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MEDITATION

Volkomen Heil

“Hij zal den dood verslinden tot overwinning, en de Heere HEERE zal de tranen van alle aangezichten afwisschen, en Hij zal de smaadheid Zijns volks van de gansche aarde wegnemen; want de HEERE heeft het gesproken.”

Jesaja 25:8.

De toekomst is vol van heerlijkheid en lieflijkheid voor het volk des Heeren.

Het Woord van God opent tafereelen van zulke schoonheid en heerlijkheid, dat we er niet bij kunnen. We kunnen het eenvoudig niet op. Het gaat alle onze denkbeelden te boven.

Hier op aarde heeft het kind van God zijn tranen tot spijze dag en nacht, waar de goddeloozen hem schamper vragen: Waar is uw God? Hij vindt treuring en droefenis. Hij stort vaak heete tranen vanwege allerlei smart. Zijn beste dagen zijn moeite en verdriet. En als hij vragend het betraande oog opheft naar den hemel, dan komen de gezanten Gods en verzekeren hem, dat door vele verdrukkingen hij ingaan moet in het Koninkrijk Gods.

Maar . . . als hij straks, moegestreden en hijgende mag komen aan den avondstond van zijn leven, dan verzekert hem de Heilige Geest, dat God hem tegemoet zal snellen, en opgaande op den gouden weg die leidt naar de poorten der gerechtigheid, wordt hij ervan verzekerd, dat Vader alle zijne tranen zal afwisschen. O ja, hij zal eeuwiglijk gelukkig zijn, daar waar geen smart of tranen ooit zullen zijn. Ze zullen voor eeuwig wegvlieden.

Van zulk volkomen heil spreekt den tekst die we kozen tot onze meditatie. Het is een vers in het lied van den koninklijken profeet. Hij is aan 't zingen gegaan, toen hij de verderving van alle Israel's vijanden zag. Want met die verdelging van Babel, Moab en Assyrië

komt ook zijn eigen verlossing. Jesaja ziet het alles in 't blijde verschiep. Laat ons blikken in de dingen die hij gezien heeft zoo lang, lang geleden, en . . . laat ons den troost vatten door Gods wondere genade over ons.

Volkomen heil!

Zooals het vaak gezien wordt door hen die luisteren naar des Heeren Woord: ge vindt in dezen tekst het volle Evangelie der verlossing.

Ik hoor van volkomen heil.

Allereerst, Gods volk wordt zekerlijk verlost.

Want . . . zijn dood wordt verslonden tot overwinning!

Wonder van genade!

Zijn dood!

Wat wil dat zeggen?

Dood is een angstvallig woord. Het is een verschrikkelijke gedachte. De dood is strijd, rebellie, oproer, en dan wel tegen God.

Eerst, de dood is vreeselijk zooals hij vreet en vreet aan het lichaam van den mensch, van het oogenblik dat hij geboren wordt (indien niet eerder), totdat hij met nog een laatsten snik ineensloort, een paar voeten onder de aarde gelegd wordt, om dan te vergaan, te vergaan.

We sterven alle dagen! Dat kunt ge ook zeggen van den physischen dood. We zijn steeds onderworpen aan duizende machten en schepselen die het op ons lichaam verzien hebben. Bij ontelbare scharen treden zij op U toe, treden binnen in U, en gaan aan 't vreten en verdoen. Sommigen onzer worden letterlijk opgevreten door die massa's.

En dat komt alles van God. Hij gebiedt en ze komen aan met drommen om ons te vernielen.

Men mag strijden er tegen, en men moet dat doen. We hebben onze voorzorgen en onze vele soorten van medicijn, en het is goed, met dankzegging genomen zijnde. Maar het helpt zoo weinig! Ge ademt den dood in. Ge eet en drinkt den dood in. En dat is ook naar het welbehagen Gods. Dat is Zijn wil over den

mensch. Hij moet al stervende sterven.

De dood is vreeselijk!

We verlangen, we hijgen naar uitkomsten tegen den dood!

We snakken naar heil, naar volkomen heil.

En toch is dat sterven van ziel en lichaam het ergste niet. De Gereformeerde dogmatiek spreekt van den geestelijken dood.

En die is ontzaglijk erger dan den physischen dood. Geestelijk dood te zijn, de geestelijke dood te sterven is zoo onheilspellend bang.

Het beteekent, dat gij God haat, Hem den rug toe keert, of Hem de vuist ballend in het aangezicht toeroept: Ik wil niet dat Gij, o God, Koning zou zijn over mij. Ja, de Gereformeerde dogmatiek heeft een kapittel over den geestelijken dood. En wel mag en moet zij dat hebben, want Gods Woord is er vol van. Daar hebt ge, om niet meer te noemen, dat vreeselijke hoofdstuk van Romeinen 3. Daar wordt een beeld gegeven van den geestelijken dood. Het is alles haat, nijd en vuilheid in het binnenste hart. Het is om van te weenen. Luistert naar de beschrijving van slechts één moment: hunne keel is een geopend graf! Vanuit dat graf rookt de haat tegen God en mensch.

De dood is verschrikkelijk, vooral zooals hij den mensch geestelijk aanrandt. En toch, dat is nog het ergste niet. Er is ook de eeuwige dood. En daarvan kan ik niet veel zeggen. Doch wat ervan geopenbaard is doet ons beven en sidderen.

Er is een worm die knaagt, er is een weenen en een knersing der tanden. Er is die rook, die verschrikkelijke rook die opgaat tot in alle eeuwigheid. Het is de rook der pijniging. Luistert naar dit veelzeggende vers: En als hij in de hel zijne oogen ophief, *zijnde in de pijn* . . .

Het alles samenvattende, is de dood de wrake Gods, het is Zijn eeuwige toorn tegen den mensch die Hem verliet, die Hem tergde in zijne zonden. Het is de uitstorting van alle de baren en alle de golven van een hittigen toorn en gramschap. Ik gevoel op dit oogeblik gelijk Mozes het uitdrukt: Wie kent de sterkte Uws toorns, en Uwe verbolgenheid naardat Gij te vreezen zijt! Wie daar een bevestigend antwoord op geeft, wie zeggen kan: Ziet hier: Ik, Ik ken den toorn des Heeren, die zal U ook verkondigen wat de dood is! Want de dood is Gods toorn.

Bij het hooren daarvan wordt het ons bang.

O, het heil des Heeren is zoo schoon, zoo lieflijk. Want het geeft uitreddingen tegen den dood.

We snakken naar het heil, het volkomen heil des Heeren.



Volkomen heil!

O ja, dat is er bij den Heere HEERE!

Dat zegt Jesaja tegen Israel, tegen het volk des Heeren.

Want Hij zal den dood verslinden tot overwinning! Ziet het eerste deel van het volkomen heil des Heeren!

En nu moet ik spreken van mirakelen. En ik weet er zoo weinig van. Er liggen zulke duizelingwekkende diepten bij en in deze waarheid. Maar dat het zoo is, weet ik. God beloofde aan Jesaja, en door Jesaja, aan Zijn volk, dat Hij den dood zou verslinden tot overwinning. En die belofte heeft Hij vervuld toen Hij Zelf neerkwam in Bethlehem's stal. God kwam neer, en Hij is dieper en dieper gezonken, totdat Hij onzen geheelen dood onderschepte, en toen, in de diepste diepten van den eeuwigen dood is Hij onzen dood aan 't verslinden gegaan. En we weten, dat Hij er mee klaar gekomen is, want op een zeer glorieuzen morgen is Hij weer te voorschijn gekomen. Het geschiedde in den hof van Jozef van Arimathéa. Toen Jezus verrees was de dood weg. Om nooit weer terug te komen. Zeg nu toch niet, dat gij toch nog sterven moet, want Uw sterven is geen doodgaan. Uw sterven is een in slaap vallen in Jezus. Daarom kunnen beide de stervenden en degenen die bij het ziekbed waakten zingen in het aangezicht van den dood. De prikkel is er uit. Want God verslond den dood tot een volkomen overwinning.

Physisch sterven? Ge krijgt een lichaam, dat nooit meer moede of mat zal worden. En dat lichaam zal schoon en lieflijk zijn.

Geestelijke dood? Ge zult God minnen tot in eeuwigheid. Men zal nooit meer kwaaddoen op Gods heiligen berg.

Eeuwig sterven in de hel? O neen, maar ge zult tot in alle eeuwigheden in het Nieuwe Jeruzalem wonen, om dan verzadigd te worden met Zijn lieflijk Beeld, en dat beeld is Jezus! Is het niet om van te zingen?

Zingt maar: het is volkomen heil!



Volkomen heil!

Wacht nog wat, er komt nog veel meer.

Hij zal de tranen van alle aangezichten afwisschen. Tranen, wat zijn zij?

De traan is U gegeven om uitdrukking te geven aan groote smart. Soms kunt ge niet verder. De smart die ge zo lang opgekropt hebt, moet er uit. En de tranen beginnen te loopen. Sommige Bijbelschrijvers gingen in uitersten zou men haast zeggen: ze smolten weg in tranen. Er zijn zoo veel tranen.

Zelfs de wereld spreekt van deze aarde als van een tranendal. En dat is waar. Daar zijn eerst de tranen van het stomme, het brute schepsel.

Ik heb vaak een innig medelijden met het brute schepsel. Ze hebben niets kwaads gedaan. En toch moeten zij zoo vreeselijk lijden. Om onzentwille zijn ze onderworpen aan allerlei smart en tranen. Zou het

daarom zijn, dat de Heilige Schrift ons toeroept, dat de rechtvaardige het leven van zijn beesten zal kennen? Kunt ge hieraan denken en dan wreedelijk Uw paard slaan en Uw koe schoppen? Zult ge Uw hond trijteren en Uw kat folteren? De beesten zijn onschuldig!

Alles weent.

Dat zegt de Bijbel. Luistert: Want wij weten, dat het gansche schepsel te zamen zucht en te zamen als in barensnood is tot nu toe. Leest ook het eerste hoofdstuk van den Prediker. Alles wordt zoo moede, dat een mensch het niet kan uitdrukken. Alles is onderworpen aan de vreeselijke ijdelheid. Het bereikt zijn bestemming niet. Het is alles tevergeefs, vruchteloos, ijdel. En het wordt steeds banger. Meer en meer steekt het tranende schepsel zijn kop op, verlangende en hijgende naar de openbaring der heerlijkheid der kinderen Gods. Er is een tranen van het brute schepsel naar het volkomen heil. Want ook zij zullen deelen in die onbeschrijflijke heerlijkheid die geopenbaard zal worden.

Alles weent.

Ook de goddelooze wereld. Er is een droefheid der wereld die den dood werkt.

Dat is een huilen dat onbeschrijflijk bang is. Zelfs in hun blijdschap hebben zij smarten. En ook hier wordt het al banger.

Vanuit het diepe hart van den goddeloozen mensch komen de stroomen van tranen. Men heeft nu al voor zesduizend jaren gesnikt en zich gekromd in ongekende smarten. Er is een droefheid in de wereld die ik niet kan schetsen. En alhoewel men tracht om haar te verbergen, zoo kunt ge die tranen toch wel gewaar worden. Luistert naar hun lieflijkste muziek, en ik verzeker U dat ge het snikken hooren kunt. Permitteer mij om één voorbeeld te noemen. Er is een beroemde dans der wereld van Johann Strauss, en de naam van dien dans is "Tales from the Vienna Woods". Luistert er naar, en ge zult het snikken der wereld beluisteren. En zooals het in die wals klinkt, zoo klinkt het ook in andere classicale muziek. En dan zoo, dat hoe schooner de muziek, hoe treuriger snikken de klanken. Let er maar op. Maar de tranen van de wereld worden nooit afgewischt. Men begon te schreien en klagelijk te weenen hier op aarde. Men schreide hartverscheurend van onuitsprekelijke ellende die men ervoer in zijn leven des doods. Het werd al erger, al naarmate men ouder werd hier op deze vreeselijke aarde.

En het einde was te laatste snik. Doch wacht! Het is niet over. Het begint pas. Het snikken en het tranen van den goddeloozen mensch ging over in de weening en de knersing der tanden in de aanvankelijke hel. Stelt het U voor hoe het er naar toe gaat in die aanvankelijke hel op dit huidige oogenblik! Het is om van te rillen. Ik zie Kain met verwrongen ziel, al snikkend. Ik zie Ezau. Op aarde schreide hij tot Izak, maar zijn schreien is nu luider, banger, vreeselijker. Ik zie ook die arme Judas. Wie zal de tranen tellen van dien

Judas? Nu, in de aanvankelijke hel? En het zal nog veel erger worden na den oordeelsdag!

Alles weent.

Maar luistert! Wat voor klank is dat? Ik hoor een onuitsprekelijk lieflijk weenen. O ja, ik bedoel het net zooals ik het neerschreef. Er is een weenen dat hemelsch lieflijk is. Het zijn de tranen van Gods volk. Het zijn de tranen van mijn tekst. Het zijn de tranen die een uitdrukking zijn van de liefde Gods. Het is geen wonder, dat de Heilige Geest van die tranen zegt, dat zij de droefheid naar God vertolken. Het zijn de tranen die de goedkeuring Gods wegdragen. Het is het weenen van David als Hij door God bezocht wordt nadat hij zondigde. Ik zei, dat zij opwellen uit de liefde Gods. En dat is correct. Gods liefde werd U geschonken in het liepe hart. Die liefde zag en ervoer de zonde die ons allen zoo lichtelijk omringt. En toen is die liefde aan 't schreien gegaan, en zij blijft schreien tot dat God komen zal om die tranen af te wisschen.

Dat geschiedt nu al in beginsel, maar, ach, het is slechts een klein beginsel van wondere troost.

Ik denk, dat Jesaja meer het oog heeft op die eidelijke afwisseling der tranen. Als we thuis komen. Dan zal God al de smart wegvagen uit het harte van de liefhebbers Gods.

Mag ik niet spreken van een volkomen Heil?



En ten slotte ziet Jesaja, dat de Heere HEERE de smaadheid Zijns volks van de gansche aarde zal wegnemen! Er is een smaadheid van Gods volk.

Ik heb niet veel ruimte meer om uit te weiden. Ik zal U direct het hart van die smaadheid toonen. Het is eigenlijk de smaadheid van Christus, en op haar beurt is zij eigenlijk de smaadheid waarmee ze God gesmaad hebben.

Maar waarom toch?

Hier is het bange antwoord: ze toonen daarmee hoe onbeschrijflijk vuil, gemeen en boos zij zijn. Stelt het U voor: God is het hoogste goed. Hij is zóó schoon en lieflijk, dat zelfs de engelen hunne aangezichten bedekken voor den troon. Zoo schoon, dat we nooit klaar zullen komen om elkander er op te wijzen hoe heerlijk Zijn deugden zijn, de deugden die dan ten volle zullen getoond worden. En denkt nu hier aan, en . . . siddert. De goddeloozen smaden dien God, dien lieflijken Christus, dat volk, dat Hem looft, mint en openbaart.

Toont Uzelf in de wereld, geliefden, en men zal U smaden. Maar zoo zal het niet blijven. God zal eenmaal al die smaadheid van den ganschen aardbodem wegnemen. Dan zal het stormen voor de goddeloozen. En dan zullen zij toestemmen, dat het dwaas was om God in Christus een smaadheid te noemen.

Maar 't vrome volk in God verheugd, zal huppelen van zielevreugd, daar zij hun wensch verkrijgen. En die wensch is: nabij-God-te-zijn!

G. Vos.

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EDITORIALS

Prof. Veenhof's Letter

(continued)

Ik kan niet nalaten in dit stuk ook nog even op Calvijn te wijzen. Er is immers wel niemand, die de verkiezing en de verwerping—dat decretum horribile—zoo krachtig en zoo consequent heeft beleden en geleerd als hij.

Welnu *desondanks*—of neen, ik zeg het weer niet goed, ik moet zeggen: *juist daarom*—heeft Calvijn ook woorden geschreven als:

de genadige aanneming—tot—kind strekt zich tot alle kinderen van Abraham uit; alle Israelieten waren huisgenooten der kerk; kinderen Gods en erfgenamen van het eeuwige leven (Kommentaar op Gen. 17:14);

derhalve heeft God het geheele zaad van Jakob zonder uitzondering uitverkoren, zooals de Schrift op vele plaatsen betuigt, omdat Hij allen gelijkelijk (pariter) met dezelfde bewijzen van zijn genade, namelijk het woord en de sacramenten, verwaardigd heeft (Kommentaar p Gen. 25:23);

dat de belofte aan Abraham en zijn zaad niet zóó gegeven is, dat de erfenis voor elk willekeurig zaad is bestemd, waaruit volgt, dat de afval van sommigen in het minst niet kan verhinderen dat het verbnd vast en bestendig blijft (Kommentaar op Rom. 9:6);

dat Israel in den beginne een gelijken graad met zijn broeder Izak verkregen had, omdat het geestelijk verbond in hem niet minder verzegeld was door het teeken der besnijdenis (Inst. III 21:6);

dat dit de ongeschondenheid van het sacrament is, welke de geheele wereld niet kan schenden, dat het vleesch en bloed van Christus even waarlijk den onwaardigen gegeven wordt als Gods uitverkoren geloovigen, maar dat tegelijkertijd óók waar is, dat evenals de regen, wanneer hij op een harde rots neervalt, wegvloeit, omdat er geen gelegenheid is in den steen door te dringen, zoo ook de goddeloozen door hun hardheid Gods genade verdrijven, zoodat die in hen niet door-dringt (Inst. IV, 33)

En dat alles zegt Calvijn niet *ondanks* het feit, dat hij zoo streng en zoo consequent Gods verkiezing en verwerping, de souvereiniteit en de onoverwinnelijkheid van Gods genade en de volstreckte onmacht van den mensch belijdt, neen, hij zegt dat, *omdat* hij die belijdt, *omdat* hij belijdt, dat Gods souvereiniteit en de absoluteitheid van Gods genade óók erkend moet worden in *de wijze waarop* God de zijnen zaligt!

En zoo sprekend, beleeft Calvijn wat hij eenmaal zelf

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aldus formuleerde: Laat ons bedenken dat “in de geheele leer van den godsdienst, één regel van bescheidenheid en matigheid moet in acht genomen worden, namelijk deze, dat wij over duistere zaken niets anders moeten spreken, of gevoelen, of ook begeeren te weten, dat wat in Gods Woord ons meegegeeld is. In de tweede plaats, dat wij bij het lezen der Schrift ons voortdurend bezig houden met het zoeken en overdenken van die dingen, die tot opbouwning dienen en niet toegeven aan nieuwsgierigheid of het najagen van onnutte dingen. En omdat de Heere ons heeft willen onderwijzen niet in onbeduidende kwesties, maar in waarachtige vroomheid, in de vreeze zijns naams, in waarvertrouwen, en in de plichten der heiligheid, zoo laat ons in die kennis berusten”. (Inst. 1, 14, 4).

* * * *

En nu moet ik noodig ophouden! Ik ben reeds veel te breed geweest! Het is niet mijn bedoeling over wat ik gezegd heb een polemiek uit te lokken. Ik zou zelfs dringend willen vragen géén discussie over dit stuk te beginnen.

Mijn bedoeling is een andere. Door Gods voorzienigheid is het leven van Uwe en onze kerken zoo geleid, dat er allerlei contact en groeiend begrip en waardeering voor elkaars leven en strijd is ontstaan. We staan nu, al is het niet officieel, toch met elkaar in een zekere gemeenschap. En nu dreigt het zeer groote gevaar, dat we van elkaar vervreemden. Dat is, nu God U en ons op elkaars weg plaatste, een zeer ernstig ding. Ik zie hierin zeer duidelijk Satan bezig. Hij doet altijd zijn best de schapen van Christus' kudde tegen elkaar op te hitsen en van elkaar te vervreemden! Laten wij nu op onze hoede zijn. Laten we nu bidden om de geesten te mogen beproeven en te kunnen beproeven. En laten we vasthouden, dat allen die werkelijk en zakelijk uit Gods *gansche* woord leven, het voor dit en het toekomstend leven *uitshuitend* en *alleen* van Gods genade in Christus verwachten, en dagelijks den *strijd tegen Satan, wereld, en eigen zonde voeren*, bijhooren, omdat zij één zijn.

Ik hoop nu, dat U en de Uwen, wat ik schreef broederlijk zullen overwegen, met de bedoeling ons leven en onzen strijd te leeren verstaan. Als iemand onder ons zou willen beweren, dat de theologische beschouwingen omtrent het verbond, zooals Prof. Schilder die ontwikkeld heeft, bindend zijn in onzen kring, dan zou dat door allen en iedereen, door Prof. Schilder in de allereerste plaats, radicaal worden afgewezen. Net zoo radicaal als we de leeruitspraken van 1942-1946 en de onder U zoo beruchte “drie punten” afwijzen! Maar leven uit het *gansche* Woord Gods, naar de confessie, dat zoeken we allen, daar bidden we om, daar worstelen we naar!

Na hartelijken broedergroet verblijf ik gaarne de Uwe in onzen Heere Jezus Christus.

C. Veenhof.



Translation and Comment

“I cannot refrain in this article from pointing for a moment to Calvin. There surely is no one who confessed and taught the doctrine of election and reprobation—that *decretum horribile*—so powerfully and consistently as he.

“Yet in spite of this—but no, I don’t express myself correctly again, I must say: exactly because of that—Calvin also wrote down words as these:

“the gracious adoption unto sonship extends unto all the children of Abraham; all Israelites were of the household of the church; children of God and heirs of eternal life (Commentary on Gen. 17:14);

“hence God has chosen the entire seed of Jacob without exception, as the Scripture witnesses in many passages, because He vouchsafed unto them equally (pariter) the same proofs of his grace, namely, the word and the sacraments (Commentary on Gen. 25:23);

“that the promise to Abraham and his seed was not given in such a manner that the inheritance is destined for every arbitrary seed, whence it follows, that the apostacy of some cannot in the least prevent that the covenant remains established and continuous (Commentary on Rom. 9:6);

“that at first Israel (that must be Ishmael, H.H.) had obtained the same rank with his brother Isaac, because the spiritual covenant was equally sealed in him by the symbol of circumcision (Institutes, III, 21, 6);

“that this is the integrity of the sacrament, an integrity which the whole world cannot violate, that the flesh and blood of Christ are not less truly given to the unworthy than to the elect believers of God; and yet it is true that just as the rain falling on the hard rock runs away because it cannot penetrate, so the wicked by their hardness repel the grace of God, and prevent it from reaching them (Institutes, IV, 17, 33);

“And all this Calvin says not *in spite* of the fact that he confesses so strictly and so consistently God’s election and reprobation, the sovereignty and the unconquerableness of the grace of God and the absolute impotency of man, but on the contrary, he says this *because* he confesses this, and *because* he confesses that God’s sovereignty and the absoluteness of the

grace of God must also be acknowledged in *the way in which* God saves His own!

"And speaking thus, Calvin practices what he once upon a time formulated himself in the following words: 'Let us be mindful of the fact that in the entire doctrine of religion, one rule of modesty and moderation must be observed, namely this, that about dark things we must say nothing or feel nothing, or desire to know nothing, than that which is revealed to us in the Word of God. In the second place, that by the reading of Scripture we occupy ourselves constantly with the search and contemplation of those things that serve for edification and do not yield to curiosity or to the striving after unprofitable things. And because the Lord wanted to instruct us not in insignificant questions, but in true piety, in the fear of His name, in true confidence, and in the obligations of holiness, let us rest in that knowledge.' (Inst. I, 14, 4).

* * * *

"And now I must quit. Already I have been much too elaborate. It is not my purpose to invite a controversy about what I have said. I would even urgently request not to start a discussion about this article.

"My purpose is a different one. Through the providence of God the life of your and our churches has been so guided that the result was various contact and a growing understanding and appreciation for one another's life and struggle. Even now we already stand in a certain communion with one another, even though it is not officially. And now threatens the very grave danger that we become alienated from one another. And that is a very serious thing, now God placed you and us upon one another's way. In this I see very clearly the work of Satan. He always does his best to provoke the sheep of Christ's flock against one another and to alienate them from one another. Now let us be on our guard. Let us pray that we may and will be able to try the Spirits. And let us maintain that all those who really and actually live out of the whole word, who expect all things for this and for the life to come *exclusively* and *only* from the grace of God in Christ, and who daily wage war against Satan, the world, and their own sin, belong together because they are one.

"I now hope that you and yours will consider what I wrote in a brotherly spirit, with the purpose to learn to understand our life and struggle. If anyone among us would allege that the theological conceptions concerning the covenant, as Prof. Schilder developed them, are binding in our circle, then this would be repudiated radically by all and every one, first of all by Prof. Schilder himself. Just as radically as we repudiate the

doctrinal decisions of 1942-1946 and 'the three points' that are so notorious among you. But we live out of the entire Word of God, according to the confession. That we all seek, for that we pray, and after that we strive.

"With hearty and fraternal greetings I remain yours in our Lord Jesus Christ.

C. Veenhof."

Comment:

In my comment on this last part of Prof. Veenhof's letters I will try to be brief. First of all, I want to make a remark or two on the very last paragraphs.

You do not have to be afraid, esteemed brother, that I will not consider your writing in a brotherly spirit. You know that in our personal correspondence with each other I have learned to know you as a brother in Christ. And I hope and believe that this feeling is mutual. But, of course, true brotherly love is always based on the truth in Christ. And to reach an understanding of that truth there is nothing more beneficial than a brotherly discussion, a controversy, if you wish. Of this I have never been afraid. And therefore I could not accede to your request not to start a controversy about what you write in your article. And it is my sincere hope that you will continue this discussion, and, answer my questions.

To my mind there is no reason why we should become alienated from one another, at least not in the way of truth. If anything causes separation between your and our churches, it certainly cannot be that we all, as you express it, "live really and actually out of the entire Word of God and expect all things for this life and for the life to come exclusively and only from the grace of God in Christ, and daily wage war against Satan, the world, and our own sin." Rather do I attribute the dissension that has arisen between us to other causes, such as: 1) The hasty and somewhat unwise decisions of your Synod of Amersfoort that provoked a protest of several of the delegates at your Synod. It was not wise to advise to open your pulpits to our ministers without further discussion and deliberation and investigation. Correspondence between our churches (and I see no reason why that could not be established) should be carefully prepared. And I propose that we should start from the beginning. 2) The meetings your committee of correspondence and others had with the Revs. De Jong and Kok while they were in the Netherlands, and the transactions of which were kept secret. It would have been far better and much more beneficial if your committee of correspondence had contacted our committee. Such contact can very easily be established and still should be established. 3) The letter of Prof. Holwerda which he wrote as an

advice to the immigrants in Canada, and the contents of which were published by them, not by us. I now have reason to believe that Prof. Holwerda misrepresented in that letter what the Revs. De Jong and Kok actually said. In other words, he did not write the exact truth in that letter. I will not write down my reasons for this opinion, but if you should desire them, I am prepared to give you them in the *Standard Bearer*. Nevertheless, that letter dumbfounded us and was the cause of much trouble. 4) And aggravating it all is the unethical publication of the slanderous letter of the 'Familie Klaver', referred to even by the Rev. Van Raalte in the *Kerkblad voor Overijssel en Gelderland*.

We must make a clean slate, and go back to the beginning as soon as possible, and get into personal contact. Your committee of correspondence and ours should personally and thoroughly discuss the question of correspondence between our churches.

As to the question of what covenant conception is binding in your churches, I confess that I do not understand you. You believe, of course, that Scripture and the confessions are binding. But do you not believe that the conception of the Liberated that the promise of God is for all is Scriptural and confessional? If so, then that conception must be binding. On the other hand, we believe that the First Point of 1924 and the Heynsian conception of the covenant are neither Scriptural nor confessional. Hence, the denial of these is certainly binding for our churches.

In conclusion, let me make a remark or two about the quotations from Calvin to which you refer in your article.

Let me say, first of all, that I am at present not in a position to check up on all of them. I am at the present time 750 miles from home and cannot lay hold on all the sources.

I did check up, however, on the quotations from Rom. 9:6 and from the *Institutes*. Let me say in general that I have indeed a great respect for Calvin and his work. To me it is nothing short of amazing that as a young man he could write his *Institutes*, and that, too, as a young man that just recently came out of the Roman Catholic Church. Amazing, too, I find that he could write almost a complete commentary on the whole of Scripture. But that does not mean that we can blindly quote from him as an authority. Often I simply cannot agree with much that he wrote. This is true, for instance, with Calvin's conception of the Lord's Supper. Thus, for instance, when he writes, "That the power of the sacrament remains entire however the wicked may labor with all their might to annihilate it. Still, it is one thing to be offered, another to be received. Christ gives this spiritual food and holds forth this spiritual drink to all. Some eat eagerly, others superciliously reject it. Will their rejection

cause the meat and drink to lose their nature? Thus nothing is detracted from the sacrament, nay, its reality and efficacy remain unimpaired, although the wicked, after externally partaking of it, go away empty. If, again, they object, that it derogates from the expression, 'This is my body', if the wicked receive corruptible bread and nothing besides, it is easy to answer, that God wills not that His truth should be recognized in the mere reception, but in the constancy of his goodness, while he is prepared to perform, nay, liberally offers to the unworthy what they reject. The integrity of the sacrament, an integrity which the whole world cannot violate, lies here, that the flesh and blood of Christ are not less truly given to the unworthy than to the elect believers of God; and yet it is true, that just as the rain falling on the hard rock runs away because it cannot penetrate, so the wicked by their hardness repel the grace of God, and prevent it from reaching them." To me the sacraments, as well as the preaching of the Word of God, have effect upon all that come under their influence. Neither the Word nor the sacraments can be explained as an offer of grace to all, but they have a two-fold effect. To the one they are a savour of life unto life. To the other they are a savour of death unto death. This is the plain truth of Scripture and also of the Reformed confessions. And, as to Calvin's exegetical work, it is true that his commentaries are still valuable. But it must also be said that his exegesis is often characterized by haste, as might indeed be expected of a man who was as busy as Calvin and who wrote a commentary on practically the whole of Scripture.

But now I must close for the present. And I do so with hearty and brotherly greetings.

H. H.

* * * *

IN MEMORIAM

The English Men's Society of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan, hereby expresses its sympathy with a fellow member, James Kok, in the loss of his brother,

Dr. Harry Kok

May the Lord of all grace comfort the relatives with His all sufficient grace.

Mr. A. Van Tuinen, Pres.

Mr. O. Vander Woude, Sec'y.

THE TRIPLE KNOWLEDGE

An Exposition Of The Heidelberg Catechism

PART TWO

Of Man's Redemption

LORD'S DAY XXVII.

4.

Infant Baptism and Its Ground.

B.

One Sign. (cont.)

First of all, I want to call attention to those passages that refer to the sign of circumcision only. Of this we read in Lev. 26:40, 41: "If they shall confess their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers, with their trespass which they have trespassed against me, and that I also have walked contrary unto them and have brought them into the land of their enemies; if then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity." It is evident here that an uncircumcised heart is the same as a heart that will not confess sin and iniquity. To be uncircumcised in heart is to be unconverted, to be ungodly. By implication this means that a circumcised heart is a regenerated and converted heart, from which there arises sorrow over sin and confession of iniquity. Of such a heart, therefore, circumcision was a sign. In this respect, as is very plain, circumcision has the same significance as holy baptism. In Deut. 10:16 we read: "Circumcize, therefore, the foreskin of your heart and be no more stiff-necked." This is very plain language. Circumcision was a sign of a circumcised, that is, of a sanctified heart. And again it is plain that circumcision and baptism have the same significance. In Deut. 30:6 we read: "And the Lord thy God will circumcize thine heart and the heart of thy seed to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live." Again this is plain in itself. Circumcision was a sign of the work of God's grace in the heart, whereby the heart is filled with the love of God. It is therefore a sign of the same grace that is signified in baptism. Again, in Jer. 4:4 we read: "Circumcize yourselves to the Lord and take away the foreskin of your heart, ye men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem." In the language of the New Testament this is the same as saying, "Put off the old man of sin and put on the new man, which is renewed after the image of God in true righteousness and holiness." Circumcision was a sign

of the putting off of the old man of sin. And the same is true of the sacrament of baptism. And to quote no more, in Rom. 4:11 we read: "And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith, which he had yet being uncircumcised." Here circumcision is presented as sealing the righteousness which is by faith, that is: God seals in the sign of circumcision that He justifies the believers by faith and counts their faith for righteousness.

Let us compare with the above passages those that speak of the significance of holy baptism.

In Acts 2:38 we read: "Then Peter said unto them, Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost". Baptism, therefore, is a sign of the remission of sins, or, if you please, of the righteousness which is by faith. The same is taught in Acts 22:16: "And now, why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." And again, in Rom. 6:4 we read: "Therefore, we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Baptism, like circumcision, is the sign of renewal, that is, of the renewal in Christ. In Baptism we die with Christ, and we rise with Him in newness of life and walk. And the same is expressed in Gal. 3:27: "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." Baptism is the sign of putting on Christ, that is, of being renewed in Him. These passages may easily be multiplied. But there is, of course, no difference of opinion with respect to the significance of baptism. The above texts, therefore, may suffice.

But finally, there are also passages in Scripture that simply identify the two, circumcision and baptism.

Thus we read in Col. 2:11, 12: "In whom also ye are circumcized with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead." Here the apostle plainly identifies the signs of baptism and circumcision with respect to their significance. He writes to the church of the new dispensation that believers are circumcized in the spiritual sense of the word, and that this spiritual circumcision took place when they were buried with Christ in baptism. A more direct proof that circumcision and baptism are essentially the same in meaning, the change of form being due to the transition from the old into the new dispensation, that is, from the dispensation of the shadows into that of the fulfillment, could not be given. Again, in Phil. 3:3 we read: "For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."

Here the apostle does not mention baptism, neither does he refer to it. But nevertheless he maintains that not the Jews, but the church of the new dispensation in Christ Jesus are the circumcision. Essentially, therefore, circumcision has not been discarded, but is continued in the church of the new dispensation.

Those who deny that infant baptism is a Biblical doctrine often attempt to dispute the statement that also occurs in our Baptism Form, namely, that circumcision has been replaced by baptism in the new dispensation. Baptism has come in the place of circumcision, thus the Form for the Administration of Baptism that is used in the Reformed churches reads. Of this the Baptist refuses to be convinced. Yet nothing could be more evident from the Scriptures. It is simply an historic fact that baptism forced circumcision out of the way. When baptism came, circumcision must be discarded. For a time they existed side by side, especially in Jewish Christian communities. And circumcision tried to maintain itself along side of baptism. But this proved to be impossible; and circumcision was forced to surrender its place in the church. And why? Because the Word of God plainly teaches, as we have shown, that essentially baptism has the same significance as circumcision, that two signs with the same meaning could not exist side by side, that circumcision belongs to the time of the shadows and therefore must make room for baptism as being the sign of fulfillment. Hence, if one would still insist that circumcision were necessary for the Christian church, he could only do so because he attached significance to it as an element of the law, sought the righteousness which is of the law, so that Christ had become of none effect to him. And surely, baptism as being the same sign essentially and having the form proper to the new dispensation, has come in the place of circumcision. So true this is, that the apostle can write that we are circumcized when we are baptized, Col. 2:11, 12, and that we are the true circumcision, Phil. 3:3.

C.

In the Line Of Generations.

Now the Heidelberg Catechism bases its argument for the baptism of infants on the fact that they as well as the adults are included in the covenant and church of God, and that redemption from sin by the blood of Christ and the Holy Ghost, the Author of faith, is promised to them no less than to the adult. But the question still arises: how are infants included from their very birth in the covenant of God? And my answer is that they are in the covenant because God establishes that covenant in the line of continued generations. This, therefore, I submit, is the ultimate ground for the baptism of infants: God establishes His

covenant in the line of continued generations. It is the will of God, plainly revealed in the Holy Scriptures, that the seed of Abraham, which is the same throughout the ages, shall receive the sign of the righteousness which is by faith in their generations.

It is the very plain truth revealed in Scripture and verified in all the history of the church of God in the world from the very beginning that God causes His people to develop in the line of generations. Always He establishes His covenant organically, in the line of continued generations. This is already evident from the protevangel in Gen. 3:15: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." This is clear from the establishment of the covenant with Noah: "And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you." Gen. 9:9. And this truth is revealed in Gen. 17:7: "And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee." Besides, this is evident from the entire historical line of development. For the line of God's covenant runs in the line of the generations from Seth to Noah, from Shem to Abraham, from Abraham to Israel, and from Israel to Christ. And even in the new dispensation it is very plain that God has His people in the line of continued generations. Hence, the apostle Peter can preach on the day of Pentecost: "The promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Acts 2:39. And when the Lord calls those that are afar off, it is equally true for them: the promise is unto you and to your children. Only in this light can it be understood that we read repeatedly in the Scriptures that houses were baptized. Thus we read in Acts 16:33: "And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway." And in I Cor. 1:16 we read: "And I baptized also the household of Stephanus: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other." Now, it is not the question at all whether you maintain that there were little children in those houses, or whether you maintain the very opposite. The fact is that houses, families, were baptized. It is the organic idea of the covenant running in the line of continued generations that is expressed. God deals not with individuals, but with generations to establish His covenant. It is only in the same light that everywhere children are considered as belonging to the church of God, in the new dispensation as well as in the old. God always establishes His church in the line of continued generations.

Does this mean that all the children according to the flesh in those generations are real, spiritual child-

ren of God, are the real seed of Abraham? No one in the Reformed churches teaches such a thing. There are indeed, and always have been, that teach that the baptism of infants is based upon their presumptive regeneration. We suppose that infants are regenerated, and therefore they ought to be baptized. Even Ursinus in his Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism seems to suggest this doctrine. Is that commentary he meets an objection of those who oppose infant baptism. The objection is as follows: "Those who do not believe, are not to be baptized; for it is said, 'He that believeth and is baptized,' etc. But infants do not believe. Therefore, they are not to be baptized. Faith is necessarily required for the use of baptism, for he that believeth not shall be damned. But the sign of grace ought not to be given to such as are condemned." And this objection he answers as follows: "The first proposition is not true, if understood generally; for circumcision was applied to infants, although they were not capable of exercising faith. It must, therefore, be understood of adults only, who are not to be baptized except they believe. Neither can our opponents say of adults that they certainly do believe. If infants, therefore, are not to be baptized because they do not believe, then neither are those to be baptized who have arrived to years of understanding, because no one can certainly know whether they have faith or not. Simon Magus was baptized, and yet he was a hypocrite. But, say our opponents, the church ought to be satisfied with a profession of faith. This we admit, and would add, that to be born in the church is, to infants, the same thing as a profession of faith. Faith is, indeed, necessary to the use of baptism with this distinction. Actual faith is required in adults and an inclination to faith in infants. There are, therefore, four terms in this syllogism, or there is a fallacy in understanding that as spoken particularly, which must be understood generally. Those who do not believe, that is who have no faith at all, neither by profession nor by inclination, are not to be baptized. But infants born of believing parents have faith as to inclination. We also deny the minor proposition; for infants do believe after their manner, or according to the condition of their age; they have an inclination to faith. Faith is in infants potentially and by inclination, although not actually as in adults. For, as infants born of ungodly parents who are without the church, have no actual wickedness, but only an inclination thereto, so those who are born of godly parents have no actual holiness, but only an inclination to it; not according to nature, but according to the grace of the covenant. And still further: infants have the Holy Ghost, and are regenerated by Him. John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb, and Jeremiah is said to have been sanctified before he came out of the womb. (Luke 1:15, Jer. 1:5).

If infants now have the Holy Ghost, He certainly works in them regeneration, good inclinations, new desires, and such other things as are necessary for their salvation, or He at least supplies them with everything that is requisite for their baptism, according to the declaration of Peter, 'Can any man forbid water to them who have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?' It is for this reason that Christ enumerates little children among those that believe, saying, 'Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me.' Matt. 18:6. Inasmuch now as infants are fit subjects for baptism, they do not profane it as the Anabaptists wickedly affirm." Here it seems that Ursinus bases infant baptism on the presumption of regeneration in the children of the covenant. Now we certainly do not deny that infants can be regenerated, nor that it is possible for them to have the faculty of power of faith. Just as little children have the power to think, although they cannot actually think; just as little children have the power of speech, although as yet they cannot speak; so also it is, of course, possible that the Holy Spirit gives unto the little children from their very birth the power of faith and regenerates them in their earliest infancy. We even believe that it is the usual mode of God's working to regenerate little children from their infancy in the church of Christ. But this does not mean that baptism is based on a presupposition or on presumptive regeneration. We certainly cannot state as a fact that all the children of believing parents are regenerated. Scripture very plainly teaches the very opposite. Not all are Israel that are out of Israel. There is chaff among the wheat. And there are many carnal children among those that are born of believing parents. And we certainly cannot and may not presuppose that which is so evidently contrary to Scripture and to all reality.

H. H.



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Will those who have received their bound copy (Volume 25) of the Standard Bearer, and have not as yet returned their copies, please return them to J. Bouwman as soon as possible. Anyone desiring to have Volume 25, or any other volume bound, please notify us and send us your copies.

R. F. P. A.

1131 Sigsbee St., S.E.
Grand Rapids 6, Michigan

Voor Onze Nederlandsche Emigranten In Canada

U leest? . . . Ook in Canada? . . . Natuurlijk leest U.

Waarom leest U? Om "bij" te blijven. Op de hoogte te blijven met wat er in de kerk gebeurt, om te weten hoe Christus door strijd en moeite heen Zijn Kerkvergaderend werk verricht tot de laatste toegebracht zal zijn en het gebouw voltooid is. Hoe Hij Zijn gemeente leidt en door middel van Zijn getrouwe dienstknechten de komst van de Antichrist aankondigt, hoe de scheidlijn tusschen Kerk en wereld steeds duidelijker wordt en hoe de antithese een harde realiteit is waar we ons met geen enkele menselijke theorie aan kunnen ontworstelen. Dit vraagt studie, inzicht en verklaring. Om dat te krijgen leest U. U wilt voorlichting, meditatie, schriftuitleg en verrijking van Uw geloofsleven voor U en voor Uw kinderen.

Wat leest U in Canada?

De Reformatie, toegestuurd door meelevende broeders en zusters in het Vaderland, op een abonnement betaald door het geld dat U in Nederland moest achterlaten. U leest het Gereformeerd Gezinsblad. Lijfbladen van ieder Kerklid in Nederland. Stukgelezen worden ze en nog zijn ze te goed om weg te gooien. Dat is de Kerk van Christus in Nederland. Bevoorrecht land om nog de Kerk in haar midden te hebben. Veroordeeld land echter ook om naast de Kerk in afval voort te leven.

Nu bent U in Canada. Lid van de Kerk in Canada of nog steeds zoekend naar de plaats waar Christus U roept. Dezelfde Kerk onder andere naam, hetzelfde Hoofd, dezelfde Leidsman.

U bent lid van de Protestant Reformed Church. Ook deze tak van de Kerk heeft haar bladen. De Standard Bearer is er een van. Did blad vervult dezelfde taak als de eerdergenoemde, dezelfde voorlichting en Schriftuitleg enz. Door verschillende proefnummers hebt U er reeds kennis mee kunnen maken. De uitgever heeft al verschillende proefnummers toegezonden. De Kerk in de States heeft alle aandacht voor de jonge gemeente in Hamilton.

Maar de uitgever wil meer. Ze wil vaste lezers hebben, Abonnementen. Subscriptions.

"Ja", zucht U, "maar ik kan dat engels niet lezen, ik heb er niets aan". Dat is het probleem. Hier is over gesproken, gedacht en geschreven. Nederlands maken? Wou U de Reformatie in het engels? Willen de broeders en zusters in de States de Standard Bearer in het Nederlands? Geeft U zelf het antwoord. Maar er is een tusschenweg. De weg van meer Nederlandse artikelen. Dat wordt reeds gedaan. En U slaat de

engelsche artikelen niet over maar tracht ze ook te lezen. Legt de Standard Bearer niet op zij als U meent er niets aan te hebben. U hebt er zeker wat aan. Haal Uw kinderen er bij. Laat hen het voor U lezen en vertalen. Dubbele vrucht! U krijgt de voorlichting die U noodig hebt en U hebt een huiscatechisatie waarin U Uw kinderen kan uitleggen en naar de Schrift verduidelijken wat er geschreven is. Zet U er toe en spoedig zult U merken dat het gaat. De Reformatie is prachtig, maar geeft niet genoeg voor ons in onze omstandigheden temidden van de Amerikaansche gedachtenwereld. Ze kan het niet geven. Ze heeft een andere taak. Dit geeft U de Standard Bearer. Dezelfde Kerk, dezelfde strijd tegen afval en binding. Dezelfde geest in de bladen.

U moet het lezen.

Onderteekende zal aanstaande Zondag al Uw adressen noteren, U abonne maken voor zoover U het nog niet bent en de "whole bunch" naar de States sturen waarnaar U verzekerd zult zijn van geregelde toezending. Elke twee weken Uw lijfblad thuis om te lezen en in te schrijven. Vergeef niet, het is een *Kerkblad* en in een *Kerkblad* wordt niemand het zwijgen opgelegd. U hebt het noodig, Uw kinderen kunnen er niet buiten. Wonderlijk, in de goddelooze, humanistische, Amerikaansche wereld verschijnt een Gereformeerd blad. Gereformeerd van a tot z. Dit wordt Uw blad. Actueel, vooral nu de correspondentie met de Vrijgemaakte kerken in Nederland en onze kerken aan de orde is en er over en weer druk geschreven wordt met het doel meer elkaar als broeders en zusters van hetzelfde huis te verstaan en te zien. De abonnements prijs is \$2.50 per jaar en hiervoor krijgt U 26 keer de principieele voorlichting waar U niet buiten kunt.

Niemand blijve achter.

Eventuele schriftelijke abonnementen kunnen opgegeven worden bij ondergeteekende: W. Wildeboer, c/o Th. Hart Lime, Ridge Road, R. R. 1, Hamilton, Ont.

W. Wildeboer.



Smyrna - Hamilton

"What might be the reason to compare the city of Hamilton with Smyrna, the observant reader probably thinks. What is the use of doing that? Smyrna, a little place in ancient history—Hamilton, a new, modern city in the Western world, center of traffic and business. Old—new, East—West. No, there is too much difference to be worth speaking about.

But still it appears in the columns of our church papers. Why? Because in Smyrna was a church of the Lord. Not a church based on the unanimity of

its members to practise religion and to meditate about a God who does what they want Him to do, but The Church. A church that exists from eternity to eternity and where its members only gather to praise their Lord and to serve Him as their Head and to wait until He finally is finished gathering His beloved children. Such a church was at Smyrna long ago, the same church is in Hamilton since April 1949. It has other members, born and raised in the twentieth century, but it is the same church, the same Head, expecting the same day of glorifying return of Jesus, all the same as the church of Smyrna.

It is this church of Hamilton I want to tell you something about. This church is living in communication with the Protestant Reformed Churches in the States and it is called First Protestant Reformed Church of Hamilton, the First Prot. Ref. Church in Canada. Many readers have had the opportunity to get acquainted with this congregation on the day of organization or on the weekly Sunday services. But the majority never knew about it. That is why I want to tell a few things. I compared our congregation with Smyrna for the Holy Writ gave us in Revelation 2 verses 8 through 12, a message for Smyrna that drew my special attention and that also is a message for Hamilton. "I know thy tribulation and thy poverty (but thou art rich) and the blasphemy of them that say they are Jews, but are not, but are a synagogue of Satan".

I don't want to emphasize the poverty of our congregation in order to make my readers helping-minded when there might come a call for financial help. It is more important to emphasize this *message* for the Church. The Church is poor, always must be; if a church is rich and well-known and the members are honored all over, then most likely it is a poor church. But our Church is rich. The Church of Smyrna was rich too. Rich by grace, not rich in the world.

Smyrna was an important city. Business made a lot of money coming in. It was a center of Roman culture. Humanity, the principle: man is good, as it first was taught by the Greek scholars and artists long before Jesus came upon earth, was the century doctrine. "Man is mighty". Man dominates trade, art, science, life, death, heaven and earth, was the base of their belief. They had gods, made by themselves in their imagination. Gods that loved and hated like men. Gods that were willing to be made fornicators, in order that their believers on earth could commit adultery without excuses. Smyrna had all seductions, the big city always has. Smyrna had its churches that said to be Jews but were a synagogue of Satan. The Jewish religion was protected by the Roman government.

The Jews, the beloved of God, the elect folk, had

their common grace theories which gave them an excuse for enjoying part of the delights of the world. Was not God gracious to the good and evil? And was not that the way to become important in life? Why not honor the emperor of the Romans? Vivat Ceasar! Church and world united gives the best conditions for a good living. The image of Caesar in the synagogue, that is the best way to make a lot of money.

No doubt, the congregation of them that believed that only God is good and mighty, and that men cannot do any good but are inclined to all evil, was in a very poor condition. Poor, no money, no importance, just enough to live and not able to affiliate with the upper-ten. No society life. Not known in public affairs. No science, no art, no trade, just poor, hard working people daily in fear for being imprisoned, for they belonged to that Church of God that judges all adultery and idol-service. Poor religion, poor people, just good enough to be the scum of society.

To those people Jesus says: "Thou art rich", not "Thou will be rich". No, present time. They *are* rich in the Lord, rich in their Saviour. Hard to believe, but it is the truth.

You understand, my readers, that I compare Hamilton with Smyrna. All our congregations are in tribulation and poverty as far as the richness of the world is concerned. Hamilton is not an exception to the church-rule. Look at the people how they come on Sunday morning from East and West, in cars of every year and model, trucks, busses. They travel 40 miles, often more than 100 miles, to be gathered around the preaching of the Word. They live *in* the world and have the same problems as the people of Smyrna had. Labor union, common grace, not known by the upper-ten. Because . . . yes, because they belong to the church of God. And because they believe in God, Who made man and is not made by man. He put His seal upon their lives. And He showed them what the church was in Canada and where they had to be gathered. They are new Canadian citizens, want to get used to the way of living, want to help building up Canada, want to join of course. . . . No, don't want to join one of the many churches in their places, in which they heartily welcome. They don't want to affiliate, even not partly with the world by using a common grace construction. Funny people. It is a hard way, not easy, and it often leads to poverty. But there is a message for them. "Thou art rich" Jesus said to the congregation of Smyrna. Jesus says it to the congregation of Hamilton today. That is what keeps them together there in Hamilton.

Most of them come from the Netherlands. From the Liberated churches. Don't shiver now. They are not a bunch of Arminians, believing in the free will of man. Our ministers that have been preaching in

Hamilton know better. They are no people that don't want to join a church with about the same name because they don't believe in common grace, and now try to find the best in a country where is no better. No, they are people that want to join *the Church, the only Church* that lives in freedom to worship the Lord in the way He ordered His Church, not bound to be silent when they have to speak, not wanting to be dead when they have to live. They want to be gathered with their Lord, as a bride wants to be united with her groom. People that are waiting for the final wedding day, when their Lord and Groom comes back upon earth to unite Him and His Bride to a complete unity, to glorify Him forever.

The Lord sent us a minister recently. He gave His congregation the man He chose to be the friend of the bridegroom. (St. John 3:29). He has to prepare His Bride for the final meeting with her Groom. That preparing will be the opening of the Word of God, to show the signs or the times, and the apostacy of the world and that what calls itself with the name of church. We don't see him as a missionary that has to educate remonstrants into good Protestant Reformed, but as a teacher with the holy task of revealing the greatness of God and His Word.

And we thank God that He heard our prayers and sent the man of His will. God certainly will strengthen him like he also did the Bishop of Smyrna, Polucarpus, when he had to be a martyr at high age. Not that I mean to see a prophecy of martyrship, but we know times will get harder and harder. And the Lord brings His sheep together through wars and hard times. We have not got a place in the world to become important, but we have to work as willing servants building where our Master wants us to build, tearing down where He wants us to tear down, regardless of the opinion of the world around.

This is a short outline of Hamilton. Much difference with Smyrna? No, God's Word is up-to-date and the Bible explains the time in which we live, although we like to explain the Bible according to the time.

That is what we in Hamilton believe.

"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of Life" (because we are rich). That is what we pray for.

W. Wildeboer
Hamilton, Canada.

* * * *

"The devil is not afraid of a Bible that has dust on it." — Unknown.

Two Telegrams

Upon our return from the Netherlands we were deeply grieved by the untimely article of the Rev. G. M. Ophoff, in the Standard Bearer of August 1, 1949. The readers undoubtedly recall that the article was occasioned by a letter from Prof. B. Holwerda to an immigrant in Canada.

It always has been our firm conviction, strengthened by subsequent development of matters, that said letter never should have been published. In that respect we sincerely differ from other brethren among us who take the opposite view. The fact that we have had close, personal contact with Prof. Holwerda, and have learned to love and highly esteem this brother (who in Liberated circles is considered to be a faithful and outstanding champion for the cause of God and His Church), is, undoubtedly, *one* of the main reasons which accounts for this difference of opinion.

Furthermore, we always have felt, and were so advised by most people, that 'the less said in this whole unpalatable affair, the better'. And that is still our conviction. And we wholeheartedly believe that this is for the best interest of the cause of God, and for the Church of God, and for the good of everybody concerned.

However, as a matter of information to those readers of the Standard Bearer who sincerely think that we should make some kind of public statement, now that so much has been said and written, we hereby quote two telegrams received by us in August, 1949. We quote:

"Professors in as far as present at a meeting with the Reverends Kok and De Jong, declare emphatically in re article Ophoff, that not a single expression of said ministers even in the least revealed any unfaithfulness, Dogmatically, Church-Politically, or Ethically to—or any criticism of—the Protestant Reformed Churches, or any of her members".

(w.s.) Deddens, Holwerda, Schilder, Veenhof.

"Deputies of Correspondence with Foreign Churches declare emphatically in re article Ophoff, that not a single expression of said ministers, revealed even in the least any unfaithfulness, Dogmatically, Church-Politically or Ethically, to—or any criticism of—the Protestant Reformed Churches, or any of her members."

(w.s.) Den Boeft, Groen, Hettinga,
Schilder, Visser.

Thus far the literal translation of the telegrams.

To the above we add the following: These telegrams were received by us as a spontaneous reaction to the

article mentioned in these telegrams, and, hence, they were wholly unsolicited.

Furthermore, these telegrams were read, among many other documents, at a combined meeting of the Consistories of Fuller Ave., Creston, Holland, and the Mission Committee, on August 29, 1949.

We don't believe it is necessary to add another word to the testimonials of these brethren who, after all, are the only ones that can give competent testimony in this matter.

In conclusion we add that we had a rather strange and mixed feeling when we discovered that the brethren across the sea considered it necessary to send us these telegrams, although, on the other hand, we gratefully appreciated these testimonials.

J. D. de Jong.
B. Kok



OUR DOCTRINE

The Counsel Of God. (5)

The Attributes Of God's Counsel.

Fourthly, the counsel of the Lord is eternal. This, too, is taught in the Word of God. "Known unto God are all His work from the beginning of the world."—Acts 15:18; "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love:"—Eph. 1:4; "But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory:"—I Cor. 2:7; "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God. According to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:"—Eph. 3:10-11; "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you."—I Pet. 1:18:20. It appears from this last passage that the expression "from before the foundation of the world" is contrasted with "these last times".

God's counsel is eternal because the Lord is eternal. However, we should be careful with the interpreta-

tions of these passages. That the Lord has chosen us "from before the foundation of the world" must not be understood in a temporal sense of the word. There are expressions in Holy Writ, such as: "from the beginning," and "from before the foundation of the world", which undoubtedly have a more profound significance than that which is commonly attributed to them. On the one hand, these expressions cannot be merely understood in the sense that, "once upon a time", the Lord elected His people. To do this would make a person guilty of transferring the element of time into eternity. There never was a moment when the Lord elected some and reprobated others. God's counsel of predestination is as eternal as God is eternal. There never was a moment when the people of God were not elected. The Lord has engraved us in the palms of His hands, and these "hands of the Lord" are as everlasting as the living God Himself. Hence, we would say, in the first place, that God's eternal election of His people "from the beginning" and "from before the foundation of the world" emphasizes the thought that this Divine election stands above time, is independent of time, has its cause and motive in the everlasting Lord Himself. If the Divine virtue of "eternity" is that virtue of the Lord whereby He is exalted above the creature which we call "time", is not dependent upon "time" or anything connected with "time", such as any living creature, but lives His own Divine and perfect and absolute Life in full and complete Divine consciousness, then this must also apply to the Divine counsel of election and reprobation. Hence, to say that the Lord has eternally elected surely must signify that His election of His people is wholly sovereign, is never dependent upon anything outside Himself, has its origin and cause solely within the everlasting Lord Himself.

On the other hand, however, such expressions as: "from the beginning", and: "from before the foundation of the world", have a significance far greater and more profound than that which is commonly attributed to them. It is true that, discussing this greater and more profound significance of these expressions at this time, we necessarily touch upon the supralapsarian-infralapsarian controversy, and it is our intention to enter into a discussion of this issue later in this series of articles. We will, therefore, write very sparingly about the supra-infra question at this time. We read in Eph. 1:4 and 2 Thess. 2:13, 14: "According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love . . . But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through the sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: Whereunto He called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the

glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." We understand, I am sure, that the expressions in these texts: "In Him (Eph. 1:4)" and "to salvation and sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth", must be understood as the object of the election of God. In the eternal counsel of the Lord our "in Him" and "sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth and salvation" are the object and result of this election of God and are therefore eternal facts. The Lord chose us, not as being in Him, but to be in Him, and He elected us, not as saved and sanctified by the Spirit and belief of the truth, but to be sanctified of the Spirit and belief of the truth. The apostle presents unto us in these expressions the content of the Lord's sovereign election. Besides, we cannot interpret the expressions, "before the foundation of the world" and "from the beginning" merely in a temporal sense of the word. The Lord, then, elected or chose us before the world was created. Sometime in eternity, before this world received its existence from God, God elected us. Our election, then, is older than six thousand years. This is a common interpretation of these expressions. And, of course, the intention of thus interpreting these expressions was to maintain the sovereign character of God's election. We, then, were chosen before the world began. Hence, any reasoning to the effect that the Lord's election of His people rests upon their faith and good works is impossible in the light of the truth that this election precedes our faith and sanctification.

Nevertheless, we feel instinctively that this does not exhaust the meaning of the apostle in these passages. First of all, we must be careful with any explanation which would emphasize the element of time. To conceive of a moment in eternity when the Lord elected us, as if prior to that Divine selection of His people there was no election, is impossible. As we have already remarked, such a moment never existed. God's election of His own is as eternal as the everlasting God Himself. Secondly, we must bear in mind that God is the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth. The Lord not only chose the elect, but He is also the Sovereign Cause of the world in all its existence and activity. The elect but also the reprobates, the heavenly glory but also hell, the world with all its sorrow and grief, sickness and misery, peace and war, life and death, owe their existence and development exclusively to the living God. Thirdly, we must bear in mind, especially in connection with the text in 2 Thess. that the apostle is speaking in verse 13 of God's election. That entire passage: "because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth," must be understood as occurring in the eternal counsel of Jehovah. This is evident from the fact that the apostle in verse 14 speaks of the Lord's realization of this

counsel in time, when he declares that "whereunto He called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." All of verse 13, therefore, must be interpreted as occurring within God's eternal counsel. This means that "from the beginning" must also be understood as within the counsel of the Lord. Then He elected us "from the beginning". In God's counsel the Divine election of His own preceded all things. This must not be understood in a temporal sense of the word, as if the Lord first willed this and then willed something else. "Known unto God are *all* His works eternally." But this must be understood from the viewpoint of significance. Hence, in the Lord's eternal counsel the election of His own is "from the beginning", transcends in importance whatever happens in this world, is primary in significance. All things are our's. The world, the devil and all his host, the world of evil men, sin and darkness, life and sickness and death, peace and war, the fuming and raging of the powers of darkness, everything is secondary in importance to the elect, serves the elect, has been sovereignly willed by God with a view to the elect. It is true that this is the supralapsarian-infralapsarian controversy. But we may say at this time that the eternal character of God's counsel emphasizes, in the absolute sense of the word, the sovereign character of God's eternal thoughts. Hence, the comfort of the Church is surely all-comprehensive.

The counsel of the Lord is also all-comprehensive. It includes all the good works of the people of God, according to Eph. 2:10: "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." It also includes the evil. This is evident from Proverbs 16:4: "The Lord hath made all things for Himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil." And in Ac's 2:23 and 4:27, 28 we read: "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain . . . For of a truth against Thy holy Child Jesus, Whom Thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, For to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel determined before to be done". Moreover, the counsel is strictly all-comprehensive and, therefore, includes all things. In Gen. 45:5-8 Joseph, when making himself known unto his brethren who had sold him into Egypt, declares unto them: "Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life. For these two years hath the famine been in the land: and yet there are five years, in the which there shall neither be earing nor harvest. And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now

it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt". And, in connection with the same incident, we read in Gen. 50:20: "But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive." In Proverbs 16:33 we read: "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord." In Psalm 119:89-91 we read: "For ever, O Lord, Thy word is settled in heaven. Thy faithfulness is unto all generations: Thou hast established the earth, and it abideth. *They continue this day according to Thine ordinances: for all are Thy servants.*" Also in Daniel 4:34-35 the all-comprehensive character of the Lord's decrees is emphasized: "And at the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the Most High, and I praised and honoured Him that liveth for ever, Whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation: And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?" That the counsel of the Lord is all-comprehensive is even applied in Holy Writ to the hairs of our head, as in Matthew 10:29-30: "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered."

That the counsel of the Lord is all-comprehensive and therefore also includes sin and darkness does not mean that He is therefore the Author of sin. On the one hand we may safely say that the Scriptures use expressions which we would surely hesitate to take upon our lips. Holy Writ certainly does not leave us in the dark with respect to the question whether also sin must be included in the eternal counsel of the Lord. Apart from the passages which we have already quoted, fact is that the hardening of the wicked and the raising up of Pharaoh (and this does not merely mean that the Lord elevated him to the Egyptian throne, but that He raised up the godless Pharaoh) are directly attributed to the operation of the living God, and "Known unto God are *all* His works from before the foundation of the world". Hence, the hardening of the wicked, etc., also occur within the everlasting counsel of the Lord. Whatever, therefore, one may say of the oft repeated objection that the Lord is the Author of sin we must never minimize the all-comprehensive character of God's decrees. We can never lay sufficient emphasis upon the truth that God is God alone and that He does *all* things according to the counsel of His sovereign will and His good pleasure.

Yet, we can say something of this problem, although we can never comprehend the truths of God's sovereignty and man's responsibility. Both are true. An author of an act is one who performs a certain deed as in perfect harmony with that particular act. Man always sins because he wishes and desires to sin. And he will be held accountable for his sin. God is never the Author of sin. He is a Light and in Him is no darkness at all. He is too pure of eyes to behold iniquity and He is far from all sin and unrighteousness. Hence, the counsel of the Lord, as including wicked men and all their acts, must surely be understood in the sense that He sovereignly willed a sinner and his sin, thus that that sinner is the author of his evil and that the Lord hates all iniquity. And we must also bear in mind, that, although the counsel of Jehovah is sovereign and is realized by God in all its phases and details, yet the Lord, in the realization of His eternal will, never destroys or violates the nature, the moral-rational being of man. How the Lord does this we do not know. To explain and comprehend how that the Lord executes all His counsel, carries out all His will also with respect to the moral acts of all His moral-rational creatures, and at the same time does not destroy that moral-rational nature of man is for us impossible. Both are true and have been recognized and acknowledged by the Church throughout the ages. God is sovereign. Man is a moral-rational creature. As that moral-rational creature the Lord has willed him. As such he is held accountable for all his deed. But we must bear in mind: God's counsel is all-comprehensive.

The counsel of Jehovah is also characterized by Divine wisdom. This appears already from the word, "counsel". That the Scriptures speak of the "counsel" of the Lord surely conveys to us the thought that God's eternal thoughts are characterized by Divine deliberation. Surely, the counsel of the Lord must be a wise counsel, for of the Lord the Scriptures declare in Rom. 16:27: "To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen." And do we not read in Rom. 11:33-36: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counsellor? Or who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed unto Him again? For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to Whom be glory for ever. Amen." What an amazing wisdom of the Lord unfolds itself before the admiring gaze of the believing Church in Eph. 1:9-12: "Having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself: That in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are

on earth; even in Him: In Whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him Who worketh after the counsel of His own will: That we should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ."! And do we not read in Jeremiah 10:12: "He hath made the earth by His power, He hath established the world by His wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by His discretion."? This same thought is expressed by the prophet in chapter 51:15. And in Psalm 104:24 we read: "O Lord, how manifold are Thy works! in wisdom hast Thou made them all: the earth is full of Thy riches."

Finally, that the counsel of the Lord is a Divinely wise counsel is further emphasized when we call attention to the fact that this counsel is One. This does not merely mean that there is but one counsel of the Lord, but also that the counsel itself is one. It is true that the Scriptures speak, in the plural, of God's purpose or will, etc. The Arminians or Remonstrants denied this oneness of the counsel, as is evident from the Canons of Dordrecht, I, B, 2: "Who teach: 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. Likewise: that there is one election unto faith, and another unto salvation, so that election can be unto justifying faith, without being a decisive election unto salvation. For this is a fancy of men's minds, invented regardless of the Scriptures, whereby the doctrine of election is corrupted, and the golden chain of our salvation is broken: "And whom He foreordained, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified." Rom. 8:30.

God's counsel, however, is one. It is true that it is characterized by a tremendous variety of details. It includes millions of elect and many more millions of reprobates. And it also includes every living creature in the heavens above and on the earth beneath and in the waters under the earth, and all their activities. Yet, the counsel of the Lord is one. It is characterized by oneness of design and purpose. Undoubtedly, the fundamental, all-overshadowing purpose of the counsel of Jehovah is the glory of His Name, the revelation of Himself, of His own infinite goodness and perfection. This revelation of Himself, of His own infinite goodness and perfection, occurs in the Son of God's eternal love, our Lord Jesus Christ, and, out of Him, in all the elect who must serve to reveal the amazing fulness and greatness and riches of the glory of God in Christ. And it has pleased the Lord to realize this glory, to reveal this amazing manifestation of the glory of God in the way of sin and

death. Unto that end the everlasting God has ordained all things, also the devil and all his host, the world and all its godless activity. Everything must serve the one purpose of the all-wise God. Unto that end everything is adapted to each other, and all things have but one purpose and that is to bring unto final manifestation the greatest possible glory of the Name of God, even as the Lord has sovereignly conceived of it in His eternal counsel and will. The Lord our God is one Lord. Also His counsel is one. Everything in the eternal thoughts of the Lord reaches a climax, a pinnacle. And that climax, pinnacle is the glory of Him, "out of Whom and through Whom and unto Whom are all things."

H. Veldman.

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SION'S ZANGEN

Van Ganscher Harte

(Psalm 111; Slot)

Dit is een loflied, dat den Heere toegezonden wordt door den geïnspireerden profeet, en dan wel "van ganscher harte"! Benijdenswaardige arbeid!

We waren toegekomen aan het heuglijke feit, dat de erve der heidenen aan Gods volk gegeven wordt. O ja, zij zullen het gansche aardrijk beërven. Nu vindt men hen vaak aan het randje der wereld; sommigen zijn van dat randje afgedrongen; ze kromden zich nog wat in de marteling der goddeloozen en bliezen den laatsten adem uit. En geen wonder: ze haatten Jezus, en daarom haten ze ook U.

Maar dat wordt straks anders. Straks ontvangt ge de erve der heidenen. Hebt ge het niet gezien, dat Israel het land Kanaan ontving tot hunne erve? En dat was een type van het ontvangen eener nieuwe wereld, waarin enkel gerechtigheid wonen zal. Daar zal ons 't goede van Gods woning, verzaden reis op reis!

Laat ons verder luisteren: het gezang is bijna uit.

"De werken Zijner handen zijn waarheid en oordeel, alle Zijn bevelen zijn getrouw!"

De werken van Gods handen! Waar zullen we beginnen en waar zullen wij eindigen? Ze zijn talloos; hunne sommen zijn zoo groot, dat we er niet bij kunnen.

Neemt het eerste werk, waarvan we hooren in het Woord Gods: de schepping van hemel en aarde met de volheid. Welnu, die werken zijn verity zegt de Engel-

sche vertaling; *waarheid* zegt de Hollandsche Bijbel. Wat mag dat beteekenen? Dat Gods werken *waarheid* zijn wil zeggen, dat zij de verwerkelijking zijn van datgene wat waar is. en dat zij een gedurig getuigenis zijn van dat ware. Er is niets ijdel in de werken Gods. Ze zijn wat ze naar hun aard en wezen zijn moeten. Om het nu eens plat te zeggen: er is geen "hokus pokus" in Gods werken. Hier in Amerika zou men zeggen: er zit geen "make believe" in de werken Gods. Hoe zou het ook: zij zijn een openbaring van God Zelf. Alle werken Gods vertellen ons, dat zij het werk Zijner handen zijn. Zij zijn *waarheid*: ge kunt er op aan. Ze vallen nooit tegen. Hebt ge er wel eens op gelet, dat we praktisch daar altijd rekening mee houden? De Deïsten spreken van wetten der natuur; en de kerk van Christus spreekt vaak die zotten na. Toch is dit niet correct. We moesten eigenlijk zeggen, dat die zoogenaamde wetten der natuur niet anders zijn dan de constante werking van den Almachtige. Laat ons eens zien. Als ge U te ver over den rand van een plat dak buigt, valt ge naar beneden. Dat is dan de wet van de zwaartekracht. Maar de werkelijkheid is, dat God U naar beneden trekt. God is de zwaartekracht die de dingen doet hellen, en als ge te ver over de diepte helt, die U dan neertrekt naar beneden, en als de afstand groot is, die U verplettert op den grond. En Hij werkt constant. Zijn werken zijn *waarheid*. Ge kunt er op aan. Het is niet zoo, dat Hij nu eens zoo, en dan weer wat anders doet. O neen. Zijn werken zijn *waarheid*. Als ge in het water springt wordt ge altijd nat. Ge kunt net zóó snel met Uw auto om een bocht rijden, en past op, gaat niet sneller, want dan doet God Uw auto omver storten, en verongelukt ge. Ge kunt over dit onderwerp wel duizend boeken schrijven, want *al* Gods werken zijn *waarheid*.

En zij zijn ook *oordeel*.

Dat wil eigenlijk hetzelfde zeggen, maar nu vanuit een ander oogpunt. Het beziet die ware werken Gods vanuit het oogpunt der ethiek. Al wat Hij doet is goed. En het is zóó goed, dat de Heilige Geest het woord *oordeel* gebruikt ervoor. Er zal nooit één mensch of duivel zijn, die God kan toeroepen: Ge hebt niet billijk met mij gehandeld, toen ik in U mij bewoog en toen Gij mij bewerkt hebt in de dagen van mij omwandering op de aarde. Alle Zijne werken zijn *oordeel*. Dit is zoo absoluut, dat als die werken Gods straks weer getoond zullen worden in den oordeelsdag, dan zal het geheele mensdom stom staan voor dien grooten witten troon. Rom. 3.

Zoo staat het er ook bij met de bevelen Gods.

Ik kan hier niet over uitweiden, en daarom zal ik direct maar spreken over het hart van die bevelen: het beminnen van God.

God zegt tot alle Zijne ethische schepselen, en dat zijn de menschen en de geesten, de engelen: Hebt Mij lief!

Nu dan: dat bevel is getrouw! En dat wil zeggen, dat als ge U overgeeft aan dat bevel, als ge dat bevel volvoert, dan kunt ge er op aan, dat het wel zal gaan met U. Zijn bevelen zijn getrouw. Van die trouw van Gods bevelen spreekt ook de Prediker, als hij zegt: ". . . zoo weet ik toch dat het dien zal wel gaan die God vreezen, die voor Zijn aangezicht vreezen."

Geliefde lezer, ge kunt op God aan. Als ge doet wat Hij zegt, zijt ge zalig, voor tijd en eeuwigheid.

De Heere zal het ook nog ordentelijk voor oogen stellen. Luistert maar naar Hem: "ze zijn ondersteund vooraltoos en in eeuwigheid, zijnde gedaan in *waarheid* en *oprechtheid*."

Let er op: God ondersteunt Zijn bevelen voor altoos en in eeuwigheid! En dat wil zeggen, dat ge op Zijn bevelen aankunt. Want Hijzelf ondersteunt ze; Hij heeft ze vastgezet, zooals Hij altijd den goede beloont en den kwade straft. Daar gaat eigenlijk nooit iets af. O, we zouden daar wat van kunnen zeggen! Denkt hier aan het kruis van Jezus. Als die Jezus voor God komt te staan, beladen met zonden en schulden, dan zegt God: Ik en Mijn bevelen zijn altijd getrouw, en Ik Zelf ondersteun die bevelen, zoodat Ik altijd den goede beloon en den kwade straf, en daarom, al is het ook, dat Gij Mijn Zoon in Uw diepste hart de Onschuld Zelve zijt, Gij staat daar voor Hij met al de schuld van Mijn volk op U geladen, en dat wel zoo erg, dat Gij "zonde gemaakt zijt" (II Cor. 5), en dat Uw naam "vloek" geworden is (Gal. 3), en daarom moet Ik U straffen. Ik ben altijd trouw in Mijn bevelen.

Dat zegt, dat wordt versterkt in de tweede clausule van den tekst: ze zijn gedaan in *waarheid* en *oprechtheid*.

De bevelen van God zijn gedaan in *waarheid* en in *oprechtheid*.

Wie zou hier niet zingen? Wat onbeschrijfelijke rust biedt dit vers!

Als God Zich tot U went, en als Hij begint te bevelen, dan is die actie Gods zooals ze zijn moet naar het wezen van het bevel. Het bevel Gods is gedaan in *waarheid*. Hij meent precies wat Hij zegt. Dat zal de wereld uitvinden.

En die bevelen zijn ook gedaan in *oprechtheid*.

God is van binnen juist zooals Hij van buiten is. Het subjectieve en het objectieve zijn bij God gelijk. Want dat is *oprechtheid*. Hij is geheel en al doorzichtig. Hij verbergt niets van Zijn bevelen. Het slangachtige is juist dit, dat men een slag om zijn arm houdt. God doet dat nooit. God is eerlijk. Halle-luja!

"Hij heeft Zijnen volke verlossing gezonden!"

"Zijnen volke" is hier weer het belanghebbend voorwerp. Belanghebbend! Ik kan er van jubelen. Wat anders geschiedt er dan Uw belang? De hemel en

de aarde en alle dingen zijn tot belang van dat volk, dat duizendwerf gelukkige volk van God!

Hij heeft hun verlossing gezonden.

Zij waren in de klauwen van Satan. Zij waren verstrikt in de strikken der zonde. Zij waren wonderbaarlijk omlaag gedaald.

Hier hebt ge het heerlijkste van Gods werken: de verlossing.

Eigenlijk heeft dat zijn begin in de stille eeuwigheid. Ik mag daar gaarne aan denken. Daar in die stille eeuwigheid heeft God alles gezien, alles besteld, alles klaargemaakt. We noemen dat Zijn Raad. Vroeger zong men er gaarne van. "Maar d' altoos wijze raad des Heeren . . ."

En in den tijd komt de zending van die uitgedachte verlossing. O ja, en dan wordt de kruispaal opgericht, de kruispaal van Uw Jezus. Ziet sterk op dat kruis: het is de gezonden Verlossing.

En die verlossing is gezonden aan zeer particuliere personen. Dat is altijd zoo. Dat was het immers ook in dien heerlijken nacht? Luistert, een Engel van God heeft het woord: Ik verkondig U groote blijdschap die al den volke wezen zal. Daar hebt ge dat volk weer. Verder: dat U heden geboren is!

Let op het particuliere van de boodschap. Het bedoelde in dien nacht eerst die herders. Dan ook de Simeon's en de Anna's. Het was een blijde boodschap voor "den volke". Het was toch niet anders bij den Engel die tot Maria kwam? En tot Jozef? Zeide die Engel niet: "want Hij zal Zijn volk zaligmaken van hunne zonde"?

Het is jammer, dat men in alle eeuwen tracht om met sluwe woorden die kring wijder te maken dan God haar maakte, maar het is vals. Hoe zou toch God verlossing zenden aan Ezau? Terwijl in Gods raad die Ezau staat als de gehate van eeuwigheid! O neen, maar het is den volke, en het is den volke alleen. Als men die kring wijder maakt, dan verliest men den smaad van Christus. Hebt ge er wel eens op gelet, dat de menschen in de synagoge van Nazareth Jezus begonnen te vertrappen toen Hij sprak van de verkiezing?

"Hij heeft Zijn verbond in eeuwigheid geboden."

Dat is maar gelukkig ook. Het staat daarom niet op losse schroeven, gelijk de mensch het altijd op losse schroeven zet. Denkt het eens goed in: vandaag zegt men (en men heeft het voor eeuwen gezegd): de van God gehate mensch is ook in het verbond! En dan bedoelt men werkelijk het eeuwige verbond der genade. Dat blijkt wel hieruit, dat men niet bloost als men poneert: Ezau had de belofte van God, de belofte van het eeuwige leven! God beloofde aan Ezau, dat Hij hem Jezus Christus zou schenken. Wat zeg ik? Men zegt dit: Esau had alle dingen ontvangen. God geeft

alles in de belofte aan al het natuurlijke zaad van Gods volk! Dat dit zoo is blijkt wel uit de gevolgtrekkingen die dat volk maakt. Hoe vaak hebben we het niet gehoord vroeger en later: God is Zijn Woord aan U kwijt! Geloof slechts! Neem het aan! Neem Uw doop voor eigen rekening!

Maar het is niet waar.

Het verbond Gods is dit: God schrijft Zijn wet in het hart van Zijn volk! En als dat geschied dan hebt ge Hem lief, dan zoekt ge Hem bij 't kriecken van den dageraad. Dan mint ge Hem boven alles, en dan wandelt ge met Hem naar den hemel! Van eeuwigheid gebod Hij Zijn verbond. En dat houdt in, dat Hij U onwederstandelijk naar den hemel leidt. Hij blijft zoolang gebieden in Zijn verbond totdat al het volk in den hemel is, en tot het volk rust in zijn God.

Ik zou wel eens een vraag willen stellen: met al het praten van dit zoogenaamde geven van de verbondsbelofte aan de verworpenen, is er ooit één van die verworpenen geweest die iets positiefs ontvangen heeft? Neen, maar zij zijn steeds verhard geworden, en "de uitverkorenen hebben het verkregen".

"Zijn naam is heilig en vreeselijk".

Zijn naam is vreeselijk juist omdat Hij heilig is.

De naam van God is de openbaring van Zijn Wezen. Gods Wezen kunnen wij niet zien, maar we kunnen wel Zijn Naam zien. Die Naam is uitgespreid over alle de werken Zijner handen.

En waar ge dan ook dien Naam van God ziet, daar ziet ge ook vreeselijkheid.

God is de Heilige.

Dat wil zeggen, dat God Zichzelven toegewijd is van eeuwigheid tot eeuwigheid. Hij is Zich bewust Zijn heerlijkheid en lieflijkheid, en daarom doet Hij alles om Zich Zelfs wil. Hij zoekt in alles Zijn Eigen eer en heerlijkheid.

En, negatief, dat Hij afgescheiden is van al het leelijke, vuile, goddelooze, gruwelijke en gemeene. De Heilige Schrift legt daar gedurig den nadruk op. Verre zij de Almachtige van onrecht. Of neemt de somma van het Evangelie naar het getuigenis van Johannes in zijn eersten brief: God is een licht en er is gansch geene duisternis in Hem! Dat is de negatieve heiligheid van God.

Nu nog een laatste woord aangaande de zaligheid van den mensch die door God bezocht werd: "De vreeze des Heeren is het beginsel der wijsheid; allen die ze doen, hebben goed verstand; zijn lof bestaat tot in eeuwigheid."

De wijsheid is die gave van God, waardoor men de rechte wegen bewandelt en de juiste middelen verkiest tot het bereiken van het hoogste en het heerlijkste doel. Dat doel is de lof des Heeren. En die middelen en wegen zijn de dingen en de gelegenheden die U

omringen. Eigenlijk sluiten zij alles in: Uw lichaam en ziel, Uw tijd en ruimte, Uw gaven en talenten, Uw vrienden en vijanden, Uw engelen en duivelen, hemel, zee en aarde, in zoo verre zij binnen Uw bereik zijn; alle dingen moeten door U gebruikt. En als gij dit doet met het vooropgezette doel om met al die dingen God te dienen, dan zijt ge wijs.

En het beginsel van dat doen is de vrees des Heeren.

Dat is mooi. En het klopt. Alleen de mensch die voor Gods aangezicht vreest kent dat doel, en bewandelt die zegen en gebruikt die middelen. De vrees Gods komt op uit de liefde Gods. En in dezelfde mate dat ge Hem mint vreest ge voor Zijn aangezicht.

Doet ge die wijsheid dan zijt ge verstandig. Dan ontvangt ge de goedkeuring van menschen en van God. Zelfs de goddeloozen zullen het zeggen, niet luide mischien, maar toch wel in het hart.

Dan is het goed met U. Dan is er lof voor U. Die lof van de laatste clausule ziet op den lof die de mensch Gods ontvangt. Het is de heerlijkheid waarmede God U kronen zal. Sommigen zullen schijnen en schitteren als de zon of als de starren. Zie vers 3 van den volgenden psalm.

Doch alleen om 't eeuwig welbehagen. Het groote einde is de Lof Gods!

Daar kan het gansche hart in rusten.

Hallelujah!

G. Vos.



FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of Ephesians 2:1-3

(continued)

At the conclusion of our former article we were speaking of the implication, of the Scriptural denotation of the phrase "the age of this world".

In this, our discussion, it became evident, that the phrase in question refers to the whole of this present world as it lies under the dominion of sin and darkness, under the law of sin and death, under the just verdict of the righteous Lord of heaven and earth. This present sinful age is meant as it is wholly this age in distinction from the age to come. These two "ages", we noticed, were not merely contrasts as far as time is concerned, but they are wholly different also in nature. That will be the age of the revelation of the perfect

righteousness of God, a new heaven and a new earth where righteousness shall dwell, whereas this age is the age of the evil one and all those who love iniquity.

It is in this world that we now walk and live as the children of God. We are in this world, yet are we not of her! Once we, too, belonged to this world, walked according to it. We were one with it; children of wrath we were as the others.

Now our text still further defines this walk of the "present age". It says that the walk of us formerly was: "according to the age of this world", but in thus being it was at once also "*according to the prince of the power of the air*".

The apostle does not here give us a needless detail, which we may very well overlook without detracting from the completeness of the description of the awful implication of that former walk. On the contrary, it is in this addition that the veil is lifted on the awful state and condition of sinful man. The standard of fallen man's life is that of Satan the father of the lie! Fallen man is not self-ruling but he is given over to the jurisdiction of the Devil and all the hosts of hell! And in this awful maelstrom of the life of this world we too were formerly. Back of the life of sinful man is the great hosts of darkness inspiring men and women, individually and collectively on toward destruction, toward the filling up of the cup of iniquity.

This world, the world of fallen men has a "prince". He is here not called the "Prince of peace". Peace he cannot and may not and will not give to the world. For his name is as Prince of this world, the Destroyer (Abaddon in the Hebrew tongue and Apollyon in the Greek tongue. Rev. 9:11). And in all of the names that he bears and which all interpret to us his activity and relation to the throne, there is not one name which shows a positive trait or purpose.

He is Satan, who opposes God and His Christ and the Church of Christ in this world. And in consequence of this we are certain that there is nothing in all of the legions of the devils, whom Satan has under his command, that is positive in intent. In the whole house of Beelzebub there is no division of hellish intent and purpose. They all seek the same thing, namely, the downfall of the Church of God. Always the saints are accused by Satan before the Throne of God.

This is, indeed, a sobering thought, if nothing more.

Let us attend a little more closely to the teaching of the Word of God in our text.

Paul here puts down his thoughts with climatic effect. Writes he: "in which ye once walked according to the age of this world, according to the prince of the power (authority) of the air". The standard of the world's walk is that standard followed by the demon-world. And according to that standard we once

walked. We too walked according to the terrible authority of the air. Not merely a Mary Magdalene, from whom seven devils were cast, but we all once so walked.

That is the sobering thought when taken by itself.

That is the joyful thought when viewed in the light of the glorious Gospel of our salvation by faith!

In considering who this "prince" of this "authority of the air" is, we ought to bear in mind, first of all, that Jesus Himself speaks of Satan, calling him the "prince of this world". Thus we read in John 12:31: "Now is the judgment of this world, now shall the prince of this world be cast out". Yes, Jesus will cast him out, but, until that happens ultimately and completely, Satan is the prince of this world. And, again, in John 16:11 we read: "And He (the Spirit of Truth) shall convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgment; 'concerning judgment, because the *prince of this world* is judged.'"

Jesus was very well acquainted with him. Him Jesus had met in open conflict as the prince of this world when He was tempted of him in the desert. Matthew 4:1-11. Again, Satan tempts Jesus through His own Apostle Peter after the latter had just made the glorious confession concerning Jesus' Messiahship and His being the Son of God! O, how Satan knows his opportunities. He is the "old angry foe, who means us deadly woe". Rev. 12:12. Satan desired Peter and the disciples before the Throne of God to sift them as the wheat, and it was only the High-Priestly intercession of Christ that was the reason for the continued faith of the disciples in general and of Peter in particular!

It is true that we, by faith, have been delivered from the "Evil One", that is, from this prince of the power of the air. But this does not mean that we have not to reckon with Satan's power and temptation as long as we are in the world. Nor, to be sure, does this mean that we have not the blessed privilege and calling to see with all saints from what mighty power of darkness we have been delivered, and thus to rejoice in the mighty work of God to usward in Jesus' death and resurrection.

Christ has stripped the principalities and powers on the Cross of all their legal power to rule over us, and has made an open shame of them.

But we are digressing a bit from our subject.

Let us turn our thoughts to the "power in the air". Who are these "powers in the air". The term here used by Paul in the Greek original is the term "power" in the sense of authority. It is, therefore, not simple brute strength that is here referred to, but the writer is thinking of the power to rule over others. Furthermore, it should be observed, that the term here used in the Greek is singular in number and not plural in

number. The apostle does not write: *authorities* of the air, but *authority* of the air. But it is very well possible that the singular noun be considered a *collective* noun denoting a class of demons who rule. We, too, often speak of "authority" in that sense, using the term "government" while we really have in mind all those who are vested with the power to rule.

Further Paul tells us that these demon-rulers are powers *in the air*. About this phrase much has been written by commentators and much speculative genius has been spent on it. It is rather refreshing to read the very brief and, to our mind, to the point remark of Dr. Greijdanus in his Korte Verklaring concerning this phrase. Says he: "the air" indicates the place where this power finds itself (is resident) and where it lets itself be felt. But even though this brief exposition of Greijdanus is refreshing, it still leaves many problems unanswered. However, the just named writer refers us to Ephesians 6:12 where we read of the great enemy against which we have to wrestle. It is not against flesh and blood, but it is "against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places".

To what is Paul here referring in this just quoted passage?

We believe that Paul here has reference to the same demon-world-powers as those spoken of in the phrase "powers in the air". And the terms "principalities, powers and rulers of the darkness of this world" does not refer to three different groups of angels, but rather should be viewed as a threefold description of one group, to wit, the demon-world in all their tremendousness as an evil power. This is the power that rules and lords it over the whole world that lies in darkness. These demon-powers they do not only rule in the sphere of moral and spiritual darkness, but they rule exactly by means of this darkness. Wherefore they are called the "world-usurpers of this darkness". Their power is in a certain sense a usurped power. In this world they have no positive program, neither are they taken up into the positive program of the coming of God's Kingdom. But their's is the kingdom of the power of darkness. And they receive this power from their prince, as Satan Himself said to Jesus, at the final attempt in the temptation in the wilderness: "All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it." Luke 4:6.

Was Satan here telling a lie when he said: "for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it?"

In the final analysis Satan always lies. He is the liar and the father of the lie. And surely he was telling a lie, and was the liar when he pretended to be

the one to whom all things belonged. This was surely his puffed up sin of devilish pride. Yet, be this true, there still is a sense in which Satan spoke a great fact here with which we must reckon. Take, for instance, the phrase "for that is delivered unto me" contains an element of truth. It is a relative truth. Satan did *not* have the power to give the Kingdom of God to Jesus, and to grant Him to sit on David's Throne forever. But he surely has the power to give the kingdom of "this evil world" to whomsoever he will. He has often done this in the past, and he shall do this also in the days of Anti-christ. He gives it to those who seek for power, dominion to enhance their own ego and vain-glory. That is the path he suggests to Jesus in the desert. He gave this to the Pharaohs, Nebuchadnezzars, Alexanders, Caesars. He is the one that deceives and beguiles them. That had indeed been delivered unto him. To bring this about he employs all of the "third part of the stars of heaven" whom his "tail" dragged along out of heaven and cast to the earth, that is, into his ignoble service.

Yes, this power to beguile men has been given to him. And it will be Satan's role in the all-wise plan and counsel of God to presently deceive the whole earth, to deceive the nations at the four corners of the earth. Rev. 20:1-3.

Just how he does this we do not know. Our passage here in Ephesians 2 suggests that there is a "spirit that works in (energizes) the sons of disobedience". It does not seem that the prince of this world has a "spirit" which is the anti-thetical counterpart of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit makes His entrance into our hearts by His work of mightily calling us out of sin and death to life and conversion. Now Satan and all his hosts cannot possibly perform this work. But they need not, nor may they, nor, again, are they willing to. They are the army of liars in the "air". And they use men, and all the avenues that are not positively in the service of God and under the unction of the Holy Spirit.

All the avenues and means of the world stand at the disposal of Satan and the demon-world. Satan has a right before God to demand this present evil world. That is his as prince. Only, he and all of his will ultimately be forever destroyed. Meanwhile he is in full swing, a tremendous energy drives the world on and on and on! It is the spirit of the lie, the locusts let loose from the "abyss", from the pits of darkness where they have been kept until the judgment. Everywhere and in every land it is the same spirit. It is the spirit of error, of false teaching revealing itself in the worldly education, philosophy, psychology, psychiatry, poetry, literature, and what not! And so a certain "philosophy of life" is traditionalized by this same spirit of error that "energizes" men from generation to generation in an ever increas-

ing measure. The shelves of many worldly (and also christian) libraries groan under the weight of the written productions of this spirit.

Yes, this spirit comes to us in the printed page, the daily news-paper, pulp magazines with all its written and suggested rot and all the literary productions of the world. And there is, to be sure, no "certain influence of common grace" to better this situation. Let us not be deceived.

And, again, this spirit is dinned into our ears daily from the housetops by the radio; on the sign-board it is spread before our eyes, and in the daily conversation and the "rubbing shoulders" of men it is evidenced.

The whole world lies in the evil one.

We might too say: the whole world lies captivated by the devil's lie and his constant beguiling, and is bowing at his shrine.

But, and this is the point of the apostle: such *we were!* But now we have been delivered from this awful power of the kingdom of Satan into the glorious kingdom of the Son of His love, the First-born of all creatures, that He might be worshipped over all.

G. Lubbers.

* * * *

IN HIS FEAR

Called To His Praise

That Wonderful Gift—Used and Abused.

There he goes, a pathetic figure indeed! Wounded in action upon the battlefield, he has suffered the loss of both lower limbs. Now he must propel himself in his wheel chair or be carried about by others. Wonderful gifts those feet and legs which made him relatively independent! Not appreciated are some of our members till we have to go through life without them! And here a block further down the street we see one crossing the busy thoroughfare with the help of his seeing-eye-dog. He has lost that precious gift of sight. Tragic that is too! And other losses of members men suffer in this life which limit them severely in their life here below. But you have not seen the most tragic till you have gone to the institutions that care for the insane. Not till you see those, who, to varying degrees have lost the power of their minds, do you see the loss of one of the most wonderful gifts that the Almighty Creator has bestowed on man. Tragic! That is hardly the word. So awful is this loss that he who

has lost it is even beyond the capability of realizing his great loss.

But we are only philosophizing if we say no more. Let us read again the general theme of this series of writings. Let us read that again, "Called To His Praise". Let us recall that the calling of the Christian is just exactly that of praising God in his confession, praising Him by a constant living sacrifice of his whole being to the Almighty, praising Him by a life of service in which he reigns over every single heart beat and breath of life and every member, great and small, of his body. Then the awfulness of that loss of control and power over the mind strikes us with all its terrible force. Lose your legs, lose your sight, lose your ability to hear, yea, even lose your power of speech, but if you retain control and power over your mind, you can still praise God. You need not shout to make Him hear your praise. He hears the still small voice in your silent prayers. But he who has lost his natural sanity and he who has lost his spiritual rationality, how will he praise his Creator and King?

How do we fully appreciate this God-given power which enables us to be His prophets? Do we realize that without it confession of His name would be absolutely impossible. Without it we would praise God's name no more than the beast in the field or than the Sphinx in Egypt. Indeed the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth forth His handiwork. To that we will come back, D.V., in a later installment. And of course, we are speaking here of a conscious willing confession of God's name to His praise and glory. But consider now that without that wonderful mind wherewith God saw fit to create us there could be no spiritual impressions made upon us. We could not know God. We could not know His name. And would you choose a man who knew nothing of America to teach your child American History? You would not. He is not qualified. Nor would we without that mind and the knowledge of God it makes possible either to teach others concerning God, or be taught concerning Him ourselves. Prophets of the Most High? No, such we would not be!

But such we now are. That is, such *we*, the Church of God are. Prophets all men are, for though we lost the content of the image of God, thus losing all our true knowledge of Him, we have retained our rational, moral nature. And that mind of the natural man is filled to capacity with the lie which the devil succeeded in driving into these minds when he seduced Eve to open her mind to spew out the truth and admit his untruth. And since that mind and its power remains, being now filled with the lie, and entirely void of the truth, every man by nature is a prophet of the devil. And everything that he sees, and especially everything that he is taught by his fellow-men only serves

to impress upon his mind the more deeply and the more in detail that awful lie that man has a right to be like God and that to rebel against the living God is for his good. But we, the Church of God, we who truly are Christians, partaking of Christ's anointing, we are the prophets of God. The true content, the proper content of our minds has been supplied by Him. For He is the Truth. And let us not forget that to every anointing belongs the two elements of calling to a special work and qualification unto that work. We are partakers of Christ's anointing. And thus we have been qualified by His Spirit to be prophets of God in that He has returned to us the spiritual power of our minds and filled these minds with the Truth.

Another marvelous faculty of that mind wherewith God created man is the power of memory. That which we have heard of the living God in the past, we do not forget, and we are able to teach these things to our children. And in our hours of fear and distress we can bring back before our minds the truth of God's unchanging faithfulness and almighty power and find peace and joy in the midst of our fears.

Then there is the power of rationality or reason, the power to combine the truths we have received and remembered and to proceed to a new and deeper concept of the truth, to build thought upon thought and behold the implications of truths, to deduce and to see the relationship between the various facts of which we have gained knowledge. Wonderful is the mind of man! A precious gift of the All-Wise God.

But what do you do with that mind? You say that you are a Christian? Does the use of your mind say that too? All too frequently we abuse and misuse that mind rather than use it to the praise of God's name. We would begin to say a few things about the use and abuse of this wonderful gift. For in the measure that we abuse and misuse that mind, in that measure we surely are not walking as Christians, and we are not then using the prophetic office aright either. Then we are also abusing it!

One of the most pathetic sights to behold on a Sabbath day in the place where God's prophets ought to gather, His church, is the prophet who hangs out his sign reading, "Do Not Disturb! Prophet Cannot Be Bothered With God's Word". Of course, I refer to those who shut their minds to the truth of sleeping *before God's face!* Had Moses gone to sleep on Mt. Sinai, how much knowledge of the truth would Israel have had there in the wilderness? What would you and I know of the terribleness of the times in which we live and of the things that must shortly come to pass if the Apostle John on the Isle of Patmos had turned away from these wonderful visions to take a nap? What kind of prophet of God are you then, when you put that wonderful mind in cold storage and

REFUSE to let it even come in contact with the truth? That is what you do!

The Christian realizes that he must receive more and more of the truth in order to fill his calling of praising God in his confession. And surely no one disputes the fact that nothing more can come out of the mouth of a man than that which has first entered his mind. Our praise of God is determined by what enters the mind. Have you forgotten how you tried to get those first few words into the mind of your child so that you might hear him say them? Have you forgotten how you sat there with your child, drilling him and drilling him on a simple Bible text which you wanted him to memorize? Perhaps it was the little speech he had to deliver at his Christmas program. You have to get it into the mind before you can expect it to flow forth from the mouth. In this connection we like to point out that the very word for prophet in the Hebrew strongly suggests this very thing. The word prophet comes from a verb which means "to overflow". The idea is, of course, that God has filled the mind of a particular man so full of the truth—and usually though by no means always in the Old Testament times it was truth about events that will soon come to pass—that this knowledge flowed out of the mouth of that man. He was the teacher, the prophet. Today God does not give us the knowledge of the truth by means of visions. But He does have His Word preached. And to think that there are prophets who deem their physical ease and pleasure so far more important that they can hang out their "DO NOT DISTURB" sign. Think it over, sleepy prophet! Perhaps you did not look at it in this light. But you may be sure that God looks down from heaven upon it in that light. And do not forget either that you have committed a double sin. You have refused to let the truth enter your mind, and consequently your praise of God's name will suffer. You will fall down in your calling as Christian to praise God from whom all blessings flow. Of course, for you have turned away from His blessing.

What then of the special prophet? Greater still is his guilt if he go to sleep on the job. Easy it is to pounce upon others, but for those in the ministry of God's Word, those who stand as prophets before the congregation assembled, those who are teachers in Christ's name, let them be diligent! On the pulpit it is quite impossible for them to fall asleep. But that says nothing of the days from Monday to Saturday. And when one is ill so that one is kept from one's pulpit on a Sabbath day and dials the radio to find a little spiritual food, one is amazed at that which is presented as food. We do not refer simply to the brevity of the expositions of God's Word, although a real prophet of God never hears too much. But if it takes a week or half a week to compose that little superficial rewording

of an event recorded in the Scriptures, then it may be questioned whether that man should have been graduated as having the necessary qualifications for such a wonderful and lofty calling.

But such is not the case, with few exceptions. These men have brilliant minds. BUT THEY TOO SHUT THEM TO GOD'S WORD! Busy all week are they with social, political problems. And they starve God's people. Careful, faithful study of the Word is foreign to them. Do you not see the handwriting on the wall? Prophets beware! What a tremendous responsibility rests upon these prophets! They have been given talented minds, capable of studying God's Word above the ability of their congregations. Labor they must to bring the congregation down to the depth of the truth they have seen. The praise of the congregation depends upon what they present. Let them not abuse and misuse these wonderful minds.

We had much more to write on this use and abuse, but it will have to wait till later. We are creatures that are limited by time and space, but let us set our minds to thinking of these things until the next installment.

J. A. Heys.



SKEPTICS AND THE BIBLE

"Last eve I paused beside a blacksmith's door
And heard the anvil ring the vesper chime;
Then, looking in, I saw upon the floor,
Old hammers worn with beating years of time.

"'How many anvils have you had,' said I,
'To wear and batter all these hammers so?'
'Just one', the blacksmith said, with twinkling eye;
'The anvil wears the hammers out, you know!'

"And so, I thought, the anvil of God's Word
For ages Skeptic blows have beat upon;
Yet, though the noise of falling blows is hard,
The anvil is unharmed—the hammers gone!"

Tarbell's Teachers Guide.

Report of Classis East

MET IN SESSION, JAN. 4, 1950 AT GRAND RAPIDS, MICH.

This session of Classis was held at the First Protestant Reformed Church at Grand Rapids, Mich. The usual opening exercises were conducted by the Rev. J. Blankespoor, president of the last classis.

All the churches were represented by two delegates except Randolph; they delegated their pastor only.

After the credentials were accepted Rev. J. De Jong was called upon to preside. He speaks a few words of welcome to the delegates of classis and to the visitors who are present.

The Formula of Subscription is signed by the delegates who are present for the first time. The minutes of the previous meeting of classis are read and approved.

Advisory vote was given to the Revs. E. Knott, W. Hofman, A. Cammenga, G. M. Ophoff, and Mr. D. Jonker.

Rev. B. Kok gives a report of Church Visitation done in Hudsonville by himself and Rev. R. Veldman.

Some additional information of Classis West is furnished by the Stated Clerk in re the 25 year Jubilee of our churches. Reports of the various consistories are given in regard to this matter.

The following was decided by Classis in regard to this matter:

"Classes advises:

1. The churches to set aside March 5 for special divine services in connection with this event.
2. That the churches locally commemorate this event by a mid-week gathering.
3. To appoint a committee to arrange mass celebrations, regionally (including as many churches as possible) and a Booklet which must be arranged in connection with Classis West."

The Committee appointed consists of the following brethren: Rev. B. Kok, Rev. J. Heys, Mr. H. Lotterman, Mr. A. Haan, and Mr. Wm. Brummel.

Oak Lawn, Kalamazoo and Creston request classical appointments. A committee is appointed to draw up a schedule. Later in the day they present the following schedule which is adopted by classis.

OAK LAWN

Jan. 15, J. A. Heys, Jan. 22 H. Veldman, Jan. 29 J. Blankespoor, Feb. 5 R. Veldman, Feb. 12 B. Kok, Feb. 19 C. Hanko, Feb. 26 G. Lubbers, March 5 H. De Wolf, March 12 G. Vos, March 19 M. Schipper, April 2 H. Veldman.

KALAMAZOO

Jan. 15 B. Kok, Jan. 22 G. Vos, Jan. 29 H. De Wolf, Feb. 5 M. Schipper, Feb. 12 J. A. Heys, Feb. 19 G. Vanden Berg, Feb. 26 J. Blankespoor, March 5 R. Veldman, March 26 C. Hanko, April 2 G. Vanden Berg.

CRESTON

Jan. 15 G. Vanden Berg, Jan. 22 R. Veldman, Jan. 29 C. Hanko, Feb. 12 H. De Wolf, Feb. 19 G. Vos, Feb. 26 H. Veldman, March 5 M. Schipper, March 12 B. Kok, March 19 J. Blankespoor, March 26 J. A. Heys, April 2 G. Lubbers.

The advice of the Committee, appointed to study the subsidy requests of Randolph (\$1800.00), Grand Haven (\$1200.00), and Oak Lawn (\$2000.00) is: that Synod be advised to grant the requested amounts. This was adopted by Classis with this stipulation, that Grand Haven is to receive this amount when she has a minister.

Hamilton had no request for subsidy at this Classis. She was advised to apply at the next meeting of Classis.

Hamilton requests permission to ask for collections of the churches in Classis East in order that in this way they may be able to finance the purchasing of a parsonage. They desire the same from Classis West through the Synod. These requests were granted by Classis.

Moderator for Kalamazoo Rev. H. De Wolf, for Creston, Rev. J. Blankespoor.

Creston and Kalamazoo request that Classis approve the ministerial testimonies of their pastors. The testimonials are read and approved by Classis.

The instruction of Kalamazoo, to overture Synod to the effect that the unused balance of funds assessed in Art. 100 of the 1949 Acts of Synod be transferred to the Theological School Building Fund fails to carry.

A protest of a brother against his consistory is on the table.

A motion is made that the material be declared out of order on the basis, that the protestant says, that it will be necessary for him to protest but did not tell the consistory that he is protesting.

A substitute motion is made and passed in which Classis declares: That the Classis does not read or treat the protest

since it appears that the consistory labored under the impression that an exact copy of the protest and related material would be presented to them before the Classis convened. Further we advise the protestant to give a complete copy of the protest and related material to the Consistory so that they may be able to answer same at our next Classis.

The protestant informs Classis that he is protesting against this decision at the next meeting of Classis.

Two new members were elected to the Classical Committee, namely, Rev. R. Veldman and Rev. J. Blankespoor.

The following were elected as delegates to the next Synod.

MINISTERS

Primi	Secundi
C. Hanko	J. Blankespoor
H. Hoeksema	J. A. Heys
R. Veldman	B. Kok
G. Vos	G. Lubbers

ELDERS

Primi	Secundi
R. Doezeema	J. Miedema
A. Haan	R. Newhouse
H. Lotterman	H. H. Windemuller
D. Ondersma	N. Yonker

When the questions of Art. 41 of the Church Order were asked, one consistory asked for advice in regard to disciplining baptized members who do not make the proper use of all the means of grace. The advice given was that the consistory should follow the regular procedure of discipline.

A motion to adjourn carries. Rev. De Jong speaks a few words of farewell to Classis East and closes with a word of prayer after we have sung Ps. No. 203.

D. JONKER, Stated Clerk.