, the eternal Source of his own life of love. Moreover, and this lies in the nature of the case, the Lord is also the Object of His own love. God loves everlastingly Himself. We say that this lies in the nature of the case. For God is the God of absolute perfection. Yea, God is absolute. Apart from Him nothing moves and has existence. And, whatever does move and has existence through Him, has a creaturely existence, was called into being by the everlasting Lord. All goodness is but a creaturely reflection of His goodness; all light is but a creaturely reflection of His light; the Lord is the absolute Reality. It therefore lies in the nature of the case that the Lord is eternally the Object of His own love. What is there for the Lord to love except Himself?! Hence, if He loves His people in Christ Jesus, He loves them only for His own Name's sake, because He beholds in them His own perfections creaturely reflected.

Hence, God is love, as the Triune God. Love, we have observed, is the bond of perfection which unites, binds two or more persons. God is Triune. This signifies that the Lord is one in essence and three in Persons. That He is one in essence implies that He is one in the bond of eternal and infinite perfection. And He is *Triune* because He is the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And as the Triune God He knows Himself eternally as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and is, therefore, united within Himself in the sphere of infinite goodness. The love of God, therefore, is that spiritual bond of friendship whereby the Three Divine

Persons, one in Divine perfection and three in Persons, are united to one another in that bond of infinite and eternal perfection, eternally go out to one another, enjoy one another's fellowship and delight in one another for ever and ever.

* * * *

Conclusion.

We conclude, in connection with the love of God, that God is love, first of all, Himself. God's own life is a life of love. Eternally He knows and has fellowship with Himself as the Triune God in the bond of infinite and eternal perfection. Hence, He loves His people only in Christ Jesus, and sends His Son into the world, in order that He may seek their eternal salvation and rejoice forevermore in the beholding of His reflections in them. This is, indeed, the heart and core of the covenant, the glorious truth which is the blessed and peculiar heritage of our Protestant Reformed Churches, namely, that the Lord, in His sovereign mercy, according to the lines of election and reprobation, pours out into our hearts His own blessed life of love, that we may love Him as He loves Himself, and so become partakers of His divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4) in the creaturely sense of the word. This is a glorious truth. It is impossible to conceive of anything higher. God's revelation to His people is not merely a Divine regulation of friendship, is not merely the revelation of the way in which this friendship can be enjoyed, so that the promise and the demand, the blessing and the curse constitute the essence of this revelation of the Lord, with the result that the Scriptural truths of election and reprobation, unconditional promise and irresistible calling do not receive the emphasis they should receive. God reveals unto us His eternal covenant of friendship which He sovereignly realizes in the hearts of those whom He has known and loved before the foundation of the world. And, therefore, the Lord hates the wicked every day and never delights in the objects of His eternal wrath. God loves Himself. God loves His people only in Christ and for Christ's sake. And He hates all workers of iniquity.

H. Veldman.

The heavens with clouds He covers,
He sends the cheering rain;
The slopes of all the mountains,
He fills with grass and grain;
To beast and bird His goodness
Their daily food supplies;
He cares for all His creatures,
Attentive to their cries.

Something New In Kalamazoo

April 14, 1949 is now a very important date in the history of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Kalamazoo. That day is important because it marked the occasion of the dedication of the new church edifice which the congregation had recently completed. That day is also important because it marks the end of an era, an era in which the congregation met in several meeting places all of which were distinguished by their inadequacy in meeting the needs of the congregation and by their stifling influence on the development and growth of the Protestant Reformed Church in Kalamazoo, Michigan.

The dedication of the new church edifice was done in a dedicatory service characterized by simplicity but nevertheless highly inspirational. Rev. H. Veldman, the pastor, introduced the service with Scripture reading, prayer and a word of welcome to the many friends of the church who expressed their interest by their presence at this service. Mr. S. De Young and Mrs. A. Vermeer favored us with a vocal duet. Rev. R. Veldman proceeded to make some pertinent remarks in connection with the dedication of the pipe organ and Miss J. Oranje played two selections by Bach. At the conclusion of the organ dedication, Mr. C. De Boer, chairman of the building committee, gave a brief outline of the activities of the building committee and then proceeded to present the keys of the church edifice to the pastor. The pastor, speaking in the name of the congregation and the consistory, responded and expressed gratitude for the splendid work of the committee.

The dedicatory address was given by Rev. H. Hoeksema and was centered on the theme Ebenezer "hitherto hath the Lord helped us." Rev. Hoeksema drew a striking parallel between the situation confronting the people of God in the days of Samuel and the cause of the Reformed truth and faith in Kalamazoo. In

unmistakeable language he outlined the hardships that faced the congregation from the time it was organized, the difficulties that always seemed to harass the cause of God and the duty of all those who profess the Reformed faith to forsake their errors. The speaker stated that all the difficult history of Kalamazoo was the work of God ultimately and that He used it as the best means to the highest good that it might become plain that God was always aiding His people in spite of the human appraisal of events in Kalamazoo. All in all, this address will long remain in the minds of those who attended this service and serve as an inspiration and reminder of the duty and calling which we have in the church of God.

After the dedicatory address, Rev. G. M. Op-hoff led the congregation in the dedicatory prayer and the service was very fittingly concluded with the singing of the doxology:

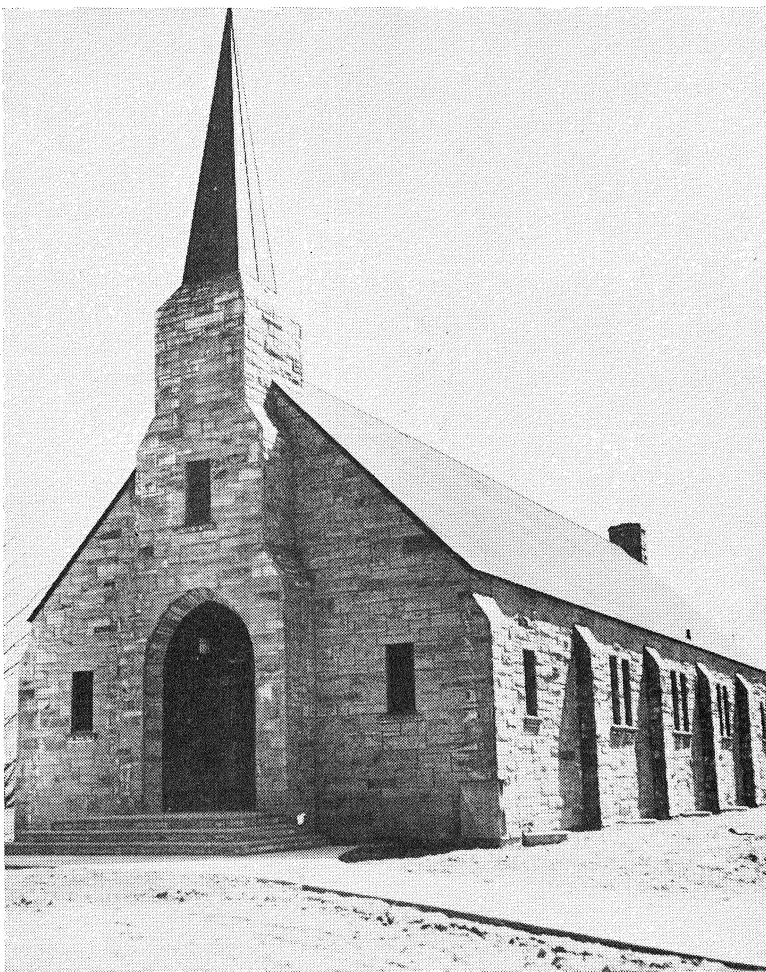
May the grace of Christ
the Saviour,
And the Fathers bound-
less love,
With the Holy Spirit's
favor,
Rest upon us from
above.

Thus may we abide in
union,
With each other, and
the Lord,
And possess in sweet
communion,
Joys which earth can-
not afford.

The service was preceded by an organ prelude and concluded by a

postlude played by Mrs. C. De Vries, one of the regular organists of the congregation. After the service a social gathering was held in the basement of the church and refreshments were served by the Ladies' Aid Society.

The completion of the church edifice marks the end of an era, and before we close that history a word of recognition is fitting. Humanly speaking, much of this was made possible by the selection of the building committee that gave generously of its time and energy, a committee that was devoted to the task given to it by the consistory and the congregation.



Confronted with difficulties that at times seemed insurmountable they proceeded with the execution of their mandate in prayer and faith that God would open the way for them so that they might complete the work set before them.

We also want to recognize the co-operation of the congregation as a whole. Many tradesmen of the church donated a sizable portion of the labor required resulting in the completion of a pleasant and pleasing building costing much less than the true value of the building.

In addition the congregation was helped in many ways by its friends in other Protestant Reformed churches and by several individuals and business firms in the Kalamazoo area who were glad to assist us in various ways.

The completion of our church edifice also opens up a new era for the congregation. Whether there will be a numerical growth in the future, we cannot say. From the human perspective, we expect to grow both from within and without. However numerical growth is hardly a good criterion for judging the condition of a congregation. In the new era before us we can however expect to grow in the favor and grace of God. Everything that we have in Kalamazoo is of the Lord and may He watch over us and keep us. Our duty in the new era before us is to keep our garments clean, to remember that we have been clothed with the righteousness of the Lord. We know that the edifice of wood and stone which is ours must perish eventually and that we must seek the eternal church whose Builder and Maker is God, and finally come to that blessed state of the redeemed whose shout of triumph is always "Ebenezer"!

Homer G. Kuiper.

GOD IS MY HELP

In joyous springtime's sunny days,
I have a happy little creed;
It blesses me in many ways—
"God is my help in every need."

In winter's ice and cold and snow,
In sorrow's hour, His love doth lead
It is a comfort still to know,
"God is my help in every need."

"God is my help in every need;"
What more shall I His bounty ask?
These words of truth my courage speed,
And give me strength for each new task.

—Selected.

Open Letter To Rev. Andrew Petter

Dear Brother,

The last issue of the *Concordia* brought to us your 27th installment on the subject of the *covenant*. I am a faithful reader of your articles. I find them interesting and thought-provoking. You write in a fresh style. You have your own way of putting things. This does not mean that I can always agree with you. Such is not the case. I find myself at odds, for example, with your last few articles. It is especially these articles that cause me to take up my pen to write you this open letter. I would like to discuss with you the content of these articles. They gave rise in my mind to questions, which I have need of revealing and herewith do so as trusting that you will be willing to entertain them and give reply. You must have realized when you penned those articles that from certain quarters there would be some reaction to what you wrote. However, what you have from my pen in this article is not to be taken as criticism. All I desire is discussion for the sake of the truth, which, I take it, is as dear to you as it is to me and to us all.

Let us turn first to your last article (XXVII). You write,

"And then it seems to me that if we remain strictly Reformed, without any Pelagianizing supposition of the natural man in some way being able to meet the *conditions* of the covenant, then we need not be afraid of speaking of *conditions*. (Italics supplied).

"I cannot see a great importance in the question, except as it leads us back to the question, 'What do we mean by the covenant?'"

"On the one hand the Scriptures plainly teach that there are conditions in connection with the covenant."

So you write; and then you go on to quote three texts in support of your contention that there are *conditions* in connection with the covenant. And you add that, to cite your own words, "We need not quote more passages for there are of course many more."

Can it be that these texts or any other text in the whole Bible teach what you say they do?—teach, namely, that God lets it be known to men that He will save His people *on the condition* that they believe? From the sequel of your article it appears that this is what you mean. You write, "The power to believe is wrought by the Lord. And so is the power to walk in sanctification and perseverance. But in these the creature partakes and acts consciously so that it becomes his act. He believes, he sanctifies himself (which, of

course, is very true and is being denied by no one in our circles. G.M.O.) "Dr. Schilder" you go on to say, "expressed this in his speeches among us by saying: 'There are no condition *for* the covenant but there are conditions *in* the covenant. God does not give the enjoyment of life to His people except under condition of faith and conversion'. (italics supplied). So Dr. Schilder. And so, too, you. For you quote Schilder here with approval. But is this teaching of Dr. Schilder—a teaching that you subscribe—true? I mean, of course, the teaching that God saves His people *on the condition* that they believe? I am persuaded that it is not true.

Allow me to set forth what I believe to be the truth of God's word on this point. And then the first question that confronts us is: What meaning does the dictionary give to the term *condition* when occurring in such conditional sentences as: the Lord saves His people on the *condition* that they believe. What is the *idea* of the concept *condition* in that connection? Let us turn to my dictionary. I have a good one here at my elbow; it's The Century Dictionary, an Encyclopedia Lexicon of the English language, a work of ten volumes of microscopic print with each volume measuring 10-12-2½ inches and weighing seven pounds and two ounces. Not that it's good just because of its size and weight and bulk. But it's a good dictionary. It was prepared under the superintendence of William Dwight Whitney, Ph. D., LL. D., professor of comparative philology and sanskrit in Yale University.

Some one may say: Why go to the English dictionary for the meaning of the term *condition*. Why not go to the Bible for the meaning of that term and consult our Hebrew and Greek lexicons. Here is my reply. What I am here confronted with in the first instance is not the Scriptures but a doctrinal statement of Rev. A. Petter made in the English language. So my first task is to concentrate on that proposition of Rev. Peter with a view to ascertaining its meaning. And this places me under the necessity of investigating the sense and meaning of the English words of his proposition, definitely of the English word *condition*. For the definition of this word I must turn not the Bible nor to the Hebrew and the Greek lexicons but to the English dictionary. That stands to reason. Having learned the meaning of Rev. Petter's proposition, I go with it to the Scriptures to determine whether the doctrine is contained in Holy Writ. This is the correct order, don't you think?

Now, then, the word *condition* (quoting my dictionary): "either as a term of philosophy or of common life, it means that on which something is contingent, or more definitely which being given, something else can exist or take place. I promise to do something on condition that you do something else; that is, if you do this, I will do that; if not, I will do as I please."

Let us take notice. A *condition* is that on which something is *contingent*. So says my dictionary. Applying this definition to the proposition that God saves His people on the *condition* that they believe, we get this: The faith of God's people, conceived of as a *condition*, is that on which salvation as a work of God is *contingent*. The word *contingent* is all important for our present study. If we want to know what is characteristic of faith as a *condition*, we must attend to the meaning of the word *contingent*. Let us then turn to the dictionary once more for the definition of the word *contingent*.

"Contingent:—Not existing or occurring through necessity; due to chance or to a free agent; accidentally existing or true; without a known or apparent cause or reason, or caused by something which would not in every case appear; dependent upon the will of a human being, or finite free agent; dependent upon a foreseen possibility; provisionally liable to exist, happen, or take effect in the future; hence, something that may or may not occur; conditional."

So speaks the dictionary. What now do the sum and total of the expressions that form that definition spell? They spell *uncertainty*, don't they? This is self-evident. Anything that may or may not occur is uncertain. So that *something*—here salvation as a work of God—that is dependent on faith as a condition, contingent on the will of a human being, or finite agent. It is characterized by *uncertainty*. And that, too, must of necessity characterize the faith of God's people as a condition, on which that *something*—salvation as a work of God—is contingent. The faith of God's people as a condition is *uncertain*. It may or may not occur and if and when occurring, it may or may not abide. Just because faith as a condition is uncertain, salvation as a work of God, contingent on such faith, is *uncertain*. In fine the characteristic of faith as a *condition* is *uncertainty*. It may or may not occur.

And what must that needs imply? The following: 1) Whether a man believes is solely dependent on his own sovereign capricious, and arbitrary will. 2) Hence, faith is not of God; it is of man. 3) Like the creature, God is limited in His power and knowledge and stands helpless over against man's unbelief.

It is plain that in the proposition, "God saves His people *on the condition* that they believe," that is, "Salvation as a work of God is *contingent* on the faith of the believer," we deal with a heresy of the first magnitude, destructive conceptionally of God and of all true religion.

Isn't it plain, brother, that the term, *condition*, as a sentence-element in the proposition, "God saves His people on the *condition* that they believe," is a dangerous one. It doesn't fit in the thought-structure of the Reformed theologian. It has place only in the per-

verted system of theology hatched out by Pelagius and Arminius. Should not the statement, "Salvation as a work of God is *contingent* on a man's faith as a condition, on his willingness to believe," make as to consider? Why defend such a statement? For that precisely, according to the very form of the words, is the phraseology that the Arminian uses to set forth his heretical idea that faith is of man and not of God. There is no other language in which to express such an idea. Why employ such terminology in discoursing on the truth? Not certainly because of the poverty of the English language. There are other terms, certainly. The Scriptures present faith to us as a means, as God's means, for saving His people. So Paul. He says not, "By grace are ye saved on the *condition* that ye believe," but, "By grace are ye saved through faith" (Eph. 3:8). Why should we exchange God's way of saying things for a heretical terminology? Why should we try to discourse on Reformed theology in the terminology of Pelagius and Arminius? It simply can't be done. What is there to be gained by such a doing? Nothing at all, as far as I can see. Absolutely nothing. And there is everything to lose. We all know how Satan works. He first smuggles in the terms, as satisfied that his lies will follow. Why play with fire?

It is true. You state in your article that, quoting your piece, "If we remain strictly Reformed, without any Pelagianizing supposition of the natural man in some way being able to *meet the conditions* (italics supplied) of the covenant, then we need not be afraid of speaking of conditions in the covenant. . . . They, (the remonstrants) taught that in the last analysis God depended on the fulfillment of these conditions. . . . (But) God Himself has set these conditions indeed, but He has also provided for the fulfillment of them. He has given to His own the power to fulfil them."

Allow me to reply to this. First, that God gives unto His people the power to believe is denied by none among us. The denial of such a truth and fact is atheistic. The sole point at issue is whether the *requirement of faith is a condition on which* salvation as a work of God is *contingent*. Second, implicit in those lines of yours last quoted is the admission that the term in question—*conditions*, always of course as a sentence element in your proposition—is in use among the Arminians. Had you only gotten before your mind the reason of its employment by the Arminians! As has already been pointed out, the reason is that they have real need of the term. It has a place in their thought-structure. This, it seems to me, should make you want to avoid the term like a plague. But it doesn't. "We need not be afraid of the term," you say, "if only we cleave to the truth and fact that "God and not man fulfills the *condition*." Indeed, but what are you doing? It seems to me that what you are doing is verily this: You give to the word *condition*, as a sen-

tence element in the proposition, "God saves His people on the condition that they believe," a sense and meaning that is wholly and absolutely contrary and thus diametrically opposed, to the *sense* and *meaning* that the term has in the dictionary and in the vocabulary of men. As we have seen, the dictionary defines a *condition* as follows:

1) That on which something is contingent; 2) hence, uncertain.

But your definition of the term (condition) reads: 1) That (here the faith of God's people as a condition) which is fulfilled by that very something (here the will of God; salvation as a work of God) contingent on it, that is, contingent on the faith of God's people as a condition; hence, 2) absolute certainty.

Isn't it true, then, that in your definition the concept *condition* is absolutely contrary to the meaning that the term has in the dictionary? Besides, your definition of a condition is characterized by inner conflict; it is illogical, self-destructive, and on this account not true. Let us look at your definition once more. It states that God, salvation as a work of God, fulfills the condition (the faith of God's people as a requirement) and that it is at once contingent, *dependent*, on faith as a condition. But that is impossible. Both cannot be true. That I have correctly stated your definition of the term *condition* is as plain as can be. You call faith a *condition*, which is equivalent to saying that faith as a *condition* is that on which something (the will of God) is contingent. At the same time you say that faith as a condition is fulfilled by God. So there you are.

It seems to me than, brother, that you will have to do one of two: 1) either stop saying that salvation as a work of God is contingent on the faith of God's people, and if you do that, you deny, of course that faith is a condition, and that you do not want to deny, of course; 2) or stop saying that faith as a condition is fulfilled by God, something you don't want to do either. So what are you going to do now, brother? Of course, I am taking the term *condition* according to the meaning that it has in the dictionary.

But the principal point that I am arguing is that your definition of the term *condition* is absolutely contrary to the meaning that it has in the dictionary.

Now it seems to me that it is very wrong and dangerous to discourse on the truth as using our words in a sense that is contrary to their fixed and accepted meanings—the meaning that they have in the dictionary. I am sure that you will agree. Allow me to put some questions in this connection.

1) Did the Holy Spirit do that in preparing for the Church the Scriptures? Can we cite one example? Does, to illustrate, the word *hot* mean *hot* in the Scriptures, in the Hebrew and Greek Bibles, but *cold* in these same languages as spoken by the Jews and the

Greeks? How could we know what God is talking about in Holy Writ were such the case? Did God who made languages deal with words in that way in communicating to man the thoughts of His heart? If faith has God as its author how can it be a *condition* in the fixed and accepted sense of that term? Impossible.

2. To say, "faith is of God and not of man," and then to set it forth as a *condition* on which salvation as a work of God is contingent is like saying that there are such things as finite-infinitudes and certain-uncertainties. In a word, condition — faith — taking that word condition now in its accepted sense—is verily a contradiction in terms. There is no such thing.

3) Isn't it true that by the employment of such a method of dealing with words, one can make the Bible say anything, absolutely anything? By the employment of such a method of dealing with words I can even make the Bible teach that Satan is a creature of virtue. All I do is to strip the words *evil*, *sinful*, *corrupt*, *depraved* of the meanings that they have in the dictionary and define them as *virtue*. There is nothing to it. It's as simple as that. Don't you see how true it is, how absolutely true, that by the employment of such a method of dealing with words I can make the Bible say anything under the sun, and smuggle into the church any heresy under heaven?

True it is that human, earthy language, as employed by the Holy Spirit in the preparation of the Scripture took on a meaning unspeakably richer than the meaning that these languages would have had had they not been thus employed. The Bible reveals the heavenly by human, earthy language. It thus forms the glass in which we behold, be it darkly, the heavenly. Here the words of our human languages are the symbols of the things above. But surely their primary meanings were not lost or changed into their direct opposite. Christ said, "I am the bread of life." But as in every man's dictionary, the word bread here still signifies bread, doesn't it, and not a stone or a scorpion.

4) You may say: But I am using that term *condition* in a good sense, that is, in the sense that the term has in my own private vocabulary formed of words of my own coining. But allow me to ask: What guarantee can you give that the word *condition*, as you define it, that your proposition, as laid upon the lips of our people by its teachers and preachers, will continue to be used in the sense that you give it? You can give no guarantee. Then I repeat: Why employ such terminology? Why play with fire? Not that it is wrong to coin a new term. It's because new terms are continually being coined that languages grow. But that is not the point here. The point is whether we should use terms in a sense that is diametrically opposed to their fixed, current, and accepted meanings,

especially if the term, like the term *condition*, as a sentence element in your proposition, has an evil connotation in the dictionary. Why do this, if there is absolutely no reason, no necessity, for it?

5) But I have still other questions. Faith as a condition is provisional. It doesn't exist as an actuality. How then can God save His people—I have reference to the actual process of His saving them—on the *condition* that they believe. It seems to me that to make that proposition yield some sense, we should make it read: "God saves His people through their faith on the condition that they originate and continue to originate faith in them." No, you say, not on the condition that they originate faith in them, but on the condition that He give them power to believe. But according to the dictionary, a *condition* is that on which something is contingent. And a contingency, according to the dictionary, is something accidental, something that may or may not occur. What then is the contingency here? Is it God's counsel? But is God's counsel an accident? Something that may or may not occur or be executed? Is God then unable or unwilling to do all His goodpleasure?

6) My next question. I come upon this paragraph in your article, "He (Dr. Schilder) says that God is not bound to a condition but He does bind man. To me the question remains whether it is true that God is not bound by conditions, namely, those which He set for Himself. He cannot deny Himself. He hath sworn and will not repent, etc." According to the meaning that words have in the dictionary, what you say here, it seems to me, is this, "God must adapt Himself to the sovereign, capricious, arbitrary volitions of man's morally free will."

7) My next question. You also write, "This confession, this testimony, this adoration, this ascription of praise to God as a Fountain of all that is good for the creature, his health's eternal spring, is exactly brought out in the conditional nature of the promises of God's covenant. The very nature of the goods of the covenant require this conditional manner of receiving and enjoyment."

Can that be true? Let us see. According to the meaning that words have in the dictionary, a conditional promise of God is one that is contingent on the willingness of man to originate faith in him. How can such a promise "exactly bring out. . . this confession, this testimony, this adoration, this ascription of praise to God." To me it makes no sense, absolutely no sense. I do wish you would shed some light on that teaching of yours and also on the teaching contained in the following paragraph from your pen." The appropriation of these goods of salvation are by faith as a condition. This faith is pictured to us in many ways in the Bible. It is pictured as a hungering and thirsting, as a longing and pining, as a seeking and

searching, as a pleading and crying." After who? After God? But then I have a question. How can such a conditional faith—a faith that man himself originates—pine after God if, according to the Scriptures, all that man can produce out of himself is corruption? Of course you understand that I am again using my words according to the meaning that they have in the dictionary.

7) You write, too, "How different from this are the implications of the conditions we find in the texts quoted above. In these texts we find these conditions to be in themselves great acts of spiritual life, seeking with the whole heart, calling on the name of Jehovah, confessing sin, etc." You speak of conditions as being great acts of spiritual life. But how in the point of view of logic can a condition be an act? As soon as there is action the condition is fulfilled and is no more. And how, if the act is of man, which it is if he is saved on the condition that he believes—can it be a great act of spiritual life? All that man can produce out of himself is corruption. I repeat. I am again using my words according to the meaning that they have in the dictionary.

Yes, indeed, you quoted three texts and referred to another without quoting it to show that it is also the teaching of the Bible that God saves His people on the condition that they believe, that, in other words, salvation as a work of God is contingent on man's faith as a condition. But you, yourself tell your readers that these texts teach no such thing. Allow me to quote you once again, "On the one hand the Scriptures plainly teach that there are conditions in connection with the covenant. As an example I may give Jer-29:13, 'Ye shall seek me and find me when ye seek me with your whole heart.' Or again, 'Seek ye the Lord (or 'in the way') he may be found, call ye upon him while (in the way') he is near, let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts and let him return unto the Lord and he will have mercy and pardon.' Isa. 55:6). You notice that you insert in the verse which you quoted last the parenthesis 'in the way'. What you said by that *doing* is verily this, "The word *condition* is not found in the text. And it is as you say (by your doing). For, certainly, the expression 'in the way' is not the equivalent of the word *condition*, according to the meaning that this term has in the dictionary. And so it is with the other texts that you quote. So it is with that text with the conjunction *if* in it. (1 Chron. 28:8). That word *if* does not mean *condition* in the fixed and accepted sense of this term. Also this *if* means "through", "by", "in the way of". So you see what you really did is to prove the very opposite from what you imagined you were proving. How could the Bible anywhere teach what you say it teaches?

Reading your article there is something that struck

me as being very strange. It is this: At the beginning of your article you write, "I cannot see a great importance in the question, "—you mean the question of the use of the term *condition*—"except as it leads us back to the question, 'What is the covenant?' " You mean then that it is not an important question *by itself*. Yet, at the same time you devote your entire article to eulogizing the term and recommending the use of it to our people. At the close of your article you even write, "From this it may appear that we have no quarrel with the idea of conditions in the covenant, if they are negatively guarded against Arminian and Pelagian falsification, and positively seen in their spiritual necessity and beauty." I have a question. If, according to your way of thinking, *conditions* in the covenant are *necessary* and *beautiful*, how could you write, "I cannot see a great importance in the question," and why did you write that? Conditions in the covenant necessary and beautiful? I wonder. Fact is that as I see it conditions in the covenant are destructive of the covenant. I again repeat that I am using the term *condition* according to the sense that it had in the dictionary. And therefore I see great importance in the question. For me it is fundamentally a question of whether we as a communion of truly reformed churches are to be or not to be.

I am going to show you now that you fully agree with all my criticism of the term *condition* as a sentence element in your proposition, "God saves His people on the condition that they believe." You write, "And then it seems to me that if we remain strictly reformed, without any Pelagianizing supposition of the natural man in some way being able to meet the conditions of the covenant, then we need not be afraid of speaking of conditions." And again, "From this it may appear that we have no quarrel with the idea of conditions in the covenant, if they are negatively guarded against Arminian and Pelagian falsification." What you say here really comes down to this: We need not be afraid of speaking of conditions, if only we guard against using that term according to the meaning that it has in the dictionary. But you see, brother, here exactly is where the danger comes in. People are not going to use that term *condition* according to the meaning that it has in your private vocabulary formed of words of your own coining, but according to the meaning that it has in the dictionary. And if they do that, we are lost.

A closing remark. I say again, What I have penned in this article is not to be taken as criticism. All I desire is discussion here in the Standard Bearer. It is true, I do express myself rather positively. But that has at least this virtue that you know now exactly what I mean and think and believe especially so because, as far as I am aware, I have been using my words according to the meaning that they have in the dictionary.

I really do hope that you will thoughtfully examine my argument and give reply. You may call my argument anything you like—abject nonsense, sophistry, it makes no difference—providing you do one thing; make plain that your characterizations are true.

There is really considerable more in your recent article that I feel constrained to discuss with you. Especially your contention that we should speak of parties in the covenant instead of parts. Here, too, I radically disagree with you. Then, too, you do wrong, as I see it, in setting Dr. Schilder apart from his liberated brethren in the Netherlands as if he and they are not doctrinally one with respect to the covenant, the baptismal form and the question whether the promise is only unto the elect or unto all. But these are matters that can be attended to later.

But how about the "if" sentences in the Bible, declarations such as these: "And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God. . . . that the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth;" Deut. 28:1, 2. There are many more such texts in the Bible. But doesn't the "if" in all such texts plainly mean *condition*? They do not, certainly. The word "if" in all such passages is not just another word for *condition*. The Hebrew and Greek equivalents for "if" do not always mean *condition*. But about this in the next issue.

And so I remain fraternally yours.

G. M. Ophoff.

SION'S ZANGEN

Eeuwige Goedertierenheid

(Psalm 107; Slot)

Het is de goedertierenheid des Heeren die Gods volk uit al hunne ellenden verlost. Keer op keer hebben we dit mogen opmerken in den psalm die ons bezighoudt. Ze riepen tot den Heere uit woestijnen en wildernissen, en Hij verhoorde hen; vanuit de gevangenis en Hij brak de deuren en hiew de ijzeren grendelen in stukken.

Daarom wordt Gods volk keer op keer in dezen psalm opgeroepen om den Heere vanwege Zijn eeuwige goedertierenheid te loven en te prijzen.

De vorige maal sloten we met zulk een oproep, en het eerste vers dat we moeten behandelen, behoort eigenlijk bij dien oproep: ". . . en dat zij lofofferen offeren, en met gejuich Zijne werken vertellen." (vers 22).

Een lofoffer is den Heere zeer aangenaam. In den letterlijken zin genomen kunt ge de voorschriften

voor lofoffers, onder meer, lezen in Lev. 7. Maar in dit verband is de beteekenis van een lofoffer, dat men zich geheel en al den Heere wijdt in lof en dank voor Zijn aangezicht. Dat blijkt ook uit het tweede deel van het vers: Men zal met gejuich Zijne werken vertellen.

En waar zullen we beginnen, en waar zullen wij eindigen met zulk een lofoffer? Des Heeren werken omringen U; zijn in het midden van U. En als we in de juiste verhouding tot den Werker staan, dan zingt, dan juicht men. Maar zoo menigvuldig zijn die werken Gods, dat we er nooit mee klaar komen. Dat juichen hier op aarde zal overgaan in den jubel des geluks aan de andere zijde der rivier. Een groot schouwspel van de jubelende schare die tot in alle eeuwigheid zal zingen van Gods goedertierenheden.

Maar ge moet er mee beginnen op aarde.

Zingt dan Uw lofoffers den Heere! Vertelt Zijne werken! Het is een begin van een werk, dat voort zal gaan tot in alle eeuwigheid.

"Die met schepen ter zee afvaren, handel doende op groote wateren, die zien de werken des Heeren, en Zijne wonderwerken in de diepte. Als Hij spreekt, zoo doet Hij eenen stormwind opstaan, die hare golven omhoog verheft. Zij rijzen op naar den hemel, zij dalen neder tot in de afgronden; hunne ziel versmelt van angst; zij dansen en waggelen als een dronken man, en al hunne wijsheid wordt verslonden."

Wat een sprekend beeld van groote angst en benauwdheid!

Met moet een storm op zee meegemaakt hebben, om hier eenigzins de diepte van ellende te peilen.

De groote wateren! Zij zijn majestieus, maar ook verschrikkelijk, als zij beginnen te koken.

Eerst was alles kalm en stil, en de groote wateren waren als een spiegel zoo vlak. Doch de Heere komt met Zijn geweldige stormwind, en alles verandert. De groote wateren verheffen zich tot den hemel toe om straks weer neer te dalen, zoodat de afgronden gezien worden. En dan versmelten de zielen van angst.

Er is dan geen gewone regelmaat meer: de wateren gelijken een dronken man, want zij waggelen en dansen daarhenen. En op die ruggen der wateren wordt het scheepke heen en weder geslingerd. Waarlijk waar: in zulke oogenblikken versmelt de ziel des menschen. Men wordt zeer bang, want aller menschen wijsheid wordt verlonden. O ja, we zijn wijs, want we rekenen met stormen en rukwinden, met hoge golven en stroomen van water. Maar als de stormen komen en het schip heen en weer geslingerd wordt, dan vergaat de wijsheid. En duizende schepen werden opgeslokt door de groote wateren van God. De zee is een zeemansgraf. We lezen van den grooten dag des Heeren, dat ook de zee haar dooden weer zal geven.

Maar hier lezen we van kinderen Gods.

En daarom hooren we: "Doch roepende tot den Heere in de benauwdheid die ze hadden, zoo voerde Hij ze uit hunne angsten: Hij doet den storm stilstaan, zoodat hunne golven stilzwijgen."

God bracht den storm; het is ook God die een groote stilte brengt. Ge kunt U levendig voorstellen hoe wonderlijk het die kinderen Gods te moede was bij het zien van zoo groote verandering.

En daarom: "dan zijn zij verblijd, omdat zij gestild zijn, en dat Hij ze tot de have hunner begeerte geleid heeft."

Men bevoer de zee met een doel. Het schip was zwaar beladen, en plannen waren gemaakt om dan en dan, daar en daar aan te landen. Men had zijn veilige haven voor oogen. Maar men dacht niet zoo aan den storm. En als men dan verlost wordt van de vrees-aanjangende vloed, ja, dan kan men verstaan de blijdschap van dit volk. Men had zich duizend maal onder zien gaan in de groote wateren; maar Hij hoorde en verhoorde hunne bede. En straks glijdt men de begeerde haven binnen.

"Laat ze voor den Heere Zijne goedertierenheid loven, en Zijne wonderwerken voor de kinderen der menschen, en Hem verhoogen in de gemeente des volks, en in het gestoelte der oudsten Hem roemen."

Dat was ook Gods doel met die angstaanjagende golven.

God doet alles met een zeker doel.

Zoo ook met die vloed en stormen op zee.

Hij wil, dat wij aan Hem denken. En aan Hem denkende, zingen van blijdschap.

Het was Zijn groote goedertierenheid, dat zij niet vergingen in het natte graf op zee. Het was Zijn zuchten om hen te zegenen.

En daarom gaat dit volk aan 't zingen zoodra zij in de gemeente van het volk vergaderen. In het midden van die gemeente vragen en ontvangen zij het woord. En zij zijn aan 't loven gegaan.

Zij hebben het verkregen woord in den mond der oudsten gelegd. En die oudsten zullen nu in naam van de gansche gemeente den Heere loven voor Zijn groote liefde aan het volk dat de zee bevoer bewezen, en uit grooten nood bevrijd wierd.

"Hij stelt de rivieren tot een woestijn, en watertochten tot een dorstig land: het vruchtbaar land tot zouten grond, om de boosheid dergenen die daarin wonen."

Hoe geheel anders zien wij het gebeuren der dingen dan het volk waarop de Heere vergramd is tot in eeuwigheid.

Dat domme volk ziet ook het opdrogen der rivieren, het veranderd worden der eertijds vruchtbare akkers in woestijnen en wildernissen. Ze schrijven hun dikke boeken over wat nu Sahara is, doch vroeger een zeer vruchtbaar vlakke was. De bange verandering van het vruchtbaar tot het wilde en droge wordt overal ge-

zien. Doch dat het komt vanwege de boosheid van het volk, ter eener zijde; en dat God de dingen verandert, ter anderzijde, ziet, dat zien zij niet. Daar zijn ze blind voor: als mollen zoo blind.

Als wij inplaats van God te dienen in ootmoed en vreeze, in boosheid uitbarsten, dan duurt het niet lang of God komt om Zijn "zout" te strooien in onze vruchtbare akkers. Dan komt Hij met Zijn drooge en heete winden en ons vruchtbaar dal wordt een woestijn gelijk. God verandert het gelaat der aarde. Het is lang geleden, maar ik herinner mij ergens gelezen te hebben een boekje, dat die veranderingen signaleerde. Het is zeer vaak gebeurd.

En het is ook immers gebeurd in Palestina, het land dat eertijds overvloedig was van melk en honing?

Wordt boos voor Gods aangezicht, en God vloekt het land. En dan is er treuring in het land vanwege het vloeken des Heeren. Zie: Jes. 24:6 en Jer. 23:10.

Doch de Heere werkt soms ook net andersom: "Hij stelt de woestijn tot een waterpoel, en het dorre land tot watertochten; en Hij doet de hongerigen aldaar wonen, en zij stichten een stad ter woning en bezaaien akkers, en planten wijngaarden, die inkomende vrucht voortbrengen. En Hij zegent ze, zoodat zij zeer vermenigvuldigen, en hun vee vermindert Hij niet."

Hier hebt ge een beschrijving van het volk, dat naar Zijn klanken hoort. Wat lieflijk beeld wordt ons hier gemaald! Het doet mij denken aan Gods werk tegenover Jozef aan het hof van Farao: De Heere zegende het huis van Farao om Jozef's wil.

Zoo was het in het Oude Testament ten overstaan van Gods volk. Als zij in des Heeren wegen wandelden dan zou de Heere de aarde rijkelijks zegenen, en dan zouden zij zeer voorspoedig zijn. Doch als zij den Heere vergaten zoo zou Hij met Zijn vloek komen, en dan zou vervuld worden alle vloeken die Mozes hun voorspeld had bij zoo groote boosheid.

Maar zoo is het nu niet meer. De uitwendige voorspoed voor Israel in het land der belofte was beeld van den geestelijken voorspoed van het huidige Israel wandelende in de vreeze des Heeren.

Nu gebeurt het heel vaak, dat Gods volk trouw is in zijn wandel, doch te kampen heeft met groote smart en ellende voor het uitwendige leven. Terwijl slordige Christenen soms veel meer hebben in het natuurlijke dan voorzichtige Christenen die het nauw met den dienst des Heeren nemen.

Nu verder.

"Daarna verminderen zij, en komen te onder door verdrukking, kwaad en droefenis. Hij stort verachting uit over de Prinsen, en doet ze dwalen in het woeste waar geen weg is."

Het lieflijke beeld van zooeven verandert en het wordt weer benauwd. En hoewel het er niet bijstaat, is het toch wel duidelijk, dat dit volk weer uitbrak in

rebellie en boosheid. En dan kwam de slaande hand Gods.

En Hij beschikt over duizende middelen om te straffen.

Hier worden opgesomd verdrukking, kwaad en droefenis.

Van dat eerste leest ge keer op keer in de Richteren. Men wordt haast moede van die opsomming: men vreesde God en had vrede; men vergat God en Hij bracht den heiden die hen onderdrukte; men riep tot God en Hij verlostte door een richter; en men had vrede. En dan begon het opnieuw: rebellie, verdrukking, roepen tot God, verhooring, en vrede.

Wordt men verdrukt, dan volgt het kwade. De vijanden die ons onderdrukken op des Heeren bevel, springen niet zachtzinnig om met de verwonnenen. O neen. Dan komt men om te slaan, te striemen en te wonden. En dan is het kwaad.

En als men genoeg van het kwade geproefd heeft, dan volgt die andere smart: de droefenis.

Droef te zijn is onnatuurlijk. Droef te zijn is principieel het smaken van den dood. In de hel is er weening en knersen der tanden. In tranen weg te smelten is bang.

Toch schijnt die droefenis van God gezonden te zijn tot kastijding, want we lezen verder: "Maar Hij brengt den nooddriftige uit de verdrukking in een hoog vertrek, en maakt de huisgezinnen als kudden."

Let er nu op, dat er tweeërlei volk is, want we lezen verder: "De oprechten zien het en zijn verblijd, maar alle ongerechtigheid stopt haren mond."

Tweeërlei volk: de oprechten en de ongerechtigheid. Let er op, dat de verworpenen niet eens een naam ontvangen. Tezamen worden zij genoemd: de ongerechtigheid.

O ja, Gods volk roept tot God vanuit de droefenis. En Hij hoort hun geschrei.

Want Hij brengt den nooddriftige uit de verdrukking!

De nooddriftige! Want een schoone naam om Gods volk mee te noemen!

De nooddriftige is de man die geleerd heeft, dat hij het leven niet in zijn eigen hand kan vinden. Aan alle kanten merkt hij, dat hij stijl afhankelijk is van God, vooral in alle zijne nooden en smarten.

En dan roept hij.

En dan komen de eeuwige armen om hem op te tillen en te zetten in een hoog vertrek. Dat vertrek is zoo hoog, dat de vijanden hem niet bereiken.

Het hoog vertrek. Uiteindelijk is het de hemel daar boven bij God.

Het hoog vertrek: het is ook Christus Jezus, in Wien wij veilig zijn.

En als God Zijn volk zoo leidt, dan zien zij het en noemen zichzelf zalig. Zij zien het en worden verblijd. Dan wordt weer vervuld, waar gij zoo vaak

van zingt: Men hoort der vromen tent weergalmen van hulp en heil

Maar de ongerechtigheid stopt haren mond!

Wat vreeselijke vloek voor dat volk.

Men heeft veel woorden. Hunne tong wandelt op de aarde. En hun mond tast zelfs den hemel aan. Maar als God Zijn volk bevrijdt dan is men stom. Als men moest zwijgen in schulderkennis, dan vloekt en raast men. Doch als men moest uitbreken in dank en lof, dan is men verstomd. *Mirabili visu!*

De oprechte is de man die van binnen en van buiten dezelfde is.

De ongerechtigheid is de kromme mensch der zonde. Daar overtreedt men het gebod Gods, en zegt: Wie zal het zien?

Maar hier komt de wijze! Luistert:

"Wie is wijs? die neme deze dingen waar; en dat zij verstandiglijk letten op de goedertierenheden des Heeren!"

Dit is het besluit.

We nemen leede afscheid van dezen lieflijken psalm.

Wijs? Wijs te zijn is om de beste wegen en middelen te gebruiken tot het bereiken van het hoogste doel. En dat hoogste doel is den lof des Heeren. Daarom werd Jezus door den Heiligen Geest genoemd: De kracht Gods en de wijsheid Gods. Het wijze en vestandige volk gebruikt Jezus tot den lof des Heeren.

En die Jezus is de verpersoonlijking der goedertierenheden des Heeren!

Korter uitgedrukt: Jezus is de zucht van den Drie-Eenigen God om U wel te doen!

Let dan verstandiglijk op Jezus!

G. Vos.

IN HIS FEAR

What Can We Do?

An imaginary case.

Several young people appear at the consistory.

To make confession of faith? No. They are confessing members, and very pious.

What brings them here is this: The minister had most excellently preached on Lord's Day XXI about the communion of saints and had emphasized that "everyone must know it his duty readily and cheerfully to use his gifts for the advantage and salvation of other members". The minister could not, of course, elaborate on every detail of this christian function.

But it was just those details that brought the young people here this evening.

So their problem was: exactly what does it mean in our congregation to practise this communion of saints? What does that mean to us and to all of us?

In short, they wanted to have the church interpret for them, in practical terms, how they may use their gifts unto the advantage of the other members.

The consistory had truly never been confronted with anything quite like this before. And the minister saw it was his duty to give these young people, of both sexes, an answer to their pious and urgent question.

An answer ought to be given.

Someone proposed that they should know by this time what the communion of saints means and what it means to use their gifts to the advantage and salvation of other members. But what of it if they should know it? They do not know it, and they must be assisted.

Generalities would not do. All were agreed on the Reformed truth which underlay the communion of saints. . . . what the young people wanted to know was how to interpret the communion of saints in terms of their every day life.

To give this answer was not so easy.

Should they approach it this way as to tell the young people exactly what work the church can do, and then leave it to them how they would take part in that work? If it is the duty of the church to preach the Gospel, is that then the duty of one or a few or is this the calling of all of them together? So that would need explanation.

One of the elder brethren remarked to the effect that the "work" of the church was being carried out by the elders, ministers and deacons. And that remark was to the point, indeed. But would that mean that just those few men were functioning and the rest look on. Each has his own appointed office, and God has set them in their places, and called them so that the one may not intrude into the work of the other. But have just those few a "calling" and the others none.

Another remarked that there were pianists and a janitor, but that "work" was being done. Hence the young people could have no part in this work now. All were doing thier work well and using their gifts to the advantage of the whole, and it were presumption on their part to intrude.

On that basis there was really not much that these young people could do. Or should they approach it this way that they ascertain what gifts each one had and then attempt to direct the use of that gift toward the welfare of the whole?

That would not do either.

Before there could be an answer given to these young people the consistory itself had to come to a united opinion.

Dogmatically they well understood that one of the priceless treasures handed down to us from the days of the Reformation was that of the Office of All Be-

lievers. In this office however they function not only toward within, but also toward without. That is, they stand in the office of all believers also in the home, the factory, the shop, everywhere where they confess their Lord. Surely Christ has instituted the special offices, elders and deacons, but Christ has also instituted the office of all believers. That was dogmatically sound. And it is good always to be dogmatically sound. But in practise things were not so sound. As far as the consciousness of the church was concerned the people figured that if the minister, the elders and the deacons functioned, there was little other work left. Besides that, in practise, the work was pretty well left to them also. Several people therefore functioned, the rest, well, really, what could they do?

It was just that thing which pressed for a solution.

One of the brethren proposed that perhaps the church could stand a few ushers. That was a solution. Or wasn't it?

No, that is not the solution.

There is danger here of becoming mechanical. The church is surely not a factory where men create jobs and other men apply. God forbid.

The communion of saints is the mystical union, with Christ, and then with one another. And the members are members of one body. The Body grows from within. Beware then, let's not become mechanical.

But now, let the consistory indicate plainly what the communion of saints means, and then tell these young people how they can use their gifts unto the end that the body may be edified.

What can they do?

It is difficult to tell them just what they can do.

It is splendid however that they want to function, and that must not be discouraged.

We could answer them, and say: if any of you feel the calling and have the gifts to become ministers, teachers, missionaries, Sunday school teachers, nurses, christian doctors, develop these gifts. Acquire the proper education and wait until the Lord calls you here or there. All the while that you do that, you are doing something, and actually using your gifts for the advantage and salvation of others. Doing something includes also preparing yourself for your life's service or calling. But this is the long-range view.

What about now and today?

What can we do for the edification of the brotherhood?

Can you do a day's work? Yes, all of you can do that. Isn't it a gift that you are capable of performing a day's work, of maintaining a family and bringing up that family in the fear of God. What would become of the church if you refused to have children, refused to raise families, refused to bring them up in the fear of the Lord. There at least is a task in which you can engage, and in fact you are already engaged.

And by your successful occupation you have something to contribute toward the cause of the church, something to give to the christian school, for the missions, and the poor. That you labor diligently, and bring the overflow of your gratitude to the collection plate; isn't that the communion of saints in practice?

And isn't it edifying for the church to see you and your family in church every Sunday with unfailing regularity. We assure you that regular attendance at the services and consecrated interest in what is preached are two things which help immeasurably for the edification of all the brethren.

It helps the Men's Society when you are present there and when you take part in their activity. The more of you that are present and the more of you that take part, the more all are edified.

Can you pray? Pray for one another.

Can you confess your faults one to another, then James says: do that.

Can you sing? If you can't you can learn it. And sing when you are in church, sing then with others, sing with the family.

What can we do?

The field is still larger than we have indicated.

You may also make it your work to find that still larger field.

M. Gritters.

PERISCOPE

NEWS FLASHES

The first Protestant Reformed Church in Canada will have been organized, the Lord willing, in Hamilton, Ontario, on the evening of April 19. The entire Mission Committee planned to be present on this notable occasion and we expect a detailed account of the event to be forthcoming.—The Rev. A. Cammenga has returned from a four-week stay of labor in Canada. Rev. Knott, who had supplied the pulpit at Hull, Iowa during their pastor's absence, has returned to Grand Rapids with his family.—The First Church in Grand Rapids has been very gracious and generous in cooperating with the work in Canada. Following Rev. Cammenga's return, Rev. De Wolf spent two weeks in Canada and at present Rev. C. Hanko is laboring there for a period of four weeks.—The Rev. J. De Jong, of our Creston Church in Grand Rapids, is looking forward to a trip to the Netherlands. He plans to sail from New York on May 20, the Lord willing, and will return sometime in August. Most of his relatives, whom he greatly

desires to see, are still living in the Netherlands. May he experience a prosperous journey with the Lord's blessing.—We extend our sincere Christian sympathy to the Rev. and Mrs. J. Howerzyl. Mrs. Howerzyl's father died recently following a lingering illness. It came at an especially difficult time since in order to attend the funeral it was necessary that Rev. Howerzyl be absent from his congregation on both Good Friday and Easter Sunday. Through cooperation of his own consistory at Oskaloosa and the Rev. M. Gritters of Pella, the necessary arrangements were made that they could attend the funeral in Michigan. May the Lord comfort them with His grace.—The work continues slowly here in the far north-west with regular services twice each Sunday in Sumas and occasional week-day meetings on the special days we celebrate at this time of year. We expect to return to Grand Rapids the latter part of this month to confer with the Mission Committee and attend the sessions of Synod.

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Earthquake

We have often read and sung the words of Psalm 46 and thought about them. Especially the phrase: "we will not fear tho' earth be moved. . . . although the mountains quake and earth's foundations shake". Now on April 13 we experienced this mighty speech of God, when a comparatively severe shock moved the earth's foundations and caused the mountains to quake in this area of the North-west. Although there was no damage in this immediate vicinity, it was distinctly felt while the tremors lasted almost a complete minute. Perhaps, that doesn't seem like a very long period, but just sit still for one minute and watch the second hand move around the face of the clock while you imagine that everything is shaking and moving and trembling!

The strange thing about an earthquake is, that one seems to sense and know immediately that it is an earthquake. We were just seated for our noon meal and about to ask a blessing when the shaking began. Both my wife and I looked at each other, and said: "Earthquake"!, and then sat speechless for several seconds feeling the movement of all things, hearing the windows and doors rattle and watching the blinds and other articles swing and sway. That it was of some duration, is evidenced by the fact that we were able to get up and walk out of doors and still feel perceptible movement when we had reached the back porch. It is truly a soul-stirring experience when the so-solid seeming earth begins to roll and heave. One begins to realize a bit of the expression of the psalmist's faith when he proclaims: God is our refuge and strength!

It is striking how quickly man begins to "shout" in answer to a mighty speech of God. About 5 or 10

minutes after it had occurred the radio was already giving a rather detailed account. (It is interesting that a Canadian station was the first to have rather accurate news, almost while the quake was still in progress. It seemed that the American stations in the vicinity, had paused to catch their breath and consequently were 10 and 15 minutes later with reports). But all that afternoon and evening *men* were busy "shouting" about the work of God. "Expert" opinions were offered and "scientific explanations" were given, "great" men and "professors" were interviewed to "tell all about it". But not once did we hear God mentioned. And while the reports of casualties and damage were being broadcast announcers were urging the populace to remain calm and go about as usual, while wild rumors of greater shocks to come, kept disturbing their "peace". And yet, at the same time, all had to admit that no one could determine or predict when a quake would strike. When God speaks, mere men can only listen!

As always this speech of God too, is soon forgotten and goes unheeded. It remains for the few to proclaim: That Thy name is great Thy wondrous works declare!

* * * *

Footnotes Of History

In the article dealing with Reformed Church life in Canada, by the Rev. P. De Koekoek, upon which we commented last time, we also read the following statement: "Neither our Christian Reformed leaders in Canada, nor our church membership in general, are wrapped up in disputations about the fine shadings of Reformed doctrine." This, according to the writer, was supposed to account for the fusion of various elements into peaceful congregational harmony in the Christian Reformed Church in Canada. As we read it we wondered whether this is really as virtuous as it may appear. Compromise may bring organizational unity but it will never satisfy the Truth.

It also struck us again, that though in 1924 "fine shadings" (?) were used to depose office-bearers and cause a denominational split, now they are forgotten and happily neglected. For the sake of external growth and prosperity, perhaps? It also served to recall how quickly and conveniently the testimony and lessons of history are forgotten. As we read, our thoughts turned instinctively to the Fathers of Dordt and the great Synod of 1618-19. To establish the *exact* color of *distinctive* Reformed Truth these Fathers formulated 59 articles clearly positing the Truth over-against "fine shadings" of Arminian error. And that no question might remain as to their *precise* meaning they added 54 more articles rejecting the many subtle errors of these Remonstrants. A Church which is

called Reformed should appreciate, rather than disparage, exactions of the Truth.

Another instance of this same convenient disregard and forgetfulness of one's own history comes to mind. Leaders in the Christian Reformed Church have often said of us as Churches (and we have also heard that same charge here again) that we do not do mission work; in fact, that we "do not believe" in foreign mission activity. It is not our purpose now to refute these statements and point out their untruth but rather to recall again a bit of history. It is well that we know these things and bring them to the attention of those who so charge us.

The history of the Christian Reformed Church reveals that it was not until almost 25 years after their separate existence as a denomination that any official missionary activity was pursued or that an official and regular Home Mission Committee was appointed. Further, it was not until 6 years later than this, or almost 30 years after their organization, that any regularity was established in this work by the Christian Reformed Church. And during that period that Church was almost twice as large as our present denomination. It is true, that during the intervening years various ministers went out from time to time, much as our own men have done in our early years. Strikingly, these early Christian Reformed ministers also labored among those closest to them in the Reformed Churches, and also among newly arrived immigrants from the Netherlands.

We learn further, that it was not until 1920 that the first foreign field was opened by the Christian Reformed denomination. At that time, by way of comparison, these Churches were already 53 years old and numbered 245 congregations of almost 100,000 souls. Sometimes these little vignettes of history are interesting and instructive. The factual details for the above are from "The Christian Reformed Church", a history, written by the late Dr. H. Beets.

W. Hofman.

IN MEMORIAM

The Consistory of the First Protestant Reformed Church hereby expresses its heartfelt sympathy to its brother-elder, William Stuursma in the loss of his brother,

MR. JACK STUURSMA

May the God of all mercy give grace according to need and pour balm into the wounds that He hath inflicted.

Consistory First Protestant Reformed Church,
Sidney De Young, Clerk.

Note:—The above obituary failed to appear in the previous issue due to the fact that it had been overlooked.