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MEDITATION

Jerusalem Searched With Candles

"And it shall come to pass at that time, that I will search Jerusalem with candles, and punish the men that are settled on their lees: that say in their heart, The Lord will not do good, neither will He do evil . . . I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord.

Zeph. 1:12; 3:12.

God, searching in Jerusalem with candles!

Jehovah, the faithful Covenant God of Israel, visiting His people with candles, in order to find out their iniquity and trespass.

Terrible were the days of which the prophet speaks. They were days of great apostacy. Historically, they were the days of the kingdom of Judah when Josiah reigned, about six centuries before the coming of the Christ of God.

But at this time it was very dark in Jerusalem.

Yes, yes, I know all about the reform that was instituted by the King of Judah, how he had tried to cleanse the foul stable of Baal worship.

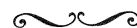
But there was a terrible state of moral decay nevertheless. And this state of decay no moral reform of Josiah can cure.

There was a terrible admixture in Judah. On the one hand, the text speaks of men like Josiah. They "seek the Lord", and they grieve for their sin. And they are characterized as an "afflicted and poor people".

On the other hand, their are the men who coagulate on their lees. They say very wicked things in their heart, and that is terrible. We can say terrible things with our mouth sometimes, but to say those things in your hearts is doubly sinful. It reveals a wicked heart. Well, they said in their heart: The Lord will not do good, neither will He do evil.

And these two kinds of people made up the historical people of God in Judah.

And this mixed mass the Lord God of Israel is going to visit with candles.



Jerusalem is visited with candles!

God will surely come and will not silent be!

He will come with a devouring fire; He will be a shining light so that it will be clearly established what kind of people He shall find.

No, this is no interesting story which you may read at your leisure. . . and forget.

This is the Word of the Lord unto Judah and Israel.

And as such it has its message even today for us. Not only did the Lord really visit Jerusalem with His searching light of judgment, but all these things are also typical, and they are repeated throughout the ages.

Israel and Judah are the people of God of all the ages. And their states of innocence or guilt, their departure from the truth or their cleaving to the same is also typical. And typical is their punishment or their reward of grace.

Israel is the Church of God of all the ages.

And you may apply the text even today. What did I say? You must apply this text today. It is the living Word of God for our day in a deeper sense than it ever could be in the days of Zephaniah. Things have developed, but they are the same things as in the days of this prophet.

There is a terrible admixture in our present Judah and Israel.

There are the men who are settled on their lees. These people are compared to wine that grows cloudy because of the sediment: the lees. They are thoroughly permeated with evil in its many forms. They are coagulated in that evil. To sin for them has become very natural.

And this evil people reveal themselves over against God as those who are practical deists: God is so far away from us that He will never find us out.

But also today there are the other kind of people: the poor and the afflicted ones. They are the people that seek the Lord.

Beautiful characteristics! Especially that last one: they seek the Lord!

From the morning to the evening, yes, and even in the watches of the night, they are on the look-out for the living God. They love Him, and therefore, they seek Him.

And they also found Him, for we read of them that they trust in the name of the Lord. God be blessed, there are such people today. And they shall remain among those that reveal themselves as practical deists. And they shall abide among the wicked until the last day. But when they are gone, then the end will come, and at that time this text will have been entirely fulfilled.

But remember that this text describes our present set-up in this world.

God is searching Jerusalem with candles!

And He finds a terrible admixture!



Yes, God is searching!

And a searching God is first of all a terrible God who taketh vengeance.

Oh, how the people of God were witness to that fact! This text began to be fulfilled in the latter days of Jeremiah, who even then prophesied. It is for that reason that he is called the weeping prophet.

It began to be fulfilled when the light of the candles of God's judgment came in the form of the Babylonian captivity.

Oh how they were searched with candles.

How literally this was fulfilled. The high and mighty hid themselves, but they were found out. God gave ingenuity to the wicked Babylonians, enough ingenuity to find the men that had settled on their lees of godlessness.

And as to these candles of God, they are the always judging God. The light of this search is the light of His blessed virtue. They are the outgoing virtues of righteousness, holiness and truth. They are the candles of God. Terrible it shall be if a man is entirely wicked, thoroughly dark and evil. This light of God's judgment will surely find him out and make him to taste His utter condemnation.

And thus the Lord will deal with the church of God throughout all the ages and in every clime.

God's candles burn brightly indeed.

They are the Word of God.

That Word is quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and the intents of the heart.

O those candles of the living God! You simply cannot hide from them. They and their light follow you in every recess and cranny of the Universe. There is no escaping their piercing light. It is really the living God Himself that looks at you!

And notice in the text that He looks, by the light of these candles, into the eyes of your heart!

Oh yes, there are the shining candles of God!

Searching, ever searching Jerusalem!



God is searching His people!

He did so in the days of this prophet. And He does so today.

Every day and every minute of the day, the Lord is searching Jerusalem, and that is you.

You see, God is always judging. He is judging me at this very moment when I am writing these lines. He judges every day, says the Holy Scripture.

And this judging is brought home to me, first, by His glorious Word. And, second, His Holy Spirit applies that Word in my heart. And there, in my heart, He tells me what He thinks of me.

And now, according to the presence or the lack of grace in your heart, you are either afflicted in that heart, or you are foolish, very foolish in your heart.

Imagine: they say in their heart: God does not see anything! For it is plain, so they say, that He will do neither good nor evil! Are they not foolish?

But the others say: I am poor and afflicted!

And that is because with the light of God's judgment which also judges and condemns them, they receive the grace of God, and through that grace they humble themselves, seek God and plead for His mercy, even as the true Israel of all the ages has ever done. In the days of Zephaniah we find such people. Well, wherever you are that read this, you will find that the Lord has left Himself a remnant that trust in His name, also among you. And they shall remain among us unto the end of time.



God is searching His people in Jerusalem!

But there will be an end of this, God be thanked!

We do not have to remain among the wicked as the remnant forever!

The time will come when this searching of God shall have been finished, and at that time the judgment of God shall be fulfilled.

For that time we hunger.

Then the Word of the Lord shall find them.

Yes, they still shall be settled on their lees. But the coagulation on their lees shall be terrible. It shall seem that they have entirely identified themselves with sin. The same picture you have in the Bible, for at the end of time these people are called the Man of Sin!

But the Word of the Lord shall find them. The

all-penetrating light of His glorious virtues shall reveal them in all their horrible perversion and iniquity. And the whole Universe shall be witness to the evil of their sin.

In this present dispensation they seem to have success with their philosophy: the deist seems to have his measure of success. Does it not seem as though he is right? Does it not seem as though the Lord will neither do good nor do evil? Does it not seem that the only one that does anything is Sovereign Man? Is he not babbling today of destroying the whole Universe? I have read statements such as these: Another war will destroy our whole civilization such as we know it. I have read that man is speaking of destroying the whole Universe with the inventions he has found out. Man is setting off atom blasts: what is God doing? Where is He?

But I would like to read a text to the Deist. It is found in Psalm 50:21, 22: "These things hast thou done, and I kept silence: thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes. Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver."

Listen also to another Scripture: "The Lord shall go forth as a mighty man, He shall stir up jealousy like a man of war: He shall cry, yea, roar; He shall prevail against His enemies. I have long time holden My peace; I have been still, and refrained Myself: now I will cry like a travailing woman; I will destroy and devour at once." Isaiah 42:13, 14.

Note three points in these two Scriptures: No. 1.: God kept silence, He seemed to be far away and He seemed not to interfere at all; No. 2.: these wicked men did wickedly and thought that God would never come to destroy them for their evil deeds; and No. 3.: God finally will come to destroy them.

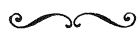
And so it is in our text too: God will search out Jerusalem with His candles of righteousness, holiness and truth, and according to His findings He will either destroy or save to the uttermost.

For that we must wait awhile.

It seems as though He is slack in coming. But it is not slackness. He is coming as fast as He can. And that means that He will come as fast as the things are developing in His counsel. And when all the things of God's counsel are realized, then He will finally come with His candles.

And for that final coming we long and pray.

God, searching out Jerusalem with candles!



The searching God of Jerusalem!

I have been a listener to many complaints. Some of them were my own. But I have also listened to many that were not my own. And among them I have

listened to good people that were almost desperate, for they thought that someone was "getting away with something". You could tell by the very fervor of the teller of the story that they required haste, that the wicked-doer better be stopped at once, that if we do not act immediately, he will escape, and there never will be any retribution!

Poor deluded people!

God is ever searching with candles!

And at the end of time there will be a searching such as we have never seen before.

The Word of the Lord will find the men that are secure on their lees. Their sin, all sin, shall be found out to be sin indeed, and. . . shall be punished.

But at that time the poor and miserable in Jerusalem will also be searched by God's candles. The judgment will begin with God's people.

And then the Lord will discover what He found in them. In their hearts the Lord will discover Himself. And He will find Himself there in the Face of Jesus the Son of God.

In the day of God's judgment that people shall be adjudged to be entirely innocent, for it shall be shown how God paid the price in His own beloved Son.

God will show that these people were poor in themselves. They knew themselves to be sinners, and they cried to God for mercy. They were an afflicted people. For since they receive God's grace in their hearts, they were hated of all. They were treated as the wicked treated God Himself. When He came to them in the appearance of His Son, He said: what will ye do unto Me? And they said: We will hate Thee all the day long! And we also hate Thy Son, Jesus Christ. And we will nail Him to the accursed tree for He is too much like Thee! And we will hate also all the people that are baptized in that Son, and that reveal that Son in all their walk of life!

That is what the wicked have always said, and always have done.

They did it initially when Cain slew Abel.

Oh yes, there is an afflicted people. God has left them among the wicked.

But they trust in the name of the Lord.

There you have the difference.

They know this God in the Face of His Son. They have listened to His Self-revelation. They have experienced the application of this revelation in their heart.

And since that time they trust in God.

What that means?

It means that you rely on Him. That you let Him shape your life, and that you expect from Him all the strength you need to walk before Him in uprightness and integrity of heart. And that you long for His coming with candles.

G. Vos.

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EDITOR: — Rev. H. Hoeksema.

Contributing Editors: — Rev. G. M. Ophoff, Rev. G. Vos, Rev. R. Veldman, Rev. H. Veldman, Rev. H. De Wolf, Rev. B. Kok, Rev. J. D. De Jong, Rev. A. Petter, Rev. C. Hanko, Rev. L. Vermeer, Rev. G. Lubbers, Rev. M. Gritters, Rev. J. A. Heys, Rev. W. Hofman.

Communications relative to contents should be addressed to REV. H. HOEKSEMA, 1139 Franklin St., S. E., Grand Rapids, Michigan.

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CONTENTS

MEDITATION—

- Jerusalem Searched With Candles193
Rev. G. Vos

EDITORIALS—

- As To Conditions196
Rev. H. Hoeksema

THE TRIPLE KNOWLEDGE—

- An Exposition of the Heidelberg Catechism200
Rev. H. Hoeksema
- Van Boeken202
Rev. H. Hoeksema

OUR DOCTRINE—

- The Counsel of God. (6)204
Rev. H. Veldman
- Correspondence207
Rev. G. M. Ophoff

SION'S ZANGEN—

- Zalig Is Den Heeren Vrees210
Rev. G. Vos
- Yes or No212
Mr. D. Jonker

FROM HOLY WRIT—

- Exposition of Ephesians 1:1-3 (continued)213
Rev. Geo. C. Lubbers

IN HIS FEAR—

- Called To His Praise215
Rev. J. A. Heys
-
-

EDITORIALS

As To Conditions

It was not my purpose originally at this stage of my discussion on the question of conditions to reply to the writing of the Rev. Petter in *Concordia*. The purpose of my writing is not to carry on a controversy, but rather to give a positive, and more or less systematic, exposition of the whole subject from a Reformed point of view. And it certainly is not conducive to the realization of this purpose to pay too much attention to what others write and especially to the writing of the Rev. A. Petter. The brother will therefore have to have a little patience, and if necessary I will reply to him at the end of my series.

Nevertheless, I can no longer refrain from pointing to a grave error in the Rev. Petter's method of attacking me in *Concordia* and especially to his misrepresentation of what I taught in the past on the question of conditions. The brother leaves the impression with his readers that I, too, have changed my mind, and that therefore our churches cannot safely follow so untrustworthy a leadership as I offer them. I therefore want to state here emphatically that I always opposed the standpoint of the Rev. Petter that faith is a condition and that the covenant is conditional.

The Rev. Petter writes: "I have shown that even those who are now trying to deny that element (of conditions, H.H.) have formerly defended and approved it. See *Standard Bearer*, Vol. II, p. 47; *Standard Bearer*, January 15, 1946, p. 175, also *Abundant Mercy*, p. 183; *Standard Bearer*, March 1, 1948, p. 247-8. We certainly cannot decide the position of our churches by the changing view of individuals."

How untrue this is ought to be very evident from the following:

In my dogmatic notes on Soteriology, which I taught twenty years ago, and which also the Rev. Petter has in his possession, I wrote on the subject of justification the following:

"To be rejected are the following modes of representation:

"a) As if faith is the ground of our justification. There is in faith even considered as a work no merit before God. The ground is only the obedience of Christ.

"b) As if faith were a condition on which God justifies us. There are no conditions on our part in the covenant of God. All the benefits of grace are bestowed upon us absolutely unconditionally. Never may the sentence, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved,' be presented as condition and

promise. Faith itself is an act of God and a benefit of grace bestowed upon us.

"c) As if faith were the means on our part whereby we can accept Christ, the hand whereby we can take hold of Him, or the taking hold of Him itself by means of that hand. This presentation is principally Remonstrant.

"The correct presentation is the following:

"a) Faith is the instrument of God in as far as it is the bond that unites us with Christ. All our righteousness is in Christ Jesus. As long as we are not grafted into Him by a true faith we are of and out of ourselves children of wrath. Through faith, however, God unites us with Christ and declares us free from sin. For that reason the Word of God uses the preposition *dia* with the genitive of *pistis* to express this. And only in this way can we understand that God imputes the faith of Abraham for righteousness.

"b) Faith is also instrument on the part of God in as far as He brings us through faith to the consciousness of our justification, and speaks to us of peace *in foro conscientiae*.

"c) And on our part faith becomes means in as far as we through the act of faith accept and appropriate unto ourselves the righteousness of God in Christ. For that reason the Word of God uses in this connection also the preposition *ek* with the genitive of Christ. Rom. 5:1: 'We therefore being justified out of faith have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ'."

Thus I taught the Rev. Petter years ago. It is, of course, his privilege to depart from this sound teaching and to present a different view if, namely, he can defend it before our Protestant Reformed Churches. But it is not honest to leave the impression with his readers that I have changed and that therefore there is something wrong with my leadership in our churches.

If the Rev. Petter will take the trouble to read my elaborate criticism on the Heynsian conception of the gospel in the ninth volume of the Standard Bearer, he will certainly find that the whole tenor of this criticism is opposed to the idea of conditions. Throughout these articles I emphasize the truth that the promise of God is absolutely certain and unconditional, and is meant only for the heirs of the promise, that is, the elect. Just read the following: "A promise rests only in him that promises, the promise of the gospel for its certain realization only in the eternal and only true God; the gospel of the promise is therefore eternally sure. For a promise is a verbal or written declaration whereby the one that promises is pledged to do or to bestow something upon someone else. The gospel of the promise, therefore, is the glad tidings that God has pledged Himself to bestow eternal life and all things on the heirs of the promise." And again: "How could it be different? Where could there be next or

outside of God a party to whom He could promise something? He is the absolute, subject and object in Himself, the completely self-sufficient One, the only Blessed, the Eternal, the wholly unique. Apart from Him, above Him, next to Him, without Him there is nothing. He is His own party. To whom then would God be able to promise something or to offer anything? Where could there be a party outside of God to which God could promise anything? No, if there is a promise of God, then the entire contents of that promise is out of Him. Then also the heirs of the promise are out of God alone. Then God has sovereignly foreknown the heirs of the promise, foreknown them in such a way that they come into existence exactly through that divine, sovereign knowledge, that eternal divine conception. And therefore you cannot conceive of a gospel without the divine, sovereign predestination of the heirs of the promise. And the gospel is the glad tidings of God concerning the promise to those heirs of the promise.

And again, speaking of our reconciliation with God I wrote: "Reconciliation is not a possibility, but an established fact. To be sure, we enter into the state of reconciliation through faith. But never may reconciliation be presented as a possibility, neither with respect to the power and perfection of that reconciliation, nor with respect to the participants of the same. For Christ has died for the elect, God reconciled the elect through the blood of Christ with Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. Reconciliation therefore is not conditional. It depends not on our faith; it is not brought to nought by our unbelief; it is in all its significance a historic fact, the fulfillment of the sure promise of God, and must be proclaimed as such."

And again, speaking of the subjective application of the benefits of salvation unto the elect I write: "All this belongs to the content of the promise of God to His people and must be proclaimed as the work of God, as the sure work of God within us through His grace in the preaching of the gospel. Also here you would detract from the work of God if you would present this as an uncertain or conditional offer." And I emphatically reject the presentation of Heyns that faith is a demand with which man must comply in order to receive in his possession the salvation to which God gave him an objective right.

These articles against Heyns were written more than fifteen years ago, and I still subscribe to them and to what I teach on the subject of the promise and conditions.

Again, I wish to refer to the pamphlet on the subject, "The Gospel," published and distributed by the Sunday School of the First Protestant Ref. Church. This, too, was written by me more than a dozen years ago, and was re-printed in 1946. From this pamphlet I quote the following:

"Now, it is important, that we clearly understand the nature of a promise. It is by no means the same as an offer. Also in the latter the person that makes the offer declares his willingness to do something for or to bestow something upon the person to whom the offer is made, but for its realization the offer is contingent upon the willingness of the second party, upon his consent to the offer. But a promise is different. It is a declaration, written or verbal, which binds the person that makes it to do or forbear to do the very thing promised. It is an engagement regardless of any corresponding duty or obligation on the part of the person to whom the thing is promised. A promise, therefore, implies the declaration of a certain good together with the positive assurance that this good shall be bestowed upon or performed in behalf of the person to whom the promise is made. This certainty of the promise is, as regards the promise in Scripture, emphasized by the fact, that it is God Who makes the promise. God conceived of the promise; He it is that realizes the thing promised; He declares the promise. Which implies, in the first place, that the promise cannot be contingent upon the will of the creature. And, secondly, this signifies that the promise is as faithful and true as God is unchangeable. He will surely realize the promise. When He binds Himself to do or to bestow anything, He is bound by Himself and all His divine attributes to realize the promise unto them to whom it is made, for He cannot deny Himself."

And again, from the same pamphlet I quote:

"And, as we remarked before, this stands to reason. A promise cannot be offered. An offer is a conditional proposition. It depends and is contingent on its consent by man. But a promise is binding him that promised. And this is especially and emphatically true of the promise of the gospel. In the first place, because it is God that promised and He cannot lie. He is faithful and true and will surely realize His every word. Secondly, because the things promised cannot possibly be realized or partly realized by men. If the gospel were the preaching of a conditional offer, there is nothing in the condition man can possibly fulfill. He cannot of himself believe the promise; he cannot even will of himself to believe in Christ. He cannot repent and turn unless God first realizes the promise unto him. In other words, the promise of God is either unconditional, or it is impossible of realization. And in the third place, the promise is given, not to all, but to a certain party, to the seed of Abraham, to those that are of Christ, to them that are in sovereign grace elected unto salvation from before the foundation of the world."

It is nothing short of astonishing that the Rev. Petter even refers to my article in the *Standard Bearer* on the subject of faith and justification to make his readers believe that I changed on the subject of con-

ditions. He appeals to the mere statement that justification in the subjective sense is contingent upon faith, as if that could possibly mean the same as the statement that faith is a condition unto justification or unto salvation. But let me quote the connection in which that statement occurs, in order to prove that the Rev. Petter wantonly misrepresents my words. You may find the quotation in the *Standard Bearer*, Vol. XXIV, p. 439.

"Nor is the relation between faith and justification to be conceived and presented as that of a benefit on God's part and a condition on our part. This, too, is often alleged. God saves and justifies us on condition that we believe. Superficially considered, it might seem as if there were truth in this assertion. Is it not true that we must believe in order to be saved? If we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be justified; if not, we shall be damned. It appears, then, that justification is conditioned by faith.

"Yet this cannot be the relation. First of all, it should be remembered that objective justification is before faith. Objectively, we are justified regardless of our faith. In eternal election all those given Christ by the Father are righteous before God forever. And this righteousness cannot be contingent upon faith, even though it is true that we cannot appropriate this gift of righteousness except by a true and living faith. Besides, long before we believed, the justification of all the elect is accomplished forever in the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And, secondly, although it is true that justification in the subjective sense is contingent upon faith, we must never forget that faith is not of ourselves, it is a gift of God. It is therefore not a condition which we must fulfill in order to be justified: God Himself fulfills all the conditions of salvation."

It will be evident to the reader that the statement that justification in the subjective sense is contingent upon faith is equivalent to the statement in the same connection "that we cannot appropriate this gift of righteousness except by a true and living faith." For the rest, how the Rev. Petter can possibly draw the conclusion from the above two paragraphs that I changed my mind about the question of conditions is a complete mystery to me. I emphatically deny him the right so to misinterpret me.

Again, the Rev. Petter also refers to an article in the *Standard Bearer*, Vol. XXII, pp. 175, ff. But also this article offers no ground whatsoever for the Rev. Petter's contention that I changed my mind on the question of conditions. In that article I am criticizing the standpoint of the Liberated Churches that the promise is conditional. And even in that criticism I make it very plain to anyone that can read that I must have nothing of conditions, even in the so-called Reformed sense of the word. For instance, I write:

"It is, of course, the Reformed view that all 'conditions' of the covenant, all 'conditions' unto salvation, are fulfilled by God Himself." Let the Rev. Petter note, please, that I put the word *condition* in quotation marks, which means that I am not responsible for the term, even if used in the Reformed sense. The same is true in the following statement: "If the brethren of the Liberated Churches understand the 'conditional promise' in this Reformed sense, etc." By putting this phrase *conditional promise* in quotation marks I naturally mean to express that I personally must have nothing of the term. And the Rev. Petter certainly can understand this.

Besides, if the Rev. Petter had but carefully read the entire article, he certainly could not so have misrepresented me as to write in *Concordia*: "I have shown that even those who are now trying to deny that element have formerly defended and approved it." And again: "We certainly cannot decide the position of our churches by the changing views of individuals." That I certainly did not change my views at all on the question of conditions may be gathered from the very article to which the Rev. Petter refers: for in that article I write as follows:

"The truth of this statement is already evident from what we quoted of that form above. That expository part of the form establishes the whole of God's covenant and all its benefits as absolutely sure unto 'the children of the promise'. God's part of the covenant is that He realizes it completely, objectively and subjectively, both as to its objective establishment and as to its subjective application. God assures the 'children of the promise', that He establishes His covenant with them, that He adopts them, that He forgives their sins and justifies them, that He delivers them and sanctifies them, that He preserves and glorifies them. This is absolutely *unconditional*. No condition whatever is mentioned in this part. Fact is, that if there were a condition attached to this, the covenant could never be realized, and that entire expository part of the Baptism Form would be made vain. But God's work is never conditional. And the language of the Baptism Form is as positive and unconditional as it possibly could be. The mere fact that the future tense is used in connection with the work of the Holy Ghost (He *will* dwell in us) does no more make this work contingent and conditional than when the same tense is used with respect to the work of the Father (He *will* provide us with every good thing); it merely denotes that God the Holy Spirit will surely fulfill this promise in the future, i.e., all our life long, as well as in the present.

"To be sure, the Baptism Form makes mention of our 'part' in the covenant, that 'we by God through baptism are admonished of, and obliged unto new obedience, namely, that we cleave to this one God,

Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; that we trust in him and love him with all our hearts, and with all our souls, and with all our mind, and with all our strength; that we forsake the world, crucify our old nature, and walk in a new and holy life.' But this part is not presented as a condition for the part of God, which we must fulfill before, and in order that God will fulfill His part, but as the new obligation of love which follows upon and from God's part. And only when and after God has fulfilled His 'part' of the covenant, can we begin to fulfill ours".

And again, to quote no more: "We conclude, therefore, that the view that all the children of believing parents are equally in the covenant in virtue of a conditional promise is in conflict with the plain language of our Baptism Form."

Again, on page 199 of Vol. XXII of the *Standard Bearer*, I write in answer to an exposition which the Rev. Bremmer offers of the well-known passage in Romans 9: "This question the apostle puts in a very specific form, at least by implication: Is the Word of God fallen out, become of none effect? Did God fail to realize His promise to the seed of Abraham?"

"It is this question which he answers in the first part of Romans 9.

"And how does he answer it?

"Does he say: No, the promise of God is faithful, and the Word of God has not fallen out, but the promise was conditional, contingent upon the faith of those to whom it was promised; and since many did not believe the promise they did not receive the blessings promised to them, bequeathed upon them, as the Rev. Bremmer would have it?

"Not at all. There is not a word in this passage that suggests such an interpretation."

From all the above, and I could refer to many more passages out of my writings, it should be abundantly evident that the Rev. Petter grossly misrepresents me, and certainly does not write the truth about me and about my views on the question of conditions when he leaves the impression with his readers that I, too, have changed and that I do not always speak and write the same language. It is not I that have changed, but the Rev. Petter is departing from what has always been accepted among us as Protestant Reformed truth. I want him to know that I will always oppose the views that he is attempting to inculcate into our people both in my writings and in the spoken word, whether it be in lecture or in sermon. And I want him to understand too that in so writing and speaking I do nothing but that which I have always done, maintain and defend our Protestant Reformed truth. It is not I that oppose the Rev. Petter, but it is the Rev. Petter that opposes and contradicts that which I have always taught as being the truth of Holy Writ and of our Reformed confessions.

H. H.

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.

C.

In The Line Of Generations.

On the other hand, there are in the Reformed churches those that must have nothing of presumptive regeneration as a basis for the baptism of infants, but who rather find the ground for infant baptism in the promise of the covenant. For this promise is: I will be your God and the God of your seed.

The motive of those that adhere to this theory is that they seek a certain assurance for all the children that are born of believing parents. They seek certainty. On the basis of a presupposition, or presumptive regeneration, there is no assurance possible, say they. According to those that hold the theory of presumptive regeneration the covenant is after all established only with the elect. One must therefore first know that he is elect, before he can have the assurance that he belongs to God's covenant. The best one can do on this basis with respect to the covenant children is to presume or suppose that they are really in the covenant. There is no assurance. Hence, they reject this entire conception. They want no distinction between an external and in internal covenant or between being really and not really in the covenant. They refuse to speak of suppositions and presumptions, and they seek objective certainty. And this certainty with respect to the covenant of God they find in the promise: I will be your God and the God of your seed. This promise all the covenant children may accept. It is sure. It can never fail. On it they may rely. It is a sure basis of certainty and personal assurance of faith; and, at the same time, it is the only ground of infant baptism.

It is evident that according to the view of the latter the promise is for all that are born under the covenant, for all the children of believing parents, for all that are baptized. In the promise God bequeaths all the blessings of the covenant upon all that are baptized. He gives all the right to those blessings. One may say, therefore, to all the baptized children: You are really in the covenant; you have the right to accept the promise.

It stands to reason, however, that seeing that Scripture and experience both plainly teach that all the baptized children are not saved, the promise must necessarily be presented as conditional. It is contingent for its fulfillment upon the faith of those that are baptized. They are obliged to believe the promise, to fulfill their covenant obligations, their part of the covenant of God. If they fail in this, the blessings of the covenant do not actually come in their possession. Instead they fall under the terrible covenant wrath and vengeance of God.

With this view we also cannot possibly agree.

In the first place, let it be noted that it certainly does not establish the assurance of which it boasts, that is, the objective certainty that according to the promise of God all that are baptized are really in the covenant and have a God-given right to its blessings.

They speak of "a conditional promise". And the condition upon which the promise is contingent is faith and obedience. It is true that many Reformed theologians have presented erroneously, in my conviction, faith as a condition unto salvation and unto entering into the covenant of God. But even so, they emphasize that all "conditions" unto salvation are fulfilled by God Himself. If, therefore, we say that our actually receiving the blessings of the covenant is conditioned by faith on our part, we must hasten to add that God Himself gives us the faith. He Himself fulfills the condition. The fulfillment of the condition, that is, faith, is included in the promise. If, therefore, those that teach that the promise of God is for all the baptized children would be consistent they must come to the conclusion that all the baptized children are actually saved. To all God promises the blessings of the covenant. To all He promises His grace and Spirit. To all, therefore, He promises the lively faith whereby they become partakers of the blessings of the covenant. The promise of God is sure. Hence, all the baptized children are surely saved. The sign and seal of this they receive in baptism. Hence, the inevitable conclusion must be that all the children that are born under the covenant are surely saved.

However, those who maintain this theory that the promise of God is for all realize very well, of course, that this position is untenable. They understand very well that Scripture plainly teaches that many that are born under the covenant are irretrievably lost. And besides, also experience teaches that many of the baptized children are not saved. Hence, they must inevitably come to the conclusion that a so-called conditional promise to all is a promise the condition of which the baptized children themselves must and are able to fulfill. This is the view of the late Prof. W. Heyns. He maintains that to every baptized child is given sufficient subjective grace to bring forth good fruits, which means, of course, the fruit of faith and repent-

ance. Or rather we may say that according to him all covenant children receive sufficient grace either to accept or to reject their covenant obligations. Writes he in his *Catechetiek*, p. 144, 145: "There is therefore a subjective grace which a) is sufficient in connection with the spiritual labor through the means of grace to bring forth the good fruits of faith and obedience, so that God has the fullest right to expect these; b) which, however, does not exclude the possibility that the covenant child even in spite of the most excellent influences of the means of grace (Luke 13) remains unfruitful, produces rotten grapes, and which therefore does not consist in definitely saving grace; c) which is not in conflict with the confession that the deepest ground of our salvation lies in the election of God and that salvation is entirely the work of God." The distinction, therefore, according to Heyns, between baptized children and others, is that the former receive sufficient grace to accept the covenant, to bring forth fruits of faith and repentance, although they can still refuse to do this. This, however, is pure Arminianism and Pelagianism applied to the covenant. And of course, even with this view the desired certainty for all the children of the covenant is not attained. For in that case the covenant is made contingent upon the will of the sinner. And that means that ultimately it has become impossible of realization.

Besides, this view is in plain conflict with the teaching of our Baptism Form.

The expository part of that form establishes the whole of God's covenant and all its benefits as absolutely sure unto the "children of the promise". It is not conditional whatsoever. God's part of the covenant is that He realizes it completely, both objectively and subjectively, both as to its objective establishment and as to its subjective application. God assures the "children of the promise" that He establishes His covenant with them, adopts them for His children and heirs, that He forgives all their sins and justifies them, that He delivers them and sanctifies them, that He preserves and glorifies them until they shall appear with all the elect in life eternal. This is not presented as a conditional promise, but is absolutely unconditional. Fact is, that if there were a condition attached to this, the covenant could never be realized. But God's work is never conditional, and it is in no wise contingent upon the will and the work of man. The language of the Baptism Form is as positive and unconditional as it possibly could be. It is true that Heyns emphasizes the fact that in that expository part of the Baptism Form the Holy Spirit is presented as being willing to dwell in us and to apply to the children of the promise all the benefits of salvation. But whether this willingness of the Holy Spirit shall be realized depends upon the attitude of the covenant children themselves, upon their faith and obedience. But this

is surely not the meaning of the Baptism Form. The mere fact that the future tense is used in connection with the work of the Holy Ghost (He *will* dwell in us) does no more make this work of the Holy Spirit contingent than when the same tense is used with respect to the work of the Father (He *will* provide us with every good thing). On the contrary, it merely denotes that God the Holy Spirit will surely fulfill this promise in the future, that is, in all our life, as well as in the present.

And therefore, we cannot accept the theory of a conditional promise for all the children that are baptized and that are living under the dispensation of the covenant.

The truth therefore is not that the ground of infant baptism is a certain presumptive regeneration. Nor is the ground that the promise of the covenant is for all that live under the dispensation of the covenant, which is plainly not true. But rather that the Scriptural ground for the baptism of infants lies in the fact that God establishes His covenant in the line of continued generations, while in those generations there are children of the promise, while at the same time among them there are also the carnal children that never receive the blessing of the promise and that trample under foot the covenant of God.

Thus it was in the old dispensation. At that time the covenant of God was confined within the limits of the nation of Israel. They formed one nation. They all lived under God's dealings with His own. They were all delivered with a mighty arm from the house of bondage. They were all witnesses of God's terrible wonders. They all passed through the sea. And they were all baptized into Moses. They all ate of the spiritual bread and drank out of the spiritual rock that followed them in the desert. They were the nation that received the law, to whom the Word of God was entrusted, whose were the prophets, the priests, the kings, the service of the temple, the altar and sacrifices. Yet with the majority of them God was not well-pleased. There were in the generations of the people of God of the old dispensation two seeds: the true children of the promise and the carnal children that despised God's covenant and trampled under foot the holy things of the covenant of Jehovah, His Word and His precepts. Yet it was the will of God that all should receive the sign of circumcision, the seal of the righteousness which is by faith.

Nor is it different in the new dispensation. The church in the world is the gathering of confessing believers and their children. And they form one people, even though the course of God's covenant is no longer confined to one single nation. And to this people God reveals His covenant. They are called after His name. And outwardly all that belong to them are subject to the same dealings. All are according to the will of God

baptized in the name of God triune. To all the Word is preached. And all, unless they violate the covenant of God before they ever come to the confession of faith in the church, celebrate the death of the Lord Jesus Christ at the communion table. Yet also to the church of the new dispensation apply the words of Romans 9:6-8: "Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed." Always there are in the line of the generations of the people of God the true spiritual seed. But there also develops always again the carnal seed, that live in close proximity and outward fellowship with the spiritual seed, dwell in the same house with the latter, are subject to the same influences as these, but are not children of the promise, and receive not the grace of God in their hearts.

And the significance of the presence of this carnal seed within the generations of the people of God is very evident, both from Scripture and from actual experience. Because of the perpetual presence of that carnal element in the church of Christ in the world, the church must fight here hardest battle in her own house and not on the mission field. For it is by this carnal element that the measure of iniquity is filled. And from the carnal seed the antichristian power is constantly developing, until the Man of Sin be revealed, the Son of Perdition, the culmination of all the forces of iniquity. It is in the carnal seed that sin becomes manifest in all its horror. They kill the prophets and stone them that are sent unto them. They crucify the Christ and always crucify Him anew. They bring forth the false church. With them the children of the promise are engaged in continual spiritual warfare, until the days come in which there shall be great tribulation,—days in which the very elect would be deceived, if they were not shortened for their sake.

And thus it is according to the will of God revealed in His Word that the sign of baptism is to be administered to all the children that are born in the line of the generations of God's people.

But while the sign and seal of the covenant is a savour of life for the children of the promise, it is at the same time a savour of death unto death for the reprobate, that trample under foot the covenant of Jehovah.

We must watch, therefore.

We must not say: We have Abraham to our father. All are not Israel that are of Israel. Neither are they children of God because they are of Abraham's natural seed. Nor ever say that the Word of God has fallen

out. For God certainly realizes His promise to all His people. His Word never fails.

But it is our calling, our sacred obligation, our responsibility before God, to walk as spiritual children of the covenant and keep our part of that covenant, namely, that we shall love the Lord our God with all our heart and mind and soul and strength, cleave unto Him and trust in Him as the God of our salvation, forsake the world, crucify our old nature, and walk in a new and holy life.

H. H.

* * * *

Van Boeken

DE HEILIGE GEEST, onder redactie van Prof. Dr. J. H. Bavinck, Dr. P. Prins, Prof. Dr. G. Brillenburg Wurth. Uitgever J. H. Kok, N.V. Kampen, Nederland. Prijs f. 9.25.

Dit lijvig boek (452 paginas) behandelt den persoon en het werk van den Heiligen Geest. Het doet dit achtereenvolgens in een exegetisch deel, een dogma-historisch deel, en een praktisch deel.

Het is niet gemakkelijk om een werk als dit in een kort overzicht te beoordeelen, vooral ook omdat zijn inhoud bestaat uit verschillende opstellen van even zoovele schrijvers. In het algemeen kan ik opmerken, dat hier veel stof geboden wordt, die lezenswaardig is, en die ook voor ieder, die Hollandsch lezen kan, bevattelijk is. De stijl is helder, en het boek is op populaire wijze geschreven. En het is rijk van inhoud. Gaarne bevelen we het bij onze lezers aan.

Als een woord van kritiek zouden we willen opmerken, dat de systematische eenheid in het boek al te zeer gemist wordt. Dit mocht verwacht worden, daar er bijna zooveel schrijvers aan hebben medegewerkt, als er hoofdstukken in het boek zijn. Ook zou ik wat meer verwacht hebben over de altijd zich opdringende vraag over de werking des Geestes vóór den Pinksterdag. Met het hoofdstuk over "De Heilige Geest en de algemeene openbaring" ben ik het grootendeels niet eens, noch ook met de opmerkingen over "het niet-christelijk gebed" op p. 391.

Gaarne ter lezing aanbevolen.

H. H.

GENESIS, door Dr. G. Ch. Aalders (Korte Verklaring der Heilige Schrift). Eerste Deel, Hfdst. 1-11:26. Tweede druk. Uitgever J. H. Kok, N.V. Kampen, Nederland. Prijs f. 4.95.

Dat deze korte verklaring van het boek Genesis een tweede druk beleefde, is wel een bewijs, dat ze in Nederland en waarschijnlijk ook bij ons Hollandsch lezend publiek in Amerika, zeer gezocht is. En geen

wonder. Dr. Aalders weet op eenvoudige en toch degelijke en wetenschappelijke wijze de Heilige Schrift te verklaren. Dit eerste deel wordt vooraf gegaan door een verhandeling van den Pentateuch in het algemeen, over zijn auteurschap, ontstaanswijze, etc., om daarna over te gaan tot de verklaring van hoofdstukken 1-11.

Over hetgeen Dr. Aalders opmerkt aangaande den duur van den scheppingsdag verschil ik met hen. Ook geef ik liever een andere verklaring van de wateren boven en beneden het uitspansel. Tot de laatste behooren m.i., ook de wolken en heel onze aarde omspannende atmosfeer.

Wij bevelen dezen commentaar aan allen aan, die belang stellen in grondige studie der Heilige Schrift. Vooral in de boekenkast van onze mannenverenigingen, die grootendeels nog Hollandsch kennen, geve men deze verklaring een plaats. En ook onze predikanten kunnen met vrucht gebruik van haar maken.

H. H.

HET BOEK GENESIS, door Dr. G. Ch. Aalders; tweede deel, hfdst. 11:27-30:43. (Korte Verklaring). Uitgever J. H. Kok N.V. Kampen, Nederland. Prijs f. 3.95.

Alle goede opmerkingen, die ik gemaakt heb over het eerste deel van dezen commentaar gelieve men ook toe te passen op dit tweede deel.

De opmerking bij 15:17: "Overigens neemt dit niet weg, dat het verbond Gods met den mensch toch den vorm van een verbintenis tusschen twee partijen draagt", is natuurlijk niet exegetisch uit den tekst gehaald.

Hartelijk aanbevolen.

H. H.

HET BOEK GENESIS, door Dr. G. Ch. Aalders; derde deel, hfdst. 31:1-50:26. (Korte Verklaring). Uitgever J. H. Kok N.V. Kampen, Nederland. Prijs f. 4.25.

Wat ik hierboven geschreven heb ter aanbeveling geldt ook zonder voorbehoud van dit derde deel.

H. H.

RANDOM HET GEMEENE-GRATIE PROBLEEM, door Dr. S. J. Ridderbos. Uitgever J. H. Kok, Kampen, Nederland. Prijs f. 1.50.

Dit boekje van 71 bladzijden biedt niets nieuws over het "gemeene-gratie probleem", maar is feitelijk een poging om Dr. Kuyper's gemeene-gratie theorie te handhaven tegenover andersdenkenden zooals Schilder, de Graaf, van Til, Dooyeweerd, en ten slotte ook nog Barth. Ik weet niet waarom Dr. Ridderbos ook niet mijn beschouwing aan een grondige kritiek heeft onderworpen, vooral daar ik de eerste was, die (met H.

Danhof) zeer grondig op het "Gemeene-Gratie probleem" ben ingegaan, ook lang voordat zelfs iemand in Nederland over dat "probleem" nadacht. Blijkbaar heeft Dr. Ridderbos ons niet gelezen, ofschoon hij in zijn geschrift Hoeksema meer dan eens noemt. Hij schrijft de illusie te hebben, dat in Amerika door Hoeksema de kerk gescheurd is!

Als ik op dit geschrift kritisch zou ingaan, zou ik veel oud stroo moeten overdorschen. En dat lust me niet.

Wil Dr. Ridderbos echter kennis nemeen van hetgeen wij over het "gemeene-gratie probleem" hebben geschrven sedert ongeveer 1920, gaarne zend ik hem al de noodige litteratuur toe.

H. H.

KERKHISTORISCHE LIJNEN, door G. P. van Itterzon. Uitgever J. H. Kok N.V. Kampen, Nederland. Prijs f. 2.75.

Dit is geen leesboek. Ook geen studieboek. Maar het is een zeer breede en volledige schets van de heele kerkgeschiedenis van den tijd der apostelen tot op heden. In een voorwoord merkt de schrijver op, dat hij in deze "Lijnen" bedoelt hoofdzaken te geven, "die sneller in het onmisbare material van feiten en stroomingen inleiden, en ook (te) spoediger tot diepere en bredere studie voeren". Hij wil dit boek gebruikt zien naast het een of andere studieboek over de kerkgeschiedenis als een soort handleiding.

Ik heb zeer veel respect voor den arbeid, die Dr. Itterzon aan dit boek heeft besteed. Toch betwijfel ik of hij het doel, dat hij zich er mee voorgesteld heeft, zal kunnen bereiken. Toen ik geschiedenis bestudeerde maakte ik altijd mijn eigen "outline", en aan een schets van iemand anders zou ik bij mijn examens niets hebben gehad.

In elk geval hebben we hier in Amerika na'uurlijk niets aan deze Hollandsche "Lijnen".

H. H.

* * * *

ANNIVERSARY

Zoo de Heere wil, hopen onze geliefde ouders

MR. S. REITSMA

MRS. A. REITSMA (van Winden)

hunne 25 jarige echtvereniging te gedenken.

Het is onze bede dat de Heere hen nog vele jaren voor elkan-

der en voor ons moge sparen.

Chedoke P.O., Mt. Hamilton
Ontario, Canada.

Hunne dankbare kinderen,

Audrey

Thomas

Patsy

Frances

OUR DOCTRINE

The Counsel Of God. (6)

God's Counsel Exclusively Divine And Sovereign.

First of all, I will attempt to trace briefly the development of this tremendous dogma throughout the ages of the development of God's Church in the New Dispensation. And we set out by declaring immediately that there are, fundamentally, but two conceptions of the counsel of God: God or man. Generally speaking, this principle may be applied to the presentation of any phase of the truth. Whether one is speaking of the counsel of God, the sufferings and death of our Lord, the application of this salvation unto or the receiving of it by the sinner, he always proceeds either from the living God or the impotent sinner. Man has been attempting throughout the ages to maintain himself and to deny the absolute sovereignty of the living God. And this same evil attempt has been creeping into and operating within the Church from the beginning of time. In various ways the attempt has been made to frighten the Church of God into submission and to renounce the sublime truth that the Lord is God alone. And, of course, none of these attempts is characterized by a desire for and an interest in the truth. One of the most common of these devices on the part of those who love not the truth of the Word of God is the accusation that we make God the Author of sin and strip the sinner of his responsibility. Also this accusation is hypocritical. Man is neither concerned about God's sovereignty nor about the sinner's responsibility. That the former is true is perfectly obvious. Nothing would or does afford the world greater delight than to deprive the living God of His absolute sovereignty and authority. However, the latter is also true. We must be on our guard against this apparent interest in the responsibility of the sinner. That the sinner is responsible surely means that he always stands in the presence of the living God, that he must always deal with Him Who knoweth and trieth the hearts of men, that he is continuously answerable to the living God and must always give an account of himself and all his actions exactly because the Lord is God alone and therefore always maintains Himself. To maintain the responsibility of the sinner we must, therefore, advocate, strictly, the full and unadulterated sovereignty of the Lord. And this is exactly what the sinner does not want. This is exactly what he opposes with all the powers at his disposal and command. And, therefore, when he emphasizes the responsibility of man, he does not do so because he is really interested in the maintaining of this truth in the Scriptural sense of the

word, but what he actually has in mind is the maintaining, not of man's responsibility, but simply of man and that over against the living God. This also applies to the historical development of the truth of the counsel of the Lord. There are, fundamentally, but two views of this concept. Some present the counsel of God as based upon foreknowledge. This means that the Lord saw beforehand what would happen and decided accordingly. And the other presentation of the Lord's eternal decrees would maintain that they are wholly unconditional, sovereign, not based upon that which the Lord saw beforehand, and that the counsel of the Lord is therefore the Divine, sovereign Cause of all things.

Until the time of Augustine there was little development of the Scriptural doctrine of the counsel of God. We may say, however, that also among the Moham-medans the struggle raged between predestination and the freedom of the human will. Whereas in the Islam (the religion of Mohammed) the emphasis was laid upon the absolute power of God and man's utter passiveness, opposition arose which defended the free will of man and regarded not the power but the righteousness of God as the essence of the Lord. In the early Christian Church, because of heathen superstition and Gnosticism (the word is derived from the Greek word, "to know", and refers to a sect which claimed knowledge of things apart from the Scriptures), emphasis was laid upon man's ethical nature and the freedom and responsibility of man. One can easily understand that the doctrine of the counsel of God could not receive its due emphasis when all attention was focused upon man's ethical nature and responsibility. We are, therefore, not surprised that there was little development of this Scriptural concept until the time of Augustine.

We may say, however, that this teaching of the freedom of man received ever greater attention and finally developed into the conception which even today characterizes essentially the Greek church (in distinction from the Latin or Western Church. The early Church was split into an Eastern and a Western, the Eastern becoming the Greek Orthodox and the Western the Roman Catholic Church). Man, then, was more or less polluted by sin but remained free and could accept the offered grace of God. An absolute predestination and an irresistible grace were not taught; the counsel of God consisted of foreknowledge, and the resultant determination of punishment or reward was regarded as dependent upon this foreknowledge of the Lord. We should note here the striking resemblance between this teaching to later Arminianism, and also to the Three Points of 1924. We should note the development of the teaching that man is more or less polluted by sin but remained free and could accept the offered grace of God. We may indeed be judged by the company in which we historically find ourselves. The Three Points

of 1924 may also be judged by the company in which they historically find themselves.

With Augustine, however, the doctrine of God's counsel came into greater prominence. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, was born in 354 and died in 430, at the age of seventy six years. Of the early Church Fathers none has exerted greater influence within the Church since the apostles than Augustine. He was a tremendous writer. Augustine is also held in high esteem by the Roman Catholic Church. The views of Augustine which were developed particularly in the Middle Ages and which are to this day cherished by the Roman Catholic Church this Church Father expressed in his controversy with the Donatists. The Donatists consisted of several contending groups which had broken away from the Church. Augustine contended that the Church must be bound together by the bond of love, must be one, and when we separate from the Church we show that we lack the love and also the grace of God. If then, these Donatists remain outside the Church, they may have the form of Baptism but they do not have the grace of the sacrament. Augustine, therefore, labored for the unity of the Church, and is therefore highly regarded particularly from this aspect, by the Roman Catholic Church. We esteem him, however, because of his defence of the truth, especially against Pelagianism.

In this connection we may briefly review the teaching of Pelagianism. Pelagius was a British monk who came from the British Isles and settled in Rome about the year 400. He attempted to raise the moral standards of Rome, which were terrible, and appealed to man's natural abilities, arguing that man must be able to do anything he ought to do. Pelagius ignored the power of sin and the utter depravity of our human nature, and made superfluous the regenerative grace of God. Man is able of himself to do good, and Christ is but an example; the Lord gives grace unto those who use their free will. Predestination, according to this British monk, was nothing else than a foreknowledge of God of the free acts and merits of men, and the resultant pre-determination of reward or punishment; actually, therefore, there is no predestination by God, either unto grace or unto salvation; it is wholly dependent upon the good deeds of man. This was the teaching of Pelagius.

Against this Pelagian heresy Augustine set himself with all the powers at his command. It is surely worthy of note that Augustine attempted to defend the freedom of the human will but was compelled to bow before the Scriptural teaching of the grace of God. In fact, long before the Pelagian struggle this Church Father has taught the doctrine of predestination. His study of the book of Romans had led him unto this conviction. According to Augustine predestination did not rest upon merit or worthiness but upon pure grace.

God did not predestinate because of man's faith but unto faith and grace. Fact is, according to him, all men were equal, constituted a "massa damnata", a "damnable mass". Predestination, he taught, has its only cause in the sovereign will of God, in His absolute sovereignty. The Lord is obligated to none, could righteously condemn all, but, according to His good pleasure, makes vessels of honour and of others vessels of dishonour. It is true that Augustine regarded reprobation as an act of Divine righteousness. To regard Divine Reprobation as an act of righteousness, we understand, would imply that this Divine decree rests upon sin, and that the Lord, therefore, reprobated the sinner because of his sin. According to Augustine, man's original sin is sufficient for his reprobation. However, man's actual sins do not prompt God's decree of Reprobation, although they do influence the measure of punishment. This the Church Father taught because of what the Scriptures teach in regard to Jacob and Esau. Nevertheless, although Augustine regarded man's original sin as sufficient ground for his reprobation, yet he did not consider it as its last and deepest cause. In answer to the question why God rejected some and elected others, he knew only one answer: the good pleasure and sovereign will of God, according to Romans 9:18. The Lord's predestination of the elect is always adequate, that is, is always unto salvation, their total is sure and unchangeable. Augustine, therefore, taught the doctrine of unconditional and sovereign predestination.

After the death of Augustine the struggle in regard to the teaching of sovereign predestination continued. Although Pelagianism had been officially condemned at the Council of Ephesus, 431, the view of Augustine was compelled to fight bitterly and strenuously for its life and existence. Pelagianism was substituted by Semi-pelagianism. Semi-pelagianism did teach that man's nature was corrupted by sin, but it also taught that man was not dead but sick. The natural man was like unto a sick person who could not cure himself, but was able to take the medicine and long for recovery, or unto one who had fallen into a pit, could not deliver and extricate himself, but was able to grasp the life-line thrown out to him. Do we recognize this Semi-pelagianism with any teaching of the present day? Does it not recur in that sickening and miserable hymn: "Throw out the life-line"? Is it not a prevalent teaching of our modern age, our present church-world that man cannot save himself, must be saved by the grace of the living God, but also that he can accept the Lord Jesus and the salvation which is offered to him through the preaching of the gospel? Has not the doctrine(?) been taught in the Christian Reformed Churches for years that every child receives at baptism a certain grace, which does not regenerate him, but does enable him to accept the salvation which in due time

will be offered to him, through the gospel and that by a living God Who does not desire anyone to perish but that all may be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth, and this in the strictly universal sense of the word. Again we remark: a person may well be known by the company he keeps. This conception of a sinner, that he cannot save himself but must be saved by the mighty grace of God, but also that he can accept the offered salvation, places one in the company, historically, of the semi-pelagians. And also the semi-pelagians maintained a view of the counsel of God which was based upon foreknowledge. Let us note: also the semi-pelagians taught a counsel of the Lord which rested upon Divine foreknowledge.

At the Synod of Orange, 529, the struggle between the Augustinian view and Semi-Pelagianism was decided. This ecclesiastical gathering decided, on the one hand, that man is entirely corrupted by the sin of Adam, and that both, the beginning and the continuance of faith, are not to be ascribed to ourselves, to our natural powers, our free will, but to the grace of God. But, on the other hand, it was also declared at this synodical gathering that our free will was weakened by sin, mind you, merely weakened by sin, that all baptized persons can and must fulfill that grace which they receive at baptism, by which grace they can help and cooperate with Christ in the things which belong to their salvation; besides, the synod was completely silent on such matters as absolute predestination, irresistible and particular grace. It was evident, at this synod, that the followers of Augustine and of his conception of unconditional and sovereign predestination were hard pressed to maintain the Augustinian view of Divine predestination. We should not fail to note that already at this synod mention was made of a certain grace which one receives at his baptism and which grace enables him to help and cooperate with the Christ. Compare this with the Heynsian conception of the covenant and of baptism to which we have already referred in the preceding paragraph.

This indecisiveness of the Synod of Orange, 529, was not salutary but harmful. Compromise decisions are never salutary. We cannot expect the blessing of the Lord when we would stand on 'both sides of the fence.' Such a person never aids the Church of the living God. Compromise decisions never solve anything. The foes of the truth are not satisfied with them because they are not strong enough; and the defenders and lovers of the truth are dissatisfied because such decisions are actually and really a repudiation of the truth. In the final analysis, a compromise decision is always prompted by the fear to give full expression to the sovereign truth of the Word of God. This was also the result of the compromise decision of the Synod of Orange, 529. This decision was not salutary but harmful. Many stood upon the Pelagian

or Semi-pelagian standpoint. Only Gottschalk and a few of his friends maintained the strictly Augustinian view of the sovereign counsel and predestination of God, but his voice was soon silenced, and the result was that the heresy of Semi-Pelagianism gained the upper hand in the Church, which was then the Roman Catholic Church. This victory of the Semi-Pelagians was gained at the Synod of Quierzy, 853. Rome, or the Roman Catholic Church, drifted farther and farther away from Augustine and Paul. At this synod Rome adopted several noteworthy declarations, statements of truth or doctrine which are worthy of our consideration. This synod declared, e.g., that man's free will was indeed affected by sin in its inclinations, but that it was not wholly extinguished, and that man, before justification, can perform many natural things which are not sinful but good. The natural man is not able to perform the good in the supernatural sense, such as faith, hope, love, justification, the meriting of eternal life. To obtain this he needs Divine grace, the intervention of the Holy Spirit. This grace is bestowed upon the children of believers at their baptism, and, with respect to the adults, this grace consists herein that God calls them objectively through the gospel, and, subjectively, touches their hearts by the Holy Spirit of illumination. However, this grace, although unmerited, prevenient (which goes before, precedes) is not irresistible. Man can embrace and reject it. Hence, Rome rejects Augustine's view of God's absolute predestination. And they also taught that Christ was sent in order that all might receive the adoption of children; He satisfied for all; man can accept or reject grace, can retain or lose this grace of the Lord.

These statements of the Synod of Quierzy, 853, are worthy of note and of our consideration. Who can fail to note the striking resemblance between these declarations of Rome and later Arminianism? We will presently have opportunity to call attention to the system of thought as set forth by Arminius and Arminianism when we discuss the counsel of God as it lived in the hearts and minds of the Fathers of Dordrecht. In these synodical declarations of 853 we should note that the doctrine of absolute predestination as proclaimed by Augustine was rejected by Rome, and that Rome embraces a conditional predestination and foreknowledge of God. Any conception that man can either accept or reject grace and salvation is a denial of God's absolute predestination. Fact is, such a presentation of the truth renders the salvation as dependent upon man's free will, declares that he can either accept or reject it, proceeds, therefore, from the idea that the salvation of the sinner is offered to him, and that, therefore, the possibility of his salvation exists. If the Lord offers all the hearers of the gospel His grace and salvation, and He is sincere in this offer, then this must certainly imply that there is salvation for every sinner

to whom the offer is made. And this is, of course, a denial of the truth of God's absolute, sovereign, and unconditional predestination. The Lord, then, has not sovereignly determined who shall or shall not be saved, but His desire to save is universal and His presentation is based on Divine foreknowledge. The Lord, then, has determined to save those that believe. We should also note in the above-mentioned articles of the Synod of Quierzy of 853 that man is not able to perform good in the spiritual, supernatural sense, such as faith, hope, and love. He cannot justify himself or merit eternal life for himself. Unto the performance of this spiritual, "supernatural" good he needs Divine grace and the intervention of the Holy Spirit. However, although man's free will was indeed affected by sin in its inclinations, it was not wholly extinguished and man is able to perform many natural things which are not sinful but good. Besides, the grace of God is offered to all through the gospel and it is not irresistible. Man can embrace or reject it. Reading these declarations of faith one must be reminded of three other declarations which were proclaimed by the Christian Reformed Synod of 1924; the resemblance between these Three Points and what the Roman Catholic Church declared in 853 is surely undeniable. Also in 1924 the Church declared that man is unable to perform spiritual, lasting good and that the Lord, in a certain sense, is favorable to all men, which general favorable inclination of the Lord He reveals in the preaching of the gospel. Also in 1924, therefore, the Church declared that salvation is offered to all the hearers of the gospel, and that man, although incapable of any spiritual good, can nevertheless perform in the realm of civic righteousness that which is good and pleasing in the sight of the Lord. Again we remark: the Christian Reformed Church ought to take inventory of the company in which she historically finds herself. And we may safely conclude that any conception that man can accept or reject the grace of God, any conception of a universal salvation or offer thereof, any conception of a Divine foreknowledge follows historically the line of Pelagianism, Semi-Pelagianism, Roman Catholicism. In our following article we will call attention, the Lord willing, to the development of this doctrine of the counsel of God by the Reformers and the Fathers of Dordrecht.

H. Veldman.

CLASSIS WEST

meets in Hull, Iowa, March 1, 1950. Consistories, propose a delegate to Synod from among your elders. Remember also the commemoration meeting on the evening before Classis.

M. Gritters, Stated Clerk.

Correspondence

November 25, 1949

Dear Reverend Ophoff:

Although not always agreeing, as to method and content, with that which has been written recently in the Standard Bearer, yet I have been following it with interest. Now, it is not my purpose today to write to you about these things in general because I realize too well the truth of the words of Elihu, "I am young, and ye are very old; wherefore I was afraid, and durst not shew you mine opinion. I said, Days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom." And therefore professor, I rather place myself in that wellknown and beloved chair of the student in order to be enlightened further regarding some things that are not plain to me.

My first difficulty has to do with your evaluation of the controversy in the Netherlands. Oh, I know your evaluation of the "Liberated" position is plain to all of us, but what about the "Synodical"? Perhaps a quotations will serve to bring out my difficulties.

For example I read in your protest to the Consistory of First Church found on p. 51 of the Acts of Synod 1949: "The truth of this statement is borne out first by the fact of the present secession of the liberated churches in the Netherlands. The deep, underlying reason of the Leaders of the secession allowing themselves to be deposed was *their unwillingness to subscribe to our doctrine* to the effect that the promise of the gospel is only unto the elect. And their followers broke off their ecclesiastical relation with the Synodicals for the same reason. This is the deep meaning of the present secession in the Netherlands." (I underscore, J.H.)

This same thought seems to be repeated in the Standard Bearer of November 15, p. 87, 2nd column, 5th paragraph: "As we know, by synodical action in the communion of 'gereformeerde' churches in the Netherlands, that promises-of-God-given-only-to-the-elect theology was made binding. Every office-bearer was asked to express his agreement with it. Dr. Schilder and his brethren in the service—professors, ministers, elders, and deacons—refused. Action was taken against them, and they were deposed in their office."

It seems to me this same thing can be read again in the Standard Bearer for Nov. 1, p. 64, col. 2, paragraph 2: "But the facts are well known. The doctrine repudiated, the 'thing' that the professor actually knows not, is the teaching that the promises of God are given to the elect only. And the 'thing' returned to is the teaching, the view, that the promises of God are given to elect and non-elect (born in the historical line of the covenant) alike—the Heynsian view, the theology of the Liberated today. So the professor must not tell

us that he knows not that 'thing'. He and his brethren do know that 'thing' indeed. They do have a theology of their own. It is that 'thing', that teaching, that the promises of God are given to elect and non-elect alike. It is not ours; it is not the Synodical's; it is theirs. . ."

Now if this were all that you had written on the above subject I could simply put the question this way, "Is your position that the 'Synodicals', in the recent controversy in the Netherlands, were fighting for the pure truth of God's Word?" Would you also subscribe to their position in that struggle?

But, in view of what you write further in the last-mentioned quotation, "(yet it is also the Synodical's. I think now of their doctrine of the well-meaning offer of salvation unto all)", (1) the question must now assume a slightly different form. Is it your position that the "Synodicals" were fighting essentially for the pure truth of God's Word? Was their adoption of the theory of a well meaning offer of salvation then something only incidental to and really opposed to their essential struggle? Except for the theory of common grace and the well meaning offer of the gospel, would you subscribe to the "Synodical" position? Perhaps I am reading more into the above quotation than is really there. Therefore I come to you with these questions and with those following seeking light. And then I ask further: (2) How do you explain the fact that the "Synodicals" speak of and approve such a doctrine as those of common grace and the well meaning offer of the gospel, while the "Vrijgemaakten" repudiate these? Must this be explained from the side of the "Synodicals" as a failure to see the logical outcome of their position, as a drawing of improper conclusions from a proper premise? Must the position of the "Vrijgemaakten" on these theories be explained perhaps from their opposition to everything "Synodical"? Is their position also a failure to see the logical outcome of their own position and a drawing of sound conclusions from an unsound and untrue premise? In view of this how is it to be explained that the "Vrijgemaakten" changed their view on common grace and the well meaning offer in recent years?

I ask you these questions because as you know although I attempt to read the Holland, yet it is difficult for me, I read it slowly and laboriously and therefore cannot give the careful attention to these matters that you can. Now with regard to the other matter about which I have some questions and desire some information, allow me to begin by saying that I am fully in agreement with what you write, "that the promises of God are given only to the elect is, according to our firmest conviction, the plain teaching of our three Forms of Unity." When you say elsewhere that this truth is written in our hearts I also agree fully. But frankly, I have a little difficulty in understanding this matter of written and unwritten creeds about which you were

writing when the above quotation came from your pen. First on p. 62, of the Standard Bearer of Nov. 1, 3rd paragraph, 2nd column, I read, "This decision was written in the official minutes of our three original consistories." By this I understand that in protesting the three points our churches through their three original consistories officially adopted (be it in a negative form) "the covenant-theology of Rev. Hoeksema", and that this was a written creed. But then I read again, top of p. 63, "As yet no one. . . has appeared on our Synod with a written statement to the effect that the promises of God are given only unto the elect, and overtured Synod to adopt that written credal declaration. . . . Nor is this necessary I believe. . . ." Now is this second not contradictory to the first? (3) Is our covenant theology something additional to the Three Forms of Unity? Or do I correctly reproduce your thought when I state that which has always been and still is my own personal position, (4) "That only Scripture and the Three Forms of Unity are binding in our churches and nothing more. But that we are so convinced that the Three Forms teach that the promises of God are given only to the elect that we believe they can be interpreted in no other way. (Promises here to be understood as not only the announcement of the promises but the actual participation in the content of the promises.) And therefore we exactly have nothing else that is binding, neither do we need anything further until it becomes evident that the Three Forms are capable of being interpreted in another, unscriptural manner. If this latter (which I do not believe possible) were ever done then we would need and obtain an additional creed interpreting officially the parts in our Three Forms not plain. I ask again, "Do I reproduce your thought here correctly?" Or is your position this, "That we have the Three Forms plus something additional?"

(5) If I present your thought correctly above and I believe I do, then I wonder what is meant by the statement found on p. 62, the bottom of the 2nd column, "Further the theology in question has been spread, so to speak over the pages of the mass of literature produced by Rev. Hoeksema through the years; and most of it has been officially adopted by our Synods for distribution." Now, I take it for granted, that we all agree with what Rev. Hoeksema has written in the past at least in all the essential points. Nor is this my difficulty in understanding your point here. But this statement is written in connection with the point that we have a written, binding, covenant-theology. What does "officially adopted by our Synods for distribution" mean? Does this mean that when our Synod decides to publish or to print, or to underwrite the publishing of a work of Rev. Hoeksema (or any other man) the entire content of such a publication becomes Church Doctrine, Creed and therefore binding in all our church-

es? If this were actually the implication of "adopted for distribution" then I for one would never favor such distribution—not because I do not agree with what Rev. Hoeksema or some other man may have written or does write, but because the whole thing is too dangerous and smacks too much of theological-strait-jacketism. Neither do I believe that you mean this. But you see, professor, I don't know what you mean here. Could you explain for me what the implication of "officially adopted by our Synod for distribution" really is?

Because I believe some of these questions to be vital and all to be interesting not only to me but to all our people, I would appreciate your placing this letter together with its answer in the Standard Bearer.

As I look over this letter it seems to me that I have almost exceeded the bonds of courtesy as far as the length of this letter is concerned. It may also be that I have forgotten here and there to be like Elihu but if I have I can only plead my impetuosity which you know so well and which I hope you will forgive.

Your brother in Christ,
James Howerzyl.

Reply.

Dear Brother:

(1) If I understand what I have read of the Synodicals, their official doctrine contains also the following two propositions: a) The promises of God are given only to the elect. b) The promises of God are unconditional. These doctrines I believe to be soundly scriptural, so that, in championing these doctrines, the synodicals champion the truth.

Now you ask, "Is it your position that the "Synodicals" were fighting essentially for the truth of God's Word." I have difficulty here with that word "essentially", as an element in your sentence. What you mean to be asking here I believe is whether I subscribe all that the synodicals teach, pronounce Scriptural and sound their whole official theology as to every one of its tenets. To the question so put my answer is: No. I do not. But I believe that the doctrine contained in the two above-cited propositions is, as was stated, sound doctrine.

To begin with, I do not subscribe the following doctrine of the sacrament of baptism of theirs. It is this: Baptism to be valid and real must seal regeneration in every infant presented for baptism. But to my mind this is an impossible teaching in the light of the Scriptures. Were it true, it would mean that the sacrament of baptism, as administered to the non-elect infant, is devoid of reality, is a pretense, a vain show. But, certainly, baptism is never that. It is real also when administered to the non-elect infant (or adult). And the reason is simple. Baptism is a sign and a seal of the promises of God unto the *elect* and to the elect

only, to the believers, the penitent, the contrite of heart. The water of baptism also as sprinkled upon the non-elect, proclaims salvation to the believers and to them only. And this water, or rather the promises of God imposed upon that water, does not cease to utter that joyful sound when and because it is sprinkled upon the non-elect. Thus baptism is always valid, real, not alone because it seals, always seals, the promises of God unto the elect, but for still another reason. It declares to the unbelievers, the despisers of the Christ and his benefits of which baptism is a sign, that they are damned in their unbelief.

Now the synodicals do not admit, of course, that their view of baptism reduces this sacrament to a mere appearance as often as it is administered to the non-elect. They imagine to be avoiding this difficulty by their so-called doctrine of pre-supposed regeneration. They simply suppose that every child presented for baptism is an elect and regenerated. But their difficulty remains. The difficulty can be removed only by baptizing on the ground that the child *is actually* regenerated. But, of course, the Synodicals affirm no such thing, knowing as they do that all are not Israel who are of Israel. So the fact is that their view of baptism necessarily involves them in the teaching of two kinds of baptism: a real and an unreal. And of this they are constantly being reminded by the Liberated.

Second, needless to say, I do not subscribe that well-meaning-offer-of-salvation-unto-all doctrine of the Synodicals.

Thirdly, needless also to say is that I do not subscribe their common grace theory, which is that of the late Dr. A. Kuyper Sr.

2) Your question which I indicated by the number (2) is a difficult one. I really can't answer it, and this for the simple reason that I cannot look into the heart of man and know his thoughts and motives. God alone knows the heart. All I can go by is what man does and speaks and writes. It's hard enough for me to know what men mean by their words, their spoken and written words. When I believe that I have succeeded therein, they write in to tell me that I don't even know the A, B, C, of their theology. So by all means, let me refrain from trying to peer into men's souls to know their unexpressed thoughts.

You say that the "vrijgemaakten" repudiate these, namely, the doctrines of common grace and of the well-meaning offer. I know that Dr. Schilder repudiates the doctrine of common grace. But can this be said of all the Liberated or even of the majority of them? I don't know.

3) Now your question indicated by (3). Allow me to restate your question thus: Is the doctrine that the promises of God are given only to the elect and therefore unconditional, something additional to the

Three Forms? Reply. No. That doctrine is the very teaching of these Forms. So we officially declared when at the beginning of our career as Protestant Reformed Churches we officially rejected the Three Points including the Heynsian tenet to the effect that the promises of God are given to all.

4) That is correct. Only Scripture and the Three Forms of Unity are binding in our midst and nothing more. Certainly, we do not have the Three Forms plus something else.

5) Yes, I did speak of our officially binding covenant-theology. By the expression "covenant-theology" I had reference only to the doctrine that the promises of God are given unto to the elect. For reasons cited above, this doctrine is officially binding even apart from Rev. Hoeksema's writing adopted for distribution.

And now those writings of Rev. Hoeksema. Synod officially adopted them for distribution. Thereby Synod officially subscribed the doctrine contained in them. Synod certainly did not declare by that act of adoption the following: Whether the doctrine set forth in these writings are truth or lie we know not; but despite this ignorance on our part, we nevertheless adopt them for distribution. No other stand is possible but the stand that in adopting the writings in question for distribution, Synod officially sanctioned the doctrine contained in them. I will answer your remaining questions in the next issue of our paper. G. M. Ophoff.



SION'S ZANGEN

Zalig Is Den Heeren Vrees

(Psalm 112; Eerste Deel)

Hallelujah!

Wat een begin!

Looft den Heere!

Het groote einde van het heeal!

Ten spijt van duivelen en alle boosheid, zal toch het einde de lof des Heeren zijn. Zooals wij de dingen somtijds gadeslaan schijnt het wel alsof de boosheid zegeviert, en dat de man die het kwade werkt succes heeft. Maar meer dan schijn is het niet. Zelfs nu, in deze bedeeeling, is dat zoo niet. Als we slechts een blik konden slaan in de harten der menschen, der engelen en der duivelen, zouden we duidelijk kunnen zien, dat de blijdschap gevonden wordt alleen in den dienst des Heeren, en die dienst is niet dan het loven van God. Looft God, en ge zijt zalig. Dat leert de psalm. En ook dit: zijt goddeloos, en ge zult Uw beeld vinden in het laatste vers: ge zult knarsetanden, en vergaan voor

eeuwig. Dan geen zingen en loven, maar dan weening en knersing der tanden.

Wat een begin! Looft den Heere! Er is geen bezigheid die ook maar vergeleken kan worden met dit begin van den psalm. Ge looft God als ge Hem kent, als ge Zijn grootheid, lieflijkheid, groote kracht en wijsheid gadeslagen hebt. Ziet ge dat, dan breekt ge uit in lieflijken zang, gelijk de huidige dichter.

Laat ons hem op den voet volgen.

En dan zult ge een beschrijving lezen van den mensch die den Heere vreest, en daarom zeer gelukkig is.

Het is een psalm die uit 22 clausulen bestaat; elk een van die clausulen begint met een van de 22 Hebreeuwsche letters van het alphabet.

"Welgelukzalig is de man die den HEERE vreest".

Wie is de HEERE?

De HEERE is de VerbondsGod van het volk Israel. Het is de liefste naam van Gods. Als er van dien jongen gezegd werd, dat hij den NAAM uitdrukkelijk vloekte, in Lev. 24:11, dan is dat duidelijk voor ieder Israeliet. Dan heeft die buitengewoon goddelooze jongen den naam van Jehovah gevloekt. En dat was daarom goddeloos, omdat door dien naam God Zich geopenbaard had in Zijn eeuwig verbond. Hij had wederom gedacht aan Zijn genade: Israel was verlost uit het diensthuis van Egypte. Als we denken aan Gods wondere trouw dan zeggen we onwillekeurig: O Jehovah! Als we opblikken naar het ontzaglijke groote gewelf boven onze hoofden, en weten mogen, dat we in dien vreeselijk grooten oceaan van het blauw een boodschap beluisteren van Gods trouwe liefde, dan zeggen we: O Jehovah!

De HEERE is de God die ons wonderen op wonderen doet hooren. Het is de God die zelfs Zijn Eigen Zoon niet spaarde op den weg van die trouw, aan Israel nooit gekrenkt! Dit slaan al de einden van het aardrijk gade, nu onze God Zijn heil ons schenkt.

Als ge in den Bijbel de voetstappen van dien HEERE gadeslaat, dan dringt de vraag in U om een antwoord: wie zou dien HEERE niet loven en vreezen?

Dien HEERE te vreezen wil zeggen, dat ge Hem mint, en dat ge in die min beeft en siddert vanwege den indruk die zulk een aanminnigen God op Uw hart maakt. Het is het sidderen en beven van ontzag. Want in al Zijn deugden is Hij geweldig. En daar komt dan bij het vragen, het vragen in groote verwondering: wie ben ik, o God! dat Gij U nederbuigt tot mij die stof en asch ben?

Zulk een mensch is welgelukzalig.

Zalig te zijn wil zeggen, dat ge vol zijt van alles wat ge naar Uw wezen behoeft. En Uw nooddrift is allereerst God te mogen bezitten als Uw deel in eeuwigheid. Hem te mogen kennen is dan vol te zijn. Van God geleerd te zijn is verzadiging van vreugde.

Zulke ervaring is gelukkig. Ge zijt dan vol van

waar geluk. En die uitdrukking wordt dan nog versterkt door het positieve woordje "wel". Welgelukzalig is de mensch die God kent, Hem bemint, en met Hem mag wonen in één Huis.

Welgelukzalig is de man die den HEERE vreest.

Die eerste clausule wordt nu verder verklaard in de tweede: "die grooten lust heeft in Zijne geboden."

Verder verklaard, want het oorspronkelijke woord voor "lust hebben in" ziet op de actie van hem die waarlijk God kent. De wortel van dit woord is het Zich buigen naar het voorwerp, dat ons aantrekt. Lust hebben in Gods geboden is het zich uitstrekken naar die geboden, het gretig aangrijpen van die geboden om ons er mee te tooien. Het ziet op het volk van God die zich vermaken in die geboden. Het is geen hard werk voor hen; zij genieten er van. Zooals David zich uitdrukt: Hoe lief heb ik Uw wet! Zij is mijne overdenking den ganschen dag.

Er zijn duizende geboden van God, maar ze komen allen neer op dit ééne: Hebt God lief, en Uw naaste als Uzelven! En als de Heilige Geest in Uw hart woont, dan zegt ge: dat wil, dat zal ik doen: ik zoek den zegen alleen bij U! Let op Paulus die in Rom. 5 zegt, dat de liefde Gods in onze harten uitgestort is door den Heiligen Geest die ons is gegeven.

Hieraan zult ge het ware kind Gods onderkennen van hem die den Heere niet vreest: ze minnen God en den naaste. Ze neigen daarheen; ze strekken zich uit om inplaats van te haten en te verwoesten, den HEERE te beminnen, en den naaste als zichzelf.

De geboden des Heeren te doen is hetzelfde als te wandelen in de liefde. Dat kunt ge duidelijk merken, b.v., uit Efeze 5:1, 2. Daar staat: "Zijt dan navolgers Gods als geliefde kinderen, en wandelt in de liefde. . ." En als ge die verzen verder leest zult ge zien, dat de Heere ons een wonderlijk voorbeeld nagelaten heeft in de liefde van Christus, die zich den Heere Zijn God offerde tot een lieflijken reuk.

En de diepste wortel van die liefde is de liefde van den DrieEenigen God die ons Zijn Zoon schonk. Daarom staat er: Zijt *navolgers* Gods! Ge moet doen zooals God deed, al Uw leven lang hier op aarde, en tot in eeuwigheid.

Van dat volk staat derder: "Zijn zaad zal geweldig zijn op aarde."

Nu moet ge hier geen fout maken. Geweldig wil niet zeggen, dat Uw zaad geweldig zal zijn naar den maatstaf van het vleesch. Er zijn geweldige dingen op aarde. Bij het groote en het geweldige van de aarde en van de wereldlingen vergeleken zijn wij niet veel. Noch wij, noch ons zaad telt mee, dat wil zeggen, als ge met aardse en natuurlijke en vleeschelijke maatstaven aan 't werk gaat.

Maar dat is de bedoeling niet.

Het ziet op de geweldige vruchten der genade Gods.

Wat laat een goddelooze zijn kinderen na? Dit:

goddeloosheid. En zij, d.w.z., de kinderen, maken het nog erger dan vader en moeder. Zoo kan ten slotte de Antichrist komen.

Maar hoe gaat het met het volk van God? Zoo: vader en moeder laten hun kinderen de godsvrucht na. En die kinderen wandelen in diezelfde godsvrucht. Ze zijn geweldig op de aarde in het strijden tegen de zonde en de goddeloosheid. Vader en moeder hebben voor hen gebeden, en wat volgt er dan? Let op Gods Woord: we hebben de voorbeelden voor het grijpen. Ruth is een lieflijke gedaante in stille godsvrucht. En de vruchten ziet ge in het geslacht dat volgt: David die de zoete zanger Israels is. Was David niet geweldig op de aarde?

Jakob is de worstelaar Gods: hij overmocht Hem door weenen en smeeën. Welnu: de vrucht daarvan ziet ge in de stille godsvrucht van Jozef. Zijn werk was geweldig in Egypte.

Kwam de Koningin van Scheba niet van het einde der wereld om de wijsheid van Salomo te zien?

"Het geslacht der oprechten zal gezegend worden."

De oprechten zijn menschen die er van binnen juist zoo uitzien als zij van buiten zich openbaren. Zij houden geen slag om den arm. Zij hebben het niet achter de ellebogen. Ze vloeken niet met het hart terwijl de mond glimlacht. De oprechten zijn menschen die eerlijk met U omgaan. Benijdenswaardige deugd! Om naar te haken. Terwijl ik het neerschrijf schreeft de stem van het geweten.

Maar met alle zonde en tekortkomingen is toch de oprechtheid de deugd die ge moet zoeken bij het volk van God. En dat is ook duidelijk. Ze zijn uit God geboren, en God is eerlijk. God is zeer oprecht. Hij is altijd Dezelfde. Hij is, spreekt en doet altijd recht en billikheden. En als het beeld van den Zoon U geschonken wordt, dan zult ge opmerken, dat er oprechtheid bij U gevonden wordt. En wij moeten ons oefenen in die deugd, en er in toenemen. Dat is de heiligmaking.

Nu dan, het geslacht van zulke menschen wordt gezegend op aarde.

Dat zal waar zijn. Gij zijt daar allen getuigen van. Ziet om U heen. Ge kunt vader en moeder niet meer zien, maar ge ziet de kinderen en kindskinderen. Zij hebben de plaatsen van hunne voorouders ingenomen. Zij zijn gezegende kinderen. Want zij wonen in Gods huis.

Wat is zegen?

Een vraag die tegenwoordig zeer dwaas beantwoord wordt.

Stelt het U voor: men zegt tegenwoordig, dat alle menschen op aarde gezegend worden! Vandaag zegt men, dat leven, gezondheid, naam, eer en positie, regen en zonneschijn, goud en zilver, have en goed, kinderen en kindskinderen, *op zich zelve* zegeningen zijn. Vreese-lijke dwaasheid! Als er geen wonder met U geschiedt dan zult ge tot in alle eeuwigheid beweenen, dat ge die

dingen ontvangen hebt. Sommigen vermenigvuldigen dwaasheid met dwaasheid, en zeggen: God gaf de zegeningen, maar wij veranderen ze in een vloek! Klinklare onzin: een zegen wordt nooit een vloek, kan niet veranderd worden in een vloek, want God verandert niet! Let er toch op: als ge het woordje *zegen* uitsprekt, hebt ge gesproken van *God in actie*! Een zegen is *de zegenende God* die in groote liefde Zich nederbuigt naar het object, en hem iets toeschikt. Zegen zit niet in de dingen, maar in God die de dingen schenkt! En dan maakt het eigenlijk geen verschil wat die dingen zijn, hoe groot of hoe klein de hoeveelheid der dingen zijn. Als God U in de dingen zegent, dan is kanker in de maag een zegen.

Dit is de Schriftuurlijke gedachte van den zegen: als alle dingen U medewerken te goede! Het is een zegen om het leven te ontvangen hier op aarde als Uw naam geschreven staat in het boek des levens des Lams. Als Uw naam niet in dat boek staat, ware het beter geweest indien ge nooit geboren waart. En nu behoeven we niet verder te gaan, want als het zoo staat met het leven, dan is het zeker zoo met de dingen die met het leven geschonken worden.

En nu komt er nog groter ketterij bij als we gaan zeggen, dat het een zegen is voor de verworpenen om het Evangelie te hooren verkondigen. Zooals eener hunner zich uitdrukte: Het Evangelie bedoelt een blijde boodschap te zijn voor alle menschen die onder hetzelfde komen!

Terwijl de Heilige Schrift heel duidelijk leert, dat het beter ware geweest indien sommigen nooit geboren waren geweest.

Maar laat ons een Bijbelsch voorbeeld gebruiken. Wat zou Judas U te zeggen hebben, als ge hem zoudt vragen: Is het een zegen voor U geweest om zoo dicht bij Jezus te verkeerren gedurende Zijn omwandeling op aarde? Is Jezus voor U een zegen geweest? Ik denk, dat niemand Judas zulk een dwaze vraag zou durven doen. Men weet bij voorbaat hoe vreeselijk die ontmoeting voor Judas geweest is; een ontmoeting die hij tot in alle eeuwicheden beweenen zal. Alles aan Jezus was lieflijk, en als een goddelooze dicht bij dien lieflijken Jezus komt, kan hij niet doen dan Hem verwerpen. Daardoor bewijst hij wat God van hem sprak in het begin der historie, daardoor openbaart hij zijn inwonend verderf, wordt zijn schuld groter, en wordt God gerechtvaardigd in Zijn oordeel.

Neen, de goddeloozen worden niet gezegend op de aarde.

Wat dan? Zij worden vervloekt.

Waarom kan dit geslacht zulke Bijbelsche taal niet meer staan? Zegt de Spreuken-dichter niet, dat de vloek des Heeren in het huis des goddeloozen is? Spr. 3:33. Wie kan daar nu toch een zegen van maken? Maar het geslacht der oprechten zal gezegend worden.

En die zegen is overstromend. Ik kan er niet bij. Stelt het U voor: alles is zegen voor dat volk. Het maakt geen verschil wat of hoe, alles is een zegen voor hen. Paulus roept triumfantelijk uit: Indien God voor ons is, wie zal tegen ons zijn? En het lijstje dat hij opnoemt houdt vreeselijke dingen in. Zelfs als de dood komt kloppen, met zijn bloed en tranen en lijden. In al die dingen zijn wij meer dan overwinnaars, en die dingen kunnen ons nooit scheiden van Gods liefde in Jezus Christus.

Laat ons terugkeeren tot de oude paden, en weer leeren Bijbelsch te spreken en *te zingen*!

G. Vos.



Yes or No

In the *Standard Bearer*, Jan. 15, 1950, the Revs. Kok and De Jong attempt to clear themselves by quoting two telegrams they have received from the Netherlands. But their attempt to clear themselves ends in complete failure. These telegrams do not deny that they made the statements ascribed to them in the letter of Prof. Holwerda.

Prof. Holwerda, and the other brethren who signed these telegrams, are now simply giving their own interpretation to the letter of Prof. Holwerda. They do not say that the Reverends Kok and De Jong never made these statements.

The question, did Rev. Kok and Rev. De Jong say these things, can only be answered by yes or no.

In the telegram signed by the four professors, Holwerda *virtually* tries to say, no, they did not say these things. In his original letter he says, yes, they did say these things. Now which of these two statements of Prof. Holwerda is the truth? If his letter, written to one of the immigrants in Canada, is not true, why doesn't he tell us so, rather than to give us an entirely different interpretation of it in this telegram.

Rev. Hoeksema writes in the *Standard Bearer* of Sept. 15, 1949, page 518, that "in view of the fact that the statements in the letter of Prof. Holwerda were so very definite" it will be necessary for the Reverends Kok and De Jong to give a public account of themselves in the *Standard Bearer* and give a clear and unequivocal answer to the eleven questions he puts to them. They have not done so as yet. And as long as they do not do this, they do not clear themselves in any way. They will either have to deny or affirm the statements made by Prof. Holwerda. The answer must be either yes or no.

Even the light that these brethren try to shed on this matter by the "Two Telegrams" in the *Standard Bearer* of Jan. 15, 1950, still demands an unequivocal yes or no.

D. Jonker.

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of Ephesians 1:1-3

(continued)

In this instalment in the series of articles of Eph. 1:1-3 we hope to finish our expository studies on this passage. Not that we could not write more on it, but we trust that what we thus contribute will aid our readers in some measure to appreciate their great heritage in Christ; to see by the strength of the enlightenment of the heart, and that by way of contrast, what is the exceeding greatness of the power of God in Christ to us who believe, in raising us out of such a great death with Him into heavenly places.

And we trust that what we intend to discuss in this final article on these verses will still be a substantial contribution to that knowledge in Christ. For Paul is here not adding an unnecessary detail, but he is adding an important element, which is necessary for our prayerful reflection. Paul is here still speaking of our awful depravity, of our being "dead by reason of our trespasses and sins". However, in this last part (verse 3) he really underscores two elements, which were already implied in the former verses, but which are not so prominently set forth.

Before we state which these two elements are we will here quote this third verse, so that both you as reader and I as the writer know what we are discussing. Paul writes here: "*Among whom we also all once lived in the lust of our flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest*". (verse 3)

Now, when we look at this verse rather closely, we notice that Paul here has two main points of difference in mind. In this verse he speaks, first of all in the *first person*, and in the *plural number*. Instead of speaking of "ye" he says "we". And not only does Paul here speak of "we" but he also makes this "we" universally true of the whole believing Church, whether they be Jew or Gentile, bond or free, barbarian or Scythian. We "all" once walked among the "rest of men" in the power of sin and under the Prince of this world. The second prominent element here is, that Paul works out more in detail just wherein this being "dead by reason of our trespasses and sins" consists; he works out exactly how this depravity shows itself concretely in the sinful life of each believer in their former state and walk, and how we can therein see that we were indeed the "children of wrath" even as "the rest".

Let us try to understand a little more in detail what this implies.

For we are sure, that by the sanctifying grace of God, such a better understanding of what Paul here states concerning our natural depravity, will enable us to gauge our thoughts in the light of the perfect law of liberty against which "even the smallest inclination or thought. . . shall never rise in our hearts". Heid. Cat. Qu. 113.

To our mind it may be deemed as being exegetically established, that in the phrase "among whom we all had our conversation. . . ." the translation "among whom" gives the correct sense as intended by the apostle and expressed in the Greek original. It is true that the original (en hois) may also be translated "in which". Should this be the translation then the relative pronoun "which" would not refer to the "sons of disobedience" (vs. 2) but to the phrase "sins and trespasses" in verse 1.

However, we believe that the antecedent noun here is "sons of disobedience", and that, therefore, the translation "among whom" is correct. In the first place because in the Greek "sons of disobedience" is in the masculine gender, and so is the pronoun "hois", that is "whom", while the phrase "trespasses and sins" is in the feminine gender. Secondly, because it is the more natural antecedent one naturally expects the relative pronoun to refer to the nearest noun. And, what is the most conclusive reason of all, is, that the limiting clause "in the lusts of our flesh" refers directly to the sins and trespasses, and that therefore, it would be confusing to refer us by this relative pronoun to "sins and trespasses" once more.

No, that relative pronoun here refers to "sons of disobedience", to those who are in their whole life and conduct disobedient, unpersuasive, rebellious; in whom every word and command of God brings out nothing but obstinate rebellion. In them is no good at all, for they never seek out God. That they are estranged from the life of God is manifest in the last jota, in the extremity of their existence and walk. Children of unpersuasiveness they are.

Now, we formerly had our walk with them. We went in and out among them. Our whole life was intertwined with theirs, it was all of one fabric. It was not merely so that we were unavoidably cast into the same world with them in the sense that the Christian cannot wholly avoid having natural contacts with fornicators in this world. Of this latter Paul speaks in I Cor. 5:9-11. There he tells the Corinthian converts, the believers, that they must not mingle with those who sell their body for lusts. These must in no wise be their chosen associates. The adage holds also here: tell me who your friends are and I will tell you who you are. Now, Paul adds here that it will be impossible to wholly avoid contact with fornicators, else one must go out of the world. So there is an unavoidable contact in this world. But that contact is quite other

from the "going in and out" with the world, which formerly was the case with the saints in Ephesus. From the viewpoint of their natural disposition and walk they were then "world", pure and simple. They were just like these sons of disobedience; they too were "children of wrath". For disobedience brings the wrath and holy disfavor of God from heaven. And *all* that was in us evoked this *wrath of God!* Nay, it did not evoke the *hatred* of God, but that was not due to the *lack* of disobedience, but this is only due to the sovereign determination in everlasting love to save. But "by nature" children of wrath we were.

We were just like *the rest!*

God looked from heaven to see if any understood. And there was not one. No, not *one!*

Here is the condemnation not merely of "the Pharisee" pictured in Jesus' parable. Him, there in the parable, it is easy again in pharisaistic self-righteousness to condemn. To say that self-righteousness is terrible, and to condemn this most profusely is an easy matter. But to understand that thus you and I cannot even stand before God; yes, in joyful thankfulness and still in deep contrition of heart to confess that such is our picture, our actual state and condition by nature, that is another matter.

Yes, we too walked "in the lust of our flesh, *doing* the will of the flesh and of the mind". We *all* did, says Paul.

Here the apostle lifts the veil on the inner depravity. Here is the valley of the dry bones. Here is the inner part of the cup that must be cleansed. Here is striking corruption in the Holy nostrils of God. The *lusts* of the flesh? Lusts are *misdirected desires* of the will when measured by the perfect law of God. If this latter be forgotten, namely, that "the least desire against any of God's commandments never even rise in our hearts"—I say, if that be forgotten, or what is worse, be denied, then there are no lusts and then what the Scriptures denote are being lusts are merely natural self-expressions with which we must not tamper. But we, who believe the Word of God, know that "lusts" are nothing else but misdirected desires, desires contrary to the perfect law of God. And the most common expression of these is in our *flesh*. Now it is true, that lusts are not limited to the sensuous is most often on the foreground. Adam and Eve immediately perceived that they were naked when they had eaten of the forbidden tree.

However, lusts are such that they reveal themselves as being rooted in a conscious purpose. Paul here speaks of the "things willed of the flesh and of the mind". Recently a brother asked me—asked me as though it were a doubtful matter, whether most of our sins were not perpetrated with the "thoughts". Now of this latter there should be no question at all to the enlightened saint. And that for the very simple reason

that this is simply taught us here in Holy Writ and it is verified in the experience of every man. Oh, those thoughts! Who can discern his errors, pleads the Psalmist, cleanse Thou me from secret faults (sins). Let the words of my mouth and the mediation of my heart be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer. (Psalm 19)

Yes, lusts and thoughts, are closely related and they together have a will, or rather, they desire certain concrete ways, which are contrary to God.

That we did. We *executed* this in life, says Paul. Yes, we *all* did by nature. And, even now this law of sin in our members often takes us captive. And, if we are honest in our spiritual inventory, we will say: I know that in me, that is in my flesh, there dwells no good. The law is holy and righteous and good, but I am carnal, sold under sin! Always this old master of sin wants again to take over the reins in our life. It wishes to rule in our body. And by grace we pray "that since we are so weak in ourselves, that we cannot stand for a moment; and besides this since our mortal enemies, the devil, the world and *our flesh*, cease not to assault (!) us, do thou therefore preserve and strengthen us by the power of thy Holy Spirit, that we may not be *overcome* in this spiritual warfare, but *constantly and strenuously* may resist our foes, till at last we obtain a complete victory."

Oh, I know Paul is speaking of what we were prior to faith in and obedience to the Son of God, but a little inventory on what we *are now* will verify in our own mind the unshakeable truth of what we *were then!*

Yes, we were just like *the rest*. We were just like the rest of men: extortioners, unjust, adulterers, publicans and sinners!

We *all* were so, says Paul. Yes, Paul means: such were *all the saints* in Christ Jesus. Of these Paul is here speaking. He is not here speaking of himself and all the Jewish-Christians, but he is standing here speaking in the first person among all the saints, whether they be Jew or Gentile, bond or free, man or woman. It makes no difference: we *all* were thus.

Yes, Paul in the front row. He calls himself the chief of sinners. God made an example of him. He, the proud pharisee, as to the righteousness of the law blameless. But when the grace of God is revealed in him: he asks on the road to Damascus: Lord, what wouldest Thou have me to do? How Paul here prayed for mercy! He smote upon his breast, and did not dare to raise his eyes! He, the man perfect according to the righteousness of the law, now says: my sins, Lord, are more than I can count. Oh, remember not the sins of my youth. And he received mercy. (II Cor. 4:1; I Tim. 1:13). And he became the medium through whom Christ might show all His longsuffering for an example of them that should thereafter believe on him unto eternal life!

But Paul does more here than make a personal confession. He is here writing in the name of God the Father and His Son by the Holy Spirit. And we are here placed next to Paul, we who have heard and believed the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation. And our name is: redeemed sinners!

I read in the gospel narrative: And all the publicans and sinners came to Him.

We, too, are in that group, and now His love is only sweetness.

G. Lubbers.



IN HIS FEAR

Called To His Praise

That Wonderful Gift—Used and Abused. (cont.)

We called your attention last time to the fact that we can praise God only because He has created us with a most wonderful mind whose powers enable us to function as prophets. And by His grace and the work of regeneration through His Spirit as well as through the instrumentality of His Word, we can be prophets of the Living God. In this connection we also began to call your attention to the great evil of closing our minds to that Word, thus abusing both our minds and the prophetic office. It makes no difference whether one misuses one's mind in the prophetic office of all believers or whether one does so in the special prophetic offices of being a Minister of the Word of God, in the measure that the mind is closed to the Word of God, in that measure one will fail in one's calling to praise God from Whom all blessings flow. We like to continue with this thought today.

The man who sleeps while the Word of God is being proclaimed on the Sabbath is not the only prophet who puts his mind in cold storage and misuses it. Sad to say, but a sign of the times in which we live is also the worldly magazine craze which crowds out the reading and study of God's Word, the reading of religious material and even the faithful preparation for the catechism class and society discussion. You find homes today that are cluttered up with this magazine published by the world and that magazine that reeks with the moralism and philosophy of an unregenerated world, of a world steeped in sin and dedicated to the praise of men. The proportion of religious literature to which some families subscribe is not even fifty-fifty, but the magazines of the world far outnumber those of a religious character or else are to be found there to the exclusion of anything that even professes to have a religious character.

Of course, we appreciate the printing press. It certainly also was a gift of God to His Church. Today we

all have a printed copy of His Word in our homes. To the pure all things are pure. And all things are ours for Christ's sake. But who is ready to deny that the printing press has today become one of the chief tools of the devil? His work is far easier today than it was before the invention of this marvelous machine whereby the thoughts of man may be transferred to paper and may be duplicated by the thousands in only a few moments of time. And he certainly has made use of that invention of man. He will do all he can with it to keep man from praising God. To a very great extent he has also done this.

Nor are we convinced that the child of God must shut himself up and never consult the published newspaper or listen to the broadcast of the news over his radio. In fact we believe that it would be sin for the prophet of God to do so and would surely hinder him in his praise to God. Are we not told to watch as well as to pray? Has God not given us signs of the return of Christ for which we must look? Earthquakes in divers places, wars and rumors of wars, the arrival of the antichrist and of Gog and Magog are things for which we should look. And observing their approach, appearance and occurrence we can praise God for His faithfulness and thank Him for His grace in showing us these signs—for the signs are for the Church. And is it not also striking how much the saints in both the Old Testament and in the New Testament times knew about the ungodly world round about them? How many of the prophets in the Old Testament make mention of the ungodly kings that were reigning at the time of their prophecy. Indeed this gives us the historical setting and indicates the time when the prophecy was spoken, yet the point is here that these men knew about things outside the narrow confines of Canaan where the Church of God was in the Old Dispensation. Notice too how Luke knew about the ungodly rulers round about Canaan and indicates to us that the taxing—or registration—demanded by Caesar did not take place until the days of Cyrenius the governor. Note too how in detail he goes in chapter three to tell us that Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip was tetrarch of Iturea, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene. We believe that God has given us minds as well as eyes which serve these minds, to read the printed page and to learn of the things which HE is doing round about us in this wide creation.

But we are also convinced that there is a host of printed page that is not only worthless and ought never to find its way in our homes, but is positively the means whereby the devil strives to seduce and to crowd out of our lives the Word of God. There are a few magazines devoted entirely to news and news analysis. There are also a few magazines that are definitely educational in bringing to our minds, by the printed word

and by pictures, things God has placed in this creation we shall never be able to visit and to see with our own eyes but which, when read and seen by the believer, the prophet of God, impress him with the majesty, the wisdom and power of his Creator. Yet even these must be read and studied as prophets of God, for even in these the devil seeks to use men to instill in our hearts the philosophies of the lie so that subtly we are taught such pernicious theories as that of evolution or else the moralism of antichristianity, so that democracy is confused and identified with christianity, to mention only one such unscriptural idea.

The readers of these lines undoubtedly know which magazines which must not be found in our homes—even though they are! They are those you hide some place when you expect the pastor and an elder to come for family visitation. As though you were a prophet of the consistory rather than of the All-seeing and All-knowing God! And how many of the Lord's days are not devoted to sucking up into your mind all the cheap, mundane things which are produced by the world? And this refers not only to magazines but to book-form novels, and other forms of reading which are purely for entertainment. The Sabbath was not given us for that reason. And we ought not to encourage our children to curl up on a Sunday afternoon with just any book or magazine. That day is given the prophet of God so that he may have time and opportunity to exercise his prophetic office to a greater degree than the many toils of his every day life follow him during the week. The Sabbath is not a day hemmed in and bounded by all kinds of high and thick walls. But it is a day when we are free to serve God. And so the prophet of God ought to use it. On that day he must use his mind for the enrichment of his spiritual life in the way of increasing in knowledge and appreciation of the truth. He and the little prophets that brighten his home should especially function in this phase of their office upon the Sabbath. In our first installment under the general heading "Called To His Praise", we asked the question in our sub-heading, "Christians—Are We?" The answer for our own encouragement lies also here. How is your mind employed upon the Sabbath outside the house of prayer? How in your own house? And the article of Mr. Wildeboer of Hamilton in the last Standard Bearer certainly strikes a note that is pleasing to our ears and mind. One could almost wish that it had also been written in English for our people. And the same thing may be applied to our other publications. Read them! Study them! Discuss them! And—let me anticipate a little—as king in your home as well as prophet, insist upon the same for your family! And as priest of your family you ought to be ashamed of your self if you can pay \$10 a year or more without a complaint for the magazines where the

world propagates its philosophies and prepares the way for the antichrist, and then are so loathe to part with two or three dollars in order to have material enter your home that will help you in your prophetic office. And the sad thing is that these lines are read by so few because they cannot part with the small subscription fee for this paper and have all kinds of money for abusing their minds in exposing them to the things the godless world produces.

At the same time we wish to remark about that other method of filling our minds with what the silly, foolish, sinful, lustful world produces, and so close our minds to the sobering truth of God's Word. I mean that method which makes use of our ears instead of our eyes, namely, the radio. And at present they are even combined in the television set. The prophet of God does not spend his or *her* day listening to all the nonsense of soap-operas and programs of foolishness which depraved men and women who know nothing of our misery but rather in their programs reflect their evil philosophy of "let us eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die." The prophet of God says with David, the prophet of Jehovah, "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer." The prophet of God appreciates this wonderful faculty God has given him. Let us ask again, Christians—are we?

You see, say what you will, those who close their minds to God's Word and to the truth as it is explained and expounded in religious literature, will be lax in their praising of God. And you can see it too in their walk of life. Those whose minds are seldom in contact with God's Word, let us say in contact only in the divine services upon the Sabbath, and have them wide open all week and the remainder of the Sabbath for reading and listening to what the world has to say, these seldom SAY anything about God. And the songs which praise God even sound flat to them. They must have lilting tunes and words which praise man. Discuss the truth they cannot. Discuss the works of men, they are full of it. Let us rightly understand, called to God's praise means that we are called to use our minds and their servants the eyes and ears as God's prophets.

J. A. Heys.

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ANNIVERSARY

Mr. and Mrs. B. G. Stegink (Windemuller), Holland, Michigan, celebrated their twenty-fifth wedding anniversary, January 20. Sincere congratulations on your anniversary.

The years you've spent together are but happy memories. As down life's pathway you proceed with those who love you dear;
God bless you, and be with you both throughout advancing years.

Jack
Isa
Paul