

# THE STANDARD

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## MEDITATION

### Beauty For Ashes

"To appoint unto them in Zion, to give unto them  
beauty for ashes. . . ."

Isaiah 61:3a.

In the beginning of the prophecies of Isaiah, he saw "a people that walked in darkness, a people dwelling in the shadow of death."

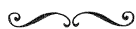
But that people saw a great light. They had begun to be very joyful before God's face, even as men rejoice when they divide the spoil.

And why all this rejoicing? Because that light would be so powerful as to break their yoke, destroy the staff that oppressed them, and splinter the rod of their oppression.

What is that light?

This: "A child, a Son with the government upon His shoulders". And He had a most wonderful name: "Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace!" I must work here with capital letters, for the Person bearing these exalted names is God of God!

And in the chapter from which my text is taken for this meditation He appears before the wondering eyes of the Church of all the ages. Listen to Him: He will show His credentials: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon He!" And: "to . . . give beauty for ashes"!



Beauty for ashes!

Ashes! Imagery for that which is powerless and entirely nerveless. It is imagery for that which has lost all resistance, which is without animation. It is the consumed, that which is gone out, the chilled, that which is absolutely gone, it is imagery for the dead!

And beauty?

Beauty, especially according to the original, is adornment, and as such it is the exact opposite of ashes. The first is object of abhorrence. There is terrible speech in ashes. And the other is object of adoration and ecstasy.

Beauty is the figure in this connection of pomp, splendour and magnificence. Adornment is that which is added to the beautiful. It is gold and silver and very precious stones. Adornment is the string of pearls and the sparkling rubies. Adornment is the apparel of silk and purple and fine linnen. It is the figure of the costliest and the most beautiful and attractive, of that which is the most splendid imaginable.

And now comes the question: But what is the signification of both in Holy Writ, in this particular place in Isaiah?

The attempt to find the signification of both terms is not difficult, especially when we remember that the Wonder Child is pictured as bringing to His people Israel this beauty for ashes.

If we let the light of the whole Bible fall upon this phrase, we see that ashes describe man, hung about and permeated wholly with death in its fullest signification. It is man, without resistance, entirely impotent unto any good and entirely inclined unto evil. It is man, powerless and nerveless. It is man, consumed, gone out, chilled, dead.

Ashes is man, the fallen race of men, the man of sin who would dare to raise his fist to the Almighty in heaven. They are the people that *sit* in darkness: they are at home in the atmosphere of devils; they are the people that *walk* in the shadow of death. They are under the yoke, the staff, the rod of the devil and his henchmen.

Ashes is imagery for God's own people too, as they are dead in sin and trespasses. Ashes describes your and my estates as we are by nature, dear reader!

Ashes was the condition of the people of Israel at the time of Isaiah's writing. Their condition was so characterized by ashes that they had to be sent into the

captivity of Babylon so that they might lose their ashes and be crowned with most wonderful adornment.



Beauty for ashes!

We know what ashes is, but what is meant with adornment? With beauty?

I will tell you at once: it is the most wonderful thing that man may ever taste for time and for eternity. It is the blessed covenant communion with the God of our salvation.

And how fitting that this Wonder Child should bring this beauty! How fitting, for it is He that earned every sparkle of it.

And you receive it all by His Holy Spirit.

And if you would ask me to enumerate the beauties of this covenant communion with the Triune God of your salvation, then I would speak, and sometimes sing, of regeneration, calling, conversion, faith, justification sanctification, glorification. Then I would like to speak of the eternal love of God. I would sing of the rubies of His lovingkindness and the pearls of His grace for you, poor sinner!

Oh, yes, beauty for ashes! The Wonder Child has oceans of beauty for Israel, for the Church, for the Elect of all the ages.

And, please note that it is beauty *for* ashes. In other words: the ashes disappear and in its place comes the beauty of covenant communion.

Beauty for ashes!

The godlessness of the natural man is taken away, and the beautiful, lovely, attractive son and daughter of Almighty God appear on the scene of history.

I know that there are many that will laugh at this statement, but you just let them laugh. It is the laugh of devils. And its fruit shall be shame and reproach when God will substantiate our appraisal of Jesus' work. Yes, they will point you to all the ashes that still cling to the church of Jesus, and they will say: Is that the city which is supposed to be a joy unto all the earth? The poor people do not see two things, things which you know and see with rejoicing. First, they do not see that all the ashes that remain after the visit of the Wonder Child are there against our will; and, second, that in Christ we are indeed entirely beautiful. We are so perfect and so beautiful in Christ that God Himself has said that He does not regard sin in Israel.

Oh, yes, you have received beauty for ashes!



Beauty for ashes!

Yes, I have already intimated who are to receive this boon of the Wonder Child, but for the sake of clarity I will ask the question again, and answer it: for whom is this beauty? What is the application?

Who receive beauty for ashes?

And well nigh the whole world crieth: It is unto all!

Some of them are very learned in deception, and they say, not unto all, but it is offered, or it is promised unto all. As far as God and the Wonder Child are concerned, there is enough for all, and the God of the heavens and the earth would like to see all men accept this wonderful beauty in exchange for their ashes, and be happy for evermore.

Yes, sad to say, such is the conception, and such has been the conception on the streets of Jerusalem during all the weary ages that are past. And such is the conception today.

Almost everyone whom you may chance to meet on the streets of Sodom owns unto himself the beauty of Christ. They bear His name. They gather in His house. They call the nations Christian. But they crucify Jesus wherever they meet Him.

And thus they are drilled. There are millions of books written on the theme of my text. And with small exception they all are faulty, deceitful, false, misleading, devilish.

I call you all to witness that the Beauty of the Christ-Child is thrown for a scramble among the dogs!

If you do not grab it, it is your own fault! There is enough for all! And the Lord God is offering it to the whole world. Become beautiful, why do you not?

And on the holidays of the Church everything glitters and glistens of beauty and splendour. All *seem* beautiful. And the devil himself appears among them as an angel of light.

The whole world shouts: Beauty for Ashes! Hallelujah!



But it is not true!

I would beg of you: read the text!

To appoint unto *them that mourn in Zion*, to give unto *them* beauty for ashes!

That is the text.

I would ask in a mighty challenge: where is the world? The world is not in it at all! It is not even unto *all* that are and belong in Zion according to their generations.

All of Zion keeps holy day: it is true. But all of them do not receive beauty for ashes. There is a second limitation. Those that are at ease in Zion do not receive beauty, but they receive a still uglier woe: their portion is second death in hell forever! That, my dear reader, is the truth.

The beauty of my text is for those that mourn in Zion! It is the spiritual kernel of Zion.

And they themselves and those that surround them may know them for what they are: they are the mourners. Take the trouble(?) and read Ezekiel 9. There you find a commentary on this mourning. They mourn

because of the abominations that are done in Jerusalem. And first of all their own abominations. Listen to David, Nehemiah, Daniel, Jeremiah, Isaiah, and all the saints who have recorded their inmost prayers in Holy Writ, and you will see that they mourned, and they mourned first of all because of their own sins.

They are the happy people that receive beauty for ashes. In Ezekiel they receive a mark on their foreheads, and they are not destroyed by the destroyers. That is negative language for the positive beauty of God's covenant communion.

These mourners are described in the context. Attend to their appearance in history: the meek—and they receive glad tidings; the brokenhearted — and they receive the binding up of their wounded hearts; the captives—and they are released; the prisoners—and they go free; the mourners—and they receive oil for joy; those with a spirit of heaviness—and they receive the garment of praise!

They and they only receive the beauty for ashes.

Beauty for ashes for God's own people, and no one else!

Beauty for ashes!

And it is given! God be praised! It is a good thing that God gives it. If He did not, I would never become beautiful with the beauty of the Son of God. For I am unable and unwilling to accept it. Oh yes, I accept, I accept oceans of grace and beauty, but even my stretched out hand is wrought by the almighty power of my God. God gives it! And shall continue to give it, until all God's people are made beautiful and time ended. And then the beautiful city and the beautiful people shall be as it were a mirror so that they may reflect the beauty of the Lord their God!

We wait for that day with inexpressible longing!

Amen! Hallelujah!



Beauty for ashes!

But I have not said anything about the most wonderful part of the text.

Oh, I admit that the sight of a child of God who is made beautiful with the Spirit of meekness is a glorious sight.

But I would tell you of more beautiful things.

Return with me to the text: To *appoint* unto them that mourn in Zion. . . .

Oh, I must speak of the appointing!

And there are terrible notes in that song. There is a terrible discord in it. A discord of hell and hellish suffering of my Lord.

Back of all the beauty of you and your church lies a chapter in the great works of God which is very difficult reading matter. To *appoint* He came. In the first two words, which I have asked to write in italics, lie

a great humiliation for the Wonder Child. They spelled for Him eternal death. If you and I saw Him go down the valley of the shadow of second death, and if you and I would have asked Him: *Quo Vadis?* He would have answered: I go to appoint to give unto you beauty for ashes! Your and my Jesus would have looked at you through the bloody sweat of the garden, and He would have sighed within your hearing: It is profitable for you that I go the way of eternal suffering, for I am going to appoint a wondrous beauty for you.

We saw Him go, and we wondered with great wonder.

We looked and saw until it grew very dark. It was dark about the cross of His appointing.

And when we could not see Him anymore, we heard His sighing and His crying on that accursed cross. And when we translate all that agony, in good dogmatics, we hear our leaders tell us that to appoint He came. To appoint means then to prepare, to set in order, to labor to come to pass. They will tell you of the travail of His soul, of His broken heart, of His crushed flesh, His spilled blood, of His eternal suffering in the hands of Almighty God.

Oh, dear reader, behind and above your beauty is a great deal of appointing by the hand of God, by the hand of Jesus, the Stranger of Galilee.

If you know that you are one of the mourners of Zion, if you hear your name called by the Lord Jesus Christ, even as He said: My sheep hear my voice and they follow Me! If you have the love of God shed abroad in your heart through the Holy Ghost that is given unto you, if you have the gift of the God-given faith so that you cling and cleave to the promises, then—have your feasts! And also have your holy days in the Church. It is well.

But remember in the midst of all your rejoicing that you have received beauty for ashes, because Jesus received ashes for beauty!

You sing and you joy in all your salvation, and it is well.

But you sing for all eternity, because Jesus wept in deepest night.

You are on the way to heaven, and I do not have in mind the heaven that now is. I have in mind the heaven that will be when God shall say: Behold, I make all things new! You are on the way to the place that shall be musical forever because of the songs and the music of the redeemed. And it is well.

But remember that Jesus trod the weary way in the opposite direction: He went to hell for you!

Beauty for ashes! That is right. But it is the beauty that is earned through the labor of Him that became ugly with the ugliness of the bottommost bottom of hell!

Love Him and His Father forever for so great love!  
Amen.  
G. Vos.

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## EDITORIALS

### As To Conditions

According to the Heidelberg Catechism, as we have seen, faith is never presented as a condition unto salvation, or as a condition which we must fulfill in order to enter into or remain in the covenant of God. Always it is presented as a means or instrument which is wrought in us by God and given us of Him, by which we are ingrafted into Christ, become one body with Him, and thus receive all His benefits.

Instrument and condition certainly do not belong to the same category of conceptions.

If faith is a condition it certainly is something man must do in order to and before he can obtain salvation. Unless we attach that meaning to the word it has no sense at all. And as I wrote before, in the minds of the people the term *condition* undoubtedly stands for some notion that makes salvation dependent on something man must do.

If, however, faith is a God-given instrument it is completely outside of the category of *condition*, for the simple reason that, in that case, it belongs to salvation itself. It is part of the work of God whereby He brings sinners to Christ and makes them partakers of all His benefits of righteousness, life, and glory. And part of salvation cannot, at the same time, be a condition unto salvation.

The same conception of faith as an instrument is found in the *Confessio Belgica* or Netherland Confession, Art. XXII. There we read:

"We believe that, to attain the true knowledge of this great mystery, the Holy Ghost kindleth in our hearts an upright faith, which embraces Jesus Christ, with all his merits, appropriates him, and seeks nothing more besides him. For it must needs follow, either that all things, which are requisite to our salvation, are not in Jesus Christ, or if all things are in him, that then those, who possess Jesus Christ through faith, have complete salvation in him. Therefore, for any to assert, that Christ is not sufficient, but that something more is required besides him, would be too gross a blasphemy; for hence it would follow, that Christ was but half a Saviour. Therefore, we justly say with Paul, that we are justified by faith alone, or by faith without works. However, to speak more clearly, we do not mean that faith itself justifies us, for it is only an instrument with which we embrace Christ our Righteousness. But Jesus Christ, imputing to us all his merits, and so many holy works which he has done for us, and in our stead, is our Righteousness. And faith is an instrument that keeps us in communion

with him in all his benefits, which, when become ours, are more than sufficient to acquit us of our sins."

This article speaks of faith in Jesus Christ.

And it speaks of it in such a way that all possibility of presenting faith as a condition is ruled out.

Faith in its essence is a spiritual bond that unites us with Christ. The article emphasizes this in more than one way. For, first, it stresses the fact that all our salvation is in Christ, and that, therefore, we can derive it only from Him. Christ is our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and complete redemption. He is our all. Hence, secondly, it is only in union with Him that we can be saved, and receive all the blessings of grace. This union, it is emphasized thirdly, is established by faith. The article mentions this when it says that "faith is an instrument that keeps us in communion with him in all his benefits". And again, faith "is only an instrument with which we embrace Christ our Righteousness." And once more, "to attain the knowledge of this great mystery, the Holy Ghost kindleth in our hearts an upright faith, which embraces Jesus Christ, with all his merits, appropriates him, and seeks nothing more besides him."

From all this it is evident that faith is the spiritual bond that unites us with Christ in Whom is all our salvation, the spiritual instrument with which it is possible for the regenerated sinner to cling to Christ, to embrace and appropriate Him, and thus to receive all His benefits.

Moreover, the article emphasizes that this faith is not of man. It is a God-ordained and God-given instrument, for "the Holy Ghost kindleth in our hearts an upright faith." The power or faculty of faith is wrought in the moment of regeneration, and active faith, which the article has in mind especially, is wrought by the Spirit in our hearts through the preaching of the Word of God.

Hence, it is plain from the whole article that faith is not the ground or reason, neither the meritorious cause of our salvation, nor a condition which man must fulfill to obtain the same.

The idea of condition is quite foreign to this article of our confession.

The same truth is clearly expressed in Art. XXIV of the same Confession, which speaks of "Man's Sanctification and Good Works."

To this article we must call attention in a later connection when we treat of the relation between regeneration, faith, sanctification, and good works as our "part" in the covenant of God. But here we must call special attention to the beginning of this article which reads as follows: "We believe that this true faith being wrought in man by the hearing of the Word of God, and the operation of the Holy Ghost, doth regenerate and make him a new man", etc.

It is evident that regeneration is here understood

in the wider sense, for the whole article speaks of sanctification and good works.

But what demands our special attention in this connection is the fact that faith, and that, too, conscious faith, which is wrought through the hearing of the Word of God, is here presented as part of our salvation, given to us by the Holy Ghost. And again I maintain that part of our salvation cannot, at the same time, be condition which we must fulfill, or with which we must comply, to obtain salvation.

The same note is sounded throughout in the Canons of Dordrecht. We will quote a few passages from them just to show that, in our Confessions, faith is never presented as a condition with which we must comply in order to obtain salvation, but always as a God-given means or instrument that unites us with Christ.

This is plain already from some of the very first articles of the Canons. In I, A, 4-6 we read:

"Art. 4. The wrath of God abideth upon those that believe not this gospel. But such as receive it and embrace Jesus the Saviour by a true and living faith, are by him delivered from the wrath of God, and from destruction, and have the gift of eternal life conferred upon them.

"Art. 5. The cause or guilt of this unbelief as well as of all other sins, is in no wise in God, but in man himself; whereas faith in Jesus Christ, and salvation through him is the free gift of God, as it is written: 'By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God'. Eph. 2:8. 'And unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him,' etc. Phil. 1:29.

"Art. 6. That some receive the gift of faith from God, and others do not receive it, proceeds from God's eternal decree, 'For known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world,' Acts 15:18. 'Who worketh all things after the counsel of His will,' Eph. 1:11. According to which decree, he graciously softens the hearts of the elect, however obstinate, and inclines them to believe; while he leaves the non-elect in his just judgment to their own wickedness and obduracy," etc.

Now I ask, how can there possibly be room in the above language for the notion that faith is a condition? The grace of faith is a free gift from God. Can, at the same time, faith be a condition with which we must comply to receive that free gift of God? We feel that this is absurd. Faith, moreover flows from God's decree, and is bestowed only on the elect, while the rest are hardened, or according to the infralapsarian terminology of the Canons, are left "in his just judgment to their own wickedness and obduracy." Is faith a condition with which we must comply in order to become elect? That would be Arminian indeed! Besides, the Canons teach us that faith flows from God's decree, and is, therefore, an unconditional gift. Again, the



Canons teach us that, when God bestows that free gift of faith upon the elect sinner, He "graciously softens the hearts of the elect, however obstinate, and inclines them to believe." Now, if man is by nature obdurate and wicked, he certainly can comply with no conditions unto salvation whatever. And if God must soften his heart, and incline him to believe, faith certainly can be no condition unto salvation, for that would imply that he had faith before God softens his heart, which again would mean that he comply with the condition of faith before he was inclined to believe, which is an utter absurdity.

I write thus in order to point out emphatically that, in Reformed terminology the term "faith as a condition" simply has no room.

With that term you must needs sail under the flag of Arminianism.

(to be continued)

H.H.




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## THE TRIPLE KNOWLEDGE

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### An Exposition Of The Heidelberg Catechism

#### PART TWO

#### Of Man's Redemption

#### LORD'S DAY XXVII.

#### 2.

#### Different Views Of The Covenant. (cont.)

The Dutch theologian, Petrus van Mastricht, defines the covenant as: "An agreement between God and His people, in which God promises salvation and all the benefits implied therein, and demands obedience to His glory, and the Church on her part promises obedience to God and demands the reward of the promise." According to him the covenant is strictly bilateral, that is, it has two parties that enter into a mutual treaty, God and the Church. Thus also Franciscus Turretinus: "Strictly and properly the covenant denotes a pact of God with man, through which God promises His blessings, particularly eternal life, to that one, and in like manner from man requires due obedience and loving worship, certain external signs being employed for the sake of confirmation; which is called bilateral and mutual because it is established by a mutual obligation of the covenanting parties, here by promise on the part of God, there by keeping of the condition on the part

of man." And Brakel defines the covenant as: "An agreement or pact between God and the elect, in which God promises salvation and redemption, to which man consents and which he accepts."

In the more recent Dutch theologians one finds a glimmer of deeper and richer notion of the covenant. Dr. A. Kuyper Sr. begins to emphasize the fundamental truth that God is a covenant God in Himself and that the relation between the Three Persons of the Trinity is a covenant relation. He finds in this covenant life of the triune Jehovah the basis for all covenant dealings of God with man; and he even speaks of the covenant as a relation of friendship in which God eats and drinks with man and speaks with him as a man with his brother, as a friend with his friend: "The establishment of the covenant is an act of friendship." Yet, ultimately he does not transcend the notion of the covenant as a means to an end, as an agreement or pact or alliance between God and man. The idea of the covenant is, according to him, expressed in the definition that it is an alliance between two parties against a third. Also Dr. Bavinck emphasizes that the covenant rests in the covenant life of God Himself: "The covenant of redemption causes us to know the relation and the life of the Three Persons in the divine Being as a covenant life, as a life of the highest consciousness and of the highest liberty. Here, within the divine Being, the covenant has its full reality." He even finds in the covenant the very essence of religion as fellowship with the living God. But also he ultimately considers the covenant as a means to an end, as a way of salvation. The covenant of grace "defines the way along which the elect shall reach their destination. It is the river-bed in which the stream of election moves onward to eternal glory." And Dr. Vos defines the covenant of grace as "the gracious pact between the offended God and the offending sinner, in which God promises eternal life in the way of faith in Christ and the sinner accepts this believingly." And incidentally the same definition may be found in the "Dogmatiek" of Prof. F. M. Ten Hoor.

Perhaps it is not superfluous to devote a line or two to the covenant conception of the late Prof. W. Heyns, especially because the Reformed Churches (Art. 31), or the so-called Liberated Churches, of the Netherlands favor the same covenant idea and have repeatedly appealed to him as a sort of authority on the subject. According to Prof. Heyns the essence of the covenant is the promise "to be a God unto you". He must have nothing of presumptive regeneration, for by this the very basis of assurance is removed upon which children of the covenant may claim that God has indeed established His covenant with them, that He is their God, and that all the blessings of salvation are really theirs. Hence, he seeks something positive, something objective, something that may be said about and to all the

children of the covenant that are born of believing parents, something that is more than a supposition, that is, in fact, indubitably certain. This positive, objectively certain ground he finds in the idea of the promise of God. The very essence of the covenant he finds in the promise: "I will be your God." That infants as well as the adults are comprehended in the covenant of grace, therefore, means that theirs is the promise of the covenant. The promise is for all the children of believers, head for head, and soul for soul. God, in His part of the covenant, promises to all that He establishes His eternal covenant of grace with them, adopts them as His children and heirs, incorporates them into Christ, gives them the forgiveness of sins and eternal righteousness and life, that through His Holy Spirit He will dwell in them, apply unto them all that they have in Christ, sanctify and preserve them, until they "shall finally be presented without spot or wrinkle among the assembly of the elect in life eternal." Here, then, is something objective, something everlastingly sure,—the promise of God. On the basis of this promise all the children of believers that are baptized are *really* in the covenant. One does not deal in suppositions here, but in certainties. It is on the basis of this certainty that the promise is for all the children of believers that they are baptized. Moreover, this promise is not to be identified with a mere "offer of grace", such as comes to all that hear the gospel, according to Heyns. It is much more: it is a *bequest* on the part of God to all that are baptized. God bequeaths upon all the children of believers all the blessings of salvation. He gives them the *right by testament* to the riches of grace. And He solemnly seals this bequest, this testament, this objective right to the forgiveness of sins and eternal life, to them all by baptism.

But with this promise the command is inseparably connected: "Walk before me and be upright." The promise is conditional, and the condition connected with the promise is faith and repentance. All have the promise. On the part of God the bequest is made to all by promise. God swears to all in baptism that their names are written in His testament. But the blessings promised are applied only to those that accept the promise by faith.

Such is the covenant conception of Prof. W. Heyns and, in the main, the theologians of the Reformed Churches (Art. 31) of the Netherlands agree with this view.

Of course, when one reads this view of the late Prof. Heyns, one cannot escape the impression that it is not Reformed, but Arminian. And the leaders of the Liberated Churches in the Netherlands have been repeatedly accused of this heresy. But they emphatically repudiate this accusation. They insist that one can believe and fulfill the covenant condition only through grace. And God works this grace only in the

elect. However, how they harmonize this with their insistence upon the view that on His part God promises the blessings of salvation to all, it is difficult to understand.

Heyns presents his own solution of this problem. According to him, all the children that are born of believing parents have "subjective grace, which a) is sufficient in connection with spiritual labor bestowed through the means of grace to bring forth good fruit of faith and obedience, so that God judges that He has the most perfect right to expect these; b) does not exclude the possibility to bring forth wild grapes, when in spite of the most excellent labor bestowed upon him, the covenant child remains unfruitful, and therefore does not consist in saving grace; c) is not in conflict with the confession that the deepest ground of our salvation lies in election and that salvation shall be a work of God entirely. The outcome will not be the same in all, and the difference will be according to the council of God; 'the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded.' Rom. 11:7. How God in the ethical sphere executes His counsel without violating man's moral freedom and responsibility remains for us a profound riddle. d) But makes the covenant member all the more responsible for his remaining unfruitful and bringing forth of wild grapes, and threatens him with a more severe judgment. Scripture teaches accordingly that the covenant child that enjoyed the influence of the work of the gospel is left wholly without excuse." Cf. "Catechetics", 143-145).

In brief, according to Heyns the promise of the covenant is objectively for all that are baptized. All are given the right to the blessings of salvation. The realization of this promise, however, depends on the attitude of the covenant children: they must accept the promise and walk in faith. And all receive sufficient grace to comply with the condition, yet so that they can also refuse and be lost.

I do not believe that in general the Liberated adopt this view of Heyns concerning a certain preparatory grace. Yet they must still explain how it is possible that the promise of salvation is on the part of God to all the children that are born under the covenant, that God, also according to them, must realize this promise by His sovereign grace, and that yet many of the covenant children are lost.

But let us now, after this little excursion, return to the main line of our discussion.

All the definitions of the covenant which we have discussed so far have this in common, that they describe the covenant as a means to an end, not as an end, the highest end, in itself. They differ only in their denotation of the essence of the covenant, some emphasizing the idea of an agreement or pact or alliance, others that of the promise, still others that of a way unto salvation. They differ too in their description of the

parties of the covenant and their relation to each other. According to some, the covenant is strictly unilateral. According to others it is completely bilateral. While still others prefer to speak of the covenant as unilateral in its origin, but as bilateral in its operation. And, again, some identify the covenant of redemption, the *pactum salutis*, with the covenant of grace; while others consider the covenant of redemption as the basis for the covenant of grace. Some insist that the covenant of grace is established with Christ; others call it a pact between the offended God and the offending sinner. But always the covenant is essentially a means to an end, a pact or agreement, and the essential elements are always the promise of eternal life and the condition of faith and obedience.

There are several grave and serious objections against this presentation of the idea of the covenant. First of all, how can man ever be a party, a contracting party in relation to the living God? God is God, the Infinite, eternal, self-existent One. He is the Lord, the absolute Sovereign, out of Whom and through Whom and unto Whom are all things. There is none beside Him. And man is the creature, that owes all that he is and has, body and soul, all his powers and talents, his entire existence, every moment, to his Lord and Creator. God is the Fount, and man is the creature that drinks from that Fount of all good. God is the all-sufficient I AM: man is completely and constantly dependent for his whole life and existence upon Him. There is no obligation man can assume, apart from that which is incumbent upon him by reason of his being a creature to love the Lord his God with all his heart and with all his existence. He can bring nothing to God, Whose is all the silver and the gold and the cattle on a thousand hills. He can do nothing for the Most High, Who is perfectly self-sufficient. All the good man has is a gift of grace, of free and sovereign favor, from his God. Even if he may love and serve His creator, it is a gift of divine goodness for which man owes Him thanks. How then can the relation of that creature to His Creator ever be or become an agreement or pact according to which man may merit something higher than he has already attained, even eternal life. Shall I make an alliance with the worm that crawls at my feet? Can the man who owes me a thousand dollars merit some other good that I am able to bestow upon him by paying his debt? Can man, then, be a contracting party with the Most High and merit anything with Him to Whom he owes all? God forbid. The covenant between God and man can never be a pact, whether we call it the covenant of works or the covenant of grace, with mutual stipulations, conditions, and promises.

Reformed theologians have felt this objection very keenly, and therefore they usually add that this form of dealing on the part of God is due to His condescend-

ing grace and mercy. By grace man is put in a position in which he is a party with God and is able to merit or to obtain some higher good, particularly eternal life. But I object that God cannot deny Himself, and that even by grace He cannot so condescend to man that the latter becomes a party next to Him, even though the relation is presented as one between a very great party and a very small one. Man can never have the prerogative, or receive it from God, to make his stipulations and to demand eternal life on the basis of anything whatever that he has done or that he believes. The declaration of the law, "Do this, and thou shalt live", is forever true, to be sure, because obedience is the sole way of God's favor, and in His favor is life. But it does not and can never mean that by keeping God's precepts man in the state of righteousness could attain to that higher state which is called life eternal and which is attainable only through the Son of God. And it is true that in the covenant of grace, as in all covenants, there are indeed contained two parts and that our part of the covenant is that we love the Lord our God with all our heart and with all our mind and with all our soul and with all our strength; but let me remind you, first of all, that "parts" is not the same as "parties", and secondly, that our part in the covenant is not a condition which we must fulfill in order to enter into the covenant of God or to remain in it, but rather our expression as moral creatures of the covenant relation which God establishes with us by His grace. The covenant is first established with us through "God's part". And our part follows and is the fruit of that gracious act of God.

Nor do we ever read in Scripture of a mutual transaction between God and man, in which God stipulates certain conditions which man accepts and by fulfilling which he may make himself worthy of eternal life. The covenant of works is usually described as consisting in a promise, a condition, and a penalty. This promise is said to be eternal life, the condition is obedience in regard to the probationary command not to eat of the forbidden tree, and the penalty is death. But first of all, let it be noted that Scripture does not speak one word in the first three chapters of Genesis of a mutual agreement between God and Adam. It is God that acts, and He alone. He plants the tree of knowledge of good and evil in the garden; and He gives Adam the command, "Thou shalt not eat of it." The command is in no wise contingent upon Adam's agreement or consent. He is under the law. Secondly, the idea that God promised Adam eternal life in case he obeyed this command is pure fiction: Scripture does not speak of such a promise, nor even suggest it. The notion of such a promise is deduced from the threatened penalty, death. It is argued that since death was the penalty of disobedience, eternal life was the implied promise. And it may be granted: Adam would not



have died, had he remained obedient to God's command. But this does not imply that he would have attained to eternal life and to heavenly glory. He would have been confirmed in the state of life in which he had already been created. Moreover, we may safely state that eternal life is a form of fellowship with the living God which Adam could never attain. It is a form of life that requires for its basis the union of God and man established in the incarnation of the Son of God and that has its central realization in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. No promise of eternal life, therefore, was, or could have been, extended to Adam. Nor was the keeping of the probationary command presented to him as a condition unto that higher, heavenly life.

Nor is that other manifestation of the covenant, that is called the covenant of grace, ever presented in Scripture as a pact or agreement. Uniformly we read that God establishes His covenant freely and absolutely. When, after man had violated His covenant, He continues and maintains it, He reveals this act of grace in a sovereign declaration: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Gen. 3:15. On man's consent this realization of the covenant depends in no wise. Both before and immediately after the flood the Lord says to Noah that He will establish His covenant with him and with his seed: the covenant is God's, and He alone establishes it. Gen. 6:18; 9:11. The same expression is used to denote God's covenant with Abraham, Gen. 17:7: "And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee." And thus it is presented throughout Scripture. Through Isaiah Jehovah says to His people: "I will make an everlasting covenant of peace with you." Is. 55:3. And through Jeremiah: "I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel." Jer. 31:31; Heb. 8:8-10. And the unilateral character of the covenant is clearly revealed in the vision of Jehovah to Abraham, recorded in Gen. 15:9, f.f. Abraham is commanded to take several sacrificial animals, divide them into halves, and lay the pieces in a row over against each other. Jehovah, then, under the symbols of a smoking furnace and a burning lamp passes through the midst of the pieces. The meaning of this ritual of passing between the halves of the sacrificial animals must have been well-known to Abraham. It symbolically expressed that the covenant was inviolably ratified and that he that so ratified it guaranteed it with his life, would rather go through death than ever annul it. Now, while in performing this ceremony both the covenant parties usually would pass through the pieces because the covenant could not be of one, in the vision of Gen. 15 the Lord alone performs this act, thus indi-

cating that He is His own party and that He alone establishes His covenant. This is probably the reason why the word BERITH in the Hebrew is usually rendered by the Greek *diatheekē*, which emphasizes the onesidedness of this covenant.

H. H.



## OUR DOCTRINE

### The Omnipotence Of God

(continued)

*God's Omnipotence Surely Unlimited and Absolute.*

That the Lord is truly omnipotent, almighty, is already implied in the names which the Scriptures ascribe to Him. He is El and Elohim, the mighty God and the God Who is alone worthy to be feared and to receive all adoration and praise. Scripture also speaks of Him as El Shaddai, the Almighty One, Who is not merely the mightiest but the almighty, the alone strong and mighty One. Or, we read of Him as Adonai (Lord); this name implies that the Lord, as the Creator and Possessor of all the earth, has the sole right to command, and man has none other calling but to obey. Hence, this name also signifies that the Lord is surely able to enforce His demands and execute His will. And, familiar, I am sure, to most of us is the name, El Tsebaoth (Lord of hosts), unto Whom are subject all the hosts of heaven and earth, also the hosts of angels and the starry heavens, and who is therefore exalted over all.

In Jeremiah 32:18 we read of the Lord as the Great, the Mighty God, the Lord of hosts, "Thou shewest lovingkindness unto thousands, and recompensest the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children, after them: the Great, the Mighty God, the Lord of hosts, is His name"; Job declares of Him in Job 9:4: "He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength: who hath hardened himself against Him, and hath prospered?"; in Deut. 7:21 Moses comforts Israel with the words: "Thou shalt not be affrighted at them: for the Lord thy God is among you, a mighty God and terrible."; in Isaiah 1:24 we read: "Therefore saith the Lord, the Lord of hosts, the mighty One of Israel, Ah, I will ease Me of Mine adversaries, and avenge Me of Mine enemies."; in Job 36:5 the writer declares: "Behold, God is mighty, and despiseth not any: He is mighty in strength and wisdom."; in Psalm 24:7-10 occur the well-known words: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them

up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, He is the King of glory. Selah.”; in Matt. 11:25 our Lord Jesus Christ speaks of the Lord as “Father, Lord of heaven and earth.”; and in Rev. 1:8 we read: “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, Which is, and Which was, and Which is to come, the Almighty.” All of Holy Writ speaks of the Lord as the King of kings and Lord of lords, the great King, the Lord Almighty, the blessed and only Potentate, Who alone possesses authority and supreme majesty, Who alone rules and does all things according to the counsel of His will.

As the Almighty God He is the Creator of heaven and earth. Such is the continuous testimony, first of all, of our Confessions. We read in our Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Day 9, in answer to the question, “What believest thou when thou sayest, “I believe in God the Father, Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth?”: “That the eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (who of nothing made heaven and earth, with all that is in them: who likewise upholds and governs the same by His eternal counsel and providence) is for the sake of Christ His Son, my God and my Father; on Whom I rely so entirely, that I have no doubt, but He will provide me with all things necessary for soul and body: and further, that He will make whatever evils He sends upon me, in this valley of tears, turn out to my advantage; for He is able to do it, being Almighty God, and willing, being a faithful Father.” And Article 12 of our Confession of Faith declares: “We believe that the Father, by the Word, that is, by His Son, hath created of nothing, the heaven, the earth, and all creatures, as it seemed good unto Him, giving unto every creature its being, shape, form, and several offices to serve its Creator. That He doth also still uphold and govern them by His eternal providence, and infinite power, for the service of mankind, to the end that man may serve his God. He also created the angels good, to be His messengers and to serve His elect; some of whom are fallen from that excellency in which God created them, into everlasting perdition; and the others have, by the grace of God, remained steadfast and continued in their primitive state. The devils and evil spirits are so depraved, that they are enemies of God, and every good thing, to the utmost of their power, as murderers, watching to ruin the Church and every member thereof, and by their wicked stratagems to destroy all; and are, therefore, by their own wickedness, adjudged to eternal damnation, daily expecting their horrible torments. Therefore we reject and abhor the error of the Sadducees, who deny the existence of Spirits and angels: and also that of the Manichees, who assert that the devils have their origin of themselves, and that they are wicked of their own nature, without having been corrupted.” And

that the Lord is the Creator of all is also the constant testimony of the Scriptures, as e.g., in Gen. 1, “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth, f.f.”; in Is. 42:5: “Thus saith God the Lord, He hath created the heavens, and stretched them out; He that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; He that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein:”—in Is. 44:24: “Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, and He that formed thee from the womb, I am the Lord that maketh all things: that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by Myself;”—in Is. 45:12: “I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, even My hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded.”—in verse 18: “For thus saith the Lord that created the heavens; God Himself that formed the earth and made it; He hath established it, He created it not in vain, He formed it to be inhabited: I am the Lord; and there is none else.”—in Is. 48:13: “Mine hand also hath laid the foundation of the earth, and My right hand hath spanned the heavens: when I call unto them, they stand up together.”—in Is. 51:13: “And forgettest the Lord thy Maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; and hast feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy? and where is the fury of the oppressor?”—and in Zech. 12:1: “The burden of the word of the Lord for Israel, saith the Lord, Which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him.” Moreover, the Lord also maintains their ordinances. This, e.g., is taught us in various passages in the prophecy of Jeremiah, as in 5:2: “Fear ye not Me? saith the Lord: will ye not tremble at My presence, which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it: and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it?”—in 10:10: “But the Lord is the true God, He is the living God, and an everlasting king: at His wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide His indignation.”—in 14:22: “Are there any among the vanities of the Gentiles, that can cause rain? or can the heavens give showers? art not Thou He, O Lord our God? therefore we will wait upon Thee: for Thou hast made all these things.”—in 27:5: “I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are upon the ground, by My great power and by My outstretched arm, and have given it unto whom it seemed meet unto Me.”—in 31:35: “Thus saith the Lord, Which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, Which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The Lord of hosts is His name.” And in Amos 4:13 we are told: “For, lo, He that formeth the mountains and createth the wind,

and declareth unto man what is his thought, that maketh the morning darkness, and treadeth upon the high places of the earth, The Lord, The God of hosts, is His name."

As the Omnipotent One the Lord has absolute control of all things, also the powers of evil. He renders dumb and enables one to speak, kills and makes alive, redeems and destroys. This is the teaching of the Word of God, e.g., in Ex. 4:11: "And the Lord said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the Lord?"—in Deut. 32:39: "See now that I, even I, am He, and there is no god with Me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of My hand."—I Sam. 2:6: "The Lord killeth, and maketh alive: He bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up."—in II Kings 5:7: "And it came to pass when the king of Israel had read the letter, that he rent his clothes and said, Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of leprosy? wherefore consider, I pray you, and see how he seeketh a quarrel against me."—in Exodus 15,—in Deut. 26:8, 29:2, 32:12: "And the Lord brought us forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with great terribleness, and with signs, and with wonders . . . And Moses called unto all Israel, and said unto them, Ye have seen all that the Lord did before your eyes in the land of Egypt unto Pharaoh, and unto all his servants, and unto all his land . . . So the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him."—in I Sam. 14:6: "And Jonathan said to the young man that bare his armor, Come, and let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised: it may be that the Lord will work for us; for there is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few."—in Hosea 13:14: "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plague: O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from Mine eyes."—in Matt. 10:28: "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."—and in Luke 12:20: "But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?"

Also, nothing can resist the Lord. This, too, is verified by Holy Writ, as, e.g., in the Psalms 8, 18, 19, 29, 33, 104, Job 1, 2, 5:9-27, and in Rom. 9:19-21: "Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth He yet find fault? For who hath resisted His will? Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the things formed say to him that formed it, Why hast Thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?"

Again, nothing is too wonderful for Him, all things are possible for and by Him. Also this truth is everywhere taught in the Scriptures, as, e.g., in Gen. 18:14: "Is anything too hard for the Lord? At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son."—in Jer. 32:27: "Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for Me?"—in Zech. 8:6: "Thus saith the Lord of hosts; If it be marvellous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days, should it also be marvellous in Mine eyes? saith the Lord of hosts."—in Matt. 19:26: "But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible."—Luke 1:37: "For with God nothing shall be impossible." And, according to Is. 45:8 the Lord created the day and the night, the light and the darkness, "I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things."

The Lord also does all His good pleasure. This, too, is taught throughout Scripture, as e.g., in Psalm 115:3: "But our God is in the heavens: He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased."—in Is. 14:24: "The Lord of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand."—and in verse 27: "For the Lord of hosts purposed, and who shall disannul it? and His hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?"—and in Is. 46:10 this remarkable passage: "Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure."—and in Is. 55:10-11: "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall My word be that goeth forth out of My mouth: it shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I send it."

And, finally, none can summon Him. This is the teaching of the Word of God in Jer. 49:19 where we read: "Behold, he shall come up like a lion from the swelling of Jordan against the habitation of the strong: but I will suddenly make him run away from her: and who is a chosen man, that I may appoint over her? for who is like Me? and who will appoint Me the time? and who is that shepherd that will stand before Me?" This same thought is expressed in Jer. 50:44.

*Above All, His Power Is Revealed In The Works  
Of Redemption.*

This almighty power the living God revealed in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, according to Scripture, Rom. 1:4 and Eph. 1:20: "And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holi-

ness, by the resurrection from the dead . . . Which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places." This Divine power is also revealed in the operation and the strengthening of faith, according to Rom. 16:25 and Eph. 1:19: "Now to Him that is of power to stablish you according to My gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, . . . And what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power." Moreover, the living God reveals His mighty power in the giving of grace above what we pray and think, as we read in Eph. 3:20: "Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us.", or in II Cor. 9:8: "And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work," and in II Pet. 1:3: "According as His Divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue." And, the almighty God will finally reveal His almighty power in the resurrection at the last day, according to the Word of God in John 5:26-29: "For as the Father hath life in Himself: so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself; And hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of man. Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."

In one word, His is the power, Psalm 62:11: "God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power belongeth unto God," and unto Him must be ascribed all the power and the strength, according to Ps. 96:7: "Give unto the Lord, O ye kindreds of the people, give unto the Lord glory and strength," in Rev. 4:11: "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created," in Rev. 5:12-13: "Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever," and in Rev. 7:12 and 19:1: "Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen . . . And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia;

Salvation, and glory, and honour and power unto the Lord our God."

*God Is Almighty, Able To Do All Things, But In Harmony With His Being And Will.*

Some have defined the power of God thus that God not only can do all He wills, but that He can also will anything and everything. And the attempts have been made in the past to prove that He can do anything, also in the sense that He can effect contradictions, etc. God, then, is able to sin, suffer, err, can become a stone or an animal, can perform contradictory things, can make false that which is true, true that which is false, etc. Also, in connection with the omnipotence of God, the question has been discussed at length whether God's power is limited to His counsel, to the things, therefore, which shall happen, or whether the power of the Lord also extends beyond His decree or counsel. Is the power of God limited to what He actually accomplishes, or can He also do other things than the things which actually occur?

In answer to the above questions, we would answer, in the first place, that the Scripture surely speaks of many things which the Lord cannot do. The Lord cannot lie, repent, change, be tempted, deny Himself. Secondly, it is surely Scriptural that the power of the living God extends beyond that which is actually realized. Christian theology according to H. Bavinck, have always clung to this opinion. This is based upon passages such as Jer. 32:27 and Matt. 19:26, where we read: "Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh: is there anything too hard for Me? . . . But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible." And, thirdly, to speculate as to what God can do above and beyond His counsel is surely idle speculation. Fact is, the Lord, in that counsel, was prompted by the virtue of the greatest and highest wisdom. The counsel is surely the expression of that greatest wisdom of God. In that counsel the Lord willed the glory of His Name, as revealed in Jesus Christ, His Son and our Lord. Also, in that counsel sin, the devil, and all the power of evil and darkness have been comprehended. And, with respect to the realization of that counsel, in harmony with the perfections of His eternal and infinite Being, God's power is surely absolute, so that He does not merely rule over all things and creatures, but also actually uses all things as instruments in His hand unto the realization of His eternal counsel and kingdom. And it is because of this supremely comforting truth that the Church of God can exclaim with the apostle, Paul: "Or who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed unto Him again? For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to Whom be glory for ever. Amen."

H. Veldman.

## Reply To Prof. K. Schilder

My publishing the letter of Prof. Holwerda in the Standard Bearer of August 1, drew from the pen of Prof. K. Schilder of Kampen, Netherlands, a brief series of articles. They may be found in De Reformatie for Aug. 20, 27, and Sept. 3. I have need of replying especially to the statements of the second instalment of the series.

The professor sets out with the statement (I translate), "In his article, already brought up for discussion last week, Rev. Ophoff wants to make plain that the ministers De Jong and Kok, who have just been in our country, and there knew how to awaken for the Protestant Reformed Churches a sympathy so warm, really grievously offended nevertheless, when they knew how to make a clear distinction between the dogmatical construction of Prof. Hoeksema and the official doctrine of the Prot. Reformed churches."

Reply. What the professor here states is not true. Allow me to make this plain. I am supposed to take it ill of the brethren that they differentiated between the dogmatical construction of Rev. Hoeksema and the official doctrine of the Protestant Reformed. The term "dogmatical construction" does not appear in my article. The term I use is "covenant-theology" (of Rev. Hoeksema). In the sequel of his article the professor uses still other terms as substitutes for the one I use, namely the following: 1) opinion (meaning) in the sentence from his pen, "Rightly considered, Rev. Ophoff and Prof. Hoeksema and no matter whom would be done an injustice, should it dare be maintained that their opinion (meaning) was binding." 2) coherent opinion (samenhangende meaning) in the sentence, "Theology is a heavy word; in this connection (in connection with the word *covenant*, the professor means) it denotes at least a coherent view". 3) thetical view *about everything and still something* (thetische beschouwing over alles en nog wat) in the sentence, "I suspect that he, himself (Prof. Hoeksema) would say, what I (Prof. Schilder) too, would declare: I have refused to subscribe the three points, because I did not find them reformed; but it was not necessary that my thetical view about everything and still something become implicated. . . . (maar mijn thetische beschouwing over alles en nog wat behoefde daarbij niet in geding te komen)."

These, then, are the various terms that the professor uses as substitutes for "covenant-theology", the term that I used. It tells us what the term "covenant-theology" means in the vocabulary of the professor. It means: 1) dogmatical structure; 2) opinion; 3) coherent opinion; 4) thetical view about everything and still something. And all these meanings the professor imposes upon the term "covenant-theology" as a sen-

tence-element in my writing. It means that what the professor tells his readers in the above-cited paragraph from his pen is that I take it ill of the brethren De Jong and Kok that they differentiate between the official doctrine of the Protestant Reformed and the covenant-theology, the dogmatical construction, the coherent opinions, the thetical view about everything and still something of Prof. Hoeksema. In other words, according to the professor my stand as revealed in that article from my pen is that all Rev. Hoeksema's dogmatical constructions, opinions, coherent opinions, thetical views about everything and yet something are official doctrine in the communion of Protestant Reformed churches, just because Rev. Hoeksema holds them.

That, to be sure, is absurd. The professor cannot point to a single statement in my articles that can justify his telling his readers there in the Netherlands that such is my stand. Here is what I wrote, "According to the report of the professor (Holwerda), the Revs. De Jong and Kok had the habit of speaking of the covenant-theology of the Protestant Reformed as the theology of Rev. Hoeksema, as if it were his private conception and personal possession and therefore not binding on the churches. . . . But that is not true. It is the covenant-theology of the Protestant Reformed, their unwritten creed, officially adopted, and therefore binding indeed."

Here in this statement of mine appears the term "covenant-theology" (of Rev. Hoeksema). How was I using that expression? Simply as the signification of the proposition that the *promises of God are given only to the elect*. Of course, the proposition does not stand alone. It is surrounded by and related to a number of other propositions with which it stands or falls, and in union with which it stands out in the minds of the Protestant Reformed as the only true covenant-theology of the Scriptures. That I was using the term in the sense just explained is overly plain from my articles.

So, then, the fact of the matter is this: I took it ill of the brethren Kok and De Jong for their saying over there in the Netherlands—according to the report of Prof. Holwerda—that Rev. Hoeksema's doctrine or teaching to the effect that the promises of God are given only to *the elect* is not the official doctrine of the Protestant Reformed. And why do I take this ill of the brethren? Because all Rev. Hoeksema's dogmatical construction, all his opinions, all his coherent opinions, all his thetical views "over alles en nog wat" of the past, present and future are official doctrine in the communion of the Protestant Reformed just because they are the thetical views of Rev. Hoeksema? That, according to the professor is what I am telling the people. That, according to the professor, is really the thrust of my article? Of course, I tell the people no such thing in that article. I tell them this: that Rev. Hoek-



sema's covenant-theology is official doctrine in our communion because we officially adopted it some twenty six years ago now.

The professor knows this right well as appears from the sequel of his article. Yet he continues, "To my amazement (mark you, to his amazement) Rev. Ophoff takes it ill (of the brethren Kok and De Jong). To my amazement I say. . . ." Why should it so amaze the professor that I take it ill of the brethren Kok and De Jong that (according to the report of Prof. Holwerda) they said over there in the Netherlands that Rev. Hoeksema's view, covenant-doctrine is official doctrine in our communion, *seeing that we officially adopted it?* I don't understand. Certainly, the professor's amazement is self-induced. This again is proved by what he next writes (quote), "for on my part I would take it ill were it being said in America that I were such a fool as to want to bind people to my dogmatical constructions."

Of course, it would also be utterly impossible for the professor to bind people to his dogmatical constructions over there in the Netherlands. And the reason is simple. The professor is not an officebearer vested like the pope in the Roman communion with the power of excommunication over all the members of his communion. The professor is not the church in the eyes of his people. This being true, he could not bind people to his dogmatical constructions, though he so desired. I do, therefore, believe that the professor has excellent reasons for saying that he would take it ill were it being said in America that he was such a fool as to want to bind people to his dogmatical constructions.

But now I have a question. Who is saying here in America that Rev. Hoeksema is such a fool that he wants to bind people to his dogmatical constructions, as if such a thing were possible for him in our communion? The professor points his accusing finger at me, doing so, however, without me having furnished him with any grounds whatever in my article. What a fool I would be should I be saying such a thing. And what an untruth I would be telling! For what are the facts? They already have been stated. Allow me to repeat them. Twenty-six years ago now our people as headed by their consistories voluntarily, by their own free choice, and certainly by the unction of the Spirit, we believe, officially rejected the Heynsian view of the covenant and thereby of necessity adopted the logical contrary of that view—the view held, proclaimed, and taught by Rev. Hoeksema. True, he was the leader in thought of that movement. But every reformation in the church had its leaders, didn't it? They were God's gifts to His people, weren't they?

Such are the facts. Why then that amazement on the part of the professor? I can't understand it. For he is well acquainted with the facts as appears also

from what he next writes (quote), "Yes, but so Rev. Ophoff observes, on page 472, column 2, so matters do not stand. The covenant-theology of Rev. Hoeksema is the covenant-theology of the Protestant Reformed churches. The unwritten creed of these churches (not brought into form, thus unwritten). Nevertheless (desondanks) officially adopted, and therefore binding indeed."

Take notice of the clause from the professor's pen, "nevertheless officially adopted." See how well the professor knows the facts! Yet I have fault to find with the professor here. I don't like it the way he treats my pen. He puts statements into it that I did not make in my article. Mark the statement, "The unwritten creed of these churches (not brought into form, thus unwritten) nevertheless (desondanks) officially adopted, and therefore binding indeed." Here the professor gives to my statement a turn that it does not have. I particularly have reference to the adverb "nevertheless" (desondanks). The adverb does not occur in my writing. Here is my statement, "It is the covenant-theology of the Protestant Reformed, their unwritten creed, officially adopted, and therefore binding indeed." This sentence from my pen, as twisted by the professor, is calculated to cause his readers to cry out in astonishment and bewilderment: "Well! Well! Well! unwritten—that covenant-theology of Rev. Hoeksema—nevertheless officially adopted! Who ever heard of the likes of such a thing.

But what is fact here? Fact is that the covenant-theology of Rev. Hoeksema was written and as written officially adopted. It was written, firstly, in our hearts and still is. This, of course, is essential. For a creed written on paper but not written in the heart is in a subjective point of view worthless, be it ever so sound objectively. Second, that covenant-theology of Rev. Hoeksema was also written on paper, thus objectivated by the written word. Consider the following. The Christian Reformed Synod of 1924 officially declared in the first of the three famous points that the preaching of the Gospel is grace for all including the reprobate, thus declared virtually that the promises of God are given to all, elect and non-elect alike. Our three original consistories officially decided to allow themselves to be deposed rather than subscribe that doctrine, and thereby certainly and this of necessity officially decided to adhere and maintain the logical contrary of that doctrine, which is, that the promises of God are given only to the elect. This decision was written in the official minutes of our three original consistories. Further, the theology in question has been spread, so to speak, over the pages of the mass of literature produced by Rev. Hoeksema through the years; and most of it has been officially adopted by our Synods for distribution. So, then, that "creed" was officially adopted not only but it was adopted *as written*,

surely. Let, therefore, no one reproach us for having adopted an *unwritten* creed.

But if that is true, why, then, did I refer to this creed as unwritten? The reason is simple. As yet no one—consistories or common members through their consistories—has appeared on our Synod with a written statement to the effect that the promises of God are given only unto the elect, and overtured Synod to adopt that written credal declaration. Hence, as yet it has not been done. Nor is this necessary, I believe. For virtually it already has been done, as I have just made plain. Second, that the promises of God are given only to the elect is, according to our firmest conviction the plain teaching of our three forms of unity, so that, as often as we subscribe the Formula of Subscription we officially subscribe the covenant-theology in question,—that written creed.

The professor continues, "These rather amazing statements (the professor simply can't stop being amazed) cause me to ask: what have we here anyway? Theology is a heavy word; in this connection it is at least: a coherent view." Allow me to remark that views, systems of thought, to be worth their salt, must be coherent. Our covenant-theology is coherent, perfectly so. It is not self-destructive by reason of its inner logical conflicts. It is free from all such conflicts. It hangs together logically.

The professor continues, "Whether collega Hoeksema himself could declare that his view of the present time in all its subordinate parts exactly corresponds, also as to its connecting-lines, with that which he had at the moment when with spirit and with strength he refused to subscribe the Three Points, the Three Points set before him in 1924?"

Reply. From the sequel of the professor's article it is plain that what he means by a man's—any man's—view is his thetical view "over alles en nog wat;" so that the question that he here puts is really this, namely, whether collega Hoeksema would say, if asked, that his thetical view "over alles en nog wat" of the present time exactly corresponds with his thetical view "over alles en nog wat" to which he held at the moment that he with such spirit and strength refused to subscribe the three points. The professor's implied answer is: Certainly, collega Hoeksema would maintain no such thing. Surely, the professor is correct. For "alles" already includes absolutely all things that be. Yet to this the professor adds "nog wat". What brain, however colossal, could at any time even conceive a thetical view "over alles en *nog wat*".

And so the professor then means to ask: Well, then, was collega Hoeksema in signing the three points some twenty-six years ago binding himself and the churches either temporarily or permanently or both to his thetical view over "alles en nog wat?" What would collega Hoeksema say, were the question put to him? The

professor replies, "I surmise (ik vermoed) that he would say, what I, too, would declare: I have refused to subscribe the three points in that I found these points not to be reformed, but it was not necessary that my thetical view over 'alles en nog wat' become implicated," that is, in signing those points I was not, either actually or as to my intention, binding myself and the churches to my thetical view over 'alles en nog wat'. The professor *surmises, conjectures* that such would be Rev. Hoeksema's answer. But it was not necessary that he take recourse to conjecture in framing that answer. He safely could have spoken with absolute confidence. For such would be Rev. Hoeksema's answer indeed, were that question put to him; and this for two reasons: 1) such a thing as a thetical view "over alles en *nog wat*" is strictly a nonentity. It does not exist conceptionally in anybody's brain. It can't. 2) As already has been stated, Rev. Hoeksema had no power to bind the churches to anything at all.

Let us attend to the rest of the answer that the professor lays on Rev. Hoeksema's tongue in reply to the above question. It reads (quote), "For I have repudiated the three points in that to my mind (the professor should have added: and according to my firm conviction) they militate against the existing CONFESSION that you can read over because that is a written creed, and with my unwritten creed neither my accusers, nor my brethren, who continue to acknowledge me as an office bearer, nor the children of these brethren and sisters, whom I still hope to baptize, have anything to do; we bind each other to written forms and not to our unwritten creeds."

I don't believe I ever read anything in my life with which I more thoroughly agreed than with what the professor here states, *provided he means by Rev. Hoeksema's unwritten creed* his thetical view "over alles en *nog wat*." But I do not agree with the professor if by Rev. Hoeksema's unwritten creed he means his covenant-theology, the proposition that the promises of God are given only to the elect. For that creed is written, as we have already explained. And it is official doctrine in our communion. And the professor agrees. For he has Rev. Hoeksema say that he repudiated—officially repudiated, of course, he and his brethren—the three points in that to his mind they militated against the existing confession—our Three Forms of Unity—implying, of course, that the logical contrary of these points—definitely the teaching that the promises of God are given only to the elect—is the plain teaching of those Forms, and therefore just as well written, official, and binding. Of course, I take it that the professor himself believes what he has Rev. Hoeksema say here.

How well the professor is acquainted with the facts in our case, again appears from what he next writes (quote). "Indeed, but, says Rev. Ophoff, in 1924 the

Synod that expelled us adopted three points. And they wanted to bind us to them, and that we refused. Excellent. Now in those three points was also implied the covenant-theology of Prof. Heyns. They were but three points, three postulates, three declarations, three propositions. But implied in them is a theology. When, therefore, the ones who were first expelled refused to subscribe the three points, they thereby repudiated the theology of Heyns and, rightly considered, also the theology of the Liberated. . . . of 1924."

The professor's ability to lay on my tongue a speech of that content only shows how well acquainted he is with the history of our origin as a communion of Protestant Reformed churches. And he also knows how to rightly interpret it, as his statements that in rejecting the three points we rejected the Heynsian theology and with it the theology of the Liberated, that is, of course, the covenant-theology of Heyns, the proposition that the promises of God are given to elect and non-elect alike, (not, of course, the thetical view "over alles en nog wat" of Prof Heyns and the Liberated, as the professor tells his readers in the sequel of his article). It is as the professor makes me to say: both those theologies we rejected at the time. For according to our firm conviction, they are one and the same theology, so that in rejecting the one, we rejected the other. That, indeed is our contention, so that the professor did not put anything into my mouth that I spew out. How can I, if it already was in my heart as a thing of firmest conviction.

But now the professor makes a surprising statement (quote), "Now this time I am not going to say a word about the theology of the Liberated of 1944." (The covenant-theology of the Liberated, the professor means to say,—the teaching that the promises of God are given to baptized elect and non-elect alike). I know not that thing. (I ken dat ding niet). These are the professor's very words. But there is more to say. Judging from what the professor next tells us, all the Liberated brethren do as he does. They know not that "thing". Take notice of this statement from the professor's pen, "And I opine that I do know something about what is going on among us." What the professor means to be telling us here is that in stating that he knows not that "thing" he voices the sentiment of the Liberated brethren in general. There is this question: what does the professor, what do the Liberated mean in saying that they know not that "thing". Is it this: that he and they deem the Liberated view—the teaching that the promises of God are given to elect and non-elect alike—unscriptural and on that account worthy of repudiation? Hardly that, certainly. The professor should have explained. That he neglects to do. But he does say, "In fact in 1924 I gave an official lecture per radio from Kampen, the Theological school (Hoogeschool), in which I argued

the point that also the Liberated (Separatists) of 1834 had no theology of their own, but simply wanted to return to the Canons of Dort. That I found to be their honor. And I would not like to see that diploma of honor kept from the Liberated of 1944, who are no robbers of the liberty of others."

Also this statement from the professor's pen is anything but explicit. The Liberated also of 1944 returned to the Confession—our three Forms of Unity. That is all they did, all they wanted to do. So the professor. But their returning to those Forms implied, certainly, a repudiation on their part of a counter creed, view, doctrine. What was that doctrine, view? Was it the "thing" that the professor says that he does not know; that teaching to the effect that the promises of God are given to elect and non-elect alike? Anyone not acquainted with the facts would have to conclude from the manner of the professor's writing that it is precisely *that* "thing". But the facts are well known. The doctrine repudiated, the "thing" that the professor actually knows not, is the teaching that the promises of God are given to the elect only. And the "thing" returned to is the teaching, the view, that the promises of God are given to elect and none-elect (born in the historical line of the covenant) alike,—the Heynsian view, the theology of the Liberated today. So the professor must not tell us that he knows not that "thing". He and his brethren do know that "thing" indeed. They do have a theology of their own. It is that "thing", that teaching, that the promises of God are given to elect and non-elect alike. It is not ours; it is not the Synodical's; it is theirs; (yet it is also the Synodical's. I think now of their doctrine of the well-meaning offer of salvation unto all). There is, then, indeed such a "thing" as a Liberated theology. And the professor and his brethren know that theology. It has the love of their hearts even to the extent that rather than sign its logical contrary—the doctrine that the promises of God are given to the elect only—they allowed themselves to be deposed in their office.

Yet the professor's denial, his telling his readers that all he and his brethren did, meant to do, is to return to the Confession has significance nevertheless. It is most revealing. It shows that to their minds the CONFESSIO and that "thing", of theirs are one and the same. It shows that this "thing" is their interpretation of the CONFESSIO. This being true, how can the professor state that the Liberated of 1944 are not robbers of the freedom of others? What he means is that this "thing" is not official doctrine in his communion and therefore not binding; that anybody as a member of his communion may repudiate it, if he likes, and hold the contrary "thing". But how can this be allowed if that "thing" of theirs and the CONFESSIO are one and the same? Ought the repudiation of the Confession be allowed in a communion

of churches? Can that be to its honor? If so, what then can be its shame?

Here follows the line of thought of the professor's article, the second half of which I must still treat.

The professor charges me with two follies:

1. My saying that Rev. Hoeksema's dogmatic structure, opinion, coherent view, thetical view "over alles en nog wat" is official doctrine in our communion just because it is Rev. Hoeksema's view and through the success that he had in binding it on our people.

2. My saying that Rev. Hoeksema's covenant-theology was *unwritten* and as unwritten officially adopted by the Protestant Reformed; and my saying that the Protestant Reformed in their rejection of the three points repudiated the covenant-theology of Prof. Heyns. (It is plain that I can't very well be guilty of both follies under 1 and 2.)

The professor tells his readers that if what I say (under 2) were true, the Protestant Reformed officially adopted Rev. Hoeksema's unwritten dogmatic structure, opinion, coherent view, "over alles en nog wat", and rejected Prof. Heyns' dogmatic structure, opinion, coherent view, thetical view "over alles en nog wat".

Fact, therefore, must be, says the professor, that all that the Protestant Reformed have is the Confession, the Three Forms of Unity that can be read, and not the unwritten creed, covenant-theology, of Rev. Hoeksema; and that all they rejected is the three points and not the covenant-theology of Heyns.

Such is the line of thought of the professor's article. It's a rather clever argument but as untrue as it is clever. This, I trust, has already become plain. The professor knew how to make the most of my speaking of our "unwritten creed".

I have still other questions of essential importance, which will have to wait.

G. M. Ophoff.

#### TEACHERS WANTED

The Board of the S. P. R. E. has decided that D. V. our school will be opened in September, 1950. We will need teachers for grade 1 to 9, plus, of course, a kindergarten teacher; and as the supply of teachers and prospective teachers is not very large, we would like very much that all who are available, especially for the primary department, would make application. That means that they who will have 2 years of college by Sept. 1950, and are eligible to teach, should also apply, because there may be a shortage of teachers especially in the Primary department, unless all who are eligible, make application. For, let us remember, Hope, Redlands and Edgerton will also need teachers.

Of course we also need teachers for the intermediate and Junior High grades. So please, one and all, send in your application to the undersigned committee, stating the grade you would like to teach and the qualifications you have.

D. Jonker, 1210 Wealthy St., S. E.  
Grand Rapids 6, Mich.

G. Bylsma, 722 Deleware St., S. E.  
Grand Rapids 7, Mich.

## SION'S ZANGEN

### Jehova Tot Adonai

(Psalm 110; Eerste Deel)

We zijn toegekomen in den Psalmbundel aan een Psalm die zeer rijk van inhoud is, en daarom dan ook tamelijk zwaar is om te verklaren. We hebben hier te doen met de uitgezochtste spijze der ziele. De Psalm schittert en fonkelt van louter schoonheid. Hij is kostbaarder dan het fijnste goud van Ofir. Het gaat in den Psalm over den Messias dien God Zich verkoren heeft.

Dat zal dan ook wel de reden zijn waarom hij vaak aangehaald wordt in het Nieuwe Testament. Jezus Zelf haalt hem aan in Zijn twistgesprek met de Farizeën; en Hij legt hen met den aanhef van dezen Psalm het zwijgen op. Van dien dag af durfden zij Hem niets vragen.

De Psalm spreekt van de ongekende glorie van den Messias. Het gaat in dezen Psalm over wat Jehova zegt tot onzen Adonai.

O, David heeft Hem gezien! Da Costa jubelt: Ik zag Hem, ik gaf mij! De hel is geweken; de hemel ging op uit Uw Woord in mijn ziel!

Da Costa helpt ons op het goede spoor: We zouden onzen Heer en Meester nooit gezien hebben tot hemelsche genietingen, indien David Hem niet eerst gezien had, en dat visioen vastgelegd had in het Woord! Da Costa mag wel zeggen: "*Uit Uw Woord in mijn ziel!*"

Wel, geliefde lezer, hier hebt ge een der plaatsen van dat Woord waar onze Adonai ten voeten uit geschilderd wordt. Ge vindt in dezen Psalm het geheele Evangelie.

Hoe kon David Hem toch zien?

Jezus, die het eerste vers van dezen Psalm aanhaalt in Zijn strijd tegen de Farizeën, zal ons het antwoord geven. Jezus heeft twee woorden bij den tekst bijgedaan. Het zijn de woorden, *en pneumatì*, in den Geest! Die twee woorden geven ons het antwoord.

David was in den Heiligen Geest toen hij deze woorden zong in dit schoone lied.

Dat houdt ontzaglijk veel in.

Eerst, die Heilige Geest bracht zijn ziel en geest en verstand en hart *en rapport* met de geestelijke wereld. Er is een natuurlijke wereld en er is een geestelijke wereld. Van nature zien we letterlijk niets van die geestelijke wereld, en dat komt niet alleen vanwege onze zonde en inwonende verdorvenheid. Dat komt vanwege het feit, dat wij aardisch en natuurlijk zijn. Om het nu duidelijk te maken wat we bedoelen wijzen we U er op, dat zelfs Adam en Eva in den staat

der rechtheid die geestelijke wereld niet konden zien. Adam was uit de aarde aardsch en kon het Koninkrijk Gods ook niet zien. Let er op, dat de Emmausgangers Jezus niet herkenden, omdat hunne oogen "gehouden" waren, d.w.z., hunne oogen werden gehouden zooals zij waren: aardsch, natuurlijk. En Jezus was glorieus, hemelsch, geestelijk. Hij was de Heere der heerlijkheid, de Koning van het *geestelijke* Koninkrijk. Er moest een wonder gebeuren met de oogen van Jezus' jongeren om Jezus te zien en te herkennen.

En dat geschiedde ook met David. De Heilige Geest nam David dier mate in beslag, dat hij de geestelijke wereld van Gods eeuwige liefde zag.

Een duidelijk voorbeeld hebben we in de Schrift waar David's sterfbed beschreven wordt. Daar ziet hij den Messias, en in duidelijke woorden heeft hij ons nagelaten van wat hij zag en hoorde: "een Heerscher over de menschen, een Rechtvaardige, een Heerscher in de vreeze Gods, en Hij zal zijn gelijk het licht des morgens, wanneer de zon opgaat, des morgens zonder wolken, wanneer van den glans na den regen de grascheutjes uit de aarde voortkomen. . . ."

En de schrijver aan de Hebreërs zegt eenvoudig: "maar wij *zien* Jezus met heerlijkheid en eere gekroond. . . ."

Om die dingen te zien moet men *en pneumati* zijn.

Tweedens, toen David al die schoone zaken van God en van Zijn Messias gezien en gehoord had, heeft die Geest them onfeilbaar geleid om het alles te boekstaven. Ge verstaat, dat het schrijven kwam na het zien en het hooren. En schrijfmateriaal genomen hebbende, is hij gaan schrijven, en na het schrijven is hij gaan zingen den honderd-en-tienden Psalm. En de kerk heeft hem dien zang nagezongen. En wij zullen instemmen met dat lied, geboren uit den Geest, totdat geen maan meer schijnt, totdat de laatste der gekenden tot berstens toe vol geworden is van het aanzien dier heerlijkheden, totdat de jongste dag ingeluid wordt, en dan zullen alle gekenden voortgaan met zingen, maar dan is het koor niet alleen vol geworden, doch het koor zal dan in den allervolmaaksten zin kunnen zingen van dien Adonai, omdat zij allen hun lichamen hebben, hunne verlostte lichamen, zoodat de volle mensch kan jubelen aangaande den wonderen Messias die in dezen Psalm bezongen wordt.

En in zekeren zin moeten wij ook *en pneumati* zijn om de heerlijkheid van dit lied te zien en te bezingen. In zekeren zin mogen, moeten en zullen wij het Da Costa nazingen: *Ik zag Hem*, ik gaf Mij! De hel is geweken; de hemel ging op uit Zijn Woord in mijn ziel!

Wie zou niet zingen bij het zien van den glorieijken Adonai?

Ja, het neemt nu ook nog den Geest om Jezus te zien en van Hem te zingen. Paulus zal ons onderwijzen. Hij zegt, dat "wij hebben niet ontvangen den

geest der wereld, maar den Geest die uit God is, opdat wij zouden weten de dingen die ons van God geschonken zijn; dewelke wij ook spreken, niet met woorden, die de menschelijke wijsheid leert, maar met woorden die de Heilige Geest leert, geestelijke dingen met geestelijke samenvoegende. Maar de natuurlijke mensch begrijpt niet de dingen die des Geestes Gods zijn; want zij zijn hem dwaasheid, en hij kan ze niet verstaan, omdat zij geestelijk onderscheiden worden. Doch de geestelijke mensch onderscheidt wel alle dingen, maar hijzelf wordt van niemand onderscheiden. Want wie heeft den zin des Heeren gekend, die Hem zoude onderrichten? Maar wij hebben den zin van Christus."

Edoch, wat zeg ik? De Messias Zelf, die in dit lied bezongen wordt, heeft eeuwen later geleerd, dat alleen die wederomgeboren zijn het Koninkrijk kunnen zien. Voor de anderen blijven al die heerlijkheden niet dan dwaasheid. Als ge ervan getuigt schudden zij het hoofd en zien U medelijdend aan. Toen die Heilige Geest uitgestort werd in de Nieuw Testamentische gemeente, en toen de goddeloozen de effecten van dien Geest zagen en hoorden, toen openbaarden zij hunne blindheid voor God en Goddelijke zaken door te zeggen: zij zijn vol voeten wijs!

Maar, dank zij God voor Zijn onuitsprekelijke gave: wij zien Jezus, met heerlijkheid en eer gekroond! En Hem ziende, zingen we, zingen we van gena!

Zoo willen we met dezen Psalm beginnen.

Doch ook dan sidderen en beven we. We zullen het U niet verhelen, dat we bevreesd zijn bij het benaderen van dit lied. Het is zoo bovenmate schoon! Het gaat hier allereerst over een tweegesprek tusschen God den Vader en God den Zoon, doch dan als den komenden Middelaar Gods en der menschen. De HEERE heeft tot mijnen Heere gesproken! God heeft tot Jezus gesproken! Later heeft God dat weer gedaan. En toen is immers de schare ontzet geworden. Het was een vreeselijk gebeuren. De hemelen scheurden zich, en de Almachtige sprak met geluiden die de menschen op konden vangen: Deze is Mijn geliefde Zoon in Wien al Mijn Welbehagen is!

Wie zou niet beven?

Ik beef als ik in dezen eersten geopenbaarden zin van dit lied de nederbuigende goedheid en liefde Gods proef. Of is het niet nederbuigend goed als God het U laat weten, dat Uw Koning verhoogd staat te worden? De weinige letteren die ik hier neerschreef zullen de hemelen doen ruischen van lieflijken zang. God zal Uw Koning verhoogen! Heeft Hem al eenigzins verhoogd. Doch de vervulling van deze weinige woorden wacht nog op dien vreeselijken dag die misschien al heel dicht bij is.

Het gaat over Uw Middelaar.

Want God de Vader kan God den Zoon niet verhoogen.

God de Zoon is van eeuwigheid tot in eeuwigheid



net zoo hoog en verheven als God te Vader. Zelfs toen Jezus schreeuwde: Mijn God, Mijn God, waarom hebt Gij Mij verlaten? toen was God de Zoon de Absoluut Volzalige bij en met den Vader en den Heiligen Geest. God kan niet verhoogd worden door God.

Maar Jezus kan verhoogd worden, en ook verlaagd. En Hij is verhoogd, omdat Hij eerst vreeselijk verlaagd is geworden (gewilliglijk).

Ik moet hier denken aan den slotzin van dit lied: Hij zal op den weg uit de beek drinken; daarom zal Hij het hoofd omhoog heffen. Dit laatste ziet op Jezus' verhooging vanuit het stof des doods.

Ja, Jezus is verhoogd. En van die verhooging spreken de eerste klanken van dit schoone lied.

Het zijn heel vreeselijke dingen die ons hier bezig houden.

Jehova zegt hier tot Adonai, onzen Adonai, en dat is Jezus: Kom uit de kuil te voorschijn, Mijn Zoon!

Hij was in de kuil geweest. In deze eerste woorden hebt ge de luisterrijke zijde van een onuitsprekelijke tegenstelling. Het zitten aan de rechterhand Gods is de hoogst mogelijke en de hoogst denkbare plaats in het tweede, het vernieuwde Heelal. Hooger kan het niet. Er zal in het Nieuwe Koninkrijk een troon zijn, en Een zit op den troon. (We gebruiken de editie van Johannes op Patmos.) En die Een is God, te prijzen tot in eeuwigheid. En die Een is de Fontein van alles wat in het eindelijke Heelal lieflijk is en weluidt. Leest het maar in de Openbaring van Jezus Christus. Boven den troon is de regenboog, de regeerende kleur in en om dien troon is den allerkostelijksten steen jaspis gelijk, dat is, onze diamant. Uit den troon komen de donderslagen en de bliksemen. Voor den troon is de kristallijne zee.

En nu zegt de psalm, dat die Een tot Jezus zeide: Kom, zit aan Mijne rechterhand! Neen, hooger kan het niet. Het zal verrukkelijk zijn voor Jezus, mijn Koning, om tot in alle eeuwigheid bewust vlak naast God te mogen zitten, te deelen in het Eeuwig Licht dat van Zijn aan'zicht straalt. O zeker, Jezus' blijdschap zal dan onbepaald, door 't licht dat van Gods aan'zicht straalt, ten hoogsten toppunt stijgen!

Neen, hooger kan het niet, hooger dan de verrukkelijke blijdschap van Jezus aan 's Vaders rechterhand!

Maar, o wat een tegenstelling!

Hij komt op die heerlijke plaats vanuit de hel!

En dan een aparte hel die voor Hem bereid was.

Jezus' hel is iets heel aparts.

En die hel, waarvan we nu niet veel zullen zeggen, was een tegenstelling. Daar was het juist het tegenovergestelde van de plaats in den troon van God. Ge weet, dat het heerlijke van de plaats in den troon van Vader de ervaring van Zijn liefde is in licht en leven, in blijdschap en groote verheuging, in hemelsche zaligheid. Welnu, in Jezus' hel was het de ervaring van

Gods vreeselijken toorn die Hem had doen brullen voor een eeuwigheid. Ik moet hier duizelen. Ik zal het U duidelijk maken waarom ik hier duizel.

Ge zult mij toestemmen, dat de hel de plaats der wanhoop is. En dat woordje wanhoop beschijft den toestand van hen die er gedurig aan moeten denken: Hier blijf ik tot in eeuwigheid! Nimmer zal er een einde komen aan vreeselijk lijden. Wanhoop is geen-hoop. Er is niet het kleinste lichtpuntje voor de hellewichten. Ik heb wel eens gezegd, dat als de Heere tot mij zou zeggen bij het ingaan in de hel: Daar moet ge blijven voor een millioen maal een millioen maal een millioen van jaren, dan zou ik met een glimlach met mijn lijden beginnen, want door al de zwarte angsten heen zou er toch altijd dat lichtpuntje zijn: Er komt toch een einde aan!

Maar zoo is het in hel juist niet. Daar ervaart men wanhoop. Er is geen hoop meer.

Nu dan, hoewel Jezus er uit gekomen is, ben ik er toch van verzekerd, dat Hij de wanhoop gesmaakt heeft. Ik weet dat, omdat de Heilige Schrift Hem ten voete uit schildert als den grooten Plaatsvervanger, die voor ons den eeuwigen dood stierf. Nu dan, de wanhoop behoort bij den eeuwigen dood. En heeft Jezus ook die vreeselijke smart gesmaakt.

Ziet ge nu de tegenstelling?

Het is om van te zingen. Jezus is verhoogd geworden vanuit de hel en de verdoemenis. Om nu te mogen zingen, te zingen.

En als wij van zulk een verhooging hooren, dan beginnen wij ook te zingen.

Want Jezus is van ons en wij zijn van Hem.

Die daar door God toegesproken wordt is Jezus Christus die ons vleesch en bloed heeft aangenomen, naar de Schriften. En die ons vleesch en bloed meegenomen heeft naar den troon Gods, maar dan verheerlijkt, vereeuwigd, vergeestelijkt, verhemelscht.

En zoo kom ik tot Uw deel, mijn broeder!

We zingen van Jezus verhooging en verblijden ons in Zijn blijdschap. En dat is goed. Wie de heerlijkheid van Gods Zoon ziet kan niet dan zingen.

Maar vergeet niet, dat Zijn verhooging Uw verhooging is.

Jezus zeide: die overwint, Ik zal hem geven met Mij te zitten in Mijnen troon, gelijk als Ik overwonnen heb en ben gezeten met Mijn Vader in Zijn troon!

G. Vos.



#### IN MEMORIAM

The Choral Society of the First Prot. Ref. Church hereby extends its deep sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. I. Cramer in the loss of her mother,

Mrs. B. Boerema

May our heavenly Father comfort and sustain them in their bereavement.

G. Vink, President

A. Vanden Berg, Sec'y.

## FROM HOLY WRIT

"And ye have forgotten the exhortation, which comes unto you as sons, which reasoneth (speaks with) as with sons: My son, regard not lightly the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art reproved of Him; For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth".—Heb.12:5, 6.

In this Scripture-passage the writer to the Hebrews reminds the readers of the Word of exhortation spoken by God Himself in the O. T. Scriptures through the pen of Solomon. The Old Testament quotation is found in Proverbs 3:11, 12.

The spiritual condition of the Hebrew Christians, the believers in Christ out of the Jews, was such that it was necessary for the writer of this letter to them to remind them of the "word of exhortation" here referred to. Their conduct plainly indicated that the truth of this word of exhortation did not so live in their mind and heart that it strengthened them unto the victory of faith, unto the running in a manner that indicated the intention to grasp the crown of life!

There was a lack of the strength of patience.

The position of God's people in this world is such that they have "need of patience". Wherefore this word is also very much to the point in our life as this was in a very special sense the case with the Hebrew Christians. Their position in the world seems to have been very trying and difficult. They were being tried by God. Affliction was their lot. And, quite likely, the affliction that they were experiencing came to them from the side of the unbelieving Jews, the kinsmen of the Hebrews according to the flesh. Their relatives according to the ties of blood, but their enemies by reason of the sword of division that Christ has come to bring upon earth. Because of Christ and their confession of His name, they were being ostracized, cast out of the Jewish community, made the object of hatred and scorn, and even imprisoned.

That these Hebrew Christians should be imprisoned by the ruling magistrates through the instigation of their kinsmen is the plain teaching of the Bible on this score. Repeatedly we read in the Acts of the Apostles that the Jews would raise up the ruling Gentiles against the Church. Such is the repeated story in Luke's account of Paul's travels. We have but to compare Acts 14:2 and Acts 14:19 to be persuaded that it were the disobedient Jews, in whom the obedience of faith was not found, who stir up the multitude against Paul. These make the way for God's people so that they are in need of the exhortation: "To continue in the faith" and also that they must be reminded "that through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom." Acts 14:22.

Paul himself makes mention of these Jews and of

their hostility in I Thess. 2:14-16. Writes he: "For ye brethren became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus: for ye also suffered the same things of your own countrymen, even as they did of the Jews, who both killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove out us, and please not God, and are contrary to all men; forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved; to fill up their sins always; but the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost."

Indeed, this is not a pleasant description. But it is very truthful and factual of a sad and terrible reality.

Such must have been the lot of these Hebrew Christians. For the writer to the Hebrews speaks in chap. 10:32 of such affliction. It had happened to them shortly after they were enlightened. They had then endured a great conflict of sufferings. The fury of the unbeliever had broken loose upon them. They had been made a gazing-stock of the people, a theatrical spectacle, both by means of reproaches and by the therein contained afflictions. (The Greek here has a fine touch. It indicates that the afflictions were inseparably connected with the being made a gazing-stock, a mockery of words and lashing tongues). By means of evil speech the finger of defamation pointed at the believers. And the result was that, although none had died the death of the martyr, yet some had been cast into prison. And those believers who had not themselves been cast into prison had also suffered for righteousness' sake. They had not been ashamed to cast their lot with that of those imprisoned, their brethren in the Lord. Yet, it had gone to such a length that even their gods had been spoiled, stolen from them. But this flight of affliction had not daunted their spirits, but had actuated their faith so that they rejoiced. They had girded up the loins of their mind and so had looked at the better and abiding treasures in the heavens.

But now things had changed. At least there was not such rejoicing, and so they are admonished to strengthen their weak hands and feeble knees!

Once more they must advance in the full assurance of faith and hope. Again they must feel and know themselves exceedingly blessed suffering for righteousness' sake. They must look at their reward in heaven. They must have the Word of Christ as a treasure in their soul: for great is your reward in heaven. Therefore the writer reminds the readers: "And ye took joyfully the spoiling of your possessions, knowing that ye have for yourselves a better possession and an abiding one." (Heb. 10:34).

When such spiritual weakness characterizes our walk then there are many things that we have forgotten.

Oh, to be sure, then we do not live in the joyful and blessed consciousness of the great liberty that is ours, so that we may boldly draw nigh to the throne of grace. Then hesitation is our lot on every hand. And the very

experiences of the tender and fatherly dealings of God with us we do not see in the light of the great liberty and freedom that is ours. In a word, we do not see that the Lord is dealing with us as with sons. We lose the sense of His gracious dealings with us. And that is more bitter than death, more bitter than words can tell!

And the Word of God thus comes to us. It came thus to the Hebrews to whom the text was first written. We read: "*And ye have forgotten the exhortation which reasoneth with you as with sons*". vs. 5.

Obviously the writer does not mean to say that the readers had forgotten altogether that such a Scripture passage is found in the Old Testament. He does not mean to say that their memory had failed them, and that this passage once having been memorized now they cannot recall. That surely cannot be the sense and implication of "forgotten". On the contrary, the writer means to say that due to the afflictions that the readers had passed through, probably were still experiencing in a measure, and due to their attitude of weakness and spiritual bewilderment and lethargy in these trials, the reality of God's gracious and merciful and all-wise dealings did not stand out sharply before their minds eyes, before the eye of the heart! (Eph. 1:18). And thus they failed to see and to confess that their trial was the *chastisement of God* upon them as sons! The very merciful design of God in this pain and sorrow did not encourage them on. The "knowing that affliction worketh patience, and patience approvedness, and approvedness hope—the hope that does not put to shame because of the love of God shed forth in their hearts" stood at low ebb!

This must change. They must remember the exhortation that speaks to them as sons. Their faith must become active. It must become a conscious activity. In this faith they must repent, turn unto the Lord in heartfelt contrition, kiss the rod that strikes them, and have the true joy in God through Christ Jesus their Lord.

They must no longer be weak!

There must be a spiritual power of faith in their life; the power that overcomes the world!

Yes, the condition of the Hebrews was so that the writer puts the statement "and ye have forgotten the exhortation" in the indicative mood. It is not a questionable statement. It is a statement of fact. A sad fact, but a fact nevertheless. But the truth must be out. It must be said. The knife of the Word of God, the two-edged knife, that cuts sharply and into the very soul and spirit, being a discernor of the inmost thoughts and intents of the heart, must be placed into the festering sore.

And so the writer says: and ye have forgotten the exhortation speaking unto you as unto sons!

Let this sink deep down into your hearts!

Hebrew Christians! such an attitude does not speak

of a hearing of the word mingled with faith. Remember the children of Israel who did not enter into Canaan because of their unbelief, whose bodies fell in the wilderness. The words: regard not lightly the chastening of the Lord and faint not when thou art rebuked of Him, is not the dynamic of the life of those who are of weak hands and feeble knees.

Now this latter was absolute in the case of Israel who murmurs at the difficulty of the way!

But it is a symptom of the same evil in the Hebrew readers and also in us when we faint and quail on the way. Let us not forget it. The readers of this letter might not when it was written to them. And, thanks be to God, the writer of this letter still "trusts better things of you (the readers) and things that accompany salvation, even though we thus speak." Hebrews 5:9. The writer knows that the readers had slipped, were even now slipping, and thus the "thus speaks" to them, warning them very earnestly against letting go of their great boldness in Christ Jesus. But even so, he trusts that with them this is only weakness, a momentary loss of the activity of faith, of the spiritual grasp on the unfailing and unchangeable promises of God, so that their failing to see with a spiritual eye the implication of God's dealings with them is but for the moment.

Hence, this is not a matter of thorough-going unbelief. It is not outright rebellion. It is "the fainting of the soul", that is "being scourged, corrected". It is the affliction while present, which is not a source of joy but of sadness—which while present is not spiritual seen for what it is and hence the fainting soul is *not exercised* thereby!

And so the writer calls the readers to their spiritual senses.

The child that is corrected must kiss the rod. He must be so exercised by the affliction that afterwards it may yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness in his life. He must say with the Psalmist from the depths of his heart, having been thus corrected, "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I observe Thy Word."

(to be continued)

G. Lubbers.



#### IN MEMORIAM

It pleased our heavenly Father to take from our midst on Saturday, October 1, 1949, our mother and grandmother,

Mrs. Bert Boerema

at the age of 65 years.

The knowledge that her life was Christ and her death gain comforts us at this time.

Mr. and Mrs. Irving Cramer

Mr. and Mrs. Charles Boerema

7 grandchildren.

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## PERISCOPE

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### Appeal . . . Comment . . .

(Note: The following was prepared and in the hands of the printer for publication in the Sept. 15th issue. Due to lack of space it has been held over until now.)

It seems to us it would be rather foolish to point out the very obvious difficulties which this booklet raises and upon this basis roundly condemn the position of the Liberated Churches. In the first place, our own history should warn us against such a procedure. We all recall, for example, how naive and foolish Dr. Hepp appeared when he proceeded in the same manner in the years of '24. He had read something of the difficulties in America and thought with a few sweeps of his pen he could tick our leaders on the fingers as though they were unruly children and say: "See here, boys, come to time and get rid of your foolish notions." As though that were all it amounted to.

Our own history proved time and again how difficult it is to properly approach and appreciate the position of others when separated by an ocean of distance and when correspondence alone can be the basis for judgment. Besides being separated physically we also learned that the environment and history through which the Lord has led His Church in the various portions of the globe certainly condition its construction of theology. For that reason again, it is so difficult to judge and distinguish. Time and again in '24 and later, our position was mis-interpreted and distorted by the leaders in the Netherlands. And that was true, even though to us, all the writings were so clear and simple a statement of Reformed truth.

It was not until personal contact was established and our struggle was properly viewed upon its own background, that our position was begun to be appreciated by a few. Hence, now also it would appear to be most foolish to simply inject our own subjective training and experience into an entirely different situation in the Netherlands. The result would probably be that we would be criticizing constructions and positions that were largely contrary to fact. That this is not mere hypothesis is a lesson from our own history and its reception in the Netherlands.

That same danger has already become evident in our judgment of the strife in the Netherlands. Our own Rev. Vos pointed this out in the Standard Bearers of Jan. and Feb. of 1948. There he makes clear that upon reading the literature of the Liberated Churches at first we were "shocked" and "suspicious". But, says Rev. Vos, personal contact with Professor Schilder certainly "removed much *misunderstanding*" and was "a great blessing for both Dr. Schilder and us".

This was also the opinion of Prof. Ophoff as is evident from the letter which our Committee for Correspondence wrote and sent to the Liberated Churches. Some time after the visit of Dr. Schilder, this committee, of which Prof. Ophoff is a member, expressed the following: "Wij zijn er van overtuigd dat wij als Kerken veel gemeen hebben. Beide kerkengroepen staan op den grondslag van de Drie Formulieren van Eenigheid. . . . we gelooven ook dat het ontstaan uwer Kerken een Reformatorisch vasthouden en terug grijpen was naar de aloude, Gereformeerde, beproefde paden. . . . Het bezoek van Prof. K. Schilder hier ten onzent heeft er ook nog weer aan toe meegewerkt dat we ons nog meer tot U gevoelen aangetrokken." (Acts of Synod, 1948, page 38).

Translation: "We are convinced that we as Churches have much in common. Both Church groups stand on the basis of the Three Formulas of Unity. . . . we also believe the origin of your Churches was a Reformatory return to, and maintenance of, the time-honored and proven Reformed paths. . . . The visit of Prof. K. Schilder here among us has once again had the effect that we feel ourselves still more attracted to you." This testimony, to which Prof. Ophoff also subscribed, is rather striking in view of the fact that the origin of the Liberated Churches is so closely connected with their peculiar covenant conception and also when we consider that Prof. Schilder spent the greater share of his time here explaining and expounding this covenant conception.

We also would prefer, therefore, to proceed on the assumption that the leaders of the Liberated Churches are men of erudition and scholarship, whose purpose is to maintain and develop the Reformed faith. Again the very obviousness of the forthright expressions in some of their writings, which to our mind contradict this judgment, should indicate that these difficulties have been met and harmonized, to their thinking at least, with the Reformed position. Here also closer contact has left this judgment. In the same issues of the Standard Bearer referred to above, Rev. Vos also wrote: "We know now that all pelagianism is wholly foreign to the conception of the covenant and baptism on the part of Dr. Schilder". And practically without exception, the judgment of those who attended the conferences with Dr. Schilder while he visited in this country, was that the Liberated Churches were fundamentally Reformed. (That sounds a great deal like the Synod of '24). We should not become guilty, therefore, of raising walls or making accusations which will stifle all further discussion.

In the second place, a severe denunciation of the Liberated Churches upon the basis of this article alone would be foolish because of the very nature of the booklet. We do not believe that even a purely objective criticism of this writing upon its face value would

serve to enlighten discussion of the differences which separate us. This appeal was not written as a polemic over against our position but meant to bring out most sharply the differences within the Netherlands for the youth there. We believe it is complimentary and to the credit and praise of the youth in the Netherlands that they enter into the life and activities of their Church and desire to further their cause. We are inclined to wonder how many young people in this country, who bear the name Reformed, would study and understand such a writing as Professor Veenhof's.

But, the point is, that once again this is not all that can be, or has been said. Here too, the advice of Rev. Vos is pertinent, that one investigate *all* the sources before building structures with resulting conclusions. Further, that though there are differences between the Liberated Churches and us, "we certainly would not be guilty of the sin to refuse to hear the other side. . . ." To our mind, this not only demands patience and an attempt to appreciate one another's viewpoint, but also personal contact and discussion. And that before the intervening walls are built too high too scale; as was done in the U. S. in 1924 and in the Netherlands in 1942.

Finally, in order to properly judge the writing of Professor Veenhof, we should bear in mind that it does not represent a position which is settled and binding in the Liberated Churches. Especially in respect to some of the details and intricacies we are rather sure that many in these Churches would not subscribe to all that was written. In the Liberated Churches the situation is such that there is still room for discussion and difference. In this way they hope to develop and formulate the truth and that should be our purpose. This can only be accomplished through a fair and open exchange of thought which is conducted upon a respectful level of polemics.

Here, too, we do well to recall what Rev. Vos wrote in the Standard Bearer of January 1, 1948: "We have learned to know Prof. Schilder as a beloved brother in Christ, as a faithful servant of that same Christ, as a man mighty in the Scriptures, as a truly Reformed man whom to throw out of the church communion cries to heaven. Of course, there are differences! Do all ministers. . . . think alike on all dogma's? You know they do not! Follow the path you have begun to tread and you will end up with peace, but it will be the peace of the graveyard, where no one disagrees with no one. They are alike still, but it is the stillness of death. The end of the pathway you have followed in 1924-1946 is the path that will surely end with Roman Catholicism where there is but one voice of authority: the Pope!

". . . I wish you could have *seen* our communion, could have attended our conferences, could have heard the words that were spoken on both sides which spoke

of warmth, of love, of trust, of appreciation. And all this in the knowledge that we differ on some points. What of it? No one has all the truth. And we will learn one from the other."

This would seem to be the honorable course and purpose. Hence, in our comment we would like to draw a few general lines in the hope that they will evoke further discussion.

It hardly need be said again, that the fundamental differences between us and the Liberated Churches concerns the idea of the covenant itself; or the question: what is the covenant? But exactly this fundamental difference makes it difficult to constructively criticize any one particular writing. The result of this difference is that the content of all the various related concepts are at variance. And consequently, if we simply proceed oblivious of this difference we would again be injecting our thought into a wholly different structure. It would appear to be most beneficial and helpful to a fruitful discussion, therefore, if some of the Liberated brethren would carefully examine and criticize our position as presented in the brochure of Rev. Hoeksema entitled: "De Geloovigen en Hun Zaad"; which has already received wide circulation in the Netherlands. And this should be done in the light of what the author writes in the preface to the second edition. Perhaps the Rev. Doekes could continue his discussions.

In the second place, an elucidation of the relationship between God's council of predestination and the covenant according to the concept of the Liberated brethren can be expected towards clarification. We maintain that the very history of Abraham "emphasizes most strongly, both in word and act, the absolute monergism of the divine power in accomplishing the things promised; . . . ." And again: "Election is a principle entering specifically into the *application* of redemption; . . . . Election is intended to bring out the *gratuitous* character of grace. With regard to the objective part of the work of redemption there is scarcely any need of stressing this. That man himself made no contribution towards accomplishing the atonement is obvious in itself. But no sooner does the redeeming work inter into the subjectivity of man than the obviousness ceases, although the reality of the principle is not, of course, in the least abated. The semblance easily results, that in receiving and working out the subjective benefits of grace for his transformation, the individual man has to some extent been the decisive factor. *And to affirm this, to however small a degree, would be to detract from the glory of God.*" (Last italics mine, W.H.) This quotation is from *Biblical Theology* by the late Prof. G. Vos, pages 94 and 108. We found his discussion of these things very enlightening and instructive.

We do not mean thereby to declare that the Liber-



ated brethren deny this. In fact, we make bold to state that it is not sufficient to simply declare that "these beliefs have strictly no place in their covenant theology, which is thoroughly arminian." And we also expect that this will be refuted and clarified by the Liberated.

Finally, in general, we would appreciate an exegetical exposition of the more classic passages in Scripture that deal with the problems involved; especially Rom. 9 and Gal. 3. Hence, we also make an appeal that these be forthcoming.

But to return to the *Appel* of Professor Veenhof. The professor maintained that baptism is a seal of God's promise to all those who are properly baptized, without distinction. Further that the realization of this promise is contingent, to some extent at least, upon its proper reception by the baptized individual. This is the construction that is most difficult for us to follow and harmonize with Scripture. Although we prefer to say with Scripture, that baptism seals a fact, namely—the righteousness that is by faith (Rom. 4:11), this would not yet remove the difficulty. Whether God declares something factually or in the form of a promise, the result is the same in respect to those to whom it is declared. Either a fact or a promise that God declares is executed. His promises are also always factually realized.

Hence, the answer which Professor Veenhof gave to the question: How does it occur that many of those who are baptized are not saved, was disappointing and weak. On the one hand, the author maintained emphatically that each and every baptism possesses exactly the same content and power. But on the other hand, in answer to the question above, he writes that the ungodly make that baptism powerless. The question naturally arises: Is it possible that the ungodly possess an apparently greater power than God? This question and problem certainly demands clarification.

In the second place, at times Professor Veenhof seems to pre-suppose grace in covenant children after all, even though he repudiates the position that baptism seals internal grace; since he wants nothing of such an assumption. He writes: "In the kingdom of heaven. . . God includes with the fathers, also their children as His children and that in that way the grace of salvation is extended to the as yet unborn children and that without distinction." In fact, here it seems is a grace even preceeding birth, and to all without distinction.

In close connection with the above, the professor also suggests a baptismal grace in the question: "Does this grace which is presented in baptism always lead to the full salvation of all those who are baptized?" This certainly approaches the teaching of a subjective covenantal grace which is common to all, at least within

the bounds of the covenant. If this is the contention of the writer, here for example, is a position to which other leaders in the Liberated Churches would not subscribe.

It is difficult to harmonize this with what the Professor wrote some time ago and which we also transcribed in the Standard Bearer. At that time, concerning God's attitudes he stated: "The result of. . . election is that there are now living in this world two specific groups of individuals. There are the *elect*, to whom God in Christ reveals His grace. These are the vessels of mercy that partake of God's disposition of grace. And overagainst them are the *reprobate*, the vessels of wrath, towards whom God's disposition of wrath is poured out unto eternal destruction." And again: "But besides, there is in God an attitude of *wrath* against all the reprobate. And that disposition permeates all of God's speech and dealing with the reprobate. It directs and motivates all His deeds for and in them."

Finally, the alternative of refusing the position of the Professor is not at all to accept the Synodical standpoint of pre-supposed regeneration. This too we reject as an unwarranted assumption, just as firmly as we do a promise for all. We maintain that the proper development of the truth of the covenant and baptism is in the direction of the beautiful and Scriptural organic conception as presented in "De Geloovigen en Hun Zaad", by Rev. Hoeksema. We believe that this contains the directive outline which follows the framework of Scripture and should be maintained and defended.

W. Hofman.



#### IN MEMORIAM

On the morning of October 8th, 1949, it pleased God to remove from this vale of tears after a long period of suffering, my beloved husband

! Bernard Dornbos

We are comforted to know that the Lord has promised to be the Husband to the widow, and that he who has gone from us is delivered from the body of death and is clothed with the house which is from above.

Mrs. B. Dornbos.

South Holland, Illinois.

\* \* \* \*

#### IN MEMORIAM

The Ladies Society of the Prot. Ref. Church of South Holland hereby express its sincere sympathy to one of their members, Mrs. Grace Dornbos, in the loss of her husband,

Mr. B. Dornbos

We pray that the God of all grace may comfort our sister with His own blessed presence and cause her to rest in the assurance that His ways are perfect and that there remaineth a rest for the people of God.

Rev. M. Schipper, Pres.

Mrs. E. Bruisma, Sec'y.