

THE STANDARD *Bearer* A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

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MEDITATION

Het Teeken Christi

“En dit zal u het teeken zijn: gij zult het kindeken vinden in doeken gewonden en liggende in de kribbe.”

Lucas 2:12.

't Was stil geworden rondom Bethlehem.
Want het was nacht.

Alles sliep. Mensch en beest, moede van het leven van een dag, hadden zich ter ruste begeven, en naarmate het later werd, werd het ook stiller.

Maar er waren herders in diezelfde landstreek.

Zij konden niet slapen, want ze moesten de nachtwacht houden bij de kudde schapen die aan hunne zorg was toevertrouwd.

Ik denk, dat hunne woorden weinige waren, en steeds weiniger werden, al naarmate het donkerder werd. Een nachtwacht leent zich niet voor onderhoudend gesprek. Daar wordt men al stiller. Men waakt wel, maar men hoorde de sprake van den nacht. En die sprake is: Houdt U stil! Laat Uw woorden weinige zijn en laat Uw stem dan ook nog laag blijven.

En toen was er iets gebeurd, dat de herders deed vreezen met eene groote vreeze. Terwijl ze zoo stilie rondom het wachtvuur zaten, stond er plotseling een troongeest vlak bij hen. En die troongeest bracht met zich de glorie des hemels, de glorie van God!

O, wat waren die mannen geschrokken!

De hemel en de hemelsche heerlijkheid verschrikt den mensch die stof en assche is. Eerst, omdat we aardbewoners zijn, en ook, omdat we zondaren zijn.

Maar het waren zondaren die barmhartigheid ervaren hadden. Zij behoorden tot de gekenden van voor de grondlegging der wereld. Het waren geloovige herders. En dat houdt in, dat God hen beminde. En God had dien Engel goede instructies gegeven. Zorg ervoor, dat ge hen gerust stelt, als zij bij het zien van Mijn

heerlijkheid zullen vreezen met eene groote vreeze. Stel hen dan gerust!

En de Engel zeide: Vreest niet, want, ziet, ik verkondig U groote blijdschap!

En zoo waren zij ietwat bekomen van hun eersten schrik. In elk geval zooveel, dat zij acht konden geven op de woorden die volgden.

Daarna hadden zij gehoord van het Evangelie: de eindelijke vervulling van de moederbelofte in het Paradijs. Het groote Zaad der vrouw was gekomen.

“U is heden geboren de Zaligmaker, welke is Christus de Heere!”

En dan volgt de tekst waarbij we even willen stilstaan: En dit zal u het teeken zijn: gij zult het kindeken vinden in doeken gewonden en liggende in de kribbe.

Toen was het hun gegeven om een hemelsch lied te hooren. Opmerkend in dat lied was, dat ze eerst aan God denken, en toch, het was ook gemakkelijk te verstaan. Die Engelen zijn Engelen Gods. Steeds staren zij in Gods aangezicht. Zij zijn vol van God, en daarom loven zij Hem dan ook ten allen tijde. Bovendien, de boodschap die gebracht werd aan de aarde was immers de openbaring van het lieflijkste dat God ooit had doen zien? De geboorte van Jezus is allereerst dit: God geopenbaard in het vleesch! En welk een openbaring! God gaat naar de hel voor Zijn volk. Dat wisten de engelen nu. En daarom gingen zij aan 't zingen. En dat dit lied gezongen werd ten aanhooren van die herders die het ons verteld hebben, is opzettelijk geschied. Het geeft richting aan alle blijdschap bij het hooren van het Evangelie. God zegt daardoor tot ons: Ook bij de kribbe van Uw Zaligmaker, denkt er aan: Ik moet alle eer, aanbidding en majesteit ontvangen tot in der eeuwen eeuwigheid.

En daarom, dit eerst: Eere zij God in de hoogste hemelen!

En ga dan maar verder. Zijt dan maar verheugd, dat ge het Kindeken zult vinden!

Gaat dan maar henen en zoekt en vindt het teeken!
En ze deden het.

Ze verlieten de kudde, en haastten zich naar Bethlehem.

Het geloof van die eenvoudige herders wilde gevoed worden.

Gevoed door het wonderlijke teeken.



En dit zal u het teeken zijn: gij zult het kindeken vinden in doeken gewonden en liggende in de kribbe.

Eerst, let wel, dat die herders geloovige menschen waren. Dat kan men opmaken uit veel en velerlei. Het sterkste komt dit uit in hun geloof aan die wonderlijke boodschap. Luistert: "En het geschiedde als de Engelen van hen weggevaren waren naar den hemel, dat de herders tot elkander zeiden: Laat ons dan henen-gaan naar Bethlehem, en laat ons zien het woord dat er geschied is, hetwelk de Heere ons heeft kond gedaan". Hun geloof schittert bij elk gesproken woord tot elkander. Er schijnt geen zween van twijfel te zijn geweest bij die mannen. Zonder twijfel mogen we aannemen, dat die eenvoudige herders behoorden tot de zeven duizend die er altijd overgebleven zijn in Israel.

En ze zijn heengegaan met haast. Ook die haast is sprekend.

En als zij het gezien hadden, maakten zij alom bekend. . . .

O zeker, die mannen waren geloovige mannen Gods.

Want het nam geloof om dit teeken te zien, om in dat teeken een woord van God te zien, en om bij het zien daarvan in gelukkige jubel uit te breken.

Het teeken: een kindeken liggende in een kribbe, en gewikkeld in doeken.

Is dat nu iets om bij te gaan zingen? Heeft daar de geheele Christenheid zich warm om gemaakt? Wat is er nu toch te zien aan een zwak kindeken? En dan nog wel een kindeken, wiens ouders zoo arm en ellendig zijn, dat ze het hebben laten geboren worden in een stal, in een kribbe gelegd, net maar omwikkeld met wat doeken?

En het wordt nog moeilijker bij die zure kribbe, waar de beesten uit gegeten hadden, als we even stilstaan, en ons geheugen raadplegen. Wat hadden die Engelen ook weer gesproken en gezongen? O ja, de Zaligmaker was geboren, Christus de Heere!

En dit wil een teeken zijn van die heuglijke mare?

Klinkt dat niet vreemd?

Het lijkt ons vreemd toe, dat die eenvoudige herders geen moeite hadden bij het aanschouwen van dit armzalige tafereel in de stal! Indien zij elkander hadden aangestaard en in elkaars oogen een groote teleurstelling hadden gelezen, om dan stilzwijgend zich om te keeren en langzaam terug te wandelen naar de kudde, indien ze dat gedaan hadden, misschien ook nog een weinig het hoofd geschud, of met een verlegen lachje gezegd hadden: dat is toch ook wat? dan hadden we ge-

oordeeld, dat zij heel natuurlijk handelden.

Want er was toch echt niet veel te zien van glorie en groote vreugde. Wat zeg ik? Er was niets te zien van dat alles. Voor het natuurlijk oog is er niets te zien op het Kerstfeest. Het blijft daarom een vreese-lijk gedoe op aarde, waar we zien dat Herodes, Kajafas, Pilatus en de Romeinsche soldaten Kerstfeest vieren. Dat geschied immers vandaag? Iedereen viert hoogtij op den dag der dagen.

Maar het teeken van den Zaligmaker?

Een teeken is in de Heilige Schrift iets zichtbaars of hoorbaars uit de tegenwoordige wereld, waardoor iets onderscheiden wordt, dat op zichzelf onzichtbaar is. Ge hebt dat immers in den regenboog? Daar zien we iets uit deze wereld, dat ons vertelt van de onzichtbare verbondstrouw van Jehovah.



Maar hier?

Dit moet de Zaligmaker beteekenen?

Komt, laat ons eens opsommen:

Eerst, een arme moeder, die nog niet eens een "layette" heeft voor haar eerstgeboren zoon! Zij heeft hem in wat lappen gewikkeld.

Een vader die niets zegt. Hij ziet alles maar stil begaan. Hij is iemand die niet genoeg bekendheid heeft om in de bange periode van Maria toegang tot een *huis* te erlangen. Hij moet zijn vrouw naar een vuile stal leiden.

Een vuile stal. Ik zou U willen waarschuwen om die stal niet mooi te maken. Laat dat spinrag en mest met rust. En vooral geen zachte en aantrekkelijke tinten in Uw schilderij. Het is een vuile stal, een beestenstal. En de kribbe waar de beesten, al kwijlende, uit vreten. Ze ruiken meestal zuur.

En een kindeken. Een pasgeboren wicht. Wie kan daar nu iets van verwachten.

Stemt het maar toe: het is een bevreemdend teeken.

Het moet beteekenen, dat de Zaligmaker van miljoenen kinderen Gods gekomen is, die met Almachtige kracht de eeuwige bergen van zonde en schuld zal opnemen, torsen, en wegdragen, zoodat ze nimmermeer gezien zullen worden. Ik kan begrijpen, dat een blinde wereld wat gaat knoeien met dit teeken. Ze begrijpen er niets van. Om nu in den stijl van ons tekstwoord te blijven: er is nog niet één natuurlijk mensch geweest die de taal van dit teeken verstaan heeft. *Ze zagen het woord niet.*

Hoe zou het ook?

Het teeken is object des geloofs.

En het geloof is de almachtige kracht Gods die Hij gewrocht heeft in Christus als Hij Hem uit de dooden heeft opgewekt, een almachtige kracht Gods die ook in ons werkt die gelooven. Efeze 1.

Door het geloof zien we een geheele wereld die voor het natuurlijke oog verborgen bleef. Zonder regene-

ratie kan men het Koninkrijk Gods niet zien. Dus ook den Koning van dat Koninkrijk niet.



O, dat teeken!

Jezus in ellende!

Ja, ik kan er in komen, dat men jubelen zal tot in alle eeuwigheid bij het zien van dit teeken, en nog veel meer bij de vervulling, bij hetgen, dat beteekend werd.

Eigenlijk zullen we niet anders zien dan dit bevreemdende voor het natuurlijk oog.

Wezenlijk is het zien van een Lam staande als geslacht niet anders dan hetgeen we bezingen in den Kerstnacht.

Jezus in ellende.

Ziedaar, de gedachten van eeuwigen vrede van God!

Dat was de eenigste weg waarlangs het verdwaalde kind naar Huis mocht gaan. Een andere weg is er niet.

Komaan, laat ons eens zien.

Ik zal beginnen met te poneeren, dat dit een lieflijk teeken is. Het is zoo lieflijk, dat ge zult zingen, zingen tot in eeuwigheid.

Jezus is de Christus Gods. Hij is het Lam Gods, dat de zonde der wereld weg zal dragen.

Maar omdat God recht is, kan Hij dat alleen doen door in onze plaats te gaan staan.

In onze plaats! Daar hebt ge den sleutel tot het mysterie.

Jezus moest Zijn volk zalig maken van hunne zonde. Maar die zonde hadden de heiligheid en rechtvaardigheid van God aangerand. En er moest genoeg gedaan worden aan die deugden Gods. Die rechtvaardigheid en gerechtigheid en heiligheid en waarheid Gods eischen, dat de zondaar sterve tot in eeuwigheid, dat hij onderga onder al de baren en de golven van den toorn en grimmigheid Gods. Dat hij armzalig en rampzalig worde, en dat hij geheel en al verdaan worde.

Zou daarom Jezus de Zaligmaker zijn van Zijn volk, dan moest Hij dat al ondergaan.

En nu kunnen we het teeken verstaan. En nu kunnen we er iets van zien, waarom de herders terugkeeren, al predikende, en al zingende.

Jezus behoort in de stal, in de kribbe, in windselen gehuld. Aan het uiterste randje der wereld behoort onze Heiland. En het zal al erger worden. Straks moet Hij ook van dat randje af. Geen plaats voor Jezus.

O ja, het teeken is treffend en schoon. Het past. Hoe zou het anders? God heeft dit teeken uitgedacht van alle eeuwigheid. Er zit Goddelijke wijsheid in. Wie zou niet jubelen?

Het teeken beteekent zaligheid.

Het teekent is een *woord* dat *gezien* werd. Leest den tekst en het verband maar.

Het teeken beteekent, dat een Ander voor U naar de hel gaat.

De zure kribbe zal al zuurder worden. De armoede

die de stal ons predikt zal al schreiender worden. Het zwakke kind zal al zwakker worden. Straks ligt Hij te kruipen en te zweeten in den hof van Gethsemane. Nog wat later vindt de vunzige, stinkende stal haar vervulling in het heengeworpen worden tusschen alle werelden heen. Er zal geen ruimte meer zijn voor Hem. Hij hangt, Hij hangt tusschen twee werelden!

O, het teeken is zoo sprekend!



Maar er is nog meer in dat teeken!

Het teeken spreekt niet alleen van onze armoede, en van het wonder der Substitutie, maar het orgelt ook van een onbeschrijfelijke liefde, de liefde Gods.

Die stal, die kribbe, die windselen, die groote armoede roepen U toe: Ik ben om Uwentwille arm geworden! Ik ga U toonen hoe groot, hoe diep, hoe hoog Mijn liefde is.

Want ziet hoe groote liefde ons de Vader heeft bewezen, dat Jezus voor ons gestorven is terwijl wij nog zondaars waren.

Zoo lief heeft God de wereld gehad, dat Hij Zijn eeniggeboren Zoon gegeven heeft. . . .

Ziet ge, God is de Liefde.

Dat weet God van Zichzelf, en Hij verblijdt Zich in Zijn onuitsprekelijke deugden.

Maar Hij wil, dat ontelbare scharen dat ook zullen weten. God verlangt er naar, dat straks een ontelbare schare voor Zijn aangezicht zal staan, en het Hem al maar toe zullen roepen: Gij, o God, hebt ons Gode gekocht door Uw bloed! Gij hebt Uw liefde zoo schoon en zoo heerlijk geopenbaard, dat Gij Zelf naar de hel gegaan zijt voor ons! En Gij hebt ons al deze heerlijkheid doen zien en zult die ons doen zien tot in alle eeuwigheden!

De openbaring van God in het vleesch heeft een theologisch motief.

De hoofdzaak is niet, dat vele menschen behouden worden. Als dat de hoofdzaak ware, dan zou de Heere alle menschen hebben behouden.

De hoofdzaak is, dat God bekend worde.

We zullen der Engelen les aanhooren en toonen, dat we geleerd werden door den Heiligen Geest; we zullen op ons Kerstfeest de lieflijkste plaats behouden voor het: Eere Zij God in de hoogste hemelen!

G. Vos.

* * * *

CLASSIS EAST

will meet in regular session Wednesday, January 4, 1950, at the First Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan. Matters for the next Synod should be brought to this meeting.

D. Jonker, S. C.

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EDITORIALS

As To Conditions

At the close of our last article we were discussing Canons, chapter I, Rejection of Errors, V.

The Arminians, as is plain from that article, presented the entire way of salvation as conditional, and, therefore, as depending on something man must do, on conditions which he must fulfill in order to be saved.

They were afraid that the doctrine of unconditional election and unconditional salvation would lead to a denial of the responsibility of man. And the latter they wanted to maintain at all cost, even at the expense of the truth of sovereign and unconditional election and reprobation.

Hence, they spoke of a conditional election, and, therefore, of a conditional salvation.

For, let it be plainly understood, these two belong together. Either salvation is conditional because election is conditional; or both are unconditional. For the application of salvation flows from the counsel of election. Hence, he that teaches that faith is a condition unto salvation, must necessarily teach that it is also a condition unto salvation.

And this the Arminians did, indeed, teach.

Already from Art. II, of ch. I, Rejection of Errors, we learn that they taught "that there are various kinds of election of God unto eternal life: the one general and indefinite, the other particular and definite; and that the latter in turn is either incomplete, revocable, non-decisive and conditional, or complete, irrevocable, decisive and absolute."

And in the article we are now discussing, I, B, V, we read further about this incomplete or complete, non-decisive and complete election of particular persons. And this is further explained by saying that in God's election of particular persons unto eternal life not only faith, but also the obedience of faith, holiness, godliness and perseverance are conditions and causes of the unchangeable election unto glory.

You understand what this means, reader?

Briefly, it means that for the Arminian the whole way of salvation is strewn with conditions!

And conditions means that, ultimately, everything depends on man's free will.

We have all learned in catechism that the Arminians teach an election on the basis of foreseen faith. God chose those of whom He foresaw that they would believe in Christ. In other words the election of God unto salvation is conditioned by man's faith.

But, true though this is, it is by no means all of the Arminian doctrine. They cannot possibly stop there.

When a man is chosen on condition of faith, his election is not yet sure, it is not yet complete and decisive. May he not lose his faith and become an unbeliever?

Hence, there is a further condition, which man must fulfill in order to have a place in God's election unto eternal life and be saved. That further condition is the obedience of faith, which includes, of course, holiness and a godly walk.

But even this is not sufficient.

A man may be chosen on condition of his foreseen faith, and his foreseen obedience of faith, holiness and godliness, and still his election unto eternal life may be incomplete and non-decisive. May he not fall away, apostatize from the faith? And if he does, is not his election changed into reprobation? Hence, a final condition must be attached to God's election of man unto eternal life. And that final condition is perseverance. Only the man whom God foresaw as persevering unto the end is elect. And only when man fulfills all the conditions can he be saved.

Do you not see, reader, that this road of conditions is a very slippery path, and that there is abundant reason to be "vuurbang" for this Pelagian and Arminian term?

Once you say that you are saved on condition of faith, you must continue and maintain that you are saved on condition of obedience, on condition of holiness, on condition of godliness, on condition of perseverance.

And always a condition is something, some requirement man must fulfill.

That means that the entire way of salvation, from beginning to end is, ultimately, dependent on the will of man.

Let us, therefore, reject this Pelagian heresy, together with the term that is used to express it.

But, you say, how then about the responsibility of man? Do we not need the term *condition* to denote that man is a responsible creature? Do we not make man "a stock and block" by laying all emphasis on the truth of election and sovereign grace?

My answer is decidedly: No!

I must say more about this in the future. I am not yet through with my discussion of conditions.

But let me suggest that instead of the Pelagian term "condition" we use the term "in the way of".

We are saved in the way of faith, in the way of sanctification, in the way of perseverance unto the end.

This term is capable of maintaining both: the absolute sovereignty of God in the work of salvation and the responsibility of man.

But, as I say, about this I must write more in the future.

I must now continue my discussion of the question

whether, in our Reformed Standards, faith is ever presenter as a condition unto salvation.

For this purpose I want to quote just one article from the second chapter of the Canons, viz., II, A. 8.

In the preceding articles under this head the Canons spoke of the atoning death of Christ and its infinite value, of the promiscuous preaching of the gospel unto all unto whom God sends it in His good pleasure, of the responsibility of those who reject the gospel, and of the truth that those that are saved are indebted for this benefit solely to the grace of God. And then it continues in Art. 8:

"For this was the sovereign counsel, and most gracious will and purpose of God the Father, that the quickening and saving efficacy of the most precious death of his Son should extend to all the elect, for bestowing upon them alone the gift of justifying faith, thereby to bring them infallibly unto salvation: that is, it was the will of God, that Christ by the blood of the cross, whereby he confirmed the new covenant, should effectually redeem out of every people, tribe, nation, and language, all those, and those only, who were from eternity chosen to salvation and given him by the Father; that he should confer upon them faith, which together with all the other saving gifts of the Holy Spirit, he purchased for them by his death; should purge them from all sin, both original and actual, whether committed before or after believing; and having faithfully preserved them even to the end, should at last bring them free from every spot and blemish to the enjoyment of glory to his own presence forever."

Notice that in this beautiful article, the entire truth of salvation, from election to eternal glory, is completely covered. And I quote it here in order to show, not only that it does not speak of conditions, but that there is absolutely no room for the notion in the entire article.

You cannot even make room in this quite comprehensive statement of the truth of salvation for the idea that faith is a condition of our entering the covenant of God, or of our obtaining salvation.

Just let us check up on this by following the various clauses and phrases of the article.

The article states, first of all, that it was sovereignly determined in the counsel of God, that the quickening and saving efficacy of the most precious death of the Son of God should extend to all the elect and to them only. This is surely unconditional. It is an absolutely sovereign determination of God with respect to the exact scope of the power of the cross: it is limited to the elect, and it will surely save them all.

There is no room here, therefore, for the idea that faith is a condition of salvation.

Secondly, the article continues by stating: "for bestowing upon them alone the gift of justifying faith,

thereby to bring them infallibly unto salvation." Here, too, it is impossible to speak of faith as a condition, in any sense of the word. God bestows the justifying faith. It belongs, therefore, to salvation itself. How then can a gift of salvation be a condition unto that gift? This is, evidently, absurd. Moreover, by this gift of justifying faith, bestowed upon us unconditionally by God, He leads us infallibly unto salvation.

It is, therefore, all determined by God, faith and salvation, and there can be no conditions. There simply is no room for anything that man must fulfill before he can attain to salvation.

There is more in this article.

But the discussion of the rest must wait until the next issue, D. V.

H. H.



Prof. Veenhof's Letter

Mag ik U vriendelijk vragen het volgende in Uw *Standard Bearer* op te nemen? Bij voorbaat mijn hartelijken dank!

Zeer tegen mijn zin werd ik, zooals uit het juist door mij ontvangen nummer van de *Standard Bearer* bleek, in de polemië gewikkeld welke op het oogenblik de Protestant Reformed Churches beroert. Had ik geweten, dat zooiets het gevolg zou kunnen zijn van het opnemen van mijn brief in Uw blad, dan zou ik mij—of liever, in dit geval—dan zou mijn vrouw zich wel driemaal hebben bedacht, eer zij toestemming zou hebben gegeven voor de publicatie van mijn snel en uit het hart geschreven epistel. Niet, dit ik polemië zou schuwen. Als ze noodzakelijk was, heb ik mij daaraan nooit onttrokken. Maar ik ben er wel bang voor mij in te laten met een polemië, welke onder broeders in een ver land en een mij vreemde situatie wordt gevoerd.

Omdat ik nu evenwel, tegen wil en dank, toch in de polemië, welke zich om de broeders De Jong en Kok heeft ontketend, werd betrokken, wil ik graag om der wille van de zaak nog een enkel woordje zeggen. Het zou mij innig verheugen, indien de gerezen kwestie in den stijl der kerk en overeenkomstig de norm voor de gemeenschap der heiligen werd opgelost.

Eerst wil ik nog iets zeggen over het publiceeren van den brief van collega Holwerda door Ds. Ophoff. Ik moet, ook na zijn artikel, al mijn bezwaren tegen de plaatsing van dat stuk onverzwakt handhaven. Ik kan mijn bezwaar, met weglating van alle bijkomstigheden, misschien het best als volgt omschrijven: Ds. Ophoff betoogt dat hij de broeders Kok en De Jong niet beschuldigd en veroordeeld heeft, maar dat hij tot drie maal toe gezegd heeft: ALS de beweringen van Prof. Holwerda waar zijn, DAN, . . . Inderdaad, dit

"als" is mij niet ontgaan! Maar daarin schuilt nu juist mijn hoofdbezwaar! Ds. Ophoff had over deze zaak m.i., geen letter op papier MOGEN zetten, eer hij over deze zaak met zijn medebroeders De Jong en Kok, die daarin rechtstreeks betrokken waren, had gesproken. Zoolang hij niets meer kon zeggen dan *als, als, als*, . . . was alle schrijven over de kwestie principieel *fout!* Indien een predikant in een gemeente of een redacteur van een krant, op grond van ontvangen mededeelingen of brieven, op deze wijze te werk zou gaan en maar vast zou gaan zeggen *als, als, als*, . . . dan zouden zij hun gemeente of hun lezerskring in een oogenblik tijd in verwarring gebracht en uit elkaar hebben geslagen. Bovendien, en dat is veel belangrijker; wij moeten naar den wil Gods de eer en het goed gerucht van onze naasten niet alleen niet aantasten, maar ook en dat met alle kracht *voorstaan* en *bevorderen*.

Stelt U zich eens voor, dat Ds. Ophoff, nadat hij den brief van collega Holwerda las, dien bewaard en, nadat zijn collega's van hun reis naar Nederland thuis waren gekomen, met hen daarover gesproken had en hij daarna, indien dat nog noodig bleek, Prof. Holwerda toestemming had gevraagd om zijn brief te publiceeren, zou dan deze geheele kwestie niet een totaal ander aanzien hebben gekregen? En zal niet ieder Christen, als hij vergelijkt wat Ds. Ophoff gedaan heeft, met wat hij had *kunnen* en *moeten* doen, met nadruk betuigen, dat dat laatste veel meer, ja, alléén, naar den Geest van Christus is?

Voorts blijf ik van oordeel dat het een eerste eisch van waarlijk Christelijke wellevendheid is, dat men een brief, welken de afzender zelf niet uitdrukkelijk voor publicatie prijsgaf, en die bovendien voor *derden* bestemd is, *nooit* zonder de toestemming van den schrijver mag publiceeren.

Dat wilde ik in de eerste plaats zeggen.

* * * *

En dan heb ik nog iets wat mij nog meer tot spreken dringt.

Ik zou namelijk aan Ds. Ophoff willen toeroepen: Staak om der wille Gods Uw vernietigende critiek op de vrijgemaakten. Want ik zeg U met allen ernst: wat U bestrijdt, waar U Uw knotsslagen op doet neerkomen is niets anders dan een caricatuurvoorstelling van wat de vrijgemaakten leeren! De eenige "zegen", welken U op dezen arbeid kunt verwachten is een vergiftigen van den geest en de harten van Uw amerikaansche broeders ten opzichte van hun medebroeders in Nederland, een verwijdering tusschen Uw kerken en de "vrijgemaakte" en zoo een schitterende overwinning van Satan.

Laat mij met allen nadruk mogen verzekeren, dat slag op slag blijkt, dat men in Amerika onzen strijd niet verstaat! Ik zeg dat niet in hoogmoed, alsof wij

zoo iets hoogs en dieps voorstonden, dat de Amerikanen daar niet bij kunnen. Neen, ik zeg dat eenvoudig, omdat ik dat telkens *constateer*. Ik zeg dat óók omdat ik uit eigen ervaring wéét, hoe gemakkelijk een dergelijk misverstand in het hart kan postvatten. Pas een goede 20 jaar na den strijd van 1924 kregen wij een beetje dóór wat in Amerika geschiedde en hoe daar de fronten liepen!

Om U te bewijzen, dat de zaken inderdaad zoo staan, wil ik een duidelijk, zoo maar gegrepen voorbeeld noemen.

Ik wijs daartoe op het laatste artikel van Ds. Petter over het verbond, dat ik onder oogen kreeg. Ik noem juist hem, omdat ik grooten eerbied koester voor de trouwe, geduldige wijze, waarop hij zich door ernstige studie in onze gedachtenwereld tracht in te leven. Indien bij iemand, dan is er bij Ds. Petter de wil om te verstaan.

Maar wat schrijft Ds. Petter nu? Hij behandelt in genoemd artikel mijn opvattingen. En dan heeft hij daartegen ernstig bezwaar.

Het eerste is dit, dat ik in de belofte Gods wel zie een speciaal bewijs van Gods liefde, maar dat ik "practically forget(s) to remind that it also implies its correlate, namely, *demand*".

Met groote verbazing las ik deze woorden! Men moet namelijk weten, dat ik al jaren- en jarenlang juist met alle kracht betoog, dat een belofte, zonder een daaraan inhaerente roeping of eisch, eenvoudig een fictie, een abstractie, een onding is! Ja, dat de belofte Gods, juist omdat ze als woord des HEEREN op het geloof appelleert en in het geloof moet aanvaard worden, zélfs altijd qua talis het karakter van eisch of roeping vertoont! Het Kort Begrip vraagt immers: Wat is de hoofdsom van hetgeen ons God in het Evangelie *belooft* en *bevoelen* heeft te gelooven? En omgekeerd heeft ieder gebod des HEEREN, dat Hij in het verbond tot Zijn volk richt ook steeds een belofte in zich. God belooft immers ook te zullen geven wat Hij eischt!

Om U te laten hooren met hoeveel ernst en kracht ik steeds de verbondenheid van belofte en eisch leerde, moge ik iets citeeren uit mijn boekje "In den Chaos", dat reeds in 1945 verscheen. Daarin leest men op pag. 39 (van den derden druk): "En nu willen wij er den vollen nadruk op leggen, dat God deze verbondsbelofte *nooit* spreekt zonder daarbij en in onlosmakelijk verband daarmee zijn *eisch* tot geloof, bekeering, gehoorzaamheid te laten hooren. Nooit komt iemand in aanraking met die verbondsbelofte, of hij komt *onmiddellijk* en *tegelijk* ook in aanraking met Gods eisch. Het is zelfs zóó, dat de verbondsbelofte den eisch in zich draagt, er volkomen mee samengegroeid is. Als ik twee appels op tafel leg kan ik er één wegnemen en wat er dan overblijft is toch nog echt een appel! Maar wánnéer ik den eisch losscheur van, of uitpel uit de verbondsbelofte, is die verbondsbelofte geen verbonds-

belofte meer! "Want—zoo zegt Calvijn—daar de belofte aan het gebod verbonden is, zeg ik, dat ze daarin zoo ingesloten is, dat ze, wanneer ze ervan gescheiden wordt, geheel en al te niet gaat" (Inst. IV, 14, 14). . . . We "hooren" de belofte alleen in dezen samenhang. We "kennen" de belofte dus ook alleen in dat verband. Wij "ontvangen" haar evenzoo alleen in deze onverbreekelijke samengroeiing. Wanneer men dan ook deze belofte uit den genoemden samenhang losmaakt en op zichzelf stelt, en haar als een, op het moment dat ze gegeven wordt in beginsel reeds vervulde belofte, alleen aan de uitverkorenen ziet toekomen, verwerpen wij die constructie, omdat ze louter een denkabstractie is! Wij "kennen" zulk een belofte niet! Zooals we uit een vierstemmig gezongen lied misschien wel één stem uit het gezongen geheel kunnen uit-hooren, zoo kunnen we misschien ook wel een "belofte", als een in beginsel reeds vervulde, alleen aan de uitverkorenen toekomende, belofte uit het onverbreekbaar geheel van het leven des verbonds, dat God met zijn volk doorleeft, uit-denken en samen-denken. Maar dat is pure denkabstractie! Wij willen daarom hier nadrukkelijk uitspreken, dat wij de theorie van de "Toelichting", welke spreekt van een onvoorwaardelijke heilsbelofte voor de uitverkorenen, welke den specifieke inhoud van verbond en sacrament zou vormen, dus volstrekt verwerpen. Zulk een belofte bestaat niet in de volle concreetheid van Gods verbondstellend en -handhavend spreken en wij werpen haar derhalve als een louter gedachte-thing overboord!"

Zoo schreef ik reeds vier jaren geleden. En ik zou willen vragen kan men de verbondenheid van belofte en eisch krasser leeren? Zeker, in het Appèl accentueerde ik deze eenheid niet zoo sterk. Maar dat is een gevolg van de omstandigheid, dat dit boekje voor de synodalen werd geschreven en ik dus speciaal dat besprak wat onder hun aandacht moest worden gebracht. En daartoe behoorde *niet*, dat ik belofte en eisch nooit van elkaar wilde scheiden. Dat wist men daar reeds bizonder goed.

* * * *

Ik schreef over deze vergissing van Ds. Petter eenigszins uitvoerig, om U duidelijk te laten voelen hoe gauw er misverstand ontstaat en welk karakter dat draagt.

En het geval dat ik hier omschreef kan met vele worden vermeerderd.

In hetzelfde artikel van Ds. Petter zegt hij b.v. ook, dat mijn verweer tegen de synodalen op een bepaald punt geen steek houdt. Ik legde n.l. tegenover de synodalen den nadruk op den rijkdom van de belofte zooals deze door de vrijgemaakten wordt geleerd. Maar, zoo zegt Ds. Petter, dat betoog van Prof. Veenhof klemmt niet, want hoe vrijgemaakten en synodalen ook over de belofte mogen denken, in ieder geval staat

voor beide groepen vast, dat de belofte gesproken wordt tot het geloof en dat men pas door het geloof daarvan zeker is en daarin rusten kan. Natuurlijk aanvaard ik de gedachte, dat men alleen door het geloof in de belofte kan rusten en daarvan zeker is, ten volle. *Maar daarover gaat de zaak niet!* Het verschil betreft niet den *weg* waarin, het *middel* waardoor, de *wijze* waarop men op de belofte rust en uit de belofte leeft! Neen het gaat hierover: *hoe komt de belofte naar ons toe; welken inhoud heeft ze vóór en onafhankelijk van het geloof; hoe ziet ze er uit en wat bevat ze en wien geldt ze, opdat ze geloofd worde!* Het punt van geding ligt dus in wat *achter* het gelooven van de belofte ligt, of, anders gezegd, wat daaraan *vooraf* gaat. Is de belofte, zooals ze naar de geloovigen en hun zaad toekomt naar haar aard—om met Calvijn te spreken—altijd “zaligheid bevattend” en “krachtdadig”. Of anders gezegd: wordt ze altijd door den Heiligen Geest gesproken? Zoodat ze ook onafhankelijk van het geloof van den daardoor aangesprokene vol, echt, betrouwbaar, krachtdadig, geldend is?

En wanneer Ds. Petter daarna betoogt, dat het nadruk leggen op de vastheid, rijkdom, kracht van de belofte IN ZICHZELF dus onafhankelijk van het geloof, opdat ze waarlijk een vaste *grond* van het geloof, en onwrikbaar *fundament* van de hoop zou kunnen zijn, voortvloeit uit een “humanitarian comfort motive”, dan zou ik willen vragen: spruit de ontzaglijke, harts-tochtelijke worsteling van alle reformatoren om de verwarde en verdoolde schapen van Jezus Christus weer tot de zekerheid des geloofs te leiden werkelijk uit een “humanitarian comfort motive” voort? Is de Catechismus, diè de gansche boodschap Gods aan zijn kerk onder het troost-motief beziet en bespreekt, . . . is Jesaja 40:1 v.v. soms ook humanitarian?

En zoo zou ik voort kunnen gaan. Als Ds. Ophoff met zware knotsslagen een bepaalde opvatting van de “voorwaarde” des verbonds verplettert, dan ben ik geneigd uit te roepen; Domine, domine, houd toch op, houd toch op! Maakt U zich niet zoo moe! Meent U werkelijk, dat één enkele vrijgemaakte ook maar één klein zierte geloof van de dwaasheden, die U bestrijdt?

Inderdaad: misverstand op misverstand.

Het komt er op aan hier voorzichtig, geduldig en vooral liefdevol elkaar te benaderen en te pogen elkaar te verstaan.

Laat mij even precies mogen aanduiden wat ik bedoel.

U, hooggeachte Ds. Hoeksema, stelt in het laatste nummer van ds *Standard Bearer* een aantal vragen aan de vrijgemaakten. Zie pag. 7. Maar om die vragen te kunnen beantwoorden, zouden U en wij eerst zeer zorgvuldig moeten spreken over het “establish” van het verbond en het “equally” establish daarvan; over den inhoud van “is equally” in de vraag “is” de

belofte “equally” voor alle gedoopten?; over de noties en tendenties van het “gives” in den zin: God “gives” de belofte aan allen; over het “seriously” en het “right” in de woorden: God zegt “seriously” tegen alle kinderen, dat Hij ze een “right” geeft op alle zegeningen van het verbond? Enz. enz. Indien dit niet heel voorzichtig en nauwkeurig geschiedt, komen er vast en zeker misverstanden met alle narigheid van dien.

(Wordt Vervolgd)

Translation of Prof. Veenhof's Letter and Comment

“Esteemed Rev. Hoeksema:

May I kindly request you to receive the following article in the *Standard Bearer*? My hearty thanks.

“Much against my wish I was implicated in the polemics which at the present moment disturbs the Protestant Reformed Churches, as was evident from the issue of the *Standard Bearer* which I just received. If I had known that something like this would have been the result of the reception of my letter in your paper, then I certainly would have bethought myself thrice, or rather, in this case my wife would have bethought herself three times before she would have given consent for the publication of my hastily composed epistle, which was written from my heart.—Not that I would be afraid of polemics: when this was necessary, I have never withdrawn myself from it. But I am indeed afraid to allow myself to become involved in a polemics which is being carried on among brethren in a far country and in a situation which is strange to me.

“However, now I became implicated *nolens volens* in the polemics which broke loose about the brethren De Jong and Kok, I will gladly speak a word in the interest of the matter. I certainly would very much rejoice if the question that is raised were solved in the style of the church and according to the standard for the communion of saints.

“First of all, I will say something yet about the publication of the letter of colleague Holwerda by the Rev. Ophoff. Even after reading his article, I must still maintain in all their force my objections against the publication of that piece. Omitting all incidentals, I can express my objection in the best way perhaps as follows: the Rev. Ophoff argues that he did not accuse and condemn the brethren Kok and De Jong, but that he repeated three times, IF the allegations of Prof. Holwerda are true, THEN. . . . Indeed, this “if” did not escape my attention. But in this consists exactly my main objection. In my opinion the Rev. Ophoff was not allowed to put one letter on paper about

this case before he had spoken about this matter with his fellow brethren, De Jong and Kok, who were directly implicated in it. As long as he could say no more than *if, if, if*, . . . all writing about this case was primarily a *mistake*. If a minister in a congregation or an editor of a paper would go to work in this way, on the basis of informations or letters received, and would to begin with say *if, if, if*, . . . they would have created in a moment confusion in their congregation or in the circle of their readers, and would have torn them apart. Besides, and this is much more important, we must, according to the will of God not only refrain from attacking the honor and the good character of the neighbour, but we must also defend and promote them as much as in us is.

"Just imagine that the Rev. Ophoff, after he had read the letter of colleague Holwerda, had saved it, and after his colleagues had returned from their trip to the Netherlands had talked with them about it, and thereupon if it had appeared necessary, had asked Prof. Holwerda for consent to publish his letter. Would in that case not the entire question have come to appear in a totally different light? And must not every Christian, when he compares what the Rev. Ophoff has done with what he had been able and obliged to do, emphatically admit that the latter is much more, yea, only according to the Spirit of Christ?

"Further, I remain of the opinion that it is the demand of truly Christian courtesy that a letter which the sender himself did not emphatically offer for publication, and which besides, was meant for third parties, may never be published without the consent of the writer.

"This is what I meant to say in the first place.

Comment:

You know by this time, esteemed brother, my own opinion about the publication of the letter of Prof. Holwerda. I do not have to repeat this.

But I wish, brother, instead of for evermore harping on this aspect of the question, you would attempt at least to see my viewpoint of the matter, and go into the thing itself.

This, to me, is far more important and far more serious than all the talk about the question of the publication of the letter, which after all was certainly not a private letter after its contents had been discussed by the immigrants in Canada and copies were made of it for the brethren there. Nor,—I say it again,—did Prof. Holwerda intend the contents of the letter to remain private and secret: for it was an advice to the immigrants.

But let that be. And let us look at the matter itself, squarely. And let me ask you, brother, please, to make an attempt to see and understand my view of the matter.

Now, no matter how you may look at the question, and regardless of the question who is to blame, fact is that the letter of Prof. Holwerda contained slander and backbiting about the Rev. Ophoff and myself, about some of our other ministers, and about all our churches. Moreover, if Prof. Holwerda did not write the truth, it also contained slander about the Revs. De Jong and Kok at the same time.

But the matter is more serious still.

The letter of Prof. Holwerda was an evident attempt to drive a wedge into the ranks of our small denomination, to set one against the other, and thus to cause a split. Mark you, I do not say that Prof. Holwerda or the Revs. De Jong and Kok made such a deliberate attempt, but I do maintain that the letter itself had that tendency. Just consider what he wrote: the conception of the Rev. Hoeksema regarding election, etc, is not the church doctrine; some are emitting a totally different sound; most of the Prot. Ref. people do not think as the Rev. Hoeksema and Ophoff; sympathy for the Liberated was great also in the matter of their doctrine of the covenant. And Prof. Holwerda's advice to the immigrants in Canada was: if Rev. Hoeksema's doctrine were binding, never join.

Now, esteemed brother, you say that the present controversy is an attempt of Satan to separate your churches from ours. But I think that it is much more devilish to attempt to drive a wedge into our small churches, as is the evident tendency of Prof. Holwerda's letter. And not only is this the tendency of that letter; but already it began to be the actual effect. Some of us began to count noses, to estimate who were on the right side and who were on the wrong side of the fence. Such is,—I say once more,—not the attempt of Prof. Holwerda, nor the attempt of the Revs. De Jong and Kok, but it is certainly the devilish tendency of the letter.

You may notice, esteemed brother, that I am not now writing about either Prof. Holwerda or about the Revs. De Jong and Kok.

That means also that I leave it, as yet, an open question whether Prof. Holwerda wrote the truth in his letter, or whether he reported falsely about the Revs. De Jong and Kok. It is a well-known fact that as early as last August the Rev. Kok had a letter read from his pulpit in which he denies most of the statements attributed to him by Prof. Holwerda and claimed that they were only conclusions drawn by the latter from what they, the Revs. De Jong and Kok, had said. I wrote about this to Prof. Holwerda several weeks ago, but he never answered me as yet. I am still expecting an answer from him.

And therefore, brother, I still insist that we must have a public statement, signed by all concerned, explaining just what was said, whether in conference or in private conversation with Prof. Holwerda.

The conferences held in the Netherlands between your Committee of Correspondence and others with the Revs. De Jong and Kok concerned important church matters. They may not remain secret. We are entitled to know all about it.

Except for the letter of Prof. Holwerda, however, we would never have known that such conferences were held, still less, what was said there. And although it is certainly unfortunate that we must learn about matters that concern all our churches from what is purported to be (but is not) a private letter of Prof. Holwerda, I am very glad that the matter was brought to light.

That is my view of the matter. And I wish you would discuss it with me openly in the *Standard Bearer*.

Professor Veenhof continues as follows:

"Then I have something else that urges me to speak.

"I would, namely, call to the Rev. Ophoff: Stop, for God's sake, your annihilating criticism of the Liberated. For I tell you in all seriousness: What you attack, that on which you allow your sledge-hammer blows to come down upon, is nothing else than a caricature presentation of what the Liberated teach. The only "blessing" which you may expect on this labor is a poisoning of the spirit and the hearts of your American brethren with regard to their fellow brethren in the Netherlands, an alienation between your churches and the Liberated churches, and thus a glorious victory of Satan.

Let me assure you with all emphasis that again and again it appears that in America our struggle is not understood. I do not say this in pride, as if we propagated something so high and so deep that the Americans cannot reach it. No, but I simply state this because I notice this repeatedly. I also say this because I know from my own experience how easy it is that some such misunderstanding can lodge in the heart. Only after more than twenty years after the struggle of 1924, we began to understand a little of what happened in America and how there the different fronts were aligned.

"To prove to you that matters indeed stand thus I will mention a clear example, which I choose at random.

"For this purpose I point to the last article of the Rev. Petter, concerning the covenant, that came to my attention. I mention him, because I have great respect for the faithful and patient manner in which he attempts by serious study to live into our world of thought. If by anyone, then it is by the Rev. Petter that there is the will to understand.

"But what does the Rev. Petter write now? He treats in the above-mentioned article my opinions. And against them he has serious objections. The first is this, that I see in the promise of God indeed a special

proof of God's love, but that I 'practically forget to remind that it also implies its correlate, namely, demand'.

"With great amazement I read these words. One must know that already for many years I have argued with all my power that a promise without an inherent calling or demand is simply a fiction, an abstraction, an absurdity; yea, that the promise of God, just because it appeals as the Word of the Lord to faith and must be accepted in faith, even always *qua talis* shows the character of demand or calling. Does not the Compendium ask the question: 'What is the sum of that which God has *promised* in the gospel and *commanded* us to believe?' And vice versa: Every command of the Lord which He directs in His covenant to His people always implies a promise. Does not God promise to give what He demands?

"To let you hear with how much seriousness and power I always taught the inseparable connection of promise and demand I may quote from my little book, 'In den Chaos', which appeared already in 1945. There one reads on page 39 (of the third edition): 'And now we will place full emphasis on the truth that God *never* speaks this covenant promise without letting us hear in inseparable connection therewith His *demand* to faith, conversion, and obedience. Never does one come into contact with that covenant promise without *immediately* and *at the same time* also coming into contact with the demand of God. It is even so that the promise of the covenant implies the demand. The one is completely grown together with the other. When I place two apples on the table, I can remove one, and what is left is nevertheless a real apple. But when I tear apart or peel out the demand from the covenant promise, the latter ceases to be the covenant promise. For thus says Calvin: Seeing that the promise is connected with the demand, I say that it is so implied therein that when it is separated therefrom, it is entirely destroyed. (Institutes, IV, 14, 14). Only in this connection do we hear the promise. Hence, also in this connection only do we know it. We also receive it only in this inseparable growing together. Where, therefore, one separates this promise from the above-mentioned connection and places it by itself and views it is a promise only to the elect, which is fulfilled in principle already at the moment that it is given, we reject this construction because it is a pure abstraction of thought. Such a promise we do not *know*. Even as from a song sung by four voices we can probably separate one voice out of the whole that is sung, so we may probably also separate in thought a promise as one that already is principally fulfilled and applies only to the elect from the inseparable whole of the life of the covenant which God lives with His people. But that is a pure abstraction of thought. We therefore express it here emphatically that we reject entirely the theory

of the "*toelichting*" (elucidation), which speaks of an unconditional promise of salvation for the elect, which is supposed to form the specific content of covenant and sacrament. Such a promise does not exist in the concreteness of God's speaking, as He establishes and maintains His covenant. And therefore we throw it overboard as a pure thing of thought.'

"Thus I wrote already four years ago. And now I would like to ask whether one can reach the connection of promise and demand more strongly. To be sure, in the *Appel* I did not emphasize this unity so strongly; but that is merely the result of the circumstance that this little book was written for the Synodicals, and that I discussed in it more especially what must be brought to their attention. And to this did not belong that I never separated promise and demand; that was already known there very well.

"I wrote about this mistake of the Rev. Petter somewhat elaborately to make clear to you how quickly misunderstanding can arise and of what character such misunderstanding is.

"And the case which I here described may be multiplied manifold.

"Thus in the same article of the Rev. Petter he says, for instance, also that my defense over against the Synodicals on a certain point does not hold water. I emphasized, namely, over against the Synodicals the riches of the promise as it is being taught by the Liberated. But, thus the Rev. Petter, that argument of Prof. Veenhof is not valid. For no matter how Liberated and Synodicals think about the promise, for both groups it is an established fact that the promise is being spoken to faith, and that one can be assured of it and rest in it only through faith. And of course, I fully accept the thought that only through faith one can rest in and be assured of the promise. *But that is not the question.* The difference does not concern the way in which, the means through which, and the manner in which one can rest in and live out of the promise. No, the question concerns *this, how does the promise approach us; which contents has it before and independent of faith; how does it appear, and what does it contain, and for whom is it valid, in order that it may be believed?* The point of dispute, therefore, concerns what lies *behind the faith in the promise*, or, to express it differently, what *precedes* it? Is the promise as it approaches the believers and their seed according to its nature,—to speak with Calvin,—always 'containing salvation' and 'efficacious'? Or, to say it differently, is it always being spoken by the Holy Spirit, so that also independently of the faith of him that is addressed it is full, genuine, reliable, efficacious'? Or, to say it differently, is it always being spoken by the Holy Spirit, so that also independently of the faith of him that is addressed it is full, genuine, reliable, efficacious, and valid?

"And when thereupon the Rev. Petter argues that the emphasis on the surety, riches, and power of the promise as it is in itself, and therefore independent of faith, in order that it may be truly a sure *ground* of the faith, an unshakeable *foundation* of hope flows forth out of the 'humanitarian comfort motive', then I would like to ask: does the amazing, impassioned struggle of all reformers to bring the confused and erring sheep of Jesus Christ again to the assurance of faith really flow forth from a humanitarian comfort motive? Is it possible that the Catechism, which views the entire message of God to His church from the viewpoint of the comfort motive, and is Isaiah 40:1, ff. also humanitarian?

"And thus I would continue. When the Rev. Ophoff demolishes a certain opinion of the 'condition' of the covenant with heavy sledge-hammer blows, then I am inclined to call out: Reverend, reverend, please stop, please stop; don't make yourself so weary. Do you really imagine that one single Liberated believes one tittle or iota of the foolishness which you attack?

"Indeed: misunderstanding on misunderstanding.

"It certainly is necessary to approach one another here carefully, patiently, and above all, in the spirit of love, and to attempt to understand one another.

"Let me for a moment point out exactly what I mean.

"You, highly esteemed Rev. Hoeksema, propose in the last number of the *Standard Bearer* a number of questions to the Liberated. But to answer those questions you and we would first have to speak very carefully about the 'establish' of the covenant and about the 'equally' establishing of it, over the content of 'is equally' in the question: Is the promise equally for all baptized? About the notions and tendencies of the 'gives' in the sentence: God 'gives' the promise to all. About the words 'seriously' and 'right' in the words: God says seriously to all the children that He gives them a right to all the blessings of the covenant, etc., etc. If this is not done carefully and painstakingly, it is certain that misunderstandings will arise with all their miseries."

Comment:

As to your criticism, esteemed brother, of the Rev. Petter's articles, Brother Petter better reply to that himself in Concordia. And as to your comment on the term 'condition' which the Rev. Ophoff demolishes with heavy sledge-hammer blows, you will have noticed that I am writing on that term myself. And I find it very striking that in all our Confessions the term is never used, except to put it in the mouth of the Pelagians and Arminians.

But I find the way in which you answer my questions, published in the *Standard Bearer* of Oct. 1, somewhat strange, and also unsatisfactory.

Let me repeat those questions here. They were as follows:

1. Is it true, or is it not true, that according to your theology God establishes His covenant equally with all the children that are born of believing parents, head for head and soul for soul?

2. Is it true, or is it not true, that according to the theology of the Liberated the promise of God is equally for all that are born in the historical line of the covenant, elect and reprobate alike?

3. Is it true, or is it not true, that according to the theology of the Liberated God gives that promise to all, elect and reprobate, in His grace and in His love?

4. Is it true, or is it not true, that God seriously says to all the children that are born in the historical line of the covenant that He gives them a right to all the blessings of the covenant?

5. Is it true, or is it not true, that according to the covenant theology of the Liberated God assures all the children that are born of believing parents in the historical line of the covenant that He washes them in the blood of Christ?

6. Is it true, or is it not true, that according to the covenant theology of the Liberated God assures all the children of believers that He will give them His Holy Spirit to dwell in them and to make them partakers of all the blessings of salvation in Christ Jesus?

7. Is it true, or is it not true, that in answer to the question why many of the baptized children are not saved you say that their corrupt nature prevents the grace of God from operating in their hearts?

8. Is it true, or is it not true, that in the case of those baptized children that are lost you teach that it is their unbelief that bars the way of God's grace?

Now, in your article you write that in order to be able to answer these questions we must very carefully define the terms and mutually agree what we mean by them. With this I can agree. It is always essential that we understand from one another just exactly what we mean by certain terms. Thus you write that we must define the term "establish", and again that we must mutually understand what we mean when we speak of God's "equally" establishing His covenant with all the children that are born of believing parents, etc.

But, esteemed brethren, would it not be beneficial for a good understanding of one another's conception that you would make a start with defining these terms. You must remember that I wrote these questions in connection with the remark of Prof. Holwerda that the Rev. Ophoff had not understood even the ABC of the covenant theology of the Liberated. And I added that that means that principally I have failed to understand the same covenant theology also. Of course, you understand that it is very difficult for me to believe this. For, in the first place, I have understood the

Heynsian view of the covenant rather thoroughly for the last 35 years; and according to all that the Liberated wrote the view of Prof. Heyns was hailed as thoroughly Reformed. And, in the second place, I have studied almost all that was written by the Liberated on the covenant question ever since after the war we had access to their literature. And therefore, I cannot believe that I fail to understand the principal tenets of their covenant conception. But I am willing to learn. And that is the reason why I asked those rather specific questions which I now reprint, with the request that you, or anyone else of the Liberated theologians, will reply to them. If there are any terms that need definition, define them according to the meaning which you attach to them. Or if there is any term in my questions you want me to define, just ask me, and I will be glad to comply with your request. But I think that on the whole the questions which I asked are rather clear and very specific; and they certainly are to the point. And I would like to have a very clear and definite answer to them.

I can also put my questions in a little different form, and base them on statements which you have made in your "Appel".

In that case they would run as follows:

1. What do you mean when you write that God in baptism seals unto all the children born of believing parents, head for head, that He establishes His covenant with them? You can define your own terms.

2. What do you mean when you write that God in baptism gives to all the children born of believing parents, head for head, the glorious promise (toezegging) that He washes them all in the blood of Jesus Christ?

3. What do you mean when you write that God gives to all the children born under the covenant, head for head, the glorious assurance (promise, toezegging) that God will give them His Holy Spirit to dwell in them?

4. What do you mean when you write that to all the children born of believing parents, head for head, God gives the glorious assurance of the forgiveness of sins and all the riches of His salvation?

5. What do you mean when you write that God in *grace* approaches all the baptized children with the promise given them in baptism? Is there a gracious attitude of God to the reprobate in the covenant?

6. What do you mean when you write that in baptism God means to engrave into the hearts of all the baptized children, head for head, the assurance, "I am your God, and ye are my children?"

7. What do you mean when you teach that when many baptized children are not saved, it is because they bar the way to the grace of God? Is grace not efficacious, and is it not irresistible, as far as God's operation is concerned? Besides, do not by nature also the

elect "bar the way to God's grace"? And will you please give me the reference to Calvin to which you refer?

I have more questions; but this may suffice.

These questions, esteemed brother, are all based on your own writing. You can therefore define your own terms. And they all refer rather sharply to the differences between us. For according to our convictions these teachings are not Reformed, neither Scriptural.

In conclusion, however, I would like to ask one more question. It is this: Do you by your teaching concerning baptism as a seal of the promise not assign more power and a wider scope to baptism than to the preaching of the Word?

Please answer these questions. I certainly will publish your answer together with my discussion of it in the Standard Bearer. H. H.



Historisch of Waar Geloof?

Van de Hollandsche Mannen Vereeniging van de Eerste Protestantsche Gereformeerde Kerk in Grand Rapids, Michigan ontvingen wij de volgende vraag (in mijn eigen woorden weer gegeven):

Ziet Joh. 12:42 op historisch of op waar geloof?

Antwoord:

In boven genoemden tekst lezen we: "Nochtans geloofden zelfs velen uit de oversten in Hem; maar om der Farizeën wil beleden zij het niet, opdat zij uit de synagogue niet zouden geworpen worden."

Het is geen wonder, dat er verschil van meening was over dit vers, en ik weet niet of mijn antwoord wel volkomen bevrediging zal geven. Er schijnen aan beide zijden gewichtige argumenten te bestaan. Aan de ééne zijde is daar het argument, dat een waar geloof beleden wil worden, en dat deden deze oversten niet. Daar komt nog bij, dat we in vers 43 lezen van dezelfde oversten: "Want zij hadden de eer der menschen lief, meer dan de eer van God". Hoe kunnen dan deze oversten gezegd worden het ware geloof te bezitten? Leert de Schrift niet, dat belijden met den mond met gelooven met het hart gepaard moet gaan om zalig te worden? Aan den anderen kant echter wordt gewezen op het scherp contrast, dat dit vers vormt met de onmiddellijk voorafgaande verzen, waar gesproken wordt van degenen, die niet in Jezus konden gelooven, omdat God hunne oogen verblind en hunne harten verhard had.

Wat zullen we hiervan nu zeggen?

Ik ben geneigd om deze oversten "the benefit of the doubt" te geven, en dat om de volgende redenen:

1. De tekst zelf. We lezen nadrukkelijk, dat de

oversten in Hem geloofden. En in het oorspronkelijke lezen we een zeer sterke uitdrukking voor "in Hem", of in het Engelsch *into Him*. Zooals de uitdrukking in de Schrift: "doopende in den Naam" in 't oorspronkelijke letterlijk luidt: "tot in den Naam", i.e., tot in de gemeenschap van den Naam, zoo beteekent in Joh. 12:42 de uitdrukking "geloofden. . . in Hem" *geloofden tot in Hem*, of tot in Zijne gemeenschap.

2. Er is waarheid in het argument vóór deze verklaring, dat n.l. dit vers in scherp contrast staat met de voorafgaande verzen. De schare in het algemeen geloofde niet in Hem. . . . nochtans geloofden velen van de oversten wel in Hem.

3. Het is zeker waar, dat dit geloof van de oversten nog zeer zwak was, zoodat ze, bevreesd voor den haat der Farizeën, het niet openlijk durfden te belijden. Maar vergeet niet, dat de haat der Farizeën zeer fel was en dat het een groote schande was om uit de synagoge geworpen te worden. Ik weet wel, dat dit die oversten niet verontschuldigt, maar het verklaart hun weifelende houding wel, vooral vóór het kruis en de verheerlijking van Christus en de uitstorting des Geestes, toen ze den Christus nog niet zagen in het volle licht der nieuwe bedeeling.

Ik hoop, dat ik een beetje licht over de vraag heb mogen verspreiden. H. H.

* * * *

IN MEMORIAM

On Friday, October 28, our beloved mother, grandmother and great-grandmother

Mrs. Ruth Veldhuis

was taken away from us by the Lord at the age of 89 years.

Her delight to walk in the ways of the Lord with the assurance that her Redeemer liveth, sustains us in our sorrow.

Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Bylsma

Mr. and Mrs. Seymour Bylsma

John Bylsma

Ruth Bylsma

Grand Rapids, Michigan. and 2 great-grandchildren.

* * * *

IN MEMORIAM

On Monday, the fourteenth day of November, our dear husband, father and grandfather

Nicolas G. Wierenga.

passed away in the Lord.

Our great comfort and rich assurance in our loss is this: that he now beholds His face in righteousness.

Mrs. Rena Wierenga

Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Wierenga

Mr. and Mrs. Martin Nymeyer

Mr. and Mrs. George Wierenga

Mrs. Gertrude Vander Veen

and 15 grandchildren.

OUR DOCTRINE

The Counsel Of God. (3)

Our Knowledge of God's Counsel Important Also From the Viewpoint of Our Knowledge of God.

A correct conception of the counsel of God is also important from the viewpoint of our knowledge of the living God. It aids us in our conception of the Lord. God is an eternally active God. This is applicable, first of all, to the living God Himself, His own inner Divine life. Thus the Scriptures reveal Him, do they not? We read in Deut. 32:4: "*He is the Rock, His work is perfect: for all His ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He.*" And in John 5:17 we read: "But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work."

God is not an idle Being, Who began to work six thousand years ago but was idle before that time. The Lord is in Himself purest action. His work and Being are eternally one, as God is one, and characterized by oneness and simplicity. Only, God works, does not labor. The Lord never struggles to attain unto anything. Fact is, His work or works is or are eternally perfect. We read of the Lord that He is the Rock and that His work is perfect. It is for this reason that the Lord is also characterized by a state of perfect rest. Rest is the enjoyment of a perfect work. The Lord is perfect in all His work; hence, eternally He enjoys this perfect work and is therefore the God of eternal and perfect rest.

That the Lord is perfect in all His work does not merely apply to the work of His own life and being, but is also applicable to all the works as they appear and occur in time. To be sure, in time this counsel unfolds itself and gradually attains unto realization; but in the eternal thoughts of the Lord all these works appear eternally complete and perfect. Fact is, according to Acts 15:18: "Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world." It is well that we distinguish between God's work and our work. Our works have a beginning. We begin with a certain task and this task is brought to a conclusion. We ourselves are characterized by a beginning and an end; this also applies to all the things we do. But this does not apply to Jehovah. His works are without beginning and without end. Secondly, the work of man is characterized by division. We are not active with all our being simultaneously. Sometimes our work is mainly physical; at other times the mental aspect of our activity appears upon the foreground. Now we work with our hand, then with our mind. Hence, our work is characterized by division. God, however, is one in all His

work. He performs all his work with all His being eternally. Thirdly, our work is limited by laws of time and space and change and development. We ourselves are creatures of time, subject to change and development. The things round about us limit and influence us. Our activity is determined and influenced by external conditions and circumstances, and over these conditions and circumstances we have no control. The question whether we shall be able to begin and finish a certain task is, for example, determined by a matter such as our health. This, we understand, does not apply to the living God. The Lord is never determined by anything outside Himself. He is the sovereign God and all His activity is sovereign and unconditional. There is nothing outside Himself. It is therefore impossible for the Lord to be determined by anything outside Himself. Strictly speaking, this conception is dualistic, renders the Lord dependent upon external matters and conditions and circumstances. Time, space, etc., are all creatures of the living God; they do not influence Him but He is completely and sovereignly in control of them. Fourthly, our works are, of course, incomplete. They are characterized by a process. They are performed piecemeal, are finished gradually. We begin a certain task today, continue with it tomorrow, and finally finish it sometime in the future. The work of the Lord, however, is complete. God works *all* His works eternally. This is an amazing truth. All the history of this world, from the beginning even unto the end, in all its details and phases, is known unto the Lord, lies eternally before Him as a "blueprint", the reality of all things as existing in the Lord's eternal thoughts. This, I say, is an amazing thing, far transcending all human understanding. This implies that God, for example, sees all things as they are occurring today. His eye is upon every activity throughout the universe; He sees not only the so-called great events but also the small, such as the worm which crawls in the dust of the earth. Every movement throughout the world, in the heavens above and upon the earth beneath and in the waters under the earth, in every living creature, in the heart and mind and soul of angel and demon, godly and ungodly is constantly known unto and by the Lord. But this is not all. To this blueprint must be added that in the same sense the Lord has an all-comprehensive "bird's-eye view" of all the history of the world, not only therefore at a certain given point in history, but as covering all the history from the beginning unto the end of time. And even this is not all. The picture becomes complete when we bear in mind that this Divine "blueprint" also includes the humanly incomprehensible fact that the Lord thus beholds all things also as they are related unto each other, as they serve each other and are used by the Lord unto the realization of the purpose which He has purposed within Himself from before the

foundation of the world. Eternally the Lord sees all things in their proper place. Surely, the work of the Lord is eternally perfect; known unto Him are all His works from the beginning of the world.

This also enables us somewhat to understand that the Lord did not enrich Himself when He created the heavens and the earth. That the Lord did not enrich Himself lies in the nature of the case. He is in Himself the All-Blessed One, the All-Sufficient One, the in Himself eternally and perfectly active God and therefore the eternally resting God. That the Lord did not enrich Himself when He created the heavens and the earth follows, first of all, from the fact that God is the Absolute Reality and that the creature is the reflection of His own life and glory. The original creation, as brought forth by the living God at the dawn of history and existing in the state of rectitude, reflected in a creaturely way the goodness and perfection of the Lord. And the new heavens and new earth will likewise reveal, in a creaturely sense, that goodness and perfection of the Lord. Of course, the new heavens and the new earth will be the eternal and heavenly reflection of the glory of God, the highest possible manifestation of the alone blessed God. But then we also understand that the Lord did not enrich Himself when He created this reflection of Himself. Do we enrich ourselves when we obtain a mirror in which we behold our own reflection and image? Besides, that the Lord did not enrich Himself when He created the heavens and the earth is also obvious from the fact that the history of the world is nothing but the unfolding of the eternal counsel of the Lord, the Divine, eternal "blueprint," reality of all things as they exist eternally in the thoughts of the living God.

It is because of this truth, that the Lord Himself is the God of purest action and activity, that the Fathers have always distinguished the works of God as "*opera Dei immanentia*" and "*opera Dei exeunta*", the immanent and outgoing works of God. To be sure, there are the "*opera Dei exeunta*," the outgoing works of God, the works of the Lord as we see them and as they unfold before our eyes. But the Lord Himself is the God of purest action; hence, we also speak of the "*opera Dei immanentia*," the immanent works of the Lord. And these immanent works of God we again distinguish as the personal and the essential works of God. The personal works of God, occurring, we understand, within the living God Himself, are the works which characterize the three Divine Persons, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We need not enter into a detailed discussion of these works at this time, inasmuch as we discussed them when we treated the Scriptural truth of the Trinity. These are the works of God whereby the Father generates the Son, the Son is generated by the Father, and the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. And also these personal works of the

Lord, of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are characterized by eternal completeness and perfection.

But we also speak of the essential works of God. These works, too, we understand, occur within the living God Himself. When we speak of the essential works of the Lord we refer, on the one hand, to those works which characterize the Being of the Lord, His essence, all that activity which causes the three Persons to be one, the Divine life of the knowledge and love of Himself, the Lord's Self-enjoyment of His own eternal virtues and perfections. These essential works of God belong also the counsel of the Lord. To be sure, the counsel of God is realized in time. However, *as counsel*, it constitutes a work of God within the everlasting God Himself. God is no architect who drew up a dead blueprint and enriches himself with the actual erection of the building. God's plan or counsel, as we have seen, is the eternal wisdom of the Lord, is God as He eternally willed all things and eternally rejoices in the reality of all things which He has constantly before Him.

Various Names of the Counsel of God.

Let us, first of all, call attention to various names of the counsel of the Lord in the general sense. We also speak of God's counsel in a specific sense, as referring to Divine predestination, election and reprobation. In the Old Testament we have various names used to denote this concept. The first word is "counsel", also translated "purpose" in Holy Writ. The Hebrew word in this instance is "etsah". This word emphasizes the idea of counsel or a plan. It occurs, e.g. in Job 38: "Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?", also in Isaiah 46:10-11: "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: Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth My counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it.", and in Isaiah 14:26: "This is the purpose that is purposed upon the whole earth, and this is the hand that is stretched stretched out upon all the nations." Hence, this word, "etsah", although it also occurs in Scripture in the sense of counsel, advice (see II Samuel 16:20), refers to the counsel or purpose of Jehovah, that which He has purposed within Himself, and according to which He acts and does all things.

Another word which occurs in the Old Testament is "decree". The Hebrew word is "Chok". This word appears, e.g., in Psalm 2:9: "I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten thee." This word, "chok", means properly that which is established or definite. It also appears in the sense of: a defined limit, a bound, an appointed time or law, statute. The word, "decree",

refers to the counsel of the Lord as having established that which shall be.

A third word in the Old Testament is "sod". This Hebrew word is derived from "yatsad", which means: to deliberate and consult together, hence, to take counsel together. This word is translated "counsel" in Jer. 23:18, 22: "For who hath stood in the counsel of the Lord, and hath perceived and heard His word? who hath marked His word, and heard it? . . . But if they had stood in My counsel, and had caused My people to hear My words, then they should have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings." It is translated "assembly" in Jer. 6:11 and 15:17: "Therefore I am full of the fury of the Lord; I am weary with holding in: I will pour it out upon the children abroad, and upon the assembly of young men together: for even the husband with the wife shall be taken, the aged with him that is full of days. . . . I sat not in the *assembly* of the mockers, nor rejoiced; I sat alone because of thy hand: for thou hast filled me with indignation." This word, "sod", when used of men, refers to an assembly of young men or judges, etc. as they sit together and take counsel. Hence, the word means: deliberation, counsel. With respect to the Lord, the word implies that the Lord eternally deliberated, took counsel within Himself.

Another word which is used to denote the eternal thoughts of Jehovah is: purpose. As such it occurs in Jer. 4:28: "For this shall the earth mourn, and the heavens above be black: because I have spoken it, *I have purposed it*, and will not repent, neither will I turn back from it." The Hebrew word is: "mezimmah." This word is derived from a word which means: to meditate, have in mind, to purpose. As a word which is used to denote the counsel of the Lord, it refers to the eternal thoughts of the Lord upon which He has meditated and proposed to Himself.

Finally, we have the Hebrew words, "Chaphets" and "Ratsoon". The former word, which means: delight, desire, will, occurs in Is. 53:10: "Yet it *pleased* the Lord to bruise Him: He hath put Him to grief: when Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the *pleasure* of the Lord shall prosper in His hand." The latter word, "ratsoon", occurs in Psalm 51:18, Is. 49:8: "Do good in Thy good pleasure unto Zion: build Thou the walls of Jerusalem. . . . Thus saith the Lord, In an *acceptable* time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages." These words emphasize that the Lord does as *He* pleases, and He does as *He* pleases. *He determines* all things and He executeth *all His delight*.

In the New Testament, too, we have several words to denote the concept, "counsel of God." The first

words to which we would call attention are the Greek words: Boulee and Theleema. These words occur together in Eph. 1:11: "In Whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him Who worketh all things after the counsel (Boulee) of His own will (Theleema)." The former word seems to emphasize the counsel, the will of God as resting upon Divine deliberation and as calling attention to the content, that which was willed. The word, "theleema", on the other hand, in distinction from "Boulee," emphasize the will of God as such, the fact that God willed it. We hasten to add, however, that these words appear often in Holy Writ, and that they also appear to be used indiscriminately.

Another prominent word which appears in the New Testament is the Greek word: Eudokia. This word is translated: pleasure, good pleasure. We read, e.g., in Matt. 11:26: "At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it *seemed good* in Thy sight." This text is repeated in Luke 10:21. In Luke 2:14 occur the well-known words: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, *good will* toward men." And in Eph. 1:5, 9 (this entire portion of Holy Writ is a grand eulogy on the eternal good pleasure of the Lord) we read: "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the *good pleasure* of His will. . . . Having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His *good pleasure* which He hath purposed in Himself." In Phil. 2:12-13 we read: "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God Which worketh in you both to will and to do of His *good pleasure*." And in II Thess. 1:11 we read: "Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the *good pleasure* of His goodness, and the work of faith with power." The word "eudokia", is derived from a word which means: to think well, to think good. It refers to the Lord's eternal counsel from the viewpoint that God has eternally decided that which seemed good to Him, emphasizes the Divine sovereignty and good pleasure of His decrees. This is abundantly clear from a passage such as Matt. 11:25-26, where Christ thanks the Father that He has hid the things of His eternal Kingdom from the wise and the prudent and has revealed them unto babes, and that this occurred according to the Father's eternal good pleasure.

A third word to which we would call attention is the Greek word: Horidzoo. This word occurs in Acts 17:26: "And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath deter-

mined (horidzoo) the times before appointed, and the bounds (fundamentally the same word as "horidzoo") of their habitation." This word reminds us of the Hebrew "chok"—Ps. 2:7. The word means literally: to mark out a boundary or limit. Thus it means: to determine, appoint. It emphasizes the truth that the Lord has sovereignly determined, appointed all things, Divinely set a bound for all things, and thereby sovereignly determined their existence.

A fourth word which appears in the New Testament is "Prothesis." The word is often translated: purpose. It occurs, e.g., in Rom. 8:28, 9:11: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose. . . . For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calleth." In Eph. 1:11, 3:11 we read: "In Whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him Who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will. . . . According to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." And in II Tim. 1:9 we read: "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." The word, "prothesis," means literally: to set before. The word can merely mean: the setting forth of a thing, place it before something. However, the word can also signify that which God before decided to do, which He placed before Himself. In the latter sense the word is used in the passages we have quoted.

H. Veldman.



The Glory of Christ the Heavenly

The Scripture on which we concentrate is the second verse of Isaiah 53. Let us begin reading at verse 1.

"Who hath believed our report? And to whom was the arm of the Lord revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor splendour, that we should look upon him.

The word "report" denotes the Gospel of Christ that the prophet had received from God by an infallible revelation. The utterance, "Who hath received our report," namely, our gospel, is an exclamation expressive of amazement mingled with grief at the reception that men gave the prophet's gospel. They did not believe it. In our text the prophet reveals what men held against the Christ of God on account of which they despised and rejected Him. In making this plain to

us, the prophet avails himself of a figure, when he says, "For he, the Christ, shall grow up before him, namely, God, as a tender plant, as a root out of a dry ground." The same figure occurs in the first verse of the eleventh chapter of Isaiah's discourse. Here the text reads, "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots." It is the figure of a little branch, a shoot or sucker that comes forth out of a sightless tree-stump, rooted in the dry ground of a desert land. This shoot or rod is Christ. The stump out of which He comes forth is the Virgin, Christ's mother. The stump of Jesse is again the virgin. The implied relation is that of stump and tree, in which the virgin is the stump, and Jesse and his royal descendants, definitely David and Solomon, the tree.

Let us lay hold on the meaning of this figure. It is plainly suggested here in our text. Dropping the figure, the prophet asserts, "He, the Christ, hath no form nor splendour." The people of Israel once upon a time did have a king who had form, splendour, glory. This king was Solomon, the son of David and the grandson of Jesse. And what a glorious king he was, was Solomon. He sat on a throne of ivory overlaid with gold. No king so rich, no king so powerful, no king so wise as Solomon.

However, Solomon's glory was not true heavenly glory, beauty, splendour of the exalted and heavenly Christ now at the right hand of God in the highest heavens. The glory of Solomon's kingdom was not the true beauty of Christ's heavenly kingdom, when this kingdom—the kingdom of Christ—shall once have appeared in glory on the new earth. The glory of Solomon was but earthly, typical. It was but a shadow, a pre-indication, a picture, of the glory of the heavenly Christ. Being but a shadow, a picture, devoid of reality, it faded, did this glory of king Solomon. The light of this glory grew more and more dim and was finally extinguished. This dimming process of the glory of Jesse's royal house began even before Solomon's death. It was accelerated by the breaking away of the ten tribes from the house of David. It was completed by the exile of Judah. The end came in 587 B.C. In that year Nebuchadnezzar once more and for the last time marched against Judah and laid siege to Jerusalem. City and temple were destroyed. King Zedekiah, the last member of the royal family of Jesse to occupy the typical throne of David was taken captive and carried to the king of Babylon in Riblah. After seeing his sons slain before his very eyes, his own eyes were put out, and he ended his life in a Babylonian prison. The holy line was continued in the generations of Jehoiada, the brother of Zedekiah, and the son of king Josiah. But never again did a descendant of David the son of Jesse occupy the typical Davidic throne. The light of the typical glory of Jesse's house had been

extinguished, never again to be rekindled. Mary, the last female descendant of this house and the mother of Jesus was a poor and obscure virgin of the despised city of Nazareth. She was all that remained of what once had been a glorious tree—a splendrous royal house, the house of Jesse. The tree had been felled; all its foliage and branches, in a word, all its glory, had been clean cut away. All that was permitted to stand of it was that sightless stump in a dry ground—Mary the virgin. The royal house of David had been humbled to the very ground. What can this indicate but that the Lord was about to make a new beginning of things. And so He did. From that sightless stump He brought forth the Christ, Israel's *true* king. But, as born from this poor and obscure female descendant of the royal house of Jesse, Christ was indeed in his beginnings a shoot out of a sightless stump—the stump of Jesse. As that stump, as that virgin, so the Christ, He was without form, without splendour, typical glory, beauty, appearance.

We perceive now how this language is to be understood. It can scarcely have any reference to the structure of Christ's physical frame, as though perhaps he was deformed of body; or to the mould of the features of His countenance, as though He was a man with a plain, expressionless, or even ugly, repulsive-looking face, so that seeing Him, men looked away. It need not even be assumed that He was small and frail. He was as well built and stalwart as any normal man, as His working alongside His supposed father, Joseph, as a carpenter, would seem to indicate. And His countenance was beautiful, must have been, as upon it was reflected the heaven that filled His pure soul. But what He lacked is form, splendour, appearance, position, prestige. He wore no crown of gold as did Solomon. He sat not on a throne of ivory as had Solomon. He was not clothed with royal purple as Solomon had been. He drank not from vessels of gold. He had no horses and chariots. As to glory, appearance, honour and prestige, He, the Christ, was as far removed from Solomon, as it was possible for any man in Israel to be. He was not a priest, was Christ. He was not a scribe; He was not an elder; He was not a Pharisee, as was Paul. He was not a member of the Sanhedrin. He had no doctor's degree. For the seminary attached to the synagogue He never attended. Anyway, what could that institution have contributed to His spiritual development? It was dry ground. It was reading its own theories into the Bible.

A shoot, a branch, a rod,—that was Christ. And a shoot that came forth not out of the trunk of a stately tree still standing in all its glory; but a shoot growing from a sightless stump in the dry ground of a desert land at that. His estate was as low as it was possible for the estate of any man to be low. He was born in a smelly stable, wasn't He? His first cradle was a man-

ger. His mother had nothing but some swaddling clothes to wrap Him in when He was born. For she was a poor woman. As soon as He was able, He had to go to work, which He did, working with His hands as a carpenter under Joseph all the rest of the years of His life with the exception of the last three.

A shoot growing from a sightless stump, that was Christ. And mark you, the stump was rooted in a dry ground of a desert land. It was thus a root and stump from which it was not even possible for a shoot to come forth at all. For it had no moisture. The application of the figure is plain. According to the will of God, as prophecy had revealed it, Christ had to be of the seed of David. But the virgin was the only living descendant of David so that there was for her no man by which she might conceive. Then the Holy Ghost performed a great wonder. He came upon the virgin and the power of the Highest overshadowed her by reason of which she was with child and brought forth a son, the Christ of God, the Son of God incarnate.

The text states further that He grew up before Him, namely, God. He increased, did the Christ, though a shoot in a dry ground. But His increase was not from below but from above. The Spirit of the Lord rested upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, and of counsel and of might, and of the fear of the Lord; wherefore He was quick of understanding in the fear of the Lord, Isaiah 11:2, 3. So did He grow up before the Lord, mark you, before the Lord. The Lord He served. The Lord He sought. Before the face of the Lord He stood and walked, fought the good fight, and bore witness to the truth. In the Lord He trusted. By the zeal of the Lord's house He was consumed. Into the work that the Lord had given Him to do, He threw Himself with all His will and mind and heart and soul and strength, and thereby procured for us an eternal redemption.

But He was without earthy form, glory, appearance. This was right and proper. So God willed it. For an earthly glory would have ill become the Christ, He being a heavenly King, who had come to establish by His suffering and death a heavenly kingdom, formed of citizens who are heavenly in contra-distinction to earthy, sinfully earthy. The only glory that becomes such a King, such a kingdom and such citizens is heavenly. It was upon such a glory—the heavenly—that Christ has His affection set. By the promise of this glory He lived and suffered and died and was raised and appeared in glory with His people.

Christ loved the glory of the heavenly; for what is this glory but Zion's righteousness going forth as brightness and her salvation burning as a lamp. Hence, Christ's love of the glory of the heavenly was love of righteousness and the salvation of His people; it was thus love of God, the triune Jehovah.

Where a man's treasure is, there is his heart. Christ's treasure was the glory of the heavenly. There was His heart. To be clothed with that glory—the glory of the heavenly—was His sole desire. "And now O Father," so He prayed, "glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." Reference here, of course, is to the glory of Christ in His office of Mediator which He already had with His Father in His counsel before the foundation of the world. It is this glory after which He thirsted; for His heart thirsted after God, and after the salvation of His people of which God His Father is the fountain and He the channel. How true it is that it was after this glory that He thirsted. Attend to the following: His thirtieth birthday anniversary came round. As prompted by the Spirit, He came into the desert. The devil was there, too. And the devil taketh Him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth Him all his kingdoms—the kingdoms of the world—man's world—and their earthly glory. Said the devil to Him, "All these things—these kingdoms of mine—will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." It is plain what the devil wanted. He wanted Christ to consent to His being exalted by him, the devil, to the devil's own right hand far above all the kings and potentates that reign on this earth. If Christ consents, He will be Christ the magnificent indeed; but He will no longer be the Christ of God but the Christ, the anointed, of the devil, the devil's vicar and viceregent on earth, in the devil's service and thus in the service of sin, and of the lie and of darkness and of all iniquity and unrighteousness. How could the Christ of God consent to such a thing? He could not. The devil's offer had absolutely no appeal for Him. He had His heart set on being exalted at the Father's right hand with the Father's countenance lifted upon Him in eternal love. He had His heart set on the glory of a heavenly kingship. Though obtainable only in the way of suffering and death on the cross, it is well; it is that glory that He will have for Himself and His own and none other. For God's favor to Him is better than life. "Get thee hence," is therefore His reply to the tempter, "For it is written, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve."

Then He came, did Christ, among His people. And they brought to Him their devil-possessed, and their sick and their blind, and deaf, and halt, and maim. And He cast out the evil spirits by His Word. He healed all that were sick and even raised some of their dead; but all this only in confirmation of His preaching—His preaching of the heavenly kingdom that He had come to establish by His suffering and death; the preaching of Himself as its heavenly king; the preaching of Himself as the Great Physician, as the good shepherd who would lay down His life for His sheep that they might be reconciled to His father through

the cross. But they refused to understand, did the men with whom He walked. With the evidence of His wonder-working power filling the land, and as willingly ignorant of the true purpose of His mission, they remarked to one another what a wonderful earthly king He would make them, to judge them and to go out before them and to fight their earthly battles. With such a king they would not only again be like all the nations, but they would be the head and not the tail of the nations as they now were, seeing that they groaned under the yoke of the Romans. And when on a day He fed five thousand of them with five loaves of bread and two fishes, they were wildly enthusiastic; and they came to take Him by force to make Him king. Of course, the devil was back of all this. He was determined that Christ consent to His being seated on an earthly throne. Thus the opportunity again presents itself to Christ to be crowned a king of earthly glory, appearance, and magnificence. Will He this time yield to the wiles of the devil? He will not. He cannot. For He is the incarnate Son of God; and thus the man Jesus can only will to stand firm, which He also does. He departs out of their midst. And the next day He returns to them and tells them the truth about Himself and themselves in language that pointed that they cannot but conclude that it is utterly useless to try to get Him seated on an earthly throne. Bitterly disappointed, and also cut to the quick by what He had said to them, they looked at Him again. Then they looked at one another and said, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? The man is a plebe, a pariah; they meant to say He hath no form nor splendour. Indeed, and it troubles them especially now since they perceive that He is determined in His opposition to all attempts on their part to give Him form and splendour and appearance by seating Him on an earthly throne. In the words of our text, they saw him—and saw that there was no beauty that they should desire Him. And they walked with Him no more, it is stated. They forsook Him to a man. From that day on they were His avowed enemies. And not so long thereafter, as inflamed by their leaders, they nailed Him to a cross. And on that cross He died. Then the Lord God again performed a great miracle. He raised Him up from the dead; and low, the sightless shoot or sprout becomes a beautiful tree; it acquires a crown of foliage and fruit—the church of the redeemed in heaven clothed with the heavenly perfection and glory of her Head, the resurrected and exalted Christ, the King of true glory at the right hand of God in the highest heavens. And the tree filleth the whole earth, the new earth. What a wonderful tree it is. So do God's people now see this sightless shoot or sprout by faith in the Scriptures, definitely in the prophetic discourse of Ezekiel.

G. M. Ophoff.

SION'S ZANGEN

Van Ganscher Harte

(Psalm 111; Tweede Deel)

De vorige maal zagen we den zanger in verrukking over des Heeren majesteit en heerlijkheid, en nu we onze overdenking over dit lied vervolgen, zien we hem zijn handen uitstrekken in vervoering over des Heeren gerechtigheid.

“En Zijne gerechtigheid bestaat tot in eeuwigheid.”

Wat is gerechtigheid?

Gerechtigheid is die deugd Gods, waarin de Almachtige in al Zijn leven beantwoordt aan de maatstaf van het hoogste goed en dat is Hijzelf. God is de eenigste maatstaf van het goede. En Zijn leven beantwoordt aan die maatstaf.

Nu is het ook duidelijk wat gerechtigheid beteekent voor den mensch. Voor den mensch beteekent het, dat zijn leven ook beantwoordt aan de maatstaf van het hoogste goed en dat is God. Is Uw leven overeenkomstig aan God, dat zijt ge rechtvaardig.

En nu is het de zang van dezen profeet, dat die gerechtigheid Gods vaststaat, rotsvast van eeuwigheid en tot in eeuwigheid. En dat is gelukkig. Want wij hebben daar wat mee te maken.

God heeft gerechtigheid bereid voor ons, die alle onze oorspronkelijke gerechtigheid verloren hebben. Hij heeft een gerechtigheid bereid in Christus Jezus den Heere. En die is geopendbaard als de Heere onze gerechtigheid. En deze, onze gerechtigheid zal bestaan tot in eeuwigheid. Want zij is gegrondvest op Gods gerechtigheid.

Wie zou niet zingen?

Indien we dien God gadeslaan in al Zijn majesteit, heerlijkheid en eeuwige gerechtigheid, dan zegt Gods volk, neen, dan zingt het: Hallelujah! Looft den Heere!

“Hij heeft Zijnen wonderen eene gedachtenis gemaakt.”

Wat is een wonder?

Het is misschien beter om te vragen: wat is het centrale wonder?

Als we de vraag zoo stellen, is het antwoord gemakkelijker. Het central wonder is zeker de vleeschwoording. Terwijl ik dit neerschrijf verwonder ik mij er over hoe men aangaande die dingen schrijven en spreken en zingen kan, en zoo kalm blijven!

De vleeschwoording!

De groote en vreeselijke God die te heilig van oogen is dan dat Hij de zonde zou kunnen vergoelijken, komt neder en neemt de menschenlijke natuur aan, verbreekt de eeuwige duisternis en komt voor ons te staan in het aangezicht van den Heere Jezus Christus, ons toe-

roepende: Ik heb U liefgehad met een eeuwige liefde! Daarom ga Ik voor U in den ewigen dood, om te dragen en weg te dragen al den last des toorns Gods die anders over U zou komen!

De Vleeschwoording! God komt tot ons in de gestalte van een slaaf met het vooropgezette doel om Zijn Eigen toorn weg te dragen, Zijn Eigen gerechtigheid te vervullen, om het rantsoen te betalen voor Zijn volk, hetwelk Hij verkoren had van voor de grondlegging der wereld.

Dat is het centrale wonder. En alle wonderen van God groepeeren zich rondom dat centrale wonder, loopen er op uit, of komen op U toe vanuit dat centrum. Juist omdat de lieflijke aanraking Gods, waarmee Hij den mensch aanraakt, haar centrum vindt in Jezus Christus den Heere, wijst alles in het verleden naar dien Christus heen, en alles wat er volgde in de Nieuwe Bedeeeling vloeit U toe vanuit dien Christus.

En zoo zijn al Gods werken wonderlijk. En kunt ge ietwat zien hoe Jezus ook Wonderlijk geheeten wordt.

En nu wil dit vers zeggen, dat God er ook voor zorgt, dat die wonderen Gods in Christus Jezus eene gedachtenis ontvangen. Dat zal waar zijn! Hij schrijft die wonderen in het diepe hart van de gekenden. Hij zingt ervan in Zijn openbaring. We hooren getuigen van *Gods lied* in den onvergetelijken twee-en-veertiger. We hooren van het lied van Mozes en van het Lam. Voorts zorgt God er voor, dat al die wonderen in het hart van den mensch des welbehagens uitbotten in het *willen en het werken naar Zijn welbehagen*. O ja, God zorgt er voor, dat men Zijn werken gadeslaat, en daar van spreekt, dag en nacht.

De Heere heeft Zijne wonderen een gedachtenis gemaakt. We zagen, dat die wonderen Jezus Christus de Heere zijn. Welnu, hier is de gedachtenis: het Woord, dat vast is. Zoudt ge blijven vragen en zeggen: waar kan ik vat krijgen aan die gedachtenis, dan wijs ik U naar den Bijbel. De Bijbel is de gedachtenis van de groote wonderen Gods. Hoe akelig naar en vreeselijk ledig zou ons leven zijn zonder de goudglansen van dien Bijbel.

En als ge dan zoudt antwoorden en zeggen: maar er zijn duizenden en tienduizenden die dien Bijbel hebben en toch de gedachtenis niet zien van Gods wonderen, dan antwoord ik U: dat is waar, en daarom heeft de Heere een tweede groote gedachtenis gegeven aan Zijne wonderen, en dat is de uitstorting van den Heiligen Geest van den verheerlijkten Christus.

En zoo hebt ge het volle beeld: den Bijbel en den Heiligen Geest.

En dan gaat ge doen als de dichter deed: ge gaat zingen en jubelen van al de heerlijkheden der wonderen Gods, van nu aan tot in der eeuwigheid.

“De Heere is genadig en barmhartig.”

Och lieve, wat zal ik daar van zeggen?

En hoe zal ik daar van beginnen te schrijven. . . . en ophouden? Er ligt ook hier weer een eeuwigheid van gedachten.

Genadig is de Heere. . . . Dat vinden we overal in den Bijbel.

Ik denk hier direkt aan Hem die op aarde Goddelijke antwoorden gaf; aan Hem die den Vader verklaarde. Van Hem getuigde men, dat Hij *genadige* woorden sprak. Eerder lazen we, dat Hij toenam in *genade* bij God en de menschen. En in de psalmen staren we in verrukking op Zijn schoone beeld, waar men zingende van Hem profeteerde: *genade* is uitgestort op Uwe lippen!

Genade is schoonheid, lieflijkheid, aantrekkelijkheid. Genade is datgene wat welluidt. Zoo is God de genadige God in Zichzelf, afgedacht van U en mij. Genade is een deugd Gods. En God is altijd en eeuwiglijk aangetrokken tot Zijn Eigen Wezen, dat schoon en lieflijk is. Daarom looft God Zichzelf.

En zoo is Hij ook schoon tot Zijn schepsel, dat naar Zijn beeld geschapen is. Hij stort die lieflijkheid in hem uit en maakt hem ook mooi en schoon. Ja, in zekere mate deed God dat ook over de werken Zijner handen. Toen Hij de mooie, *gracieuze* schepselen zag die Hij gemaakt had, zeide Hij immers: het is zeer goed!

En zelfs nu nog, nadat de zonde, schuld en vloek kwamen, zelfs nu verwonderen wij ons over het vele schoone, dat er gevonden wordt hier op aarde. Alles predikt, dat God nog genadig is. Ik zie het in de schoone tafereelen van het uitspansel in diepen nacht, in de bruisende golven op het strand; ik sta in vervoe-ring bij het zien van duizende schakeeringen van groen en geel en bruin in de kleederen des aardrijks, het groene tapijt van gras en plant en heester. Ik kan wel zingen als ik de schoone geluiden hoor van wind en water, van storm en onweer, van alle de elementen die dan stil en vredig, dan wild en onstuimiglijk hun stemmen laten hooren. Ik droom er van in zoele zomernachten, en ontwaak in een bad van het licht der zon: de morgen, de schoone morgen is weer gekomen! O, alles verkondigt de genade van God.

Denkt daaraan, als men het schier automatisch elkander nazegt: genade is verbeurde gunst!

Och arme! Heeft Jezus soms ook verbeurde gunst van God ontvangen? Hij sprak genadige woorden in Nazareth' synagoge; Hij nam toe in genade bij God en menschen; de profeten zagen Zijn genadige lippen!

En wat de deur toedoet: God is toch een genadig God in Zichzelfen? Hoe kan dan de genade wezenlijk verbeurde gunst zijn?

Neen, maar zóó loopt de lijn: genade is schoonheid en pracht, aantrekkelijkheid en lieflijkheid. Het is datgene wat gracieus is.

God is dat in Zijn eeuwig Wezen. God is gracieus! God tooit Zijn schepping en schepsel met genade, en

zij zijn óók mooi en lieflijk.

Als die schepping ondergaat in zonde en vuilheid, en het tegenovergestelde vertoont van genade, en leelijk wordt, dan openbaart God Zijn genade weer, doch dan nog veel heerlijker dan in het Paradijs. Dat doet God door Zijn Eigen schoonheid te doen zien gelijk nooit te voren: en dat is Jezus! Jezus is de Genadige bij uitnemendheid. Hij is zoo gracieus en lieflijk, dat de Kerk van alle eeuwen, Hem ziende, uitgeroepen heeft: alles aan Hem is zeer begeerijk! Ziet ge nu niet, dat het Hooglied van Salomo juist die schoonheid van beide den Bruidegom en de Bruid bezingt? Gij zoudt boven het Hooglied kunnen schrijven: Een lied der Genade!

En in de vierde plaats buigt God Zich in eeuwige liefde tot Zijn volk in Jezus Christus, richt hen op, wascht hen van alle hunne zonde, en maakt hen allen weer schoon en lieflijk. Leest, neen, zingt nu dien psalm die spreekt van "gelijk een duif in 't zilverwit en 't goud dat op haar vederen zit", enz. Komt daar ook niet in voor: weer met Uw schoonheid pralen? Welnu, dat is de genade Gods over u!

O ja, Vader, we zijn klaar om er van te zingen, te zingen.

G. Vos.



Correspondence With The Liberated Churches

An Explanation and An Apology.

The undersigned feels that he owes a word of explanation to the readers of the *Standard Bearer*, the Deputies for Correspondence in the Netherlands, and an apology to two members of the Committee of Correspondence with foreign churches, appointed by our Synod. The two committee members are the brethren Rev. H. Hoeksema and Rev. G. M. Ophoff.

This past summer when I was in the Netherlands I received a letter from the Deputies for Correspondence with foreign churches from the Liberated churches. That was some time in July. The purpose of course was that I take this letter along to the States and that as Committee of our Churches we would discuss this letter and reply to it.

Naturally, if I had known then what I discovered later, I would have sent that letter to the States immediately. Or else if I had known everything beforehand I would have placed that letter in the hands of the Committee very shortly after I arrived back in the States, which was in the middle of August. And after all it was not my letter but the property of the Committee. However, the facts in the case are that I did not open that letter (although I was acquainted with

its contents) till several days after I arrived home. Then at a meeting with the Consistory of First Church, an August 29, I read said letter to the Consistory and several other brethren that were present. There was nothing secret about the letter as such and, hence, I could see no harm in reading the letter at that time. But at that particular meeting the two brethren, Committee members mentioned, were not present, and, hence, they were not acquainted with the contents of this letter nor even knew about its existence, while the fact remains of course that they first of all were entitled to know the contents of the letter because it was a letter for our Committee.

At the time I thought it was a matter of wisdom to keep that letter for a while, (besides, I expected another letter very shortly) and I hoped that we could meet as Committee in the near future to discuss said letter. As matters turned out it was not till November 18 that I sent the letter to the brethren. As I said before, if I had to do it over again I would do it differently, but that can not be done now. I readily admit that it was wrong of me to hold on to the letter till such a late date.

However, there is still another element that enters here. Not being aware of the existence of said letter things were written in the *Standard Bearer* in re the question of Correspondence (I noticed even in the last issue of the *Standard Bearer*), and also in re the Deputies for Correspondence in the Netherlands, which would not and could not have been written had I forwarded the letter immediately to our Committee.

I can assure the brethren involved that there was no evil intent on my part, but I am certainly willing to take the blame for what I neglected to do. And I hereby apologize for this neglect which resulted in a serious misunderstanding, and in turn led to wrong conclusions and observations which were not true. And I certainly hope that herewith the readers of the *Standard Bearer* will understand the situation, that my apology is accepted by the brethren involved, and that this incident is closed.

Gladly would I write about the matter of correspondence as such, the letter and its proposals, etc., (there is nothing secret about it), but that is not the purpose now and that does not lie within the framework of this short article. Besides, it is also natural and self-evident that as Committee we first meet and discuss the letter.

I do want to say in conclusion that I appreciate it very much that I have the opportunity to write about this matter and thus avoid the possibility of all personal reflections, and that also in this way all misunderstanding may be removed and that the readers may receive a clear and truthful picture of the whole thing as such.

J. D. de Jong.

FROM HOLY WRIT

"And you (did He make alive) when ye were dead through your trespasses and sins, wherein ye once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the powers of the air, of the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience; among whom we also all once lived in the lusts of our flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest."—Eph. 2:1-4.

The attentive reader, who lives by faith in Christ Jesus, having read the quotation here from the pen of Paul, must have observed both to his joy and blessed comfort, that for him all the old things of sin, guilt and death are gone forever, and that by faith all things are new, not only for the present age, but also into the endless ages to come.

Such is the rich and glorious import of this Scripture passage.

For by faith the redeemed child of God stands in the new state of justification and adoption to sons through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And in this faith in Christ he has free entrance into the holy place of God, and receives all the spiritual blessings in heavenly places, to wit, the blessings of sanctification and the hope of everlasting glory. Prior to and apart from faith we are without the possession of God's blessing and favor, but in this faith in Christ crucified we are assured of the possession of salvation to the end.

And what a change this is! It is the change from "what we were once" to what "we are now". It is a complete change from the darkness of sin and death to the brightness of the Light of God shining in our hearts in the face of Jesus Christ. A greater change is unthinkable. It is the work of God in His redeeming grace. God brings us up out of the deepest depths of sin and guilt to the highest pinnacle of life and liberty in Christ. For He has claimed us from death and hell and has set us in the heavens in Christ Jesus.

And all the way it is His work alone.

For it is a work so great in magnitude that it is the very work of "creation", the calling of things that are not as though they were; the illustriousness of it is so exceedingly great, that it will require the entire span of ages to come to display the riches of God's goodness in us the saints!

All things will then sing and rejoice, saying: Behold, what God hath wrought!

There is nothing of the work of proud man in this. God alone is the Builder and the Architect. And for this very reason every mouth must be stopped, and the whole world stand condemnable before God. This change here wrought in us, who believe, has nothing in common with the false claim of the moralist that it is a change from being morally bad to becoming less evil

in a moral sense. Salvation is not a matter of morality, of man's lifting himself up out of the miry clay by inches, but it is the work of God whereby in Christ He completely justifies and sanctifies the godless!

For this is the glad tidings of the Gospel, which the Ambassadors of Christ, the King, bring, namely, "that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses"! (II Cor. 5:19).

This reconciliation of God brings a complete change about in the relation of man, of redeemed man, to God. Oh, the change is so very complete; so very radical it is.

To this complete change, this complete translation out of the authority of the power of darkness into the kingdom of God's Son, Paul calls the attention of his readers, and through this letter to them he also speaks to us. And since Paul prefaces this part of His letter with the prayer to God, the Father of glory, that He give the readers, the saints in Ephesus the Spirit of revelation and wisdom that thereby the eyes of their heart may be enlightened and since this letter is also addressed to us, it follows, that the content of this prayer must be realized by God through the Holy Spirit shall we have a spiritual understanding of this wonderful work of God's salvation by grace alone. It is indeed only by the Holy Spirit that we also have a believing understanding of what God's hope unto which He has called us in Christ means, and what the riches of the glory of God in Christ in the saints implies, not to forget the exceeding greatness of God's power in saving us through the resurrection and glorious, triumphant ascension of Christ to the Father's right hand.

This receiving of enlightenment of the heart from God is not merely necessary in the sense of the first impartation of the new life of faith in Christ by the Spirit, but it is a constant necessity, a gift given upon prayer to those who "have faith in Christ Jesus and have love to all the saints". (Ephesians 1:15-23)

And to this our prayerful and believing attention Paul pictures, describes to us in these verses (2:1-10) the greatness of salvation alone on the background of the awful depth of sin and death in which *we were* by nature.

The contrast is as sharply stated by Paul in verse 5: *Ye were dead in your trespasses and sins—but now ye have been made alive with Christ Jesus!*

Now it is quite certain that the main description, the very heart of the awfulness and hopelessness of our former state and condition, of our state and condition, of our state and condition by nature, apart from God's salvation in Christ, our Lord, is stated by Paul in verse 1 by the phrase "ye being dead by reason of the sins and trespasses of you." The remaining clauses of the verses 2-4, which deal with this same question are evidently meant as a somewhat broader description of this awful depravity.

That such is indeed the case is not merely suggested by the very natural law that the important and central matter is stated first, but in this case is proven from the very striking fact, that Paul in verse 5 briefly repeats the entire content of the former verses, and that, too, for the sake of the special emphasis that this truth needed, in verse 5, where we read in abbreviated form "and ye being dead by the trespass".

This repetition of this thought shows clearly that the essence of the death from which we have been saved by grace is our "being dead by reason of our trespasses and sins".

Now, what does this latter really imply?

It is salutary to prayerfully and believingly consider this.

And then we would remark, first of all, that to him who is thoroughly Reformed, to him who believes that our whole nature became vitiated by the fall, our understanding darkened, our will hard and obdurate and wholly estranged from the life of God—to him, I say, the question arises why Paul does not say: Because ye were *dead by reason of the one trespass in Adam* ye sin and trespass. It is rather remarkable that Paul does not explain our actual sins and transgressions out of our original guilt and pollution here. At least that is not the way it is *stated*.

Now by way of warning against a false assumption it may be well to state that we are also convinced that Paul here does not deny that *death came upon all* by the *one transgression* of Adam.

Paul does here deny in Eph. 2:1-4 what he had taught in Romans 5:12-21.

But what then?

To be sure the truth of Romans 5:12-21 stands in all its awful reality. We all died in the one transgression of Adam. On the other hand it also remains true that we *are dead by reason of our* trespasses and sins!

There are two basic considerations that here come to the foreground. The one is that we should bear in mind the nature of the guilt of Adam and his relation to the whole human race both as representative head and as father, or the "root" of the human race. The other is, that we have and keep a rather clear conception of the moral, rational nature of the sinner, upon whom death *has* come, as this sinner concretely performs moral-rational sinful acts!

In the first place we may point out that while Paul in Rom. 5:12-21 speaks of "death *came through* to all men", and says "that the trespass of one many died"; "for the judgment came by one to condemnation"; "by the trespass of one death reigned through that one", and "so then, through one trespass the judgment came unto all men to condemnation; for through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners".

How is this to be accounted for? How could this

awful guilt of Adam come upon all of us?

To this Paul answers in Rom. 5:12 "Because that all had sinned" in Adam. This does mean that every one in the human race was very really in Adam, consciously sinning. It surely means that legally Adam represented the whole human race before God. When Adam sinned his transgression was imputed to all of us. And very really the death-sentence, which was before already threatened to Adam, is immediately executed by God. And Adam and Eve very really died, as is attested by their whole conduct subsequent to the fall and prior to the gracious giving of the Protevangel in Genesis 3:15. They were guilty, the sentence of guilt was written by God in their conscience, and they could not love each other anymore. For they accuse each other, and do not humbly confess their sins. They could not *confess* their sins, but could only admit their sin and guilt and that, too, while they accused each his own respective temptor. They thus became "children of wrath".

Now this verdict of guilt was passed on to the whole human race. Cain was a child of wrath, but so was Abel *by nature!*

Since we have mentioned Abel it being convenient to us, we will demonstrate the point of "being dead by reason of trespasses and sin" in his case.

That Abel was "dead by means of trespasses and sins" does not mean that there was an endless number of "falls" in him and in all who like him are "children of wrath". We do not experience, do not pass through the "fall". There is only one fall, the one trespass of Adam. And so, to return to Abel, Abel was born and conceived in the guilt of Adam, with the law of sin in his members. He was by nature "inclined to all evil, incapable of doing any good." His whole nature was corrupt, his will perverse, and his mind darkened. That was due to the *one* transgression of his immediate father, Adam! And in this he was just like the "rest" by nature, that is, he was *as such* just like Cain!

But, and here we come to our second consideration, which we have stated earlier in this essay, Abel sinned as a moral-rational being under the same law of God under which Adam had been placed. The original command to love God perfectly and to obey Him did not change! By nature Abel was under the perfect law. And the law Abel could only transgress! For by nature he was a child of wrath. And in this wrath he was in the vicious-circle, the perpetual motions of sin. Sin bears more sins. It is endless! Each new transgression and sin is written indelibly by God in the conscience the verdict of guilt. The conscience becomes ever more defiled and the mind more reprobate unto every good work!

And so as Abel lived concretely, by nature he with Cain, was dead and ever more dead by reason of the

verdict of God upon each added trespass and sin. Hence, they were dead by reason of their trespasses and sins. This is also the experience of the godly, when the eyes of their heart have been enlightened, and they have died unto the very sin and trespass which has very exceedingly revided in them, that they experience "that their conscience accuses them for each transgression and sin. And the confession is: I find in me, that is, in my flesh, no good; I am carnal, sold under sin. O, wretched man that I am. And with David the godly confess it is not only because of these trespasses and sins that I am dead, ever dead in my conscience and, therefore, further by nature do nothing but sin, but this reaches back to my having been conceived in sin by my mother, and her having given birth to me in unrighteousness!

That such is the awful state and condition where the rich mercy of God finds us, is evident from the further description of Paul of the state and condition of the believers as they, as we *were* by nature.

But this must wait till the next issue, D. V.

G. Lubbers.

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TEACHERS WANTED!

The Free Christian School Society of Edgerton, Minnesota, expects to open the doors of its own Protestant Reformed School for the Reformed instruction of the children of the covenant, Sept. 1950. Instruction will be offered in the grades one through eight. We expect an enrollment of approximately fifty pupils.

We will need teachers, Protestant Reformed teachers, two of them. One to serve as principal and to teach grades five through eight, the other to teach grades one through four.

The Board hereby invites teachers, and prospective teachers, to make application for these positions. Full co-operation of the parents and of the Board is assured. Attractive salaries will be offered. A new school building, with up to date class rooms, furnished with new educational materials, will provide pleasant working conditions.

Anyone qualified, and interested in more information, is invited to correspond with the secretary. We invite you to send a letter of application for one of these positions. Please include in this letter a statement of educational background and attainments, and indicate the position for which you apply. Kindly indicate previous experience, if any.

This is an opportunity for anyone eager to teach in one of our Prot. Ref. schools, under pleasant conditions, at a good salary. It is an opportunity to help lay the groundwork of a new Prot. Ref. school, in order that the school may get off to a good start, doctrinally and educationally. We earnestly solicit your application, teachers and prospective teachers!

Applications should be mailed to the Secretary:

Mr. Wm. Huiskens
Edgerton, Minnesota.