

# THE STANDARD *Bearer* A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

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## MEDITATION

### Jehovah's Blessing

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying, on this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them, The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: the Lord make His face to shine unto thee, and be gracious unto thee: the Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace. And they shall put My name upon the children of Israel; and I will bless them."

Numbers 6:22-27.

Even the fact that we have here the glorious name of Jehovah mentioned three times in this blessing is proof that we listen to the blessing of the Triune God. But this is still clearer in the threefold operation of the blessing: the keeping Father, the gracious Son and the peace-bringing Holy Spirit.

Oh, yes, it is the blessing of Triune Covenant Jehovah which is given unto God's people.

That blessing is upon His people now; it shall be on them forevermore.

Let us meditate on this wonderful blessing of Jehovah.

It is the blessing of the Father.

And He is the Fountain, the Source, the Cause of all things.

It is thus even in the Godhead. He is the Father of His eternal Son. He is the great Cause of the Son's eternal generation. And from Him the Holy Spirit is forever spirated.

And thus it is with all things that are created and that will be re-created.

He is the Cause of creation. In Him is the eternal power of sustenance. He is that eternal Agent of guidance and the steering Power of all things that move and have their being.

Hence, the Father is the Lord and as Father He is the Fountain of all blessing: "The Lord bless thee!"



And the eternal Son, co-equal with the eternal Father blesses His Israel: "make His Face to shine upon thee!"

The Face of Jehovah is the Son, is the revelation of God. And also here, He is the revelation of God both in creation and in re-creation. The eternal Godhead is revealing the excellence of His virtues in the Son, who is the express Image of the Father. Heb. 1:3.

All the beauty of the Godhead is shown in the Son, and through the Son. Thus it has been and thus it shall be unto all eternity. Such is the order in the Godhead.

And the Holy Spirit of Jehovah blesses thee!

For He lifts up that countenance of Jehovah, that is the Son, and He places Him upon thee.

That work is peculiar to the Holy Spirit. It was thus in creation. It is thus in re-creation. Listen to Jesus, the Face of Jehovah: "He shall glorify Me, for He shall receive of Mine, and shall shew it unto you." John 16:14.

The Holy Spirit brooded upon the face of the deep so that the beauty of God which shone in His face might be manifested to all that received power to see and to hear of created things. And that same Holy Spirit, but now as the Spirit of Christ, broods upon the works of Jehovah in Christ, and has shown and will show these beauties to the church unto all eternity.

He places that Countenance of God upon you.

And through and in that Holy Spirit the blessing of Jehovah God is fulfilled.

And so we hear of a threefold blessing, but there is an essential unity in them. We hear of three blessings, but the unity is in the one Name which is placed upon the happy people of Israel.

We hear of three blessings, but three times it is the one name: The Lord!

I may not even say that in each of the three bless-

ings one of the glorious Divine Persons is coming to the foreground, for the work of blessing is one marvellous work, in which all three Persons are energetically operative.

Let us rather say: Jehovah God is blessing His people, and this blessing is from the Father, through the Son and in the Holy Spirit.

Let us now look a little closer at this threefold blessing and see its wondrous operation.

Father blesses you.

What is the meaning of this? What does it mean that Jehovah blesses you?

To bless is literally to speak a beautiful word. You have a word for it in your American tongue: eulogy. And a eulogy is literally a beautiful word.

God spoke a beautiful Word at the very beginning, and the kosmos appeared. Creation is the speaking of a beautiful word. God said! And the speaking God is the creating God. When God ceased speaking the whole of a most marvellous creation stood before Him. And looking at the result of His blessed speaking, He said: and behold, it is very good!

And what does that mean?

If I may borrow a word that came from God through Jeremiah, I would answer your question this way: God loved you with an everlasting love, and it was His determined purpose to be very good to you. He would move heaven and earth unto your eternal welfare. Yes, and He would move hell also so that you might forever lie in His bosom and be inexpressibly happy for evermore.

And so He started to work in order to bring His eternal thoughts of peace for you unto fruition: He began to create. Creation, the blessed work of God, was for you. God engaged in creation with the view to your eternal welfare. And when God saw the first Kosmos, and when He pronounced it very good, he had in mind your blessedness, your blessed estate for time and for eternity. When God said: Behold, it is very good! He saw that this first earth was good unto the preparation of much greater blessings than were heaped up in that first Universe. It could serve most wondrously unto the coming of a better Kosmos. Through the dark way of the fall because of sin, and the elevation from untold depths of misery unto the heights of glory He would bless you as never before. The first creation could admirably serve such exalted purposes such as God harboured in His counsel for you and for all Israel.

Oh yes, God blesses Israel. And shall bless Israel forevermore.

The Father will tell you every day: The Lord bless thee!

And that blessed operation of blessing is through the Son.

For: He makes His face to shine upon thee!

If you would know the heart of Jehovah you must look strongly upon His Son, upon His Face.

You find a weak picture of that in the life of man. If you would know a man you must look upon his face. You study the face of man, and in the measure that you hunger to know a man you look upon his countenance. And that is a weak shadow of how things are with the Godhead.

God shows Himself in the Son. How God is and what He is is shown conclusively in the second Person of the Holy Trinity.

Thus it is in creation. God spoke a Word which came from His wonderfully wise Heart: and creation appeared. Creation is the reflection of God's wisdom.

And o, how that beauteous wisdom of God shines upon the man of His good-pleasure. When that man looks about him by day, he exclaims: the heavens declare the glory of my God.

I can see how Adam and Eve stood in the midst of the light of God's countenance and exclaimed continuously: O our God, how marvellous art Thou in beauty, wisdom and power!

Later we hear these words by an inspired prophet, but his voice broke: he was a sinner.

And if this speech of God's blessing in creation is most wonderful, what shall we say of the Face of God which we begin to see in the re-creation of all things? Words fail me.

Let us at once go to the very heart of that Speech of God. Go to the little hill outside of the city of the Lord, Jerusalem.

And in the darkness of great agony we hear a shout of the Son of God: Why, o why hast thou forsaken Me?

There is a beauty of the Godhead which we cannot fathom. There is a blessing of Jehovah that shall make your heart sing forevermore. It is the speech of the love of God for you who should be forsaken unto all eternity. Instead, He forsakes His beloved Son. God wants to show you, He desires to manifest to you how beautiful He is in His love.

The Face of God He will make to shine upon you. That is what the text says. Do you see it? Do you see the rays of light which the Cross of Jesus emits? Do you see the oceans of the light of God's love that bathe you in cherishing warmth and attractive sympathy of lovingkindness?

See it and you will dry all your tears.

See it and you will listen to Isaiah's admonition: Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great

is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee!

Yes, the Face of God blesses you in its wonderful shining light!

It is the light of God's forgiving love.

And the operation of Jehovah's blessing in the Holy Spirit brings this blessing very near to you.

For He takes that blessed and radiant Face of God and brings it in your heart.

You see "The Lord lifts up His countenance upon thee!"

Allow me to speak as a child speaks: God takes Jesus and all His blessings and places that blessed Jesus in your heart. It is the application of God's salvation. Theologians tell us that we are justified by faith. Well, I have heard of it from my earliest infancy. It is one of the jewels of Reformed Doctrine.

Let us speak of this jewel in connection with my text. The trouble with unhappy Israel and miserable Zion is this: he is not righteous before God. He has deserved to be an eternal companion of devils and all kinds of wicked men.

But Israel is a happy people for they are the objects of Jehovah's blessings. And in this connection that means that God's Face is taken by the Holy Spirit and it is placed in their heart. And the Face of Jesus, is Jesus, and He bears the Name: The Lord our righteousness! And when you have "the Lord, our Righteousness" in your heart, you are the object of the smile of God's approval. When the robes of Jesus' righteousness enfold you, you are welcome in God's heaven, and you may stay there forever.

And by faith you taste such an estate even now, before you breathe your last.

And so we see Israel blessed by Jehovah God.

No wonder Moses exclaimed at the hour of his death: Happy art thou, O Israel.

And what is the result of all such blessing?

First, you are kept by the Father.

The Lord blees thee, *and keep thee*.

To be kept by Jehovah means that His arms are around you so that nothing can harm you, on the one hand, and on the other, you experience that which is above all things to be desired, namely, you experience the fellowship of the Triune God.

We keep that which we consider precious.

You are precious in the sight of God. You are His heritage. No wonder Isaiah said a while ago: Cry out and shout, O thou inhabitant of Zion!

Must you have proof of these loving arms of God that always bless Israel? Listen again to the dying Moses: "and underneath are the everlasting arms!"

Think of that when the devil tempts you, when the

world hates you, when your flesh is an ever present burden. Think on that when it seems as though all things are against you. Think on the fruit of the Father's blessing, and . . . smile through your tears.

And you will begin to stammer: it is well, it is well, with my soul.

I do not wonder at the poet who gave us the wonderful line: "Safe in the arms of Jesus!"

The first link in eternal blessings sings to us of a love which the Bible compares to a mother who holds her infant in arms of loving compassion. And if they would forget, God tells you: I will never forsake thee!

And the Son? He blesses you and says: I will be gracious unto thee! Grace is beauty, the beauty of the Godhead. Look upon creation, and you will see the grace and the beauty of God.

But its beauty is marred, more than man can utter.

Look upon the chosen saint in Christ, and you will sing with the psalmist of the beauty of the dove who is decked with silver and gold. The Sun's golden rays are upon the dove which glistens with beauty such as Hermon never gave.

The effect of the blessings of Jesus are that instead of an ugly, filthy sinner, you become a beautiful saint. You will be more beautiful than the Angels of God, and they surely are beautiful. You will be so beautiful that you will be like the Face of God, and that is Jesus. We shall be like Him. He is called our elder Brother.

And He is beautiful for He is the express Image of the Father, full of grace and truth. And according to the measure of the creature you shall be as beautiful as God is. And so you begin to see the reason why God calls you His children. The child is like the Father. Hallelujah.

The Son's blessing has the effect to make you gloriously beautiful.

And the Holy Spirit? He gives you peace.

Words fail me again and again when I talk of Divine things. What, O what shall I say of peace.

I will not reason with you, dear reader. Neither will I be unreasonable. Let us both listen to the Holy Scriptures.

Some of these things I feel rather than understand.

Your peace, the peace as effect of blessing, shall be as a river, says the Bible. I have heard the sweet murmurings of a river, sitting at her banks. And I distinctly remember how I thought on these things.

It was an earthly picture of heavenly things.

And so I was silent. I am silent now.

G. Vos.

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## EDITORIALS

## Reply To Rev. Blankespoor

Although the Rev. Blankespoor did not ask me personally to reply to his questions, published in the preceding issue of the *Standard Bearer*, I will nevertheless try to make a start with the discussion.

In the first place, I feel, of course, co-responsible for this Declaration of Principles as a delegate to our last Synod. Secondly, I feel still more responsible because synod added me to the committee that drew up this declaration and advised synod to adopt it. And thirdly, the committee asked me to draw up the first Draft of this Declaration of Principles, which then was discussed by them and proposed by them to synod, and finally adopted by this body. This does not imply that I am the only responsible party, or even that I assume more responsibility for this Declaration of Principles than any other member of synod. For after its adoption synod as a body is responsible. And when I write a word of explanation in answer to the question of the Rev. Blankespoor, I simply try to voice the sentiment of our last synod. Nevertheless, being so directly and intimately acquainted with the origin, meaning, and purpose of this declaration, I feel that I am at least in as good a position as anyone to answer the Rev. Blankespoor's questions.

Any other member of the committee *ad hoc* or any other delegate, except the one dissenting vote which I heard was cast (though I did not hear it at the time), may, of course, add to my explanation or criticize my interpretation of the sentiment of synod.

Of course, anyone is entitled too to criticize the declaration itself. But this does not belong to the proper scope of this present writing, since the Rev. Blankespoor does not criticize, but simply asks a few questions.

The first question reads as follows: "I am informed that the Mission Committee requested synod to draw up a form regarding our principles for those (especially in Canada) who request organization. On the basis of this synod drew up this declaration. Now my question is this: Is it church politically correct to make such a declaration on the basis of a request of a committee? Doesn't this violate the rule of Reformed church polity that all matters must come to synod via consistory, classis, etc.?"

*Answer.*

Synod, in my opinion, did not violate any rule of Reformed church polity by acceding to the request of the Mission Committee for a form or declaration which

might be used in the organization of churches. It is not true that it is a rule of Reformed church polity that all matters must come to synod via consistory and classis. The article of the Church Order that pertains to this matter is article 30, which reads as follows: "In these assemblies ecclesiastical matters only shall be transacted and that in an ecclesiastical manner. In major assemblies only such matters shall be dealt with as could not be finished in minor assemblies, or such as pertain to the churches of the major assembly in common." The last clause of this article applies to the matter in question. Mission work, like the Theological School, is certainly a matter that belongs to the churches in common. Besides, perhaps article 51 of the Church Order pertains to the same matter: "The missionary work of the churches is regulated by the general synod in a mission order." The Mission Committee, therefore, certainly had the perfect right to appeal to synod for a form that may serve as a basis for the organization of Churches. And the synod did nothing that was church politically out of order, when it drew up the declaration of principles.

Let me, however, explain this matter a little more in detail, especially to show what motivated the Mission Committee to come with such a request to synod.

The Mission Committee is a synodical committee that serves synod and all our churches in the interest of our mission work. Its purpose is through our missionaries and in cooperation with the calling church to propagate and disseminate the pure Reformed truth (which to us is the same as Protestant Reformed truth) outside of the pale of our churches and to bring to manifestation the purest manifestation of the body of Christ in the world (which to us is the Protestant Reformed Church). They have not the calling, therefore, to organize any group of people, regardless of their doctrinal convictions, but only such as are sufficiently acquainted with our Protestant Reformed truth and are willing to subscribe to its main tenets.

We used to conduct this kind of mission work chiefly in the Christian Reformed Churches. And the work used to concentrate chiefly around the question of common grace, as adopted by the Christian Reformed Church in 1924 and embodied in the well-known Three Points. With this work I am personally thoroughly acquainted, as I used to go out for weeks at a time to explain the errors of the Three Points especially to the Christian Reformed people in Illinois, Wisconsin, Iowa, and even in California. It was never our purpose simply to extend our churches and to organize congregations. Always the people were first acquainted with our standpoint and our Protestant Reformed truth in distinction from the errors of the Three Points. And it was only after they were convinced of these errors and as a result of these labors a group was gathered that were willing to subscribe to our Protestant Re-

formed principles, that they were organized into a church.

Recently, however, the Mission Committee faced what was really the same problem from a different angle. They and our missionaries came into contact with people that are apparently willing to subscribe to our denial of common grace and to repudiate the Three Points, but who insist that the promise is for all the children that are born under the historical dispensation of the covenant. In other words, they wanted to maintain common grace within the historical line of the covenant. These people had their origin in the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands. Historically as well as doctrinally they differed from the Christian Reformed Churches in America, but also from our Protestant Reformed Churches. In the Netherlands they had been urged to join the Protestant Reformed Churches and not the Christian Reformed Church. No wonder then that they lived under the impression that they could simply, without further instruction, be organized into Protestant Reformed Churches. But at the same time they wanted to adhere to their own peculiar view of the covenant. They even sent a request to the Mission Committee to be organized on their own basis. That was the difficulty with which the Mission Committee had to contend.

Hence, the Mission Committee wanted a definite form as a basis for the organization of churches, a form on the basis of which our missionaries could labor among these people, and which they themselves could study in order that they might not only become acquainted with our view, but also know what they were doing when they requested the Mission Committee for organization into Protestant Reformed Churches. More than a year ago the Mission Committee requested me to draw up such a form, but I made no work of it for the simple reason that either the Mission Committee themselves were capable of composing such a document, or that they could appeal to synod to furnish a form as a basis of organization for them. The latter they chose. They came to the last synod with their problem. And the synod heeded their request and adopted the declaration of principles. There certainly was nothing church politically wrong on the part of the Committee to come with such a request to Synod, nor on the part of synod to accede to this request.

But after all, the Rev. Blankespoor makes a wrong impression when he writes that the synod made such a declaration on the basis of a request of a committee. Fact is that in order to avoid a semblance of hierarchy the synod did not make or adopt the declaration of principles, but merely proposed it to the churches in order that by way of consistory and classis it may come to the next synod. And they suggested that the Mission Committee and the Missionaries use this de-



claration in the meantime as a working hypothesis. The synod felt that after all this declaration is a matter of doctrine. And although it is not meant as a certain "fourth form", binding our churches (see below), it nevertheless thought it safer to let this matter come from the bottom up. Hence, the declaration of principles was never adopted, but consists merely of a proposal to be discussed by all our churches, and to come by way of consistory and classis to our next synod. And it will undoubtedly be very salutary for all our consistories, as well as for all our people, to study this declaration thoroughly and offer their criticism and suggestions for improvement or for revision, in order that our next synod may be ripe for a final adoption.

The next question which the Rev. Blankespoor asks is as follows: "Is this declaration exclusively for those outside of our denomination, or also for our own people?"

*Answer.*

If this declaration is finally adopted after being thoroughly discussed by our people, by our consistories, and by our classes, at our next synod, it is not *for* our own people, but it is *by* them as a declaration of what they believe to be the truth concerning the covenant of God, the promise of the gospel, over against those that differ with us as Protestant Reformed Churches. Our own churches have no need of such a declaration for themselves, or at least should not have. It is therefore intended as a working basis for the Mission Committee and for the missionaries in the organization of churches.

This does not mean that our own people cannot benefit by this declaration of principles and that they cannot very profitably be instructed in it. It would be very beneficial, no doubt, if this declaration of principles were made the object of instruction and study by a catechism class of confessing young people.

The third question by the Rev. Blankespoor reads as follows: "It seems to me that the declaration is mainly directed at the Liberated Churches. Only a small portion is given to the repudiation of the common grace theory, church hierarchy, etc., while a large portion directly and indirectly is devoted to the repudiation of the Liberated views of the covenant and baptism. Am I correct in drawing this conclusion?"

*Answer.*

The declaration of principles cannot possibly be directed against the *Liberated Churches* for the simple reason that they claim that as churches they have no covenant conception. They claim that in their churches there is nothing binding concerning the covenant.

Of course, the question is how far this goes. I discussed our difficulties with Mr. and Mrs. A. Schilder,

brother and sister-in-law of the professor. They were over last summer, and we had the privilege of entertaining them at our home for a couple of days. They proved to be very amiable people, and in the short time that they were with us we learned to love them as a brother and sister in Christ. But I told him that for us it was not a question of receiving some individual families or members from the Liberated Churches, but of organizing groups of Liberated people into Protestant Reformed Churches. And I asked him whether in the Netherlands, supposing there were a group of Reformed people that emphasized the theory of presumptive regeneration and wanted to become organized as Reformed Churches (maintaining article 31), the Liberated Churches would organize them and receive them in their fellowship on that basis. And both he and Mrs. Schilder replied that they would never do that. And I told him that we confronted the same problem here with respect to the Heynsian conception that the essence of the covenant is the promise and that the promise is for all that are born in the historical line of the covenant.

Nevertheless, it cannot be said that the declaration of principles is as such directed against the Liberated Churches, for they have not adopted any official conception of the covenant. At most, therefore, it should be said that it is directed at some of the Liberated, who teach that the promise of God is objectively for all the baptized children and that in this promise God is gracious to them all.

It is true, of course, that due to the present circumstances the declaration of principles apparently devotes the lion's share of its contents to the question of the promise of God for all the children that are born under the covenant. Yet this is only apparent. The declaration just as emphatically denies the theory of common grace as adopted by the Synod of Kalamazoo, 1924. It denies that there is a grace of God to all men, including the reprobate, in the common gifts to all men. It denies that the promise of the gospel is a gracious offer of salvation on the part of God to all that externally hear the gospel. And it denies that the natural man through the influence of common grace can do good in this world. And over against these points it maintains that the grace of God is always particular and only for the elect, never for the reprobate. It maintains that the promise of the gospel is not a gracious offer of salvation on the part of God to all men, nor a conditional offer to all that are born in the historical dispensation of the covenant, but an oath of God that He will infallibly lead all the elect unto salvation and eternal glory through faith. And it maintains that the unregenerate man is totally incapable of doing any good, wholly depraved, and therefore can only sin. Moreover, it repudiates the theory of presumptive regeneration, and it declares that it

must have nothing of the hierarchical action of the Reformed Synod of the Netherlands, 1939-'44, whereby they imposed certain doctrinal decisions upon the churches synodically. And whereby they deposed local officebearers. The only difference is that, whereas for the proposition that the promise is not for all the children that are born under the covenant, but only for the elect elaborate proof is furnished from the confessions, it was not deemed necessary to offer the same elaborate proof for the proposition that the Three Points are unreformed, for the simple reason that also the Liberated people are supposed to agree with us in regard to the denial of common grace and in regard to the contents of the Three Points. If, however, confessional proof must be furnished, this can easily be done. And if it should be done, it will become evident that the declaration of principles is just as elaborate on the theory of common grace as it is on the question concerning the promise of the covenant.

In the fourth question the Rev. Blankespoor asks: "I gather that these principles are meant to be an explanation of the confessions, not another confession. Does this imply that our confessions are ambiguous on these points, so that these truths cannot be clearly proven from the confessions without this declaration of principles? Does this then also imply that our missionaries, ministers, and people are not able to state the same without them?"

*Answer.*

That our confessions are not ambiguous on the main question that the promise is not for all is our firm conviction. That this is true is exactly the point of the declaration of principles. You may notice that intentionally the declaration presents very little argumentation, but widely and elaborately and literally the confessions. In this respect there is a vast difference between such a document as the Conclusions of Utrecht 1905, and this declaration of principles. The former adopted synodically some very general statements on eternal justification, immediate regeneration, presumptive regeneration, the promise of the covenant, etc., without any elaborate proof either from Scripture or from the confessions. But the declaration of principles offers very few statements of its own, but emphatically and elaborately points to the confession and quotes it. This, to my mind, is the strength of this declaration. And therefore it rests exactly on the assumption that the confessions are certainly not ambiguous.

Hence, our missionaries and ministers, as well as our own people, if they are properly instructed, can very well read the fundamental principles of this declaration in our confessions.

But, as was already stated under "2", this declaration serves to let others that allege that the theory of common grace, of presumptive regeneration, and of

the promise for all that live under the historical dispensation of the covenant is the teaching of the confessions read and know what is confessionally Reformed on these points. It is not a question of ambiguity in the confessions as such, nor is it a question what our ministers and missionaries and people need. But it is rather a question as to how some interpret and read the confessions erroneously. And to point out to them that they do read erroneously is exactly the purpose of this declaration of principles. And to my mind this purpose is admirably served by this declaration.

The final question put by the Rev. Blankespoor reads as follows: "What is the difference between a declaration and a form? I have heard a few people call this a fourth form. What technically is a form or confession? What historically are the conditions that necessitated the formulation of confessions? Have the Reformed churches ever set a precedent in making declaration of the confessions? If so, in what conditions did they do so?"

*Answer.*

This is not a fourth form or a fourth confession. Of this we have no need, for we stand on the basis of the Three Forms of Unity only. And this basis is sufficient for us. But it aims to be a declaration of principles which are already contained in our confessions. The difference is plain. A fourth form or confession either adds some new doctrine, which before was extra-confessional; or it also adds some elaborate explanation of what is principally implied in the confession, but not elaborately and clearly expressed. And finally, a fourth form may also serve to corrupt the confessions. As an illustration of the second instance we may point to the Canons of Dordrecht. They were indeed based upon the principles of the then existing confession. But they elaborated those principles into the present five articles against the Remonstrants. They appeal to Scripture as their basis, but not to the existing confession. And as an illustration of a corrupting addition to the confession we may point to the Three Points of 1924. It is true that the Synod of 1924 also appealed to the confessions and tried to leave the impression that the Three Points were nothing but an explanation of the Three Forms of Unity. But it can easily be shown, and we have proved repeatedly, that this is not true, and that the theory of common grace as contained in the Three Points is certainly contrary to the confessions that are adopted in the Reformed churches. But this declaration of principles does not aim at being a fourth form or an addition to the confession, but simply a setting forth of principles that are already clearly expressed in the confessions. If this is not true, the declaration is open for criticism. That is the reason why the Synod of 1950 suspended or postponed the final adoption of this declaration until all the churches

have made a thorough study of it. Besides, a form or confession or even an addition to the confession is composed for the churches themselves, and after it has been officially adopted the churches are all supposed to abide by that form or addition. But this declaration of principles is not *for* the churches, but *by* the churches and is proposed as a basis for the organization of churches. In no sense of the word, therefore, can this declaration of principles be called a fourth form or a fourth confession.

The Rev. Blankespoor asks further: "What historically are the conditions that necessitated the formulations of confessions?" We answer briefly that historically the formulation of confessions is usually occasioned by the attack of false philosophy and false doctrine upon the truth as it is in Jesus Christ our Lord. If I may quote from my own work on the Heidelberg Catechism, Vol II, p. 113: "And this is especially true in our times. It is a well-known fact that those that seek to undermine the foundation of the true church upon which the Church is built, and to introduce false doctrines, hardly ever reveal their evil intention by openly declaring their opposition to the doctrines as they have been formulated by the Church in the past. On the contrary, they prefer to employ the very same terms the Church has always used to express her faith, although they give them a new and entirely strange content. If they mean to deprive the Church of the truth of sovereign grace, and to introduce the false doctrine of free-will, they employ the Scriptural terms of predestination, election, and reprobation nonetheless; only they declare that God has chosen them that believe, and rejected those that remain in their unbelief. Or they speak of a 'double track' and insist that, while they firmly believe in the truth of absolute predestination, they also hold the very opposite, viz., that God will have all men to be saved. And thus they do with regard to every fundamental truth of the Bible. Even present day modernism, though it rejects and opposes all the fundamental doctrines of historical Christendom, is often very efficient in the employment of practically all the terms used to express the object of the Christian faith. They, too, speak of Christ as the Son of God, but in their mouth the term is completely emptied of its true significance so that it does not express at all the essential divinity of the Saviour. And they love to speak of the kingdom of God and its righteousness, while they refer to a kingdom of mere man, and of this world. And so we might go on. It shows, that as the Church advances in the knowledge of the truth, it will not only need a more elaborate confession to express its faith positively, but it must also more definitely and fully define its doctrines, lest they be open to the attack of gain sayers because of their ambiguity."

And as to the final question asked, namely, whether

the Reformed churches ever set a precedent in making declaration of the confessions and under what conditions they ever did so, I would answer that the churches indeed have often made such declarations. They made such a declaration in 1918, when the Synod of the Christian Reformed Churches appealed to the confessions in order to combat the false doctrine of dispensationalism and premillennialism. At that time they simply pointed to the truth clearly expressed in the confessions of the kingship of Christ, as well as to the other truth, also definitely expressed in the confessions, of the unity of the church of all ages. And on this basis they principally condemned the error of premillennialism. The attempt at such a declaration was also made in 1905, when the Conclusions of Utrecht were adopted by the Synod of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. I say that in those Conclusions of Utrecht an attempt was made to make a declaration of principles based upon the confessions. For actually these conclusions never appealed to the confessions whatever. In the condemnation of the instruction of Dr. Jansen by the Synod of 1922 in Orange City repeatedly such declarations are made from the confessions. Thus we read in "Reports and Decisions in the Case of Dr. R. Jansen", which was published by the Synod of Orange City, 1922: "We remark with reference to these five passages that in each of these, in the one more, in the other less, a human, fallible element is injected into the divine revelation. This does not agree with what we confess in article 3 and 7 of the Belgic Confession of Faith:

"Article 3 reads as follows: 'We confess that this word of God was not sent nor delivered by the will of man, but that holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, as the apostle Peter saith, And that afterwards God, from a special care, which he has for us and our salvation, commanded his servants, the prophets and apostles, to commit his revealed word to writing, and he himself wrote with his own finger, the two tables of the law. Therefore we call such writings holy and divine scriptures.'

"In article 7 we confess as follows:

" 'We believe that these holy scriptures fully contain the will of God and that whatsoever man ought to believe, unto salvation, is sufficiently taught therein. For, since the whole manner of worship, which God requires of us, is written in them at large, it is unlawful for anyone though an apostle, to teach otherwise than we are now taught in the holy scriptures; nay, though it were an angel from heaven, as the apostle Paul saith. For, since it is forbidden to add unto or take away anything from the word of God, it doth thereby evidently appear, that the doctrine thereof is most perfect and complete in all respects.' "

As to the question under what conditions the churches made such declarations, we may answer that



additions or corruptions of the confessions were frequently made by the churches from impure and sinful, carnal motives, motives of hatred and envy, as was undoubtedly the case with the adoption of the Three Points by the Synod of 1924. Or it may be the desire of the churches to get away from under the binding force of the truth. Or again, it may be the desire to unite the church in a compromising statement, as was the case with the Conclusions of Utrecht. But if the church really desires to maintain the truth of the confessions, the purpose is usually to defend the truth over against errors and to safeguard the church over against false doctrines.

And now I have explained to the best of my ability the content and the purpose and the meaning of the declaration of principles that was proposed to our churches by the Synod of 1950.

And once more I want to emphasize that any delegate to the Synod of 1950 may add to or criticize this explanation.

H. H.



## Van Boeken

*Lucas* (in de series De Bijbel Toegelicht voor het Nederlandsche Volk) door Ds. C. B. Bavinck.  
Uitgever: J. H. Kok, N.V. Kampen, Nederland.  
Prijs f. 2.70.

Dit boek van 158 paginas is eigenlijk geen commentaar, maar weinig meer dan een paraphrase, of een zeer beknopte toelichting op het evangelie naar de beschrijving van Lukas. Het is misschien geschreven voor dat gedeelte van het Nederlandsche volk, dat geen tijd heeft of wenscht te nemen voor de bestudering van breedere en meer grondige verklaringen. Het is geschreven in heldere stijl en eenvoudige taal. Wie vluchtig iets wil nazien over dit evangelie, schaffe zich dit boek aan.

Met de traditioneele verklaring van het ledige graf en de linnen doeken, die daar zoo "keurig bijeen" lagen, ben ik het niet eens. Cf. p. 153.

H. H.

## CLASSIST EAST

will meet in regular session, the Lord willing, on Wednesday, October 4 at the First Protestant Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan, at 9 o'clock A. M.

D. Jonker (Stated Clerk).

## OUR DOCTRINE

### The Idea Of Creation. (5)

#### *The Creator.*

We must beware of the error of Tritheism in our discussion of the Creator of the heavens and the earth. That the authors of the Heidelberg Catechism did not teach this error is evident from the quotation from Ursinus which we quoted in our previous article. We also noted in that article that our Confession of Faith, too, does not propagate the teaching that there are three gods.

Finally, we would also call attention to the fact that the first article of the Twelve Articles does not teach this error. This is evident from the article itself. This article reads: "I believe in God the Father, Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth." We should notice the following. We do not read here: "I believe in the first Person of the Trinity, the Father, Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth." Neither do we read later in these articles: "I believe in God, the Son, and in God, the Holy Ghost," but: "I believe in God, the Father. . . . And in Jesus Christ, His only Begotten Son, our Lord. . . . I believe in the Holy Spirit." This, we believe, is striking. The name, God, therefore appears exclusively in the first article; we read of Jesus Christ in the second article: and the Holy Ghost appears later in these articles, but then as the Spirit as He operates out of Christ in the Church. This is evident from the fact that the articles in regard to the Church follow upon the article which concerns the Holy Ghost. We conclude, therefore, that the Name, God, in Art. 1 refers not to the First Person of the Trinity, but to the Triune God, and that the Triune God is presented here as the Father, Almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth.

We must therefore, surely beware of the error of Tritheism. Tritheism separates the three Persons, teaches three gods, so that the one Person is active in one thing, another Person is active in another work, and each work is ascribed exclusively to each particular Person. We must ever bear in mind that, although it is true that within the Triune God Himself the three Divine Persons perform their own personal functions, so that the Father alone generates, the Son alone is willingly generated, the Holy Spirit alone proceeds from the Father and the Son, yet in all the works of God's hands God always reveals Himself and works as the Triune God. All the three Divine Persons are co-eternal and equally significant in all the works of God. It is not true that the Father is the Chief Per-

former in the work of creation, the Son the Chief Performer in the work of redemption, and the Holy Spirit the Chief Performer in the work of sanctification. All are equally active in all the works of the Lord. The Triune God creates; the Triune God redeems; the Triune God sanctifies; always it is out of the Father, through the Son, and in the Holy Spirit.

*That Scripture ascribes the work of creation also to the Son and the Spirit is abundantly clear.*

That the Word of God ascribes the work of creation to the Son is clear from various passages. We read in John 1:1-3: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made." In Hebrews 1:1-2 we read: "God, Who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, Whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by Whom also He made the worlds." And in Col. 1:16 we read: "For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him." And in Proverbs 8 the holy writer speaks of wisdom, or, if you will, of Wisdom (with a capital letter). It is evident from the chapter that this Wisdom bears a personal character. We read of this Wisdom that she cries, puts forth her voice, stands in the top of high places, cries at the gates, at the entry of the city, at the coming in at the doors. We read of her that she calls unto men and that her voice is to the sons of men. Moreover, this Wisdom is eternal (see verses 22-36). It is therefore evident from this chapter that this Wisdom is personal, is eternal. The Wisdom of Proverbs 8 is the everlasting Son of God.

Also of the Holy Spirit that He is the Creator of the heavens and the earth. We read in Genesis 1:1-2: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." Moreover, the word, Spirit, means literally: wind, breath. And we read in Ps. 33:6: "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the *breath* of His mouth."

*Hence, we must conceive of the work of creation as a work of the Triune Jehovah.*

Everything, then, is out of the Father. This is already suggested by the Name, Father. The fundamental idea of "Father" is not that of love but source, beginning, origin. The First Person in the Trinity is the Father because He is the eternal Source, within

the Triune God, of God's infinite life and perfections. He is also the eternal Source of the Divine counsel with respect to all things. This explains why the authors of the Heidelberg Catechism, in Lord's Day 9, in connection with the first article of the Twelve Articles of Faith, mention also the counsel of God. And in the work of creation at the dawn of history all things are out of the Father. The first Person, in distinction from the other Persons, is in a particular sense of the word the Father, the Source, the Beginning of all the works of God's hands.

Everything is through the Son. This is true of God's own infinite life and perfection. We read in Hebrews 1:3: "Who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." Within the blessed Trinity the Son is the expressed image and reflection of God's eternal perfections. The Father generates the Son and the Son is generated by the Father. In the Son the Father beholds Himself eternally. The second person is therefore the *Son*, the expressed image, reflection, the eternal, complete, full, and therefore the only eternal and essential likeness of the Father. This also applies to the counsel of God. Even as the living God sees Himself eternally in the Son, so also the perfect and eternal reality of all things is reflected in the Son. Hence, inasmuch as the Son is the expressed image of the Father and also the counsel of God is eternally reflected in the Son so that all things are out of the Father and through the Son, so also it is out of the Father and through the Son that the world is called into existence and also continuously sustained. Hence, through the Word (Christ, the eternal Word or Logos) all things are created and sustained.

And, finally, all things are in the Spirit. First, this applies to the life of the Triune God Himself. Within the Triune God, everything is out of the Father, through the Son, and in the Holy Spirit. God's blessed covenant life occurs in the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit proceeds eternally out of the Father and the Son, searches eternally the deep things of God, testifies in the Father of the Son and in the Son of the Father, so that the blessed life of friendship of the alone blessed God eternally occurs out of the Father, through the Son, and in the Holy Spirit. This is also true of the work of creation. Therefore we read in Genesis 1:2 that the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. Even as God realizes His work of creation out of the Father and through the Son, so also the vibration of life and of fellowship and of harmony, the bond of life which unites all creatures, mutually and with God, is placed in living fellowship with God through the Holy Spirit. For the Spirit of God, we read, moved upon the face of the waters. In Job 26:13 we read: "By

His Spirit He hath garnished the heavens; His hand hath formed the crooked serpent." And by the breathing of the Holy Spirit man became a living soul, adapted with all his life unto the fellowship with the ever blessed God. Finally, this also applies to the Divine work of creation. Presently sin enters and man is torn away from God's fellowship and communion. He ceases to be office-bearer of the living God and becomes the servant of the devil. His knowledge becomes hatred, his righteousness unrighteousness, and his holiness sin and corruption. Instead of merely losing the image of God in which he had been created he became the image of the prince of the powers of the air. He did not merely lose his knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. Man did not become a vacuum. He who was full of light became full of darkness; he, who was the prophet-priest-king of God became the prophet-priest-king of the devil. And with him all things were torn from the fellowship and communion of the living God. But the Spirit of God enters the heart of man, as the Spirit of Christ, and man returns unto the living God, out of the Father, through the Son, and in the Holy Spirit. Then the creation of God shall have been completed, not accidentally, we understand, but according to the counsel and sovereign operation of the alone living God. Sin was no accident, and redemption is not merely a remedy. All things occur according to the sovereign counsel of the living God; He alone does all things, for His Name's sake, and He alone will receive *all* the glory in the new heavens and upon the new earth. God did not lose anything when sin entered into the world. The devil did not deprive the Lord of His possession and now the Lord is desperately trying to regain what He has lost. God alone is at the helm, and He is realizing His eternal tabernacle along the Divinely sovereign lines of election and reprobation.

#### *The Purpose Of Creation.*

*This is an interesting question.*

We believe that this world, which has been called into being and existence in time, has been called into existence by an act of God's omnipotent will, and exists essentially distinguished from God's eternal and unchangeable Being.

However, the question must arise in our souls: Why did God create the world? What prompted and moved the Lord to make the universe? Did the Lord create the world to prepare glory for Himself? Did He need the universe for His own sake? Did He create the world for man's sake? Was He richer after He made the world than before the formation of the universe? Is it not true that a counsel of God plus our present world is more than this counsel of Jehovah minus the world? Did not something exist after the

Lord called the heavens and the earth into being, which did not exist before? Did not, therefore, the creation of the heavens and the earth enrich Jehovah?

The question relative the creation of the world and the purpose of God has always been answered by the Christian Church as to be ascribed wholly to the sovereign will of the Lord. There is no deeper and more profound answer to the question of the purpose of creation than: God willed it. This is and should always be the answer to and the end of every argument. Even so, the question is interesting and worthy of our consideration.

*Some have sought the answer to the question relative God's creation of the world in a Divine necessity.*

Pantheism, which identifies God with the world, has attempted to solve this problem in this manner in a two-fold way. The one interpretation, then, seeks to explain the creation of the universe out of the richness of God's Being. God, it is said, is the overflowing Fount of all good. The life of the world flows out of the being of the Lord. This is the doctrine of "Emanation," to which we have already called attention. The world, then, is out of God, out of His Being. Another interpretation, on the other hand, would ascribe the universe to the poverty of God. The Lord is so poor that He needs the world for His own development. God, then, is pure potentially, Who Himself is nothing but can become everything. He must objectify Himself and thus attain unto Self-consciousness and development. The world, therefore, is necessary for God; God needs the world; and the world is a necessary development of His Being. The Church has always opposed this pantheistic, ungodly conception of creation, has always refused to regard the universe as a necessity for the living God, as if the Lord were in dire need of the creation of the world. Christianity has always ascribed the heavens and the earth unto the sovereign will of the Lord.

Even so, however, the question with respect to the purpose of the universe continued to rise to the fore. That the will of God is the sole answer to the question which concerns the purpose of the universe does not necessarily imply that we view or must view that will of the Lord in a cold, Mohammedan sense, arbitrary and despotic. God is no despot, not a tyrant. Neither is He characterized by a cold arbitrariness, so that the world exists, but things could just as well have been different. We surely must understand that, although the work of the Lord can never be comprehended by man, yet all things, also the creation of the universe, are not merely the product of necessity and coercion or compulsion but were prompted by a high and wise purpose in the eternal and everlasting God Himself.

And therefore the question was asked: What prompted God to create the world, i.e., what purpose

motivated Him when He called the heavens and the earth into existence? And, as one might expect, the answers to this question have varied. Some sought in the goodness and the love of God a sufficient motive for the creation of the universe. Does not Scripture speak often of the fact that God is good, that His goodness is revealed in all His works, that He loves His creatures and seeks their good and salvation? God cannot be conceived as in need of anything; He certainly did not create the world to receive anything, but only to give. Hence, His goodness and love are the Divine purpose and motive in the creation of the universe. Others declared that God created the world because otherwise He would be selfish and egoistical. Then the Lord would not be the highest good and love. Because He is good He does not wish to be the only blessed One; hence He establishes a kingdom and a sphere in which He can bestow His love upon a creature and can seek the salvation of His creatures. This love, unselfishness of the living Jehovah is the purpose, the Divine purpose of all His works.

However, to seek the purpose of the universe either in the goodness and love or the unselfishness of the Lord toward the creature can hardly be considered Scriptural and can therefore not be adopted. To be sure, it is true that all the works of God's hands reveal the goodness of the Lord. This the Scriptures abundantly testify. Indeed, the Lord is good to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works, according to Ps. 145:9. In fact, we may surely say that all of Scripture is an eulogy upon the goodness of the Lord, one tremendous anthem of praise. "Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens; and Thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds. Thy righteousness is like the great mountains; Thy judgments are a great deep: O Lord, Thou preservest man and beast. How excellent is Thy loving kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Thy wings. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of Thy house; and Thou shalt make them drink of the river of Thy pleasures."—Ps. 36:5-8. In Ps. 106:1 we are admonished to praise the Lord for His matchless goodness: "Praise ye the Lord. O give thanks unto the Lord; for He is good: for His mercy endureth for ever." And in 2 Chron. 5:12-13 we read: "Also the Levites which were the singers, all of them of Asaph, of Heman, of Jeduthun, with their sons and their brethren, being arrayed in white linen, having cymbals and psalteries and harps, stood at the east end of the altar, and with them an hundred and twenty priests sounding with trumpets: It came even to pass, as the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord; and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of musick, and praised the Lord, saying, For He is good; for His mercy endureth

for ever: that then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the Lord." Or, as we may read in Ps. 118:1: "O give thanks unto the Lord; for He is Good: because His mercy endureth for ever." Moreover, as we pointed out in our article on the goodness of God in our discussion of the attributes of the Lord, the goodness of God is a generic concept and consists of the Lord's mercy, compassion, love, grace, kindness, longsuffering, etc., wherein the Word of God abounds.

However, it is surely incorrect to say that His goodness requires the creation of the universe because the Lord would otherwise be selfish. God is surely All-Good, the perfect Love, perfect and complete blessedness in Himself, and therefore does not need the world to bring His goodness or love into development, even as He would need the world to attain unto Self-consciousness. Besides, it lies in the very nature of the case that God does not exist for the sake of man but man exists only for the Lord's sake. God alone is Creator, man is the creature; and for this reason already man cannot be the purpose of creation. Whereas man has his origin in God alone it follows necessarily that he also has his purpose only in the Lord. Besides, the presentation that creation has its purpose and motive alone in God's goodness in the sense of His love toward man, and purposes to seek the salvation of man is in conflict with reality. Creation surely does not exist for the service of man and must have an entirely different purpose than merely to be beneficial to the creature. The suffering and misery, which have been poured out upon the human race, is surely not to be explained exclusively in the light of a general goodness or love of God. And the final result of the history of the world, which does not merely include the salvation of the elect but also the eternal destruction and desolation of the Divinely reprobated world, reveals other perfections of Jehovah, and surely refute the theory of a general goodness of the living God. That the purpose of creation is therefore the manifestation of the goodness of the Lord, goodness understood as a loving attitude on the part of the Lord toward mankind, is in conflict with the Word of God and also with reality. The Word of God, proceeding from the standpoint that God is the living God, proclaims unto us that the purpose of creation is the glory of the living God. To this thought we expect to call attention, the Lord willing, in our following article.

H. Veldman.

—:—

The tokens of Thy mighty power  
Lead men in every clime to fear;  
From east to west through all the earth  
Thou sendest gladness far and near.

## THE DAY OF SHADOWS

### David's Praise Of The Lord Among The Heathen

In grateful awareness that in warfare with the heathen his victories were the Lord's, David vowed that he would give thanks unto the Lord among the heathen. The lines read:

Therefore I will give thanks unto thee,  
O Lord, among the heathen,  
And I will sing praises unto thy name.

An identical sentiment receives expression in Ps. 96. Here it meets us in the form of an exhortation:

Sing unto the Lord, bless his name, shew  
forth his salvation from day to day.  
Declare his glory among the heathen, his  
wonders among all people.

The wonders of the Lord were all His works through which He in His mercy effected the salvation of His people through the ages. Included are the plagues of the Lord upon Egypt; the signs of the period of the wanderings, the victories of Joshua, of the judges, of Saul and of David in all their warfare with the heathen. Being works of God, they were revelatory of His strength and of the beauty of His holiness, in a word, of all His goodness. And to set them forth as His works was to declare His glory; it was equivalent to singing praises unto His name.

That David would do among the heathen. That the prophets in Israel had been doing through the ages—singing praises unto the Lord among the heathen. Not that in the Old Testament dispensation the church through a called and ordained ministry was engaged in spreading the Gospel among the heathen. David did not live with the heathen of his empire as active in their midst as a missionary minister. David was a man of war in the physical sense, and he dwelt in his house in Jerusalem. The people of Israel through the ages had their prophets, men of God directly called and sent of Him to speak His Word. But with few exceptions their sphere of labor was limited to the house of Israel. Singing praises unto the Lord was not done by missionary ministers laboring as official organs of the church among the heathen.

The idea is different. It is this. The people of Israel, definitely their prophets, as dwelling in the midst of the nations and in contradistinction to the nations, sang praises unto the Lord, that is, set forth their victories in their warfare with the heathen as

given them of God. That was Israel's calling in the midst of the nations, namely, to set forth its history in its right light in order that God's name might be declared throughout all the earth. Accordingly, the substance of all of Moses' communications to Pharaoh is that the plagues spoiling his land and people were strokes laid on him by Israel's God. "The lord is a man of war," sang Moses and the children of Israel. "The Lord is his name. Pharaoh's chariots and his host hath *he* cast into the sea. . . . *Thy right hand*, O Lord, is become glorious in power: *thy right hand*, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy. And in the greatness of thine excellency *thou* hast overthrown them that rose up against thee: *thou* sendest forth thy wrath, which consumed them as stubble. And with the blast of *thy nostrils* the waters were gathered together, the flood stood upright as an heap, and the depths were concealed in the heart of the sea." In voicing this praise, Moses and the people of Israel were giving thanks unto the Lord among the heathen and singing praises unto His name. The one proposition on which all the prophecy of the Scriptures turns is precisely that God is *it*. And the one proposition on which all false prophecy turns is precisely that *man is it*. Thus in penning and publishing his Psalms David, too, was giving thanks unto the Lord among the nations. That *God is it* is the heart and core of all his songs.

The Scribes and pharisees of Christ's day were zealous missionaries. They compassed sea and land to make one proselyte. But the trouble is that they were not telling the heathen that God is *it*. The result was that they made their converts "twofold more the child of hell than themselves" (Matt. 23:15).

The true prophets of the Old Dispensation set forth the works of God as *His* works, as wonders of *His* grace. And the report of these works, as rightly construed and extolled by God's people, as set forth by them in their right light, spread far and wide. They spake, of course, by the infallible guidance of Christ's Spirit. Their constructions originated not in them but in God. They spake His word among the heathen, so that Israel's history, the works of God, the wonders of the Lord, the revelation of God in Christ, was known more or less also to the heathen of Israel's world. It could not well be otherwise. The salvation of Zion is always effected through the destruction of the adversary. And the heathen were that adversary. Over and over they had seen God's wrath and power as operative in their own destruction. They, too, knew of the Lord's works. And the memory of what God had wrought was perpetuated also among them. Said Rahab the harlot, to the spies, "I know that the Lord hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint



because of you. For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that were on the other side of the Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed. And as soon as we did hear these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: for the Lord your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath" (Jos. 11:8-11). And the counsel of the Philistine priests and diviners to their Philistine lords contains also this remarkable word, "Wherefore ye shall make images of your emerods. . . . and ye shall give glory unto the God of Israel: peradventure he will lighten his hand from off you, and from off your gods, and from off your land. Wherefore then do ye harden your hearts, as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? when he had wrought wonderfully among them, did they not let the people go and they departed?" (I Sam. 6:5, 6).

Truly, God was known to the heathen of Israel's world. They had knowledge of the revelation of His mercy to His people. It raises the question of the reaction of the heathen. The great bulk of them, following in the footsteps of the Egyptians and the Canaanites, hardened their hearts. The author of the book of Joshua makes mention of the perverse attitude of the Canaanites, "Joshua made war a long time with all those kings," he writes. "There was not a city that made peace with the children of Israel, save the Hivites the inhabitants of Gibeon." He adds the reason, "For it was of the Lord to harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle, that he might destroy them utterly, and that they might have no favor, but that he might destroy them, as the Lord commanded Moses."

But the Scriptures reveal that there were also others. Heathen they were, drawn by the light that penetrated the darkness also of their night into God's kingdom. First to be mentioned is the mixed multitude that followed the children of Israel out of Egypt. Doubtless the Ethiopian, whom Moses married after the death of Zipporah belonged to them. It shows that God had His people among that motley crowd. The Kenites were friendly toward Israel. The kindness that they had shown the children of Israel at the time of their departure from Egypt was still being held in grateful remembrance at the time of Saul (I Samuel 15:6). Jethro, Moses father-in-law was a Kenite. His reaction to Moses' report on the glad happenings in Egypt is revealing. He rejoiced. He blessed the Lord. He extolled the Lord above all gods. He sacrificed burnt-offering for God. And Aaron and the elders drew nigh and eat bread with him (Ex. 18). The Gibeonites made peace with Joshua be it by the em-

ployment of a subterfuge. They did not harden their hearts but cast themselves on the mercy of Joshua and of the Lord. They said, "And now, behold, we are in thine hand: as it seemeth good and right unto thee to do unto us, do. And they said, too, that it had *been told them*, "how that the Lord thy God commanded his servant Moses to give you all the land, and to destroy all the inhabitants of the land from before you" (Jos. 11). Under the constraint of a living faith in Jehovah, Rahab, the harlot, hid the spies; and Ruth forsook Moab and joined herself to the commonwealth of Israel.

King David was fervently loved and much befriended by heathen men. During the Sauline persecution he brought his father and mother under the protecting wing of Moab's king; and here they remained until he received the kingdom (I Sam. 22). While he was in hiding in the cave of Adullam, many warriors attached themselves to him, from whom he recruited his "mighty men" and later his bodyguard. Their names—Keethi and Pelethi—suggest that they were foreigners (22 Sam. 8:19). He dwelt a long time in the city of Gath; and there, too, a band of brave Philistine men collected about him, and they were for him in his last great distress brought on by Absalom, "And the king went forth, and all the people after him. . . . and all his servants passed on beside him; and all the Cherethites, and all the Pelethites, and all the Gittites (men of Gath), six hundred men which came after him from Gath, passed on before the king" (2 Sam. 15:18). Uriah was a Hittite, that is, a descendant of Heth (2 Sam. 11:3). The warriors of David included still other foreigners. There was an Ammonite named Zelek (2 Sam. 23:37). It was in the house of a Gittite (man from Gath) that David placed the ark. In the hour of Absalom's revolt, it was foreigners who show him kindness. In his flight an Ammonite provided him with provisions (2 Sam. 17:27). Hushai, the Archite (from Arke, a city in Phoenicia) did him well by destroying the counsel of the traitor Ahithofel (2 Sam. 15:32). Remarkable and touching was the faithfulness of Ittai, the man from Gath. "Wherefore goest thou also with me," said David to him, "return to thy place, and abide with the king, for thou art a stranger, and also an exile. Whereas thou camest but yesterday, should I this day make thee go up and down with us? seeing I go whither I may; return thou, and take back thy brethren; mercy and truth be with thee." But Ittai replied, "As Jehovah liveth, and as the Lord my king liveth, surely in what place the lord my king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also will thy servant be."

"All the earth sought the face of Solomon to hear his wisdom, which God had put into his heart" (I Ki. 10:24). Having seen Solomon's wisdom, the Queen of

Sheba blessed the Lord his God, "which delighteth in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel: because the Lord loved Israel forever, therefore made he thee king, to do judgment and justice" (1 Kings 10).

The Ninevites repented—and they truly repented—at the preaching of Jonah. Several centuries before the birth of Christ, the Jews were scattered throughout the whole civilized world. And they took with him their Scriptures. This is the solution of the visit of the Magi at the cradle of the Christ-child. They knew the Scriptures.

King Solomon's dedicatory prayer contains lines that should be quoted in this connection, "Moreover," so he prayed, "concerning a stranger, that is not of thy people Israel, but cometh out of a far country for thy name's sake; (For they shall hear of thy great name, and of thy strong hand, and of thy stretched out arm:) when he shall come and pray toward this house; hear thou in heaven from thy dwelling place, and do according to all that the stranger calleth to thee for; that all people of the earth may know thy name, to fear thee, as do thy people Israel; and that they may know that this house, which I have builded, is called by thy name."

The law of Moses is much occupied with these "strangers that would come out of a far country for the sake of the Lord's name." If a stranger, sojourning with the people of Israel, desired to keep the pass-over, his males (including himself) were circumcised, and then he was permitted to come near and keep it; and he was to be as one born in the land (Ex. 12:48; Nu. 9:14). He was allowed to "offer an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the Lord (Nu. 15:14). He had to be loved; food and raiment had to be given him, were he in need; and his cause had to be judged righteously (Lev. 19:34; Deut. 10:18, 19; Deut. 1:16).

In the light of this data the position that during the centuries inclosed by the calling of Abraham and the ascension of Christ, God was limiting salvation to the Jews so absolutely that not a heathen was saved or that the number of heathen saved was too few to have any meaning or to deserve mention even is seen to be untenable. Moreover, the position is not to be harmonized with the prophetic range of the Psalms and of the discourses of the later prophets. They foretell that the heathen shall fear the name of the Lord, and *all* the kings of the earth His glory (Psalm 102:15); that the Gentiles shall seek to the root of Jesse, that shall stand for an ensign of the people (Is. 11:10); that the Gentiles shall bring Zion's sons in their arms, and that here daughters shall be carried on their shoulders (Is. 49:50); that her sons shall come from far, and that her daughters shall be nursed at her side; that the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto her, and that to her shall come the forces of the Gentiles (Is.

60:5); that in the last days the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains and that many nations shall come and say, Come, let us go up to the top of the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us His ways, and we will walk in His paths (Micah 4:1, 2).

Here we listen to the prophets of the 8th century before Christ. What we behold in their words is a marvelous thing, namely, the eternal God folding in His arms and taking to His bosom *all* nations, the whole of our fallen race.

It raises the question whether these prophets were in any way prepared in their minds for the reception of the revelation of this mighty and glorious thing. Must we not conclude that such was indeed the case—conclude that they were speaking of a thing that through the centuries had been going on right along in their own limited world, to wit: the coming of "the strangers" out of a far country for the sake of the Lord's name—the coming of these strangers to pray toward God's house, in the earthly Canaan, the heaven of the Old Testament church. Besides, let us consider that the proclamations of these 8th century prophets of God's purpose to draw *all* men to Himself through Christ's cross was but an expansion of the gospel as first set forth by God Himself in paradise. "I will set enmity between thee and the woman, between thy seed and her seed. . . ." is the germ of all prophecy. And through the centuries God had continued to speak with always greater clarity as when he said to Abraham that in him were all the families of the earth destined to be blessed.

In the Old Dispensation the house of God was established in the top of a mountain—Mt. Zion—that is on earth. Accordingly only a few nations came and said, "Come, let us go up to the house of Jacob"—the few nations of Israel's small world, of David's empire. But Christ has come; and He died for our sins. He is exalted. His Spirit is now. And the house of God is exalted above the mountains in the highest heavens. Many nations now come and say, "Come, let us go up to the house of the God of Jacob."

As to David, he was priest and prophet as well as king in Israel's throne. For he vowed to give thanks unto the Lord among the nations of his domain. Therein, too, he typified Christ.

G. M. Ophof.

—:—

Be Thou, O God, exalted high,  
Yea, far above the starry sky,  
And let Thy glory be displayed  
O'er all the earth Thy hands have made.

## SION'S ZANGEN

### Niet Ons, O Heere! Niet Ons

(Psalm 115; Tweede Deel)

In ons vorig opstel over dezen psalm behandelden we het eerste vers en luisterden naar de taal der genade: Niet ons, o Heere! niet ons, maar Uwen Naam geef eer! En dat moet geschieden omdat dien naam geprezen worde. Die naam is lieflijk: hij spreekt van goedertierenheid en van waarheid.

De deugd van goedertierenheid hebben we eenigzins behandeld. We zeiden nog niets van de waarheid.

De waarheid staat tegenover de leugen.

De leugen is gelijk de kronkelende slang. De waarheid is recht.

De waarheid Gods is die deugd Gods waarin Hij in alle Zijne openbaringen recht, oprecht, rechtvaardig is. Alle relatien worden recht getrokken in het liefdeleven Gods. God is de Ware: Hij doet, spreekt en handelt als God.

Hoe geheel anders is de leugen. De leugen is het verdraaide, het kromme, het kronkelende geknoei van den duivel.

De leugen heeft iets vreeselijks: de leugen is eigenlijk hetgene dat niet is. Daarom staat de leugen in onmiddellijk verband met de schaamte. Als de leugen onderzocht wordt leugen te zijn, dan staat men met beschaamde kaken. Het leugen-leven is het on-leven, het niet-leven. Daar vindt ge het ijdele, het vooze, het ledige.

O, aan te komen tot voor het doordringend oog van God, en dan niets te kunnen toonen dan het ledige, ijdele, vooze leugen-leven van een natuurlijk mensch, en zulk een mensch is een volgeling van Satan.

Daar zullen vele beschaamde kaken zijn in het oordeel.

Maar God is de Waarheid Zelve.

En in Christus Jezus is Hij de Waarheid voor Zijn volk.

Jezus zeide: Ik ben de Weg, de Waarheid en het Leven.

En de conclusie is: de Waarheid zal U vrijmaken.

Als God Zich uwer ontfermt, en U Zijn Zoon schenkt tot Middelaar en Zaligmaker, dan is het goed, want dan maakt de Waarheid U vrij. Dat wil zeggen, dat Jezus alle lijnen recht trekt ten overstaan van U en Uw geschiedenis. Alle Uwe kromme lijnen van schuld en zonde trekt Hij recht door voor U te sterven. En de lijnen der gerechtigheid die gij nooit getrokken hebt, trekt Hij plaatsvervangend voor U. En ge zijt gered.

En in dank en lof, begint ge de lijnen ook recht te trekken. En dat is de heiligmaking.

Zouden we dan niet meebidden met dezen bidder en zeggen: Heere God! Niet ons, niet ons, maar Uwen Naam geef eere en majesteit en heerlijkheid, want Gij zijt goedertieren en Gij zijt Waar? Gij zijt Waar, altijd, overal, en tot in alle eeuwigheid. Maar Uwe Waarheid heeft nooit heerlijker geschenen dan in dien Zoon Uwer rechterhand. En door Zijne waarheid zijn wij verlost!

En daarom aanbidden we, aanbidden we!

“Waarom zouden de heidenen zeggen: Waar is nu hun God?”

Een vraag die ons doet sidderen.

Maar de siddering wordt weggenomen, en het Evangelie zegt van zichzelf: Het Evangelie van Christus is mij niet tot schaamte. Het is een kracht Gods tot zaligheid.

Maar het zou vreeselijk zijn om te roemen in God en geen bewijs te mogen noemen van Zijn voortreffelijkheid. Die mogelijkheid stelt de dichter. Waarom zouden de heidenen zeggen: Dit volk heeft te honderd uit gezongen en gepredikt van een grooten God. Maar waar is die God? We zien niets van Zijn zoogenaamde groote daden.

O, de heidenen nemen U waar. De heidenen letten nauwkeurig op Uw woorden en voorspellingen. En als zij een kans zien om U en Uw God te brandmerken, dan nemen zij die kans waar.

En zoo bidden de ware Sionieten: Heere, laat Uzelf zien. Toon Uwe groote goederetierenheid en waarheid, zoodat Uw Naam de eer ontvangen moge die hij waard is. Geef eer Uwen naam! En dan zullen de heidenen met beschaamde kaken daar staan, en zullen niet zeggen: de godsdienst der Israëlieten is ijdel!

En dat bidt Sion om Gods wil.

En waarom zouden de heidenen zoo spreken?

Laten zij toch naar zichzelf kijken. Wat hebben zij om op te roemen van hun kant? Niets met al.

Maar wij zullen in God blijven roemen, want: “Onze God is toch in den hemel, Hij doet al wat Hem behaagt.”

Kostelijke belijdenis van God.

Dat “toch” is tartend. Desnietteenstaande al het spotten der heidenen: God is toch in den hemel. En Hij werkt tot nu toe en tot in eeuwigheid.

Hij doet al wat Hem behaagt.

Dat is een zeer rijke belijdenis.

Het omvat de geheele geschiedenis, niets uitgesloten. Alle dingen die zich roeren en bewegen doen dat, omdat God zoo besloot in Zijn eeuwig besluit. En, positief of negatief, het moet alles dienen tot de komst van Zijn koninkrijk en tot de verheerlijking Zijner deugden.

En het centrum van al dat behagen Gods is Zijn Zoon Jezus Christus. Hij wordt daarom genoemd:

Mijn geliefde Zoon in Wien al Mijn welbehagen is.

Alle die dingen weet de Sioniet. En hij roemt erin. Tegenover de heidenen, zooals in dezen psalm.

En die roem is rijk en hecht, vooral als ge dien roem ziet tegenover het geknoei der heidenen.

Luistert:

“Hunlieder afgoden zijn zilver en goud, het werk van 's menschen handen. Zij hebben eenen mond, maar spreken niet, zij hebben oogen maar zien niet; ooren hebben zij, maar hooren niet, zij hebben eenen neus, maar zij rieken niet; hunne handen hebben zij, maar tasten niet, hunne voeten, maar gaan niet; zij geven geen geluid door hunne keel.”

Wat een beeld van ijdelheid en ledigheid!

Jesaja heeft hetzelfde betuigd, maar hij lachte. Hij spot met den man die uit één stronk twee dingen voortbrengt. Het ééne stuk neemt hij en maakt een vuur om zich te verwarmen. Hij roept uit: Ik was koud en ik ben warm geworden. Maar het andere stuk neemt hij, en maakt er een god van. Hij buigt zich voor dien god neer en zegt: o, mijn god, ontferm u mijner en red mij!

Geestelijke ironie!

En zoo staat het er letterlijk bij met de heidenen, met alle heidenen, ook die van onzen tijd, in deze verlichte (?) eeuw.

In alle knoeien der zondaren zijn zij nooit hooger opgeklommen dan de hoogte (liever, en beter, gezegd: de laagte) des menschen.

Het is geen wonder dat de afgoden van Griekenland zulke vuile wezens waren. Ze weerspiegelen niet dan het vuile hart van hen die de afgoden maakten.

Bespottelijk! Een mond te hebben en niet te spreken. Een hand te hebben, maar niet te tasten!

Daar staat de hoogmoedige mensch! Te midden van het werkmateriaal van het heelal. En hij verknoeit alles. Inplaats van den Maker van alles te roemen en te prijzen en te loven, neemt hij het werkmateriaal, en zegt: Gij zijt mijn god! Hij maakt van het creatuur een schepper. Maar het is niet zoo; het is de leugen.

En de straf komt.

De bidder bidt erom.

“Dat die ze maken hun gelijk worden, en al wie op hen vertrouwt.”

En dat gebed staat verhoord te worden; is alreede in beginsel verhoord. Wat waren die afgoden? Stomme dingen. Daar staan zij: stijf en strak en stil. Denkt aan het kerkhof. Denkt aan een lijk. Het is een begin der smarten. Hoe stijf ligt dat lichaam in de kist! Het is een profetie van de ijselijke verstijving in de hel. Daar zal nooit meer actie zijn. Daar is de verstijving van den eeuwigen dood. Ik moet er niet in komen. Het is te vreeselijk.

En toch: ze ontvingen hun loon naar den maatstaf

van Gods gerechtigheid. Ze vertrouwden op de ijdelheid; ze hebben zich laten zakken en zinken op hetgeen niet is, hetgeen volstrekt ijdel is. En zoo ontvangen ze precies wat ze gezaaid hebben tot oogst. Die afgoderij zaaide, ontvangt het loon der afgodendienaars. Ze worden gelijk aan het angstige stijve van een afgodsbeeld.

Hoe geheel anders zal het er naar toegaan in Israel! Tot dat volk spreekt de Heilige Geest dit:

“Israel, vertrouw gij op den Heere, Hij is hunne hulp en hun schild!”

En o, hoe hebben wij dat noodig!

Dat is waar, afgedacht van de zonde en de schuld die ons neerdrukt.

We zijn slechts schepselen. Ik denk, dat Adam het goed beseft heeft in den staat der oorspronkelijke gerechtigheid. Hij zal het onmiddelijk, inhaerent gezien hebben: ik ben slechts stof en assche. Ik kan niets zonder dien grooten God die mij doordringt, die mij omringt, de mij steeds terzijde staat. Ik leef in Hem en ik beweeg mij in Hem. Want zoo is het.

We spreken vaak van de *stijle* afhankelijkheid des schepsels. Wel, er is niemand die dat ten volle beseft. Ook de meest vrome niet. Neemt het hart der zaak: als God eventjes weg zou loopen van Zijn schepsel, zoo zouden we terugvallen in het niet. Elk vezeltje van ons lichaam wordt elk oogenblik *onderhouden* door dien vreeselijken God, die zoo zeer dicht bij ons is.

Ik denk, dat die waarheid voor de aandacht van Paulus zweefde toen hij zeide: Werkt uzelfs zaligheid met vrees en beven, want het is God die *in u werkt!* God is dicht bij U! Beseft het! En sidder!

We hebben dus God broodnoodig, zelfs als bloot schepsel.

Hoe meer, wanneer we gedenken aan ons bestaan als vuile zondaren. We zijn vuil en zondig en schuldig geworden door de zonde. En dat spelt grooter, oneindig grooter, nooddrift. Ge hebt God noodig, o zondaar!

Daarom, o Israel, vertrouw gij op den Heere!

Dat “gij” staat tegenover menschen die dat niet doen, en dat zijn de heidenen van zostraks. Die menschen kunnen zichzelf wel redden. Och arme! Wat zullen zij schrikken als ze straks dien vreeselijken God zien, en als ze dan te laat beseffen, dat die groote God steeds vlak bij hen was, door al hun ijdele leven heen!

Maar gij, o volk Israels, vertrouwt gij op den Heere!

Vertrouwen op den Heere wil zeggen, dat ge Uw leven niet kunt leven zonder Hem. Dat ge ten overstaan van Uw geheele leven zegt: Heere, ik kan niets! Maar Gij zijt de Almachtige, en Gij kunt alles doen wat U behaagt. Doe Gij het voor mij, Heere! Het is het nederige leven des Christens.

Dat laat ge U zakken en zinken op God. En daar-

uit wordt de heerlijkste actie geboren. Daar vindt ge ware heiligmaking. Dat volk wordt door God aan 't werk gezet.

En dan volgt het Evangelie dat eeuwig is.

"Hij is hunne hulp en hun schild."

Als God U helpt, dan zijt ge klaar. Dan is alles klaar. God zeide aan het kruis in Jezus Christus: Het is volbracht! En let wel, dat is absoluut waar. Al wat noodig was ter Uwer hulpe is volbracht. Ge behoeft, ge kunt, ge moogt er niets tot toedoen. Het zou toch maar aan geknoei zijn. Getuige alle ketterij.

Ge zijt bloot schepsel. Welnu, Hij draagt U en spaart U en geeft U Uw dagelijksch brood.

Ge zijt schuldig met een schuld die eeuwige straffen dreigt. Welnu, Hij gaat zelf onder die schuld staan en giet over Zichzelf (in Jezus) een eeuwige stortvloed van toorn. Wij zouden vergaan zijn onder Zijn toorn en vanwege Zijn grimmigheid zouden we eeuwiglijk verschrikt zijn (Moses, in Ps. 90). Welnu, Jezus wordt weggezeefd door dien stortvloed om Uwentwil. Wie zou niet jubelen?

Ge zijt vuil en zondig, en elke dag ziet meerder gruwelen. Welnu, God komt met Zijn Heilige Geest om U het hart te vernieuwen. En ge begint in de goede werken te wandelen die Hij verordeneerd heeft, opdat gij daarin zoudt wandelen.

O ja, mijn vriend, Hij is Uw hulp.

En dan zijn daar de vijanden.

Ik heb van der jeugd aan gehoord van dien brieschenden leeuw: de satan en duivel. Hij omringt Uw tente en is een sluipmoordenaar van den beginne. Hij heeft het verzien op Uw ondergang. Gij draagt God in Uw boezem en hij haat dien God. En daarom haat hij U.

Maar geen nood. God is U tot een schild. Al de vurige pijlen Satans worden uitgeblusht. Ge zijt veilig tegenover den duivel.

Want Jezus heeft gezegd: de poorten der hel zullen U niet overweldigen.

Daar is de wereld die door Satan geïnspireerd wordt.

En zij haat U.

Maar hebt goeden moed, zegt Jezus, Ik heb de wereld overwonnen.

God heeft van voorlang gezegd: Hij liet geen mensch toe hen te onderdrukken. Ge zijt veilig.

God is Uw schild.

En werd de zonde meerder? Daar werd Zijn genade meer overvloedig.

Wie zou niet jubelen bij het zien van zulk een Hulp en zulk een Schild?

G. Vos.

## FROM HOLY WRIT

### Exposition Of Hebrews 10:19-25

#### II.

In our former article we called attention to the fact, that here in the book of Hebrews in general and particularly in this passage, *drawing near* to God means a coming to the *living God*. When we draw near to God we draw near to God as He lives in the Holy Place, as He is enthroned on High.

We also noticed, that the text here in question teaches us that our drawing near to God must be done in *true hearts*, that is, with hearts that are filled with the love of God through the Holy Spirit. Our hearts must not be false. It is exactly the false heart that does not dare to come to God, the living God, before whose eyes all things are naked and open and Who tries the reins and hearts of men. Hence, we must draw near unto God with true hearts.

Such *true hearts*, we noticed, are hearts that are sprinkled from an *evil* conscience. And this sprinkling is realized in us through the operation of the Holy Spirit, Who works faith in our hearts—the faith that is energized by the love of God. In this faith we claim the righteousness, sanctification and complete redemption of Christ as our own.

For let it never be forgotten, that our drawing near to God is purely a matter of faith. There never was, nor shall there ever be a heart that is true, that is purified from an evil conscience, that is not a *believing* heart. The root-sin of all who do not enter with joy into the presence of God is: *unbelief*. It was because of their unbelief that Israel *could not* come into the land of Canaan, unto the holy hill of God in Zion. Hebrews 3:19. For without faith it is *impossible* to *please God*. He that comes to God must not come in order that by his coming he may make himself pleasing to God, but he must come believing that God is, and that He is a rewarder of those, who diligently seek Him. Heb. 11:6. Only by faith in Christ we are well-pleasing to God.

Drawing near to God is an *act* of faith!

Unto this faith the writer of Hebrews admonishes and stimulates us.

Where such a faith breaks forth the veil of unbelief has been lifted off our hearts, and we *behold* the glory of the inner sanctuary into which Jesus has entered as our great High-Priest and Paraclete, as He ever lives to pray for us. Here in faith there is a new consciousness, a new world of experience of that which is in Christ.



But now, in this essay, we wish to call attention to the fact, that our drawing near must not merely be one of faith, but it must be a drawing near in the *full assurance* of faith!

Is there then a difference between *faith* and the *full assurance* of faith? If so, in what sense can this be true?

Let us attend to our text.

The term "full assurance" is the translation of the Greek word *pleerophoria*. When we open our Bibles to the English and Dutch versions of this particular word, we notice, that it is variously rendered in both of these languages. In the American Standard Edition of the Revised Bible we read: "Let us draw near with a true heart in *fulness* of faith." (However in the margin we read the rendering "full assurance" with a reference to Heb. 11:1). Thus the term is also translated by A. T. Robertson in his "Word pictures of the New Testament". With this agrees the renderings of F. W. Grosheide in the Korte Verklaring of Hebrews. Writes he: "in abundance (overvloed) of faith". On the other hand the King James Version translates "in the *full assurance of faith*". Thus also the Staten Vertaling, or the Dutch translation of the common Dutch Bible. There we read "in *volle verzekerdheid* des geloofs."

Such a scholar of repute as Lightfoot inclines toward choosing the rendering "full assurance" above the simple "fulness". Writes he, in explaining this same word in Col. 2:2, "*the full assurance*., for such seems to be the meaning of the substantive wherever it occurs in the New Testament".

We prefer the rendering of the Holland Translation and the King James Version, which read: In the *full assurance* of faith.

The reasons?

Because the term *preerophorias* is really more meaningful and has a slightly different connotation than the Greek term, which in the New Testament, is commonly translated by "fulness". That is the term *pleerooma*. This latter term definitely refers to a fullness, the filling up of a certain measure. Thus, for instance, in Ephesians 3:19. Here we read of being filled with all the *fulness of God*, that is, with all the blessings that God has prepared for us in Christ, which blessings are then viewed as being the full-measure, the fullness. The measure is full. But in the term *pleerophorias* we have a slightly different notion. It is here the question of a thing *carried through* to the full point.

Now this latter thought is, in the case of our text, a very fine point. And it is also very significant as it has a bearing on the full and conscious life of faith.

And this latter observation is our second reason for choosing the rendering *full assurance* of faith.

For when the term *pleerophorias* is translated "full assurance" and not merely "fulness" the element of the *carrying through of faith to the very end* is underscored. It refers to faith as that activity of the heart, mind and soul, when it has been perfected, when it can go no farther in trusting and relying on God. The certainty in the soul of the believer, as a spiritual-psychological reality, can be no stronger. All doubt is dispelled in glad and joyful confidence.

Not only is this element just referred to underscored in this translation important, but the resultant meaning thus arrived also fits perfectly with the very *essence* of faith,—or faith as taught in the Holy Scriptures.

For what is the essence of faith? Is it not really the glad *assurance* of the personal participation in Christ. And this *assurance* is expressly stated to be the blessed manner of drawing near to God, in the translation that is rendered "full assurance". Of this *assurance* Hebrews 11:1 speaks as follows: "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen". Of the coming to this assurance of faith, the full assurance of faith, the entire life of Abraham is a living example. God, in His wondrous, pedagogical dealings with Abraham so leads him that all the dross of unbelief is taken away, is wrestled and prayed away. Finally the faith of Abraham is seen on Mt. Moriah as the *full assurance* of faith, when he offers Isaac, considering, that God was able to raise him from the dead. Here is the full assurance of faith that draws near to God in very truth. Faith could press forward no farther, the assurance could not be more intense and firm!

Oh, glad assurance of faith. It is, indeed, *pleerophorias*!

In such an intense assurance we must draw near to God—to God as He dwells in the most Holy Place, where all the Cherubims and Seraphims adore Him.

Unto this full-orbed and perfected faith we are admonished, unto this we must press forward.

Looking at this admonition in the text, we notice, that the writer does not merely speak in the imperative mode, he does not merely give a personal or collective *command*. He does not say: *Ye* must draw near, nor does he say: *you* (thou) must draw near. Nay, he does not use the imperative mode. Writes he: *Let us draw near*. . . . In so speaking the writer does not place himself at a distance from his readers, nor even above them in a condescending way. But he places himself in the very midst of the "brethren", whom he addresses by way of admonition.

Hence, this is an admonition in which the writer

includes himself. He has placed himself under this admonition first. It is a passionate, throbbing appeal, which is all the stronger, by reason of the fact, that the writer includes himself in this activity of drawing near unto God in full assurance of faith. He stands, he takes his position, as it were, at the very head of the believers, whom he thus admonishes. He says in holy impatience: Let us draw near in full assurance of faith, and thus let us press the foot-steps of Abraham at Mount Moriah!

And what is the incentive brought forward by the writer to thus encourage, admonish to this drawing near in the full assurance of faith? It is what we have in Christ, what is ours by reason of the suffering, death and resurrection of Christ.

Literally we read the following: "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holy place (unto the entrance of the holy place) by the blood of Jesus, which he hath dedicated to us as a new and living way, through the veil, that is, through His flesh."

Since we have all this in Jesus as a realized and accomplished fact for us, we should draw near in the full assurance of faith.

And we immediately ask: in what sense of the word does the writer mean that *we have* this boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus?

We emphasize: in what sense does the *text teach* this present possession of the benefits in Christ?

And we are certain that thus the matter must be stated. We are equally certain that this calls for painstaking and careful exegesis of the text and of the context.

We ask the following questions:

1. What is the meaning here of the term "boldness" to enter into the holiest?

2. What does it mean that *we have* this boldness? And, then, what does it mean that *we have* this boldness?

Does this boldness mean the *subjective courage* to draw near unto God, or must it be understood as meaning the *objective right* to do so? Is this merely a subjective sense of being free to enter into the holy place, or does it refer to a right that is ours on the statute books of God by reason of the New Covenant in Christ's blood?

What does it mean to *have* this boldness to enter? Does it mean that we have it in promise, a promise to all in the church, or does it mean to possess it in faith?

To these questions we will attempt to reply in the next issue.

Geo. C. Lubbers.

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## IN HIS FEAR

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### Church Membership In His Fear

#### 1.

#### An Important Matter.

Both the main topic, upon which we propose to write a few articles, and our sub-topic for this issue could, of course, have been formulated in question form. And yet the introduction of a question mark would have changed the formulation somewhat. To ask, "Is Church Membership a Matter of the Fear of the Lord?" and to write on that question, is not quite the same as writing on the topic "Church Membership in His Fear." The former leaves the matter open to doubt, and such a formulation would require a demonstration. The latter formulation, however, proceeds from the assumption that Church Membership, properly conceived, is a matter of the fear of the Lord, does not require or seek a demonstration of that fact, but desires to know the meaning of and implications of Church Membership in the Fear of the Lord. And that is, of course, the stand of the believer. He proceeds from the believing presupposition that all things are a matter of the fear of the Lord, and as a faithful child of God desires to know the way of the fear of the Lord, that he may walk therein. Nor can the believer properly ask the question really, "Is church membership in His fear an important matter?" Faith rules out any question here, but proceeds certainly from the viewpoint that it is certainly a matter of the utmost importance, rightly considered, a matter of life or death. And proceeding from the basis that it is important, faith desires more and more to understand and see its importance, that it may walk in the proper way. Hence, faith takes warning here against any skeptical or cynical attitude over against this matter.

When we speak here of "church membership", it is to be understood, of course, that we do not mean directly membership in the holy catholic church, as that expression is sometimes vaguely and with a certain false piety employed. Certainly, also membership in the holy catholic church is a matter in the highest sense of the fear of the Lord, and, as we hope to see, principally it is also very closely related to and involved in the subject at hand. But the subject we now are taking up is the matter of formal and official membership in a certain communion of churches not only, but of such membership in a particular congregation within those churches, and that, too, in the fear of the Lord.

And that is an important matter.

Important it is, from the practical viewpoint, first of all for the very simple and obvious reason that we, as a rule, are members of a certain church. I do not have the statistics at hand, but it is unquestionably true to a large extent of our nation in general that if they are not a church-going nation, they are a church-belonging people. Even in thoroughly modern circles membership in some church is the accepted thing, —though often it amounts only to having one's name on the roll. And the closer home we come, ecclesiastically speaking, the more church membership is a rule. In such a sphere the believer nowadays moves. And we often move in a sphere in which church membership, though it be from the viewpoint of faith lacking in interest and activity and even empty and formal, is yet in a certain sense very rabid. People who are otherwise not interested either in the truth or in what their own church stands for will often flare up when their church and their membership in that church is attacked in some way or other. And far from being rabid with respect to his own church and his membership therein, far from defending it purely from the motive of partisanship and a possessive feeling, the believer must be able to give a positive, well-grounded account of his membership in a given church.

Besides, we ought to be able to give account of our church membership for *ourselves*, as well as directly before our God. Especially is that true in the light of the fact that usually we are born and grow up in a certain church, and because the danger is that we stay there simply because we were born there, and because our membership becomes something almost automatic. That can very well be the case, for example, with those who belong to the next generation after 1924. Those who experienced the struggle of our churches, who were faced with the question whether they would remain faithful to the Reformed faith or not, were almost forced to give account to themselves of their position. But the generation that grows up afterwards, even though under faithful preaching and teaching they cannot fail to be reminded of the battle for the truth which took place in 1924, can very easily fall into the error of simply "going along" and assuming an entirely passive attitude over against the church to which they belong, so that finally when the need arises they are not even able to give account to themselves or to those that oppose them why they are in the Protestant Reformed Churches.

Also because of present circumstances and prevalent misconceptions in regard to the church both in the church at large and in Reformed circles and even in our own churches, one cannot fail to note that a proper understanding of the subject in hand is of the utmost significance.

We live at a time when church membership and

the question of the true and the false church is with many a "ticklish" subject, at a time when people are hesitant to take a stand and according to the Reformed manner declare definitely what is true and what is false. We have come to move in the sphere of a false tolerance-philosophy. And as a result many become "soft" in respect to the truth, are afraid, as they say, to offend others, and forget all about the stern and strict stand of our Reformed confessions. Besides, under the guise of assuming a scientific and open-minded attitude there are those in our times who really assume an attitude of skepticism over against the truth, and who refuse to take a stand and to proceed from that stand with regard to other churches when it comes to the question, "Where is the truth proclaimed?"

And, sad to say,—although that has always been the case in the church of Jesus Christ,—there are those too who purposely and wilfully refuse to take a proper stand with regard to the church, those even in our own churches who while they are members in the Protestant Reformed Churches deliberately run down all that is Protestant Reformed, openly defend the opposition, hold them up as an ideal of broadmindedness and piety, depreciate the differences between us and those that cast us out. And over against them it is necessary that the church shall take a stand, and that the people of God in the church take a definite and uncompromising stand, in order that as much as possible the church may be kept pure in the midst of the world, and in order that she may be able to defend herself over against the false doctrines and the false teachers that eat like a canker from within.

But there is still another class of members often, whom we may call the laggards. They are those who will go along with you as far as the principle is concerned, but who do not *practice* their stand in various ways, who in their life in the church and in relation to other churches, give the lie to the principle which they profess. They act as a weight, as a drag, upon the life of the church.

And with a view to all these circumstances it becomes increasingly evident that the believer's membership in the church in the fear of the Lord is a matter of the utmost import.

Besides, there are a number of misconceptions prevalent against which we must guard. Possibly one of the chief errors committed in our times is the error of those who always are seeking *unity*, who strive for unity at the expense of the truth. In the Protestant church world of late years that movement has made great strides. How often nowadays one hears of a merger between these two groups or of a proposed merger between those two large denominations. How beautifully men can paint the picture of a large and

powerful and united church which can be a force for good in the world, and which might be able to combat the powers of the united Romish Church. And always, of course, the cause of all the dissension and division in the church is found in the fact that there is too much doctrine, too many creeds that are specific in their doctrinal declarations. The denominational walls must be broken down, the confessions must be broadened, generalized, the church must agree on certain general principles, and thus the ideal of "one Lord, one faith, one baptism" must be realized in the church on earth. The church must be reduced to her lowest common denominator. Against that error we must beware!

And its cousin is known by the name of undenominationalism, which is prevalent in so-called fundamentalist circles. Also it despises the narrow limitations of creeds, and with false piety calls for a return to the simple Scriptures and to the gospel and creed of Christ. And sadly enough, even Reformed people are ensnared by this cunning craftiness at times.

Other movements and conceptions might be mentioned. There is, for example, a false idea of the multiformity of the church which has crept into Reformed circles, which in essence also denies the possibility of distinction between the true and the false church. There are movements in our time which call themselves "inter-denominational", movements that arrogate to themselves the duties and privileges and calling of the Church unlawfully.

And we must not make the mistake that we cannot be touched by all these factors. We live in that world. We see these things all around us, and sometimes among us. And we must be warned against them, must be founded in the truth concerning the church, in order that we may be able to call things by their correct name. We must know what the church is. We must know the relation between the "holy, catholic church" and the church institute in the world. We must know where and how that faith concerning the holy catholic church and the communion of saints may be experienced as a matter of living faith, and that as a matter of the experience of faith. We must know what we say when we confess in the language of the Heidelberg Catechism that we are and forever shall remain living members of that holy catholic church.

In the light of all this, and especially in the light of the fact that there is an intrinsic relation between our faith concerning the holy, catholic church and our membership in a given church in the world, as we hope to point out more fully, the subject becomes one that calls for the extreme of seriousness and earnestness, does it not?

H. C. Hoeksema.

## We Go To Church

(continued)

"Our Help is in the Name. . . ."

At the very opening of the divine service the pastor says: "Our help is in the Name of the Lord who made heaven and earth".

I wonder if the congregation pays much attention to those words which every Sabbath are uttered from the pulpit. Possibly for many of us (pastors often included) these words are little more than a mere formality. We have perhaps grown accustomed to the little expression, and its continued repetition only makes the words more meaningless.

Suppose that some morning your pastor would ascend the platform and say: "beloved in our Lord, our help is in chariots and horses", or, if he would say, "our help is in the power of the U. N. Forces". Everyone of us would realize at once that he had said something. It would have your attention at once. And every member, I believe, would rise up to deny it at once. Because every one of the believers would feel that the statement was not true. Our help is not in chariots or horses, nor in their modern counterparts of today's armed forces, but our help is in the Name of the Lord.

But then we ought to know what the Church means when it introduces the service with these words.

They are a literal quotation from Scripture. Psalm 124:8.

In the early days of the Reformation the churches had no definite votum. Luther said: "zum anfang zingen wir ein geistlich lied" (i.e. to begin our service let us sing a spiritual song) and thus they did. A Lasco, in his *Lithurgies* prescribes no votums. At Straatsburg, in the German churches the service began with, "In the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, amen." Calvin, however, used Psalm 124:8 and the Forms which come to us from the Pallz and Datheen are most of them preceded by the passage from Psalm 124 also. The Prov. Synod at Dordrecht in 1574 (Art. 37) prescribed these words as a votum in the churches, but it seems that the expression could not find general approval, hence its use was limited and optional. Some ministers began the service with a brief prayer, some with a song, others with some other passage of Holy Writ. Our DKO does not prescribe in detail what our order of worship is to be. Calvin's order of worship differed from Dr. A. Kuyper's and ours differs again from both of them. We have evidently in the course of time come to adopt a certain order of worship and it has this in its favor that it at least brings about some unity of

the worship-plan in the various churches. Worship needs order, but the order is not more important than the worship.

All Scripture is beautiful and many passages could well serve to open our services, but Psalm 124:8 is especially beautiful and applicable. One of the objections raised against such a formal votum was the sorry fact that so many of the people understood little, or nothing, of what the words meant. The words became to them a certain form of "mystery". Magical words, perhaps. Expressions which clerics use but the people do not understand. This objection, it seems to me can be easily removed by endeavoring to understand what the words of Psalm 124:8 mean.

What then do these words mean?

To know what the eighth verse means we ought to take a quick look at the entire psalm.

In this Psalm the church is threatened by destruction at the hands of the wicked. The threat is presented under four figures of speech: Verse 3, the enemies come on like an earthquake and wanted to swallow us up so that we would have disappeared into the earth; verse 4, they were like a flood, which would have overflowed us; verse 6, they attacked like wild beasts, with mouths open wide to devour us; verse 7, and they had encircled us, like a bird in a net.

Except the Lord had been for us, except God had surrounded us with His loving care, there would have been nothing left of us. If the Lord do not surround us with His Grace from moment to moment we shall be swept off the face of the earth, for our enemies are great and they come at us from all sides. But blessed be the Lord, blessed be the Lord, He is FOR us and who can be against us? He saved us when the earthquake came, He kept us when the flood rose up against us, He saved us from the teeth of the wild beasts and as for the net, we were already caught in it, but the Lord broke the net and we have escaped.

Well may such a delivered church say: Our help is in the Name of the Lord Who made heaven and earth. Well may Israel say and may we all say it today: Our help is in the Lord. Earthquakes and floods, wild beasts and snares . . . shall He Who created all things be unable to govern all things? Earthquakes, floods, wild beasts, and snares are all part of creation, are they not? And has not the Lord created heaven and earth? If He is so mighty that He can make heaven and earth, can He not direct the ragings of the wicked to His Own glory and to the salvation of the Church?

Our Help is in the Name!

A Confession. A shout of confidence. A cry of victory. The Name of the Lord, the Name of the Lord, in it is our Help. That is, for the honor and glory of His Name, for the display of His reputation (virtues) He lets the enemies come like an earthquake and

like wild beasts, only to be destroyed after they have served the purpose which God has with them. The children of God must know that God is our Only Salvation. Therefore the enemies come against us . . . in order that we should cry for help. If God be FOR us who can be against us. And let Israel say it forever, except God were FOR us, we would have perished from the earth long ago. What power have we against such formidable foes? None. Our help is in the Name.

Now on Sunday morning, your minister brings you these words and it is a confession of faith. We need help. We need to live out of faith to see that we need help. We see little need for help as we quietly, peacefully and comfortably meet together for the purpose of divine worship. In the days of visual persecution, when men came to church at the risk of their lives, when spies were at every window and the pounding of horse's hoofs could be heard on the pavement, then Psalm 124:8 was especially applicable. If the Lord be not our help we will be swallowed up before we ever have the first psalm verse sung, and what will then become of the rest of the service which the Christ has laid upon us? We on the other hand live amidst ease and luxury. We encountered no road-blocks on the way to church, no threats were hurled at us, no spies in church to implead us. The laws of our land forbid disturbance of the divine service. We can call the officers if anyone raises a riot against us. We live in such a peaceful time, do we not?

Psalm 124:8 has so little significance for us unless we see with eyes of faith.

We are God's Church in the midst of the world. Jesus said: marvel not my brethren if the world hate you and again, in the world ye shall have tribulation. The relation between world and church has not changed. The world has not improved. The enmity has not abated. The antithesis is there today as much as it ever was. The enemy has changed his tactics but not his purposes. The earthquake and the flood, the wild beasts and the snares are there today as well as ever . . . if only we have eyes which can see. It requires eyes of faith to see what Scripture says there is to see. We are threatened with the evil which Paul mentions, "men shall be lovers of their own selves", and again, "lovers of pleasures rather than lovers of God". Threatened with the evil of world-conformity. Threatened with dissensions, hierarchy, individualism, love of mastery, suspicions, sectarianism, strife, hatred, love of money. Threatened with departure from the truth in order to gain the world. Threatened with hundreds of machinations of Satan used against us daily. And abroad we see the two great world-powers locked in a titanic death-struggle, and we realize that behind it is Satan, exerting himself to acquire the vantage point of attack against the church of Christ.



Whatever the outcome of this world-struggle shall be, the things of Revelation must come to pass and the Anti-christ is getting things ready for his appearance.

In such a world the church comes together for divine worship. In His Name we come together to do what the world will never tolerate. We come to do what Satan hates to have done, to do that which makes him fly upon us with rage. We come to do that which it is risky to do and becomes daily more dangerous. We come together to take upon us the service of Christ and the stigma of the Hated One.

The times will come when this service becomes impossible. In the temple of God shall sit the Anti-christ demonstrating that he is God. In homes perhaps, in holes and dens of the earth . . . a remnant shall still do what the world forbids to do.

Our help is in the Name of the Lord. The time will come that the testimony of Christ shall disappear if the HELP do not Himself come from heaven. The triumphant Christ shall descend in glory to destroy the wicked and give victory to His Church.

Except God be FOR us we shall be swallowed up . . . but our Help is in His Name. With that confidence we open the service. Every service, until the Help comes from Heaven.

M. Gritters.



## Contribution

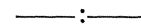
Esteemed Editor:

May I have just a little space in the Standard Bearer also, to ask a few questions with regard to the article of Rev. Blankespoor in re: the "Declaration of Principles" proposed by our last synod? I am confident that the editor can certainly give Rev. Blankespoor the light he seeks. However, since Rev. Blankespoor is the first to publicly refer to this "declaration" I am interested to know what his difficulties are in this matter. He speaks about origin, intentions, etc., but not one word about contents. I assume that he surely subscribes to the contents of this "declaration" and I cannot understand why he should be so concerned about who formulated it, or who it is pointed at. He surely knows that it was adopted by our synod, and that it was formulated by the Committee of pre-advice with the advice of the two seminary professors. Also, that it was requested by our Mission Committee, which also represents our denomination in the Mission field.

As to his question no. 4, do not the Christian Reformed and Liberated Churches also claim to adhere to the Confessions? And do they not misinterpret the same? The Christian Reformed Churches teach common grace, but they never changed their Confessions. And they maintain that they hold to the Confessions.

Also, Rev. Blankespoor states that the "declaration" speaks more on the subject of the Covenant than the subject of common grace. But, the error of the Liberated Churches with regards to the Covenant and the error of common grace in the Christian Reformed Churches are simply one and the same error. I feel that in the past 25 years the stand of our Churches on the subject of common grace has been made perfectly clear. And finally, why should any of our ministers, missionaries, or lay-men object to having this "declaration" at this time? It's the truth, isn't it? We confess this truth, do we not? Now please tell us why we should not boldly proclaim this truth, and instead of talking about origin and all other objections, thank God that we have leaders who *can* and *will* give us these "declarations" which we so sorely need. If there is any error in this "declaration" or any danger of proclaiming its contents, let some one tell us. And if it is the truth, let us adopt it.

A. H. Haan.



## HOLD THOU ME UP

I cannot trust myself, Jesus my Lord,  
Hold Thou me up!  
My feet had well nigh slipped, with Thine own word  
Hold Thou me up!  
O teach me how, and when, and where to go,  
The path of safety I entreat to know.

I cannot walk alone; I am a child,  
Hold Thou me up!  
And yet to try my strength am oft beguiled;  
Hold Thou me up!  
Support me, lead me, keep me in Thy way,  
Be Thou my Surety, Thou my Strength and Stay.

Oh do not let me fall! I cling to Thee;  
Hold Thou me up!  
Be merciful in this great strait to me,  
Hold Thou me up!  
Let Thy strong hand prevent me; Let Thy grace  
Carry me safely past the slippery place.