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MEDITATIE

Jeruzalem Der Goddeloozen Aanstoot

Ziet, Ik zal Jeruzalem stellen tot eene drink-schaal der zwijmeling allen volken rondom; ja, ook zal zij zijn over Juda in de belegering tegen Jeruzalem. En het zal te dien dage geschieden, dat ik Jeruzalem zal stellen tot een lastigen steen allen volken; allen, die zich daarmede beladen zullen gewisselijk doorsneden worden; en al de volken der aarde zullen zich tegen haar verzamelen.

De Heere spreekt!

Zach. 12:2, 3.

Hij is de HEERE, Jehova, de Ik zal zijn.

Hij is de Eerste, maar ook de Laatste; de Alpha en de Omega.

Hij verkondigt de dingen van den aanbeginne, en kondigt het einde aan van het begin, Hij, de Onveranderlijke!

Daarom kan hij ook aan Jeruzalem bekend maken, wat haar weg zal zijn door heel de geschiedenis tot het einde toe. Het is "de last van het woord des Heeren over Israel." 't Is de last van het Woord des Heeren over Israel, dat eeuwig zal bestaan.

Een nieuw gedeelte van de profetie van Zacharia wordt hier ingeleid. Het is het sluitstuk der voorzeggingen des profeten. En daarin wordt ons getekend Jeruzalems positie en worsteling en lijden temidden eener vijandige wereld, die haar belaagt en haat en van alle kanten belegert, het op haren ondergang heeft gemunt; en ook hare heerlijke toekomst. Daar is lijden en verdrukking te verwachten voor de Kerk des Heeren, maar ook bewaring en eene eindelijke volkomen overwinning. Eén profetie is het, want hetzelfde thema wordt er in behandeld; doch dit laatste stuk valt in twee deelen uiteen: het eerste gedeelte, dat loopt tot het zesde vers van hoofdstuk dertien, teekent ons Jeruzalem, zooals het door de vijanden wordt bestookt, en door God tot een aanstoot voor de goddelooze wereld

wordt gesteld, en zooals het door den Heere der heirscharen wordt beveiligd, geheiligd en gelouterd; en het tweede stuk loopt tot het einde der profetie, voorspelt denzelfden strijd, maar zooals deze uitloopt op Jeruzalems eindelijke overwinning.

't Is de last van het Woord des Heeren over Israel, over Juda en Jeruzalem, over de Kerk in het midden der wereld. . . .

En dit alles wordt ingeleid door het veelbeteekende: "De Heere spreekt."

De HEERE!

Hij is Jeruzalems God!

De VerbondsGod, Die Jeruzalem verkoren heeft tot Zijne erve, Die haren weg, haren strijd en haar lijden, maar ook overwinning heeft bepaald voor de grondlegging der wereld, en Die dien weg bestuurt en op het door Hem bepaalde einde doet aanloopen.

Hij kan spreken, want het einde is Hem van den aanbeginne bekend! En niets kan Zijn Woord ooit verijdelen, of "Zijn hoog besluit ooit keeren", want de HEERE is de volstrekt almachtige Potentaat!

Hij is het, Die den hemel uitbreidt en de aarde grondvest! Let wel, niet alleen heeft Hij in den beginne het firmament uitgebreid, maar nog altijd heeft dat firmament des hemels zijne spanning, omdat Hij het met Zijne almachtige hand die spanning geeft: Hij breidt den hemel uit als een dunnen doek. En als straks die uitgebreide hemel zijn doel heeft gediend, dan rolt Zijne hand hem toe. . . .

Hij heeft niet slechts bij de schepping de aarde ge-grondvest, maar Zijne hand doet nog altijd, en tot het einde toe, de aarde op hare grondvesten staan, en straks, wanneer ook die grondvesten haar doel hebben bereikt, heeft Hij slechts Zijne hand terug te trekken, om de wereld ineen te doen storten. . . .

Alle dingen zijn in Zijne hand!

Ook de geest des menschen!

Niets bedenkt de mensch, niets kunnen de machtigen der aarde beraadslagen tegen Jeruzalem, dat niet door Hem met besliste souvereiniteit wordt bepaald en bestuurt.

Hij formeert des menschen geest in zijn binnenste!

De God van Israel is het, Die in heel deze profetie spreekt!

De Heere HEERE!

Ziet! . . .

Ik zal Jeruzalem stellen . . .

Vergeten we niet, dat de profetie staat op een uitgaat van het standpunt van des profeten tijd en omstandigheden.

Zoo is het altijd. De openbaring der profetie is voor heel de Kerk de eeuwen door, voor de Kerk van den tegenwoordigen tijd en der toekomst, maar ook voor de geloovigen van den dag, waarin de profetie eerst werd gegeven. Houden we dit niet voor de aandacht, dan vallen we in de dwaling van het Chiliasme met zijn dispensationalisme en verbrokkeling van het Woord Gods. Dan is Jeruzalem altijd de aardsche stad van hout en steen, met zijn aardschen tempel en met zijn aardsche vormen van het koninkrijk Gods. Dan zijn Israel en Juda altijd het Oud Testamentische volk. Dan komt het nooit verder met het werk Gods door de geschiedenis. Dan geldt deze profetie ons feitelijk niet, maar alleen den Joden. En dan keert God straks op Zijn schreden door de geschiedenis terug, om te herbouwen en te herstellen, wat reeds lang verwoest werd.

Doch zoo is het niet!

Voor Gods volk de eeuwen door is ook dit gedeelte der Schrift. Hun geldt ook deze voorspelling.

En destijds, toen de profeet deze openbaring ontving, bestond dat volk des Heeren in den vorm nog eener natie, het Israel der oude bedeeling. Toen nam de Kerk nog den vorm aan van het aardsche Jeruzalem. En omdat ook voor de Kerk van dien dag dit Woord Gods gold, daarom kon het wel niet anders of het moest zich aansluiten bij de omstandigheden en de vormen, waaronder de Kerk van dien dag bestond.

Vandaar: Jeruzalem . . . en ook Juda.

Aan geen tegenstelling is hier te denken. Zoo is de uitdrukking: "zij zal ook over Juda zijn" wel verklaard. Juda ligt dan buiten Jeruzalem, dat door de vijanden wordt belegerd. En het maakt gemeene zaak met den vijand. Daarom zal de drinkschaal der zwijmeling ook "over Juda zijn". Doch een zeer onwaarschijnlijke verklaring mag dit worden geacht. En bovendien strijdt ze tegen hetgeen we in het vervolg van dit hoofdstuk van Juda lezen. Jeruzalem en Juda zijn één. Niet de drinkschaal der zwijmeling zal over Juda zijn, maar de last van hetzelfde Woord des Heeren over Israel, dat Jeruzalem geldt, is ook voor Juda. Tezamen vormen ze het ééne volk des verbonds. Beide zijn ze, als het ééne volk des Heeren, voorwerp van den haat der volken. En door den Heere worden ze gesteld tot een drinkschaal der zwijmeling allen volken.

Wezenlijk is dit Jeruzalem de Kerk in het midden

eener vijandige wereld!

Dit is wel duidelijk uit hetgeen we in het verleden uit de profetie van Zacharia hebben geleerd aangaande de stad Gods, die dorpsgewijze zou worden bewoond, die groot en heerlijk zou worden, in het midden waarvan alle volken zouden aanbidden. Dit is ook genoegzaam duidelijk uit het tiende vers van dit hoofdstuk, dat zeker op den Pinksterdag zijn allereerste vervulling had. En eindelijk wordt dit bevestigd door het Nieuwe Testament, dat immers altijd nog spreekt van Jeruzalem, schoon de aardsche stad reeds lang werd verwoest.

Jeruzalem is de Kerk!

Verschillende vormen neemt de stad Gods aan. Wezenlijk is ze altijd dezelfde. Nimmer bestaat het wezen van Jeruzalem in eene stad van hout en steen, van aardsche mensen en aardsche vormen van godsdienst. Altijd is Jeruzalem *stad Gods*, de stad, die fundamenten heeft, welker kunstenaar en bouwmeester God is, de gemeenschap van God met Zijn volk. In Jeruzalem woont God. Daar wandelt Hij met hen, daar zegent Hij hen, daar regeert Hij door Zijnen Geest en Zijne genade; en daar dient het volk Hem en verkondigt het de deugden Desgenen, die hen geroepen heeft uit de duisternis tot Zijn wonderbaar licht. In de oude bedeeling nam die stad Gods den vorm aan eener aardsche stad. Daar stond de aardsche tempel. Daar werden door aardsche priesters aardsche offeranden gebracht. Daar was ook de aardsche berg Sions en daar stond de aardsche troon van David. Dat alles werd verwoest, om nimmer in dien vorm weer te worden opgericht. Maar ofschoon de vorm van het oude Jeruzalem verdween, Jeruzalem bleef, en werd verhoogd en verheerlijkt. In de nieuwe bedeeling is Jeruzalem wezenlijk hemelsch, het Jeruzalem, dat boven is, hetwelk is onzer aller moeder. Want Jeruzalems Koning en Verlosser is gekomen, is gestorven, begraven, en ten derden dage opgewekt, verheerlijkt aan de rechterhand des Vaders, en heeft nu alle macht in hemel en op aarde. Tempel en altaar, de berg Sions en de troon Davids,—ze zijn thans alle boven, in den hemel, waar Christus is zittende aan de rechterhand Gods. Maar dit hemelsche Jeruzalem telt hare burgers ook op aarde. Ook in het midden eener vijandige wereld verschijnt dit hemelsche Jeruzalem.

De Kerk van den nieuw^{en} dag!

Want wel is die Kerk "gekomen tot den berg Sion, en de stad des levenden Gods, tot het hemelsche Jeruzalem, en de vele duizenden der engelen; tot de algemeene vergadering en de gemeente der eerstgeborenen, die in de hemelen opgeschreven zijn" (Heb. 12:22, 23).

Maar toch woont zij nog op aarde, en verkeert zij tijdelijk in de wereld. Straks neemt Jeruzalem haar eeuwigen vorm aan!

Dan komt er een nieuwe hemel en eene nieuwe aarde! En dan daalt 't volmaakte en hemelsche Jeru-

zalem uit den hemel van God op de nieuwe aarde neer!

De stad Gods in 't Kanaän der ruste!

Ik zal Jeruzalem stellen!

God stelt Zijn volk in de wereld in het midden der vijanden!

't Lijkt niet zoo!

't Schijnt veeleer alsof de vijanden Jeruzalem stellen tot het mikpunt van hunne booze aanvallen.

Al de volken der aarde verzamelen zich tegen haar! Van rondom rukken ze aan, om Jeruzalem te verwoesten. De stad Gods is belegerd, aan alle zijden ingesloten, volgens de voorstelling in deze profetie.

Zooals een wellustige dronkeman zich zet om zijn sterken drank op te zwelgen, zoo zijn de vijanden vergaderd, om zich aan Jeruzalem te goed te doen, hun haat en vijandschap aan Jeruzalem te bekoelen, haar te verwoesten. Jeruzalem is hun een steen, die hun in den weg staat. Ze zijn met man en macht gekomen om die "lastigen steen" voor altijd uit den weg te ruimen.

Zoo was het onder de oude bedeeling.

Letterlijk stond toen de stad Gods als een aardsche stad temidden van aardsche en vijandige volken. En altijd was ze gehaat. Door heel haar geschiedenis heen was ze het voorwerp van de pogingen der volkeren om haar ter aarde toe te verwoesten. En hare inwoners konden metterdaad klagen: "Ze hebben mij dikwijs benauwd van mijne jeugd af. Zegge nu Israel; zij hebben mij dikwijs van mijne jeugd af benauwd. . ." Ploegers hebben op mijnen rug geploegd; zij hebben hunne voren lang getogen. . ."

En niet anders is het onder de nieuwe bedeeling.

Neen, 't is niet langer een strijd van natie tegen natie. De volkeren der wereld kunnen zich niet langer stellen tegen Jeruzalem door op te trekken tegen eene stad en haar te belegeren. Jeruzalem en de vijand beide zijn thans onder alle volkeren der aarde.

Doch de strijd is daarom niet minder werkelijk.

Want de "wereld" staat onder de heerschappij van den vorst der duisternis. Zij heeft de duisternis liever dan het licht. Ze haat God en Zijn verbond en Zijn Christus en Zijn volk. En ze stelt zich altijd tegen de Kerk, om haar op te zwelgen, haar te verwoesten. Die Kerk is haar een lastige steen, die haar in den weg staat. Want die Kerk heeft het Woord Gods, en verkondigt dat Woord, en in die verkondiging staat ze voor de zaak des levenden Gods, en veroordeelt ze de wereld en de werken der duisternis.

Daarom bestoort ook thans die vijandige wereld de Kerk, en belegeren de volkeren der aarde Jeruzalem wel zeer werkelijk!

En die wereld gebruikt verschillende wapenen.

Soms valt ze op Jeruzalem aan door de wapenen der valsche philosophie, en legt ze hare mijnen van leugen en bedrog onder de grondvesten der stad. Soms

spreidt ze ten toon hare schatten voor de oogen van Jeruzalems burgers, haar geld en goed, haar macht en positie, haar eer van menschen en haar zingenot; de lust des vleesches, de lust der oogen, de grootheid des levens. Dikwijs ook, als ze merkt, dat geen valsche philosophie en geen schijnschoon der verleiding de Kerk tot afval kan bewegen, openbaart ze zich in hare ware gedaante van haat en nijd en vijandschap tegen den allerhoogsten God. . . .

Dan trekt ze het zwaard!

Dan benart ze de burgers van Jeruzalem in hun aardsche positie!

Dan geeft ze Gods volk geen plaats meer voor het hol van hunnen voet. Dan veroorlooft ze hun niet om te koopen of te verkoopen!

Dan doodt ze hen den ganschen dag!

En toch: 't is alles van den HEERE!

Ik zal Jeruzalem stellen!

Een aanstoot!

Meer dan overwinnaar is Jeruzalem!

Nooit wordt des vijands doel gediend in deze belegering van Jeruzalem, in de vervolging der Kerk. 't Is God, die Jeruzalem alzoo in het midden der vijanden stelt. 't Is Gods doel, dat gediend moet worden!

Want Hij stelt Jeruzalem tot een zwijmeldrank, en tot een "lastigen" steen.

Figuurlijke taal wordt hier gebruikt, om de gedachte zoo scherp mogelijk voor te stellen. Jeruzalem wordt voorgesteld als een schaal vol van een bezwijmenden drank. Gretiglijk zwelgen de vijanden den drank op. Doch ziet, ze worden dronken, ze doen vreemd; ze tuimelen, ze waggelen; ze weten niet wat ze doen. Of ook: Jeruzalem is een zware steen. En de vijanden trachten den steen uit den weg te ruimen. Doch ze lichten zich een breuk aan den steen.

Jeruzalem een aanstoot!

Zoo toch is de gedachte. Zeker, door het beeld van den zwijmeldrank en den "lastigen", veel te zwaren steen, wordt ook aangeduid, dat de vijand tevergeefs op Jeruzalem zal aanvallen, nooit de overwinning zal hebben, dat Jeruzalem door hen nimmer zal kunnen worden verwoest. Maar toch: door den Heere wordt Jeruzalem gesteld in het midden der vijanden, en dat als een bezwijmenden drank, als een steen, waaraan men zich een breuk tilt.

Een steen des aanstoots en een rots der ergernis!

Zoo was het centraal met Christus. Zoo is het nog altijd met de Kerk des Heeren in de wereld, die staat voor de zaak des levenden Gods. Hoemeer die wereld zich keert tegen de Kerk, hoe dwazer ze wordt en doet. En hoemeer ze op de Kerk aanvalt, hoe meer ze haar eigen verwoesting werkt!

Staat dan voor de zaak des levenden Gods!

De Heere spreekt!

H. H.

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CONTENTS

Page

MEDITATIE —	
JERUZALEM, DER GODDELOOZEN AANSTOOT.....	417
Rev. H. Hoeksema.	
EDITORIALS —	
STEDFAST AND ABOUNDING.....	420
Rev. H. Hoeksema.	
THE TRIPLE KNOWLEDGE —	
EXPOSITION OF THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM.....	424
Rev. H. Hoeksema.	
THE LIVING CREATURES (CHERUBIM) IN EZEK.	
1 and 10	427
Rev. G. M. Ophoff.	
SMART TE MIDDEN VAN VALSCHHEID.....	430
Rev. G. Vos.	
GEDOOPT VOOR DE DOODEN.....	432
Rev. W. Verhil.	
GOVERNMENT RELIEF AND THE DEACONATE.....	434
Rev. L. Vermeer.	
SUBMISSION TO CHURCH GOVERNMENT.....	436
Rev. J. D. de Jong.	
THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL AND THE CHURCH.....	438
Rev. G. Lubbers.	
NIEUWS VAN ONZE KERKEN.....	440
Mr. S. De Vries.	

EDITORIALS

Stedfast And Abounding

PRE-SYNODICAL SERMON

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not vain in the Lord.

I Cor. 15:58.

A mighty faith and a great love express themselves in the words of address that introduce this exhortation; a faith, not in the work of man, but in the indestructableness of the work of the Lord; and a love far transcending all mere human bonds and relationships designated by that term. "My beloved brethren!" Was not the condition of the Church at Corinth such that the relation of love denoted by these words had been strained to the breaking point if not actually severed? For a long season the apostle Paul had labored in the idolatrous city of Corinth, for the Lord had much people there. Through his labors a church of Jesus Christ had come to manifestation there, had been called out of the world into the kingdom of God's dear Son, out of the darkness of heathendom into the light of the gospel of Christ. And, behold, how quickly the wiles of the devil had deceived the believers in Corinth; how easily the deceitfulness of sin had wrought havoc in the youthful church! Disrupted they were by the spirit of partisanship, so that one said: "I am of Apollos", another: "I am of Cephas"; a third: "I am of Paul"; while a fourth would acclaim Christ as the head of his party! Disfigured the church was by shameful sins and corruptions, and at their love-feasts one was hungry and another drunken! And its very foundations were shaken by false doctrine, so that they even denied the resurrection of the dead! Yet, approaching the close of his epistle to them, in which he instructed, admonished, rebuked them, the apostle in this final exhortation does not hesitate to address them as his beloved brethren! He knew that the church of Corinth was not his work, but the work of the Lord, and that the gates of hell cannot overwhelm the church of Christ in the world. He knew, too, that the believers in this world still carry about with them the "body of this death", and so, through the darkness he could perceive the light, through the corruption of sin he saw the saints in Christ Jesus, through the dissension and disruption he saw the unity of the communion of Christ's body, and he does not hesitate to address them even now as "my beloved brethren!"

In the narrowest sense the conjunction "therefore" connects this exhortation with the immediately preceding verse. God giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, we know that our work shall not be vain in the Lord. Let us, then, be stedfast and unmoveable, constantly abounding in the work of the Lord. In a broader sense, however, this exhortation constitutes the conclusion of the entire chapter on the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the glorious resurrection of the saints with him. It is in this resurrection that they have the hope of victory; let them, therefore, be stedfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. And in the widest sense, we may, we cannot fail to see in this exhortation a reference to all the apostle had written to them in this epistle. Glancing back over the entire letter, the apostle realizes that they had need of the exhortation to be stedfast and unmoveable, and to abound in Christ's work. And always again the church of the Lord Jesus Christ has need of hearing this twofold admonition: persevere and abound; and of being reminded of her sure hope: your work will not be vain in the Lord! And the more need she has to hear this Word of God as the time of the coming of Christ approaches, apostacy from the faith increases, wickedness abounds in the world, and the position of the church in the world becomes more precarious and apparently impossible. It is with this in mind that I decided to call your and my own attention to this Scripture tonight.

We see at a glance that the words of our text contain a twofold exhortation, the two parts of which are very closely related and interdependent. The first part of the admonition urges us to persevere. For such is the meaning of the figurative expressions: *stedfast* and *unmoveable*. Both these expressions are, evidently, figurative. Both make us think of an edifice that is built upon a sure foundation, or of the sturdy oak that is firmly and deeply rooted in the ground, or of the rocky cliff that proudly rises in an almost perpendicular line from the surface of the ocean, and against which the angry billows beat in vain. And both terms together refer to what we express by the phrase "perseverance of the saints". The first term "stedfast" considers this perseverance as such, by itself, apart from its relation to the evil influences of the world and the attacks of the enemy; the second word, "unmoveable", looks at that same perseverance, but this time from the aspect of its being put to a severe test. The first expression brings to your mind the mighty oak as it stands quietly in the calm atmosphere; the second word shows you that same oak as it is swept by the tempest only to strike its roots more deeply in the ground. The first term makes you think of the rock as it rises from the plains of Wyoming, the second of the rock as it stands in the midst of the

raging waves of the sea. And together the two words might be paraphrased by the exhortation: be ye, therefore, persevering, whatever forces of darkness rise against you!

To be stedfast means to stand somewhere, on a definite, clearly circumscribed place, and to stand there firmly. For the Church as a whole, as well as for the individual believer, this place on which to stand is Christ. Christ is the sole and sure foundation of the Church, and on Him the Church is founded. He is the soil in which the individual believer is rooted, from which he draws his life, his all. The power by which the Church is fastened to this sure foundation, and by which the believer is rooted in Christ, is the spiritual power of faith, that faith which is both, a certain knowledge of all that God has revealed in His Word, and a hearty confidence, whereby I rely wholly, for time and eternity, on the God of my salvation in Christ Jesus our Lord. It follows, therefore, that with respect to her conscious life and walk in the world, the Church organically and institutionally, and the believer individually must be stedfast in the truth as it is revealed in the Scriptures. "Be ye, therefore, stedfast" means: be firmly established in the truth as it is in Christ!

Now, what does this imply? First of all, it means that believers should know the truth. They should have a clear and full conception of the whole counsel of God concerning our salvation. I say, a clear, that is, well defined conception of the truth. Our knowledge of the truth must not be vague and ambiguous, for if it is, we will not be able to discern between the truth and the lie; and if we fail clearly to distinguish between truth and error, we cannot clearly discern the place on which we must stand, we will wander away from the foundation of truth, and before we even know will have landed in the sphere of the lie. For the same reason, our knowledge of the truth must be complete, full, embracing the whole counsel of God. We must not be satisfied with a little gospel one can write on his thumbnail, but appropriate all that God has revealed to us in His Word. It implies, in the second place, that this truth is spiritually appropriated by us. Mere intellectual knowledge of the truth is not sufficient. Stedfastness means that we firmly stand on the basis of that truth, and that, therefore, it has become for us a living conviction, a deeply rooted certainty, the certainty of faith. We, then, know the truth spiritually. We embrace it with all our heart. We love it and always give it the testimony that it is the truth. Thirdly, to be stedfast also implies, that we confess the truth. We do so as a church in our standards. For us this means that we stand on the basis of the Reformed Confessions, unadulterated by the alien elements of the "three points", the heart of which is the truth of God's absolutely sover-

eign grace. But we also confess the truth as individual Christians in the midst of the world. To stand on the basis of the truth, to preach and to teach and to confess that truth in all its purity and definiteness,—that is to be stedfast. And, lastly, from this it follows, that this truth also becomes the sole controlling power in our actual life, so that we gladly and stedfastly run in the way of God's commandments, and stand for the cause of the Son of God in the midst of the world.

Now, we must maintain this stedfastness in the midst of the world. And this implies that our perseverance in the truth will be tested. The world lies in darkness. It loves darkness rather than light. It stands in enmity against God and His Christ. It loves the lie and hates the truth. And it delights to live from the principle of the lie. It develops the lie in all kinds of false philosophy and heresies, and it creates for itself a world full of the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. And this world, with its Prince, the devil, is not purely external to the church visible in the world. It is always in the church, in the carnal element of the church as well as in the old nature of believers. And this "world" cannot leave the church alone. It must needs attack her. It will try to make inroads into the Church. It will attempt to deceive her by its false philosophy, and to confuse her mind and heart by all kinds of heresies. And it will tempt her to seek the things of the world, to follow after the vanities of its idols, to seek the lust of the flesh, that she may be swallowed up by its corruption. Well, it is in the midst of that world that the church must be stedfast. Hence, the apostle adds: "unmoveable". Always the world will try to move you from your sure foundation. Winds of false doctrine will sweep against you to carry you hither and thither; tempests of persecutions will arise threatening death and destruction; sweet siren's songs of carnal lusts will be sung on your very doorstep to lure you away from Christ as revealed in the Scriptures; but in the midst of it all stand ye unmoveable on the basis of the truth, and let that truth in Christ dominate your whole life, to the praise of the glory of His grace in the beloved!

Of course, we all understand that this would be quite impossible, if it were not for the power of God's grace. The power of our perseverance is God's preservation of us. We are kept in the power of God. Yet, let us not forget, that this power of preservation does not remain external to us, so that we are passively kept in the world and led unto glory: it passes through us, and in us becomes the power of God, the power of faith, whereby we may fight the good fight even unto the end that no one take our crown. No, we do not persevere in our own strength: if our weak hand had to hold God's hand, we would surely be lost. Nor do we speak the full truth when we insist that God holds

our hand, so that we are passively carried along. Rather does God's power of grace hold and preserve us from within, from our deepest heart, and in the strength which His grace supplies do we hold on to Him in Christ. And so, even though it is all of God's sovereign grace, there is room for the constant admonition: "Be ye, therefore, stedfast, unmoveable."

But there is another element in this exhortation, intimately related to the first: "always abounding in the work of the Lord." I like to emphasize, first of all, that the work in which we must abound is definitely *the work of the Lord*. Do not be too hasty in paraphrasing this expression into: "the work *for* the Lord," for then we might miss the true meaning of the apostle. O, we in our modern times hear a good deal about working for the Lord. To work for the Lord, to do something for Jesus,—that is true Christianity! It matters not what we believe, if we only do something for Christ! Yes, but let us not forget that it is the work *of* the Lord in which we are exhorted to be abounding by the words of our text. And this means, first of all, that the work is most emphatically *His*, not ours. It is His, not only in the sense that He determines what must be done, that He alone has the prerogative and authority to command and to demand strict obedience; but it is His work also in the sense that it is *He that does it!* He did the work *for* us, in our stead and in our behalf when He shed His life-blood on the accursed tree and was obedient even unto the death of the cross. It is He that also does the work within us, calling us out of darkness into marvelous light by His Spirit and Word, uniting us with Himself, clothing us with everlasting righteousness, and making us partakers of everlasting life and glory. But it is He also, that works through us, that bears fruit in us, that preaches, that teaches, that exhorts and admonishes, that confesses and fights the good fight *through the believers*. This applies, to be sure, to the work of officebearers, of the ministers of the Word, the elders and deacons. If He does not speak His own Word there is no preaching. If He does not instruct and admonish and handle the keys of the kingdom of heaven, there is no instruction or discipline. If He does not function as the merciful High Priest, there is no work of mercy. If He does not work His work through our synodical gathering, counsel and lead, and deliberate through us, there is no synod. But this is also true of every believer in all his life and walk and confession. In as far as he serves the Lord Christ, it is Christ that works through him. He is the vine, we are the branches: and He bears fruit through us! The work is the work of the Lord!

But in this work of the Lord we must abound! Always abound! We might say, that the work of the Lord overflows in us and through us, and because it overflows, abounds in us as rational, moral creatures,

it takes into its service our hearts and minds and souls and wills and all our strength, so that we become in this true and correct sense of the word co-workers with Christ! Even though, therefore, it is the work of the Lord and not ours, though it is Christ that works and not we, yet we become conscious partakers of His work, and there is room for the admonition: always abound in the work of the Lord! And you will now also understand that in this exhortation two elements should have all the emphasis: it must be the *work of the Lord* in which you are engaged, and in that work you must constantly *abound*. It must be the work of the Lord! You must not think your own thoughts, you must not speak your own word, you must not preach your own philosophy, you must not accomplish your own will, or work your own work: you must be engaged in the work of the Lord. And in this work we must not be lax or indolent, but diligent, and that, too, constantly: always abounding! And well may all of us, but especially we as officebearers, take this admonition to heart, not in order that we should make some vain resolutions henceforth to heed this exhortation, but rather that we may confess our weakness and our unfaithfulness, and ask the Lord whose work it is for His grace and Spirit, that we may always be more and more abounding in His work!

It will be evident, too, that there is a very close relation between the two parts of this double admonition: be persevering and be abounding in the work of the Lord. And the relation is mutual. On the one hand, to be stedfast and unmoveable, to persevere in the truth, is an indispensable condition for abounding in the work of the Lord. We must be stedfast in order to abound. This is denied or, at least, ignored by many in our day. What does it matter, say they, whether we know the truth, whether we are instructed in the whole counsel of God, whether we stand on the basis of a very definite and clearly circumscribed confession, or not? If only we know that we are saved and that we belong to Christ, it is quite sufficient! Let us forget rather about our differences, and be up and doing in the work of the Lord! But this is very dangerous and deceptive talk. It is quite impossible to be negligent in regard to the truth, to be indifferent in respect to the stand we take in our confession, and then to abound in the work of the Lord. The reason is that it must be the work of the Lord, and not our own work, in which we must abound. And how shall we know how to abound or whether we abound in His work, unless we know and stand on the basis of the truth? How shall our preaching and teaching and exhortation, our confession and walk in the midst of the world be an abounding in the work of the Lord, unless it is all according to His Word as contained in the Scriptures? And how shall it be according to that Word, unless we know and are stedfast in the truth? Surely, the two

cannot be separated: we must be stedfast and unmoveable in order to abound in the work of the Lord!

Yet, on the other hand, it is equally true, that abounding in the work of the Lord is necessary unto true stedfastness. For, of what good would it be, if we know the will of the Lord, and know what is His work, if we do not accomplish it, if we are not abounding in it? Dead intellectualism, cold, good for nothing orthodoxy, confessionalism, then will be the result. We will then be able to expound true doctrine in every detail, and to defend Reformed truth against anyone that contradicts or corrupts it; we may even be proud of our Reformed Confessions; but it is all faith without works, which is dead. And dead intellectualism cannot endure, will surely fail in the evil day. A church, or an individual believer cannot remain stedfast merely on the basis of a dead faith, of cold intellectualism. And, therefore, even as it is necessary to be stedfast, and not to be moved to and fro, in order to abound in the work of the Lord, so, on the other hand, to abound in His work is an indispensable condition unto spiritual stedfastness! Let us, therefore, hear this Word of God, and be found faithful in the work of the Lord, laboring while it is day, ere the night cometh in which no man can work!

We may, indeed, be assured of fruit. We know that our labor shall not be vain in the Lord! "Your toil," the apostle here says. He had written: "the work of the Lord." Now he writes: "Your labor" or toil. And, indeed, as we abound in the work of the Lord, that work assumes the form of toil, hard labor, struggle, battle, suffering. And always the reason is: the opposition of the flesh, both from within and from without. If as believers, and more particularly as officebearers, we would please the flesh, we need not toil, and suffer, and labor, and be in fear and trouble, in anxiety and worry. But if we would abound in the work of the Lord, our own flesh opposes us, and the flesh in the church hates us, and the world fills us with reproach! The work of the Lord is not of but opposed to the flesh! Hence, we must *labor* in the Lord!

That toil, however, shall not be vain. Vain is all work that is in the last analysis fruitless, that bears no abiding fruit. Vain is the effort of a horse in a treadmill, that toils and labors all day long without advancing. Vain is all the toil and labor, all the science and philosophy, all the invention and production of the world. For, even though it meets with temporary success, it is encompassed on every side by death, and it will all be destroyed in that day, when the very elements of the world shall melt and be consumed. There is no abiding fruit of the work of man outside of Christ. To man it may be said: "you know that your labor shall be vain in the world!" Vanity of vanity, saith the preacher, all is vanity! But this

cannot be said of "your labor in the Lord". It may often appear vain to us. Because neither the work in the Lord nor the fruit of that work belong to this world, the latter may frequently appear very efficient and fruitful, while the work of the Lord seems vain. And this may cause us to be discouraged often. Yet, our labor in the Lord cannot be vain. It always bears fruit. And its fruit will appear in the day when the Lord Himself shall be manifested and we shall be manifested in glory with Him!

We know this, because we know that the Lord is risen! He was dead and, behold, He liveth forevermore! Death has no more dominion over Him! He is the Lord of life! His resurrection was no return to our mortality and corruptibleness, our weakness and our shame, but an advance into immortality and incorruption, into power and glory, the glory of the image of the heavenly. Our labor in the sphere of that risen Lord is not vain. It is not limited by death, it is transcendent! It can never be destroyed, it will abide forever. For, presently, that living Lord shall come again, and be manifested in all His glory. Then His work, even His work through our toil, shall be manifested with Him. This mortal shall put on immortality, and this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and the saying shall be brought to pass: death is swallowed up in victory! And in that final victory it will be revealed, that in the Lord our labor was never vain, shall bear eternal fruit in everlasting glory!

We know this. Yes, but only by faith. We know this, yes, but only as we look at our risen Lord. It is not the things that are seen that can ever assure us of the fruithfulness of our toil. Let us, therefore, be stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. And if the work should become burdensome and difficult, and if we should be inclined to grow weary and faint and discouraged, let us not forget to fix our eyes on Him Who is the resurrection and the life, our glorious Lord! Then we shall take courage and know, that our labor shall not be vain in Him!

H. H.

SEVENTEENTH ANNUAL FIELD-DAY

will be held July 4th at Ideal Park. The program will begin at 10:00 with games for the children. Speakers for the day will be Rev. H. Hoeksema and Rev. A. Petter. There are plenty of seats and benches.

We have our own Canteen this year. Come one and all and spend the day with us in Christian fellowship. Directions: from Grand Rapids— $3\frac{1}{4}$ mile from South Beltline, turn $\frac{1}{2}$ mile West, then $\frac{1}{4}$ mile South. From Kalamazoo: $1\frac{1}{2}$ mile north of Cutlerville on Division, turn $\frac{1}{2}$ mile West, then $\frac{1}{4}$ mile South.

The Committee.

The Triple Knowledge

An Exposition Of The Heidelberg Catechism

V.

LORD'S DAY IV.

3.

The Justice Of God's Mercy.

Is not God then also merciful? In this third and last question of Lord's day IV is expressed the final attempt on the part of sinful man to find a way out of his misery without satisfaction and without repentance, to change the living God so as to make it quite safe to sin before His face. The first attempt involved an attack on the right of God to demand of the sinner that which he cannot perform. The second denied God's punitive justice. And in this last question the sinful mind makes the foolish attempt to divide and to divorce from one another the very virtues of God, particularly those of His justice and mercy, and to introduce a conflict between them, such a conflict that God's mercy induces Him to deny His justice. The question is closely related to the preceding one, and implies an objection to the answer our Catechism gave to it. God will not leave sin unpunished. His justice demands punishment. He is filled with wrath against all our sin, original and actual. He curses all that do not keep His good commandments. And He punishes them with temporal as well as with eternal punishment. Such is the terrible wrath of God. But now comes the question: is not God then also merciful? The question contains an objection to the conception of God presented in answer to the tenth question. And how common an objection it is! How frequently one meets with it in actual life! The objector that raises this question really means to say that if you insist that God is always filled with wrath against the sinner, and that He punishes sin in time and eternity, your conception of God is that of a cruel tyrant, who knows of no mercy, a Shylock, that wants his pound of flesh! This indictment is brought against those who deny that God can be gracious at all to the sinner outside of Christ, as well as against them that maintain the truth of eternal punishment in hell. God's mercy militates against His justice, and prevents Him from executing His righteous wrath upon the head of the sinner!

However, the Catechism denies the existence of such a conflict in God. It readily grants that God is merciful. But it denies that this mercy of God eliminates the execution of His justice and righteous wrath.

It insists that the blessed mercy of God can reach the creature only through the channels of His justice. "God is indeed merciful, but also just therefore his justice requires, that sin which is committed against the most high majesty of God, be also punished with extreme, that is, with everlasting punishment of body and soul."

God's justice is that virtue according to which He maintains Himself as the only Good as the sovereign Governor of the universe. God is good. He is a light, and there is no darkness in Him at all. He is the implication of all infinite perfections. And as the infinitely perfect One He reveals Himself in His relation to, and His dealings with the moral creature. He will be glorified. For He made all things for His own name's sake, even the wicked unto the day of evil. He seeks His own glory in the righteous and in the wicked both. And this means that it is His will that all the moral creatures shall know Him and acknowledge Him as the infinitely perfect Sovereign of heaven and earth, for God's glory is the radiation of His divine perfection. The creature must confess that God is God, that He is the absolute Lord, and that He is the perfection of goodness. Hence, God always reveals Himself to the moral creature as the perfect Sovereign of heaven and earth. He does so by rewarding the good with good, the evil with evil. From this fundamental rule of His government God never departs. From the implications of this rule no creature can ever escape, not even for a moment. God, Who seeks His own glory and would have the creature know that He is infinite perfection, blesses the righteous. He makes the good happy in his goodness, in order that he may taste and acknowledge that the Lord is good. And He makes the evil one miserable. He curses him in the way of his wickedness, in order that the wicked, too, may experience and confess that He is good. "With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful; with an upright man thou wilt shew thyself upright; with the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure, and with the froward thou wilt shew thyself froward. For thou wilt save the afflicted people; but wilt bring down high looks." Ps. 18:25-27. And the Spirit teaches us to pray: "Do good, O Lord, unto those that be good, and to them that are upright in their hearts;" and assures us: "As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity: but peace shall be upon Israel." Ps. 125:4, 5. This, then, is the justice of God. According to it, He so governs the universe that He becomes known to all His moral creatures as the absolutely good Lord, by rewarding the good with good, the evil with evil.

God's mercy, too, is His infinite goodness. But mercy considers this goodness of God from the viewpoint that He is the infinitely blessed One. With God there is life and light, fulness of joy and gladness;

there are pleasures forevermore at His right hand. And even as He is blessed in Himself, and that, too, as the infinitely perfect One, so He is the sole Fount of all blessing, of all life and joy and delight, for all His creatures. For the will to glorify Himself implies that He purposes to reveal Himself as the eternally blessed God. That God is merciful, therefore, signifies the will and desire in God to make the creature share in His own divine blessedness. If, therefore, that creature is in depths of misery, the mercy of God becomes revealed in the divine act of deliverance. In relation to the creature, therefore, the mercy of God is that divine virtue according to which He delivers the creature from all misery and fills him with life and joy.

Now, these two perfections in God are often presented as if they are or might be in conflict with each other. This is the case, according to this conception, as soon as God's mercy and justice are applied to the sinner. Then God confronts a dilemma. According to the justice of God, He must make the sinner miserable; according to His mercy, however, He desires to deliver him from all misery and to fill him with blessedness. If, therefore, God will exercise His justice, He cannot show His mercy to the sinner. And, on the other hand, if He would reveal His mercy, He cannot execute His justice. Now, according to the conception that is implied in this eleventh question of the Catechism, God's mercy prevails against His justice. This is in the very nature of mercy, not only among men, but also in God. A just mercy is a contradiction in terms. If a criminal receives mercy from the court, justice is set aside in his case. Justice is overruled; mercy prevails; the criminal is pardoned. The same, according to this view, must be true of God, if He is merciful. He is just, to be sure, and according to this virtue He strikes the sinner with the curse in His wrath. But He is also merciful. And in His mercy it is impossible that He can cause suffering and misery to the creature, even though he be worthy of punishment. He yearns for the happiness of the sinner. The result is that He denies His justice, and blesses the sinner even in his sin and guilt. By some this is applied consistently: without satisfaction of His justice, God bestows upon the sinner eternal life and bliss. By others this same error is applied only to this temporal life and existence: without any basis of righteousness God is gracious to and blesses the sinner in His common mercy.

The fundamental error of this conception is apparent: it denies the oneness of God, and presupposes a conflict between the virtues of truth, faithfulness, righteousness, holiness, and justice, on the one hand, and those of love, grace and mercy on the other. Mercy and justice are separated. They are presented as opposed to each other. But this whole conception is false. God is one. It is true, He is revealed to us in

many perfections, but all these divine attributes are one in God. We may not separate them, even though they can be distinguished. God is His attributes. His mercy is His justice, and His justice is His mercy. And therefore, His mercy is always a just and righteous mercy; and His justice is always merciful. It is this truth that is denied by the objector that is introduced to us in the eleventh question of the Catechism. And this denial is a very fundamental error, that vitiates all the theology and the whole conception of life of those that present it as the truth. We must emphasize, therefore, that God is one, and that all His attributes are one in Him. The divine virtue of simplicity must be maintained.

If this is clearly understood, it will at once be recognized that unjust mercy is fundamentally no mercy, and that the latter, far from overruling and prevailing against mercy, cannot even be bestowed upon the sinner, except in the way of and with strictest maintenance of justice. This is even true in human life. Suppose that a child has grievously sinned, and that the parent should inflict a severe punishment upon him. However, he cannot bear the very thought of seeing his child suffer, and so he refrains from punishing him. Is the motive on the part of the parent for not chastising the child to be considered mercy? Of course not. It is merely a sinful weakness. And instead of blessing the child and bestowing a good upon him, it hardens him in his sin. Or suppose that a judge, instead of maintaining law and justice, pardons the criminal that is indicted in his court. Is that judge motivated by mercy or by a "love of humanity" in thus pardoning the criminal, and does he really bestow a blessing upon that criminal? Far from it. Various reasons may motivate the action of the judge, but mercy is not one of them; justice is violated; the criminal is strengthened in his crime; and crime is encouraged in the land. Or again, suppose that a certain governor of a state or country would habitually pardon all criminals in his domain. Would such a governor gain for himself the reputation of being a very merciful and benign sovereign? And would, under his government, even the good be blessed? The answer is evident. His very subjects would condemn such an application of human weakness and gross injustice in the name of mercy. In an infinitely higher sense of the word this is true of God in relation to the sinner. In fact, that all the attempts of men to separate justice from mercy in human life are doomed to failure, has its deepest cause in the fact that these two virtues can never be separated in God. Mercy cannot be bestowed upon the wicked as such. It cannot bless the sinner except on the basis of justice. The guilty sinner cannot be blessed. It is impossible that he should ever be made happy in his sin. Even if he should be taken to heaven, suppose this were possible, there he would

be most miserable of all. The wicked would flee far from heaven, because God's presence is there. And, therefore, the question: "Is not God then also merciful?" may in general be answered as follows: "Indeed He is; but this already implies that He is just, for an unjust mercy is fundamentally a contradiction in terms."

This justice, according to the Heidelberg Catechism, "requires, that sin which is committed against the most high majesty of God, be also punished with extreme, that is, with everlasting punishment of body and soul." Justice requires punishment. The wicked is evil, and because God is good and must be known and acknowledged as such, the ethically evil must suffer evil, misery, death. Never may the sinner receive the impression that God blesses him in his sin. Nowhere, in all the wide universe, may the sinner find a place where he can stand and claim that He found rest and peace and life and joy. Not for a moment may he so experience God's government that he can deny that God is good, righteous, holy, and true, too pure of eyes to behold sin. On the contrary, he must taste, even in his way of sin, that God is good; and this he must confess. Hence, he must be made miserable, unspeakably wretched. Punishment must be inflicted upon Him. Such is the requirement of the justice of God. He rewards the good with good, the evil with evil; and that for His own name's sake!

And this punishment must be commensurate with the evil committed. The evil inflicted as punishment upon the sinner must be equivalent to the greatness of the sin. This is the underlying principle of the statement of the Catechism here that "sin which is committed against the most high majesty of God, be also punished with extreme, that is, with everlasting punishment of body and soul." The greatness of sin is not measured by the position and worth of him that commits it, but by the majesty and goodness and sovereignty of Him against whom sin is committed. It is so among men. It makes a world of difference whether one offends against his fellowman on the street or in the shop, or whether his offense is directed at the chief magistrate of the land, be he president or emperor. But sin is committed against God. And God is GOD! He is infinite in majesty and glory, the sole Good and overflowing fountain of good. To sin against Him is to trample infinite majesty and sovereignty under foot. To clench the fist in His face and violate His commandment, is to rise in rebellion against the everlasting Lord of heaven and earth. He is Lord in all the universe; He is Lord in time and in eternity. Always and everywhere and for ever we have to do with Him. Never can we escape Him. There is, therefore, no rest for the sinner. Offense against the infinite majesty of God, than Who there is no other sovereign, must be punished everywhere and

for ever. Extreme, that is, everlasting punishment and that, too, in body and soul, is required by the justice of God!

There is no way out, therefore, as far as man is concerned. Salvation is of the Lord. It is not, it cannot be of man. God is indeed merciful. And it is His everlasting good pleasure that His mercy should be revealed in all the fulness of its glory, even through sin. He does, indeed, lift the sinner from his misery, and reveals the abundance of His mercy by exalting him to the glory of everlasting, heavenly bliss in His tabernacle. And His mercy is revealed, too, as a just mercy. For God revealed His mercy in Christ, His own Christ, in Whom His justice and mercy with relation to the guilty and miserable sinner shine forth in most blessed harmony and sweetest accord. And when that mercy of God revealed in the cross and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ is bestowed upon the sinner, he acknowledges by faith that God is abundantly merciful, but also that His mercy is absolutely just!

H. H.

The Living Creatures (Cherubim) In Ezekiel 1 And 10

It was in the thirtieth year on the fifth day of the fourth month that Ezekiel saw visions of God. The heavens were opened and the word of God came to him. And he looked, and, behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire catching itself, and about it was a brightness, as the color of amber, issuing out of the midst of the fire. Looking more closely, the prophet saw four living creatures—the cherubim of the book of Genesis and of the book of the Revelations—whose likeness came also from the midst of the fire. It is these creatures that form the subject of this essay. Let us present what may be collected from the Scriptures on this subject—arranging our remarks under the following divisions:

1. The descriptions of the structure of these creatures.
2. The names applied to them.
3. The position assigned to them.
4. Their function.

1. As to the first point, we find nothing definite in the Old Testament Scriptures until we come to the book of Ezekiel. "And this," says the prophet, "was their appearance; they had the likeness of a man. And every one had four faces, and every one had four wings. And their feet were straight feet (the original:

straight foot); and the sole of their feet was like the sole of a calf's foot: and they sparkled like the color of burnished brass. And they had the hands of a man under their wings on their four sides; and they four had had their faces and their wings. Their wings were joined one to another; they turned not when they went; they went every one straight forward. As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion, on the right side: and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four also had the face of an eagle. Thus was their faces: and their wings were stretched upward; two wings of every one were joined one to another, and two covered their bodies. And they went every one straight forward: whither the spirit was to go, they went; and they turned not when they went. As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of fire, and like the appearance of lamps: it went up and down the living creatures; and the fire was bright, and out of the fire went forth lightning. And the living creatures ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning" (Ez. 1:5-14).

The main features of this word-picture stand out clearly. What we discern is four living creatures, of strange composite structure. Their general appearance is human. They are winged; and each has four heads—that of a man, lion, ox, and eagle. Each has two legs, which are straight, i.e., without joints, without back and front, smooth and symmetrical; and their feet are those of a calf. The wings of all—those which are stretched upward—are so joined one to another, that all move straight forward with remarkable coherence. There being four faces to each creature, all quarters of the earth are facing them, whether they go backward or forward, to the right or to the left. Hence, they turn not when they go, and every one goes straight forward. The upper pairs of wings form a square. The lower pairs are without connection and with these the creatures cover their bodies in order to show their holy fear and reverence. They are led by the Spirit—the life-breath of God—which dwells in them (whither the spirit was to go, they went). Issuing out of the midst of the fiery core of the great cloud, their appearance is in themselves like kindled coals of fire burning and breaking forth in lightning. They form, do these creatures, the very kernel of the fiery cloud.

Vss. 15-21 form a passage that sets forth the second vision of the prophet—the vision of the four wheels. These wheels are associated with the living creatures of the first vision so closely that they may be said to belong to the very structure of these creatures. "Now as I beheld the living creatures," so the prophet continues, "behold one wheel upon the earth by the living creatures, with his four faces. The

appearance of the wheels and their work was like unto the color of beryl: and they four had one likeness: and their appearance and their work was as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel. When they went, they went upon their four sides: and they turned not when they went. And as for their rims—the rims of the wheels—they were so high that they were dreadful; and their rims were full of eyes round about them four. And when the living creatures went, the wheels went by them: and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up. Whithersoever the spirit was to go, they went, thither was the spirit to go; and the wheels were lifted up over against them: for the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels. When those went, these went; and when those stood, these stood; and when those were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up over against them; for the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels."

The living creatures, forming as they do the kernel of the fire-cloud, are directly suspended between heaven and earth. But being destined for this earth, they are associated with wheels. Thus the impression as a whole is that of a kind of vehicle, in which the Lord takes the place of the charioteer, and the living creatures the place of the chariot. The wheel, which is lowermost, as is usual in a chariot, is to be thought of as being on the earth. That mention is made first of one wheel and then of four is because the four are conceived of together as forming a unity. They correspond to the four front sides, the human faces of the creatures and round them form a square. All four have one sort of shape. Each consists of two wheels, which intersect each other at right angles. This construction has the effect (vs. 17) that they can go in all four directions without turning. Vs. 18 concludes their description. Great height characterizes the rims of the wheels. These rims are full of eyes. Mention is made in vs. 17 of the movement of the wheels by themselves; now in vs. 19 their relation to the creatures is spoken of in detail. The wheels stand beside the creatures, but when the latter move, the former must of themselves follow the impulse. whither the spirit of the creatures went, just thither went the spirit of the wheels. This simultaneous movement is based on there being one spirit. The eyes in the wheels correspond to the faces in the living creatures and both are to be understood in connection with the spirit as indicative of life. As the creatures themselves, so the wheels—they are things not inanimate but living.

The Bible contains still other descriptions of these "living creatures" (Cherubim) as to form and appearance. Ezek. 41:18, "And every cherub had two faces." Ezek. 10:12 "And their whole body and their back and their hands and their wings and their wheels were

full of eyes round about, even the wheels that they four had." Rev. 4:7, 8, "And around the throne were four living creatures (*beasts* in the translation, but incorrectly so) full of eyes before and behind. And the first living creature was like a lion. And the second like a calf, and the third had the face like a man, and the fourth was like a flying eagle. And the four living creatures had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within."

Thus the structure of these creatures varies at least as exhibited in the vision. As seen by Ezekiel in his first vision (chapter 1) they are represented as having each four faces and four wings while in the description subsequently given by him in chapter 10, mention is made of only two faces appearing in each. Again, if John and Ezekiel discern four creatures of composite structure, the former sees each creature as having not four faces but a face after one of the four types. The number of wings belonging to each is also different—not four but six. Finally, in Ezekiel's first vision the eyes appear only in the wheels connected with the cherubs, "while in Revelation the creatures themselves appear full of eyes, as they also do in Ezekiel 10:12." There is thus a diversity in regard to the particular form. But they are alike in two respects: Their predominating appearance is that of a man—a man's body, posture, and hands. "The other point of agreement is their composite structure—with this form of a man predominating but combined with other animal forms—those namely, of the lion, and the eagle."

As to these creatures' names, nothing certain has been established regarding the original meaning of the term *Cherub*. There is another name, however, first applied to them by Ezekiel and the only name given them in Revelations. This expression is "the living ones," or, "the living creatures". In Ezekiel and Revelation it occurs over and over and therefore must be taken as bespeaking the symbolical character of the Cherubim. It presents them to view as imbued with life. The thought thus imparted agrees with all that is known of them from the Scriptures. They are incessantly active. They rest neither day nor night saying, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, which was and is and is to come (Rev. 4:8). Their movements are characterized by marvelous speed. Their running and returning is quick even as the flash of lightning. They are replete with life in its highest state of power, courage, true wisdom and knowledge. For they are full of eyes and the eye is the symbol of life that is light.

The position of the cherubim must be noticed in this connection. In Gen. 3:24, they are placed by God, after the ejection of man from the garden of Eden, at the east thereof together with the flaming sword "to keep the way of the tree of life". In the Tabernacle there were two cherubic figures of solid

gold upon the mercy-seat with wings outstretched above and with faces toward each other and toward the mercy-seat. This seat, bordered by the cherubim and covered by their wings, was the throne of God. "There", said He to Moses, "will I meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy-seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment to the children of Israel." In obedience to the command of God, there were also cherubic figures woven into the texture of the inner curtain of the Tabernacle and the veil.

We must attend more closely in this connection to the vision of Ezekiel in Ezek. 1. The entire chapter is taken up with this vision, formed of three distinct parts, the first two of which have already been explained. There comes a whirlwind out of the north, bringing a great cloud, the interior of which is formed of a brisk fire that spreads its brightness round about. Out of the intensive fire of the cloud there are formed the four *living creatures*—the cherubim. This is the first part of the vision (vss. 4-14). By the living creatures are four wheels that bring the whole in connection with the earth. The description of the appearance of the wheels and of the behaviour of the wheels and the cherubim, into union with the wheels by the spirit, form the second part of the vision (vss. 15-22). The whole is now completed in the vision of the *Heavenly Enthroned One* (vss. 22-28), the culminating point of the theophany.

"And the likeness of the firmament upon the heads of the living creatures was as the color of the terrible crystal, stretched forth over their heads above. And under the firmament were their wings straight, the one toward the other: every one had two, which covered on this side, and every one had two which covered on that side, their bodies. And when they went I heard the noise of their wings, like the noise of great waters, as the voice of the Almighty, the voice of speech, as the noise of an host: when they stood they let down their wings. And their was a voice from the firmament which was over their heads, when they stood, and let down their wings. And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone, and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it. And I saw as the color of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it, from the appearance of his loins even downward, I saw, as it were, the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about. As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face. . . ."

Let us get the features of this word-picture clearly before our eye. There is the *likeness* of a firmament upon the heads of the living creatures. It is not heaven—the deep, blue sky above our heads—but something *like* it. This *something*—stretched forth over the heads of the cherubim—is *fearful* in its dazzling clearness and purity. It incites awe by its splendour, in which that of the Creator is reflected. Under it are eight of the sixteen wings with which the cherubim collectively are equipped,—straight, raised aloft. With the remaining wings they cover their bodies. The tip of the wings, raised aloft, reach to the firmament, not for support and for this reason, that the wings make a loud noise, and are therefore in motion, when the creatures are in flight and further because when they stand, they let down their wings—the ones serving for flight. The prophet now describes also what he hears, *to wit*, the voice of their wings in their going. The comparison is a threefold one: (1) of the voice of many waters, (2) of the voice of the Almighty, which may mean the thunder; (3) of the voice of a host. The prophet now directs our gaze even higher. When, i.e., as often as, there comes a voice from the firmament which is over their heads, the cherubim at the hearing of it, cease their motion and let down their wings. They thus come to rest and are submissively silent before the living God, as soon as His voice—the voice that comes from the firmament is His—is heard. Above the firmament, that is over the heads of the cherubim, is the likeness of a throne. It is the throne of God. If beneath it is fire and lightning—all that is terrifying—the throne itself is bright and pure, heaven-like blue. Upon the likeness of the throne is the likeness as the appearance of a man above it, the lower part of whose body is like fire, which produces a reflection round itself, and the reflection has the appearance of a rainbow. "This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord." Thus the glowing likeness of the man upon the throne, the fire and its reflection, is the *face* of the triune Jehovah, i.e., the visible manifestation of all His goodness—the face of Jehovah, here again the prefiguration of Christ's human nature. Such is the vision in its entirety.

We can now make a statement regarding the position of the cherubim. It is near and even in (Revelation 5) the throne of God.

(To be Continued)

G. M. O.

FIELD DAY

JULY 4th, IDEAL PARK
EVERYBODY WELCOME

Smart Te Midden Van Valschheid

(Psalm 55)

Er zijn er die dezen psalm doen slaan op David's lieden te midden van de vervolging die hij van Saul's handen ervoer. Doch ten onrechte. En dat om verschillende redenen. Saul was David's leidsman en bekende niet. (vers 14) Saul was in geen een opzicht de raadsman van David. (vers 15) Ook wandelde Saul niet liefelijk met David ten Huize Gods. Saul was de openbare vijand van David. Saul had nooit een verbond gemaakt met David, een verbond dat later verbroken werd. (vers 21) Bovendien duidt de psalm aan, dat al de vuile geschiedenis van verraad en valschedheid in Jeruzalem geschiedde, terwijl de vervolging door Saul door het geheele land plaats vond. Ook kunnen we dan de verzen 7 en 8 niet verstaan. Als deze psalm gedicht werd door David toen hij vluchttende was voor het aangezicht Sauls, zou hij zulks niet vragen, doch dan was hij daadwerkelijk weggevlucht in de woestijn. Nu, terwijl David Koning te Jeruzalem was, kon hij dat juist niet. Want, dat is onze verklaring: deze vervolging ondervond David toen hij koning over Israel was; en geschiedde door het verraad van Achitofel en de onnatuurlijke handeling van Absalom, zijn zoon. De verzen 13-15 en 21 slaan daarom op Achitofel en niet op Saul.

Er zijn niet veel psalmen die de smart van Jezus beter vertolken dan deze. Want daarop moet ook gelet. Psalm 41 en Psalm 55 zijn hierin gelijk, dat ze beiden de smart van Jezus vertolken vanwege het verraad van Judas. Die smart is vooruit doorleefd door David. Doch dan slechts in oppervlakkige mate. Vergelijking is daarom bijna uitgesloten.

De verzen 2-9 beschrijven de smart van David; van vers 10 tot 16 luisteren we naar een beschrijving van den vijand in zijn valschedheid en geweld; van vers 17 tot het einde hooren we van het einde der partijen: David sterkt zich in zijn God en de vijand zal ter helle varen. Het gebed van David, den nam Gods, heeft een kostelijk einde: hij zal op God vertrouwen! Dat is ook zijn overwinning.

Hart-verscheurend is de beschrijving van David's ellende in deze periode. Treffend is zijn worsteling om toch gehoord te worden. O God! Het is David's gewoonte om in bange dagen zich tot God te wenden en Hem aan te roepen. Wat schoon begin voor het gebed: O God!

Tot viermaal toe komt er een bange nadruk in de opening van zijn gebed. Het is als een worsteling: eerst vraagt hij om Gods oor; dan smeekt hij om toch den Heere te mogen zien; vervolgens vraagt hij om Gods oog; en eindelijk, dat de Heere aan het werk tijge om toch de bede te beantwoorden in daden: verhoor Uw knecht!

Dan volgt een beschrijving van zijn ellende.

Ik bedrijf misbaar in mijn klacht! Het oorspronkelijke woord voor *misbaar bedrijven* betekent letterlijk: heen en weder geworpen te worden. David weet niet meer waar zich te wenden om rust te verkrijgen. Er is op aarde geen uitweg meer: hij heeft alles overwogen, alles werd door hem beproefd, doch wat er verdwijnen moge, zijn klacht, zijn smart bleef. Daarom is het gevolg, dat hij getier maakt. Ge zult het zelf wel eens ervaren hebben. In zulke benauwde oogenblikken, soms in de eenzaamheid, ontsnappen er kreunende zuchten die soms ons zelf ontstellen. Ze rezen op uit een geprangd gemoed en onwillekeurig werd het zuchten hoorbaar en maakten we geluid, getier. En indien wij al kreunen, de beweeglijke en veel meer aangedane Oosterling sprak van getier maken.

En waarom? Vanwege den goddelozen vijand. Met die twee namen karakteriseert David die tegen hem opstaan. Zij zijn hem een vijand en ook goddeloos. Die vijandschap en goddeloosheid openbaarde zich hierin, dat zij ongerechtigheid op David schoven en in torn hem haatten. En dat werkt benauwend. Dat weten we bij ervaring. Ook is het de ervaring van elk kind Gods. Dit is de openbaring Gods: het al is ingegeven door den Heiligen Geest. Dus we weten, dat David de waarheid sprak. Hij was onschuldig. Daarom moest men ongerechtigheid op hem *schuiven*. Zoo komt de onschuld te staan in de plaats der boosdoeners. Wie denkt hier niet aan Jesaja die van Jezus profeteerde: "en met de overtreders is geteld geweest" ofschoon Hij "Mijn Knecht, de Rechtvaardige" genaamd is?

En dat is benauwend. Doch Jezus heeft dit veel dieper gevoeld dan David. David was een zondig mensch. Hij mocht dan geheel en al onschuldig zijn in het onderhavige geval, toch was hij een zondig mensch. Maar van Jezus staat er: "omdat Hij geen onrecht gedaan heeft, noch bedrog in Zijnen mond geweest is." Zelf zeide Jezus: "Wie uwer overtuigt Mij van zonde?"

Ik zeide, dat al dit gruwelijk werk der goedelozen benauwt. Ge kunt het aanhooren in de ontroerende beschrijving: "Mijn hart krimpt weg in het binnenste van mij, en verschrikkingen des doods zijn op mij gevallen. Vrees en beving komt mij aan, en gruwen overdekt mij; zoodat ik zeg: Och, dat mij iemand vleugelen als een duif gave: ik zoude henenvliegen waar ik blijven mocht; zie, ik zoude ver wegzwerven, ik zoude vernachten in de woestijn. Sela. Ik zoude haasten, dat ik ontkwame van den drijvenden wind, van den storm!"

Straks dachten we aan Jesaja, nu staan we bevend bij Golgotha of gescheiden door een steenworps afstand in Gethsemane's hove. Daar waren het onze ongerechtigheden die op Jezus afgeschoven zijn en de haat die

eigenlijk onzer is, was op Hem gevallen. Er was een wervelwind die van uit de diepten Gods Hem tegenvoelde! O, Jezus was bang van die wervelwind. De verschrikkingen van den eeuwigen dood deden Hem vragen: "Vader, of Gij wilde dezen drinkbeker van Mij wegnemen!" Evenwel, die Jezus had God zóó lief, dat Hij de verschrikkingen van den eeuwigen dood verkiest boven de vlucht eener duive naar het gebergte, zoo zulks de wil van God zij. Want Hij be-eindigde Zijn gebed: : "Doch niet Mijn wil, maar de Uwe geschiede!"

Doch wij verkiezen vaak de vlucht der duive. Wij zijn bang van vervolging en die vreeze doet ons soms daadwerkelijk wegvliegen, ver, ver weg. Dan stort Elia zijn klacht uit tot God: 'Ik ben alleen overgebleven en zij zoeken mijne ziel!' En moet Gods volk leeren, dat als de Heere maar met ons is, de vijand en de valsche vriend niets vermogen tegen ons. O, het is mogelijk, dat de toestand zóó benauwd wordt, dat ge teruggedrongen wordt tot in het hart, zoodat niemand zijn stem verheft tegen allerlei gruwelijk onrecht om voor U te spreken: als in dit hart ik mij maar sterken mag in mijn God, dan is het goed. Daar vond dan de duive rust voor het holle van haar voet.

Want God is God. Dat besefte David. In één woord maakt hij zijn zaak de zaak des Heeren: verslind ze! Heere! David weet dat de Heere gruwelt van goddeloosheid. Dat Hij verslinden zal allen die ongerechtigheid gieriglijk bedrijven.

Dat soort volk zijn het die David benauwen. Luistert maar naar hun beschrijving. Ze hebben de stad Jeruzalem al ingenomen, ofschoon David nog steeds op den troon zit. En ze hebben de stad ingenomen door valscheheid, door verraad. Overal is de partij van Absalom bezig. Er is wrevel, twist, ongerechtigheid, overlast en verderving in de stad des Konings. En al die gruwelen worden gekenmerkt door "list en bedrog"; vers 12.

Dat wordt bewezen door de volgende verzen. En in die verzen uit David zijn diepste smart. Wat nu volgt is een beschrijving van Achitofel's woelen. Het was geen vijand en hater die David hoopte en zich tegenover hem groot maakte. O neen. Als dat het geval geweest ware, zou David gezegd hebben: dat had ik allang van hem verwacht. Ik wist dat hij mij haatte; nu komt het tot openbaring. Wat zal ik doen? Ik zal mij voor hem verbergen.

Doch nu? Het was mijn leidsman en mijn bekende, een man die mij gelijk was in waardigheid. In zijn dagen achtte men het woord van Achitofel als het woord Gods: zoo wijs waren zijn redenen. David leunde op hem gelijk op geen ander. Leest de geschiedenis maar. Zoo wijs en verstandig was hij, dat hij zich verhing toen hij gewaar werd, dat zijn raad niet opgevolgd was. Geheel Israel met de helden trokken uit om David den genadeslag te geven, doch Achi-

tofel wist het beter dan zij allen: hij hing zich op. Hij wist van te voren, dat nu Israel het verloren had.

Leest de beschrijving van de betrekking die er bestond tusschen David en Achitofel vóór die bange dagen: "wij, die in zoetigheid heimelijk beraadsslaagden; wij wandelden in gezelschap ten huize Gods!" En als dan zulk een mensch zich verkoopt tot goddeloosheid en zich tegen U keert, dan wordt het bang. Dan geeft men den moed op. Dan is men geneigd om te zeggen: waar zullen we nu heengaan? Och, geef mij de vleugelen van een duive en dan zullen we, ver van mensen, een toevlucht zoeken bij de rotsen en in de spleten der bergen of in de woestijn!

De vuile boosheid der zonde roept dan ook om de hoogste straf. David wendt zich tot God en vraagt Hem of Hij ze wil beettomen en levend der helle doen varen.

En Achitofel is Judas. Zoo heeft dan ook Jezus gebeden.

En beide David en Jezus zijn verhoord.

Achitofel en Judas hebben zich verhangen. Zie vooral vers 24. Beide Achitofel en Judas hebben hunne dagen niet ter helfte gebracht: ze sloegen hun hand aan hun eigen leven. Doch achter dit alles ligt de hand Gods. En ze voeren levend ter helle.

De dood overviel hen beiden als een schuldeischer. Wel, we weten immers wat dat beduidt. Een zeer duidelijk beeld.

En God is altoos recht in al Zijn weg en werk. Dat weet David ook. Hij zal ons den grond voor hun akelig vonnis leveren. Boosheden waren in hunne woning. Ook was het niet zoo, dat het zonden en boosheden waren die nog tegen onzen wil overbleven, die we bekampten in onze woningen. O neen. Het waren boosheden die hun oorsprong hadden in "het binnenste van hen". Vers. 16. Dat is de beschrijving van duivelskinderen. Gods volk is rein van harte. Als er booze gedachten en woorden en daden zich openbaren vanwege de bewegingen der zonde die nog in onze oude natuur woeden, dan stelt zich, dat reine hart tegen al zulke dingen, veroordeelt ze in 't hart en bindt den strijd aan er tegen. Dan bedroeven we ons om al die dingen en dan is ereen snerpend leed over al die zonde die tegen onzen wil geschiedden. Doch geheel anders is het met de Judassen en Achitofels. Zij zijn boos tot in 't diepe hart toe. En daarom behooren zij in de hel. Dat is naar 't zuiverst recht.

Neen, het reine hart van Gods kind zal anders handelen. Ge kunt het van David leeren. "Mij aangaande, ik zal tot God roepen, en de Heere zal mij verlossen. Des avonds en des morgens en des middags zal ik klagen en getier maken, en Hij zal mijne stem hooren." Dat is heilzaam. En gevaarlijk voor onzen vijand.

O, die vijand zal nooit de ware wijsheid leeren. Hij besefte niet dat als men Gods kind aanraakt men

Zijn oogappel aanraakt. Dat Hij altijd hoort het gekreun van Zijn volk. Luistert: als gij Gods kind benauwdheid aandoet en hij tot zijn God roept, dan gaat er een rechtvaardig oordeel van God uit. Hij oordeelt alle dagen. Dan mocht ge lachen en U verkneukelen in de smart en benauwheid van Uw slachtoffer, doch weet, dat de Heere U in 't vreeselijke Oog heeft. Zijt ge niet bang voor God!?

Hoe ging het met de vijanden van David? Met Saul? Achitofel? de Filistijnen? met Absalom? Ze zijn in de hel.

Hoe ging het met de vijanden van Jezus, die Hem deden zuchten en weenen? Met Judas, het Sanhedrin, Pilatus en Herodus? Ze zijn verzonken in de diepten van Gehenna. En de echo's van die bange vraag klinken o zoo naar en akelig in den afgrond: Vriend Judas, was doet gij hier in de hel? Waart gij niet de bekende, de raad, de apostel van Jezus? Wandeldet gij niet met Hem naar den Huize Gods? En tot in alle eeuwigheid moet die arme Judas schreeuwen: Ik heb verraden het onschuldige Bloed!

Neen, we kunnen Jezus nu niet meer verkoopen voor dertig zilverlingen: Hij is nu in den hemel daarboven bij God!

Maar Zijn arme volk is nu nog op de aarde. En waar gij allen ook nog de bedrieglijke, harde, onvermurwbare menschelijke natuur hebt en het gevaar niet denkbeeldig is, dat Juda Israel benauwt en broeder den broeder vertrapt, zou ik U allen willen smeeken: Zijt tegen elkander goedertieren en laat toch nooit één onzer zoo moeten zuchten en kreunen vanwege laffe vervolging. Voor dengene die het doet wacht de kastijdende en straffende hand Gods, ook al wordt ge behouden. Want zulke vertrapte en vervolgde broeders zoeken de eenzaamheid op en roepen tot God. En God geeft ook een antwoord. Hij zal ze plagen. De vertrapt echter wordt in vrede verlost. Alle werk dat tegen Gods volk ondernomen werd, door vriend of vijand, wordt verwoest. En hijzelf wordt ook zelfs door die vertrapping gebaat. Hij wierp zijn zorg op den Heere en tot in der eeuwigheid toe zal God er voor zorgen dat de rechtvaardige niet wankelt vanwege Uw slagen. Want het is Gods eigen rechtvaardigheid die op 't spel staat.

Slaat Uwe handen niet aan degenen die vrede met U hebben. Dat deed Achitofel en dat deed Judas. Dat hoort onder ons niet, broeders.

De broeder gaat toch naar God ermee. David heeft het U geleerd. Aan het einde roept hij uit: Ik daarentegen zal op God betrouwen!

En dat betrouwen op God is Gods eigen kracht. Daartegen kan niets bestaan.

En ook: hoe zalig is zulke ervaring.

Daar juicht men, zelfs door de tranen heen: Hij is de kracht van mijne kracht!

G. V.

Gedoopt Voor De Dooden

1 Cor. 15:29.

Het lijdt geen twijfel of de vele verklaringen gegeven van dezen tekst, hebben allen dit gemeen, dat zij dit doopen voor de dooden als een geheimzinnige en verder voor ons verborgene handeling beschouwen. Daarop komt het, wat de grote meerderheid der verklaringen betreft, op neer. Er is dan te Corinthe een tijd geweest, dat men bij de bediening van het Sacrament des Doops zich van een zeker gebruik bediende, waarop in geen anderen brief wordt gezinspeeld. Het komt ons echter voor, dat sommige van die zoogenaamde gebruiken niet de verklaring kunnen zijn van dit vers, doch veeleer gebruiken zijn, die eerst later in de Kerk zijn uit- of ingevoerd en waarmee men zich tot den tekst heeft gewend. Voorzichtigheidshalve hebben anderen dan ook gezegd, er was wel een zeker gebruik of verrichting bij de bediening des Doops, wel bekend vooral te Corinthe, doch voor ons verder verborgen gebleven. Daarmede blijft men dan bewaard voor verkeerde gissingen, maar blijft dan ook de tekst onverklaard. Dat eerste nu mag volstrekt niet, omdat we met geen enkel gebruik ons tot de Schrift mogen wenden, om dan de Schrift maar om te buigen en haar iets te laten zeggen dat wij gaarne willen, dat zij zeggen zal. Wat betreft het laatste, dan kan de vraag gedaan worden, zou iets, dat de Heere voor ons verborgen wilde houden, ooit op eenige wijze ons worden geopenbaard. We bedoelen, als er een zekere handeling was bij de Doopsbediening te Corinthe, voor ons niet noodig, dat we daar kennis van zouden hebben, zou het dan wel op eenige wijze ons zijn medegedeeld. Dit laatste trekken we zeer sterk in twijfel. Niet, we erkennen het gaarne, dat iedere plaats overduidelijk is en haast voor zichzelf spreekt en zichzelf verklaart. Dat is niet waar van een enkele Schriftuurplaats, schoon er daarom wel groot verschil is tusschen tekst en tekst, brief en brief.

Er zijn niet minder dan dertig verschillende verklaringen gegeven van dit Schriftwoord. Af te gaan op enkele der eerste of oudste, dan was dit doopen een doopen van levenden, dat geschiedde voor of ten behoeve van hen, die ongedoopt waren gestorven. Men doopte de levenden, opdat de gestorvenen de straf der niet gedoopten zoude ontloopen. Magisch was dan ook de kracht, die er van den doop uitging. Of ook, men doopte een ander, omdat men bang was, dat de gestorvene anders niet zoude worden opgewekt, of dat hij indien hij werd opgewekt, zijn opstanding zou zijn, niet ten goede doch ten kwade. Beide kwamen vrijwel met elkaar overeen en hadden ongeveer hetzelfde op het oog: Het behoud van hen, die alreeds gestorven waren. Iets dat niet zoo ver ligt van de theorie, die wil dat kleine kinderen gedoopt worden op het geloof

der ouders.

We stemmen natuurlijk toe, dat deze ketterijen van allerlei kleur en schakeering wel opkwamen in de kerk des Heeren, doch dat we in geen geval het beamen, als men zou meenen, dat dit feitelijk ook al het geval was in den tijd der Apostelen. We meenen, dat de Kerk haar Doop en Avondmaal toen zeer wel verstanden. De ketterijen zijn van later datum.

Eén der meest afwijkende verklaringen is, die der Marcionieten. De Kerk-vader Chrysostomus verhaalt van hen: "Wanneer een catechumeen onder hen sterft dan leggen zij een levende onder de doodssponde; dan naderen zij tot dezen, spreken met hem en vragen hem of hij den doop wil ontvangen. Dan verklaart hij, die onder de sponde ligt, dat hij zou willen gedoopt worden." We hebben dan in deze beide zoogenaamde verklaringen te doen met een opvatting, die aan het doopen en doopsbediening een magische kracht toekent, die door de Schrift nergens wordt geleerd. En indien deze praktijken te Corinthe werkelijk aanwezig waren geweest, we zijn er zeker van, dat de Apostel de gemeente daarover zeer scherp zou hebben vermaand en bestraft. Hij had er zeer zeker op gegeven, dat dit gruwelijk spel en goddeloos gedoe, een ontheililing van het Sacrament was, Erger wordt dit nog wanneer op de vraag, wie dan toch wel deze afgodische gewoonte had ingevoerd, men ten antwoord geeft, dat Apollos hiermede was begonnen, om aan de Doopshandeling een plechtigen vorm te geven. Men beredeneert het dan als volgt: Apollos was een mensch met een aesthetische natuur en gaf aan zijn schoonheidsgemoed uitging, door het invoeren van dezen vorm bij den Doop. Het werd er daarom zoo plechtig om—schoon een mensch met een gezond verstand het boerenbedrog noemt.

We gevoelen aanstonds, dat al dit soort van verklaren, door den tekst wordt tegengesproken. De hoofdfout is, dat men van de veronderstelling uitgaat, dat het voordeel van het doopen den doodten goede zal komen. Doch juist het tegenovergestelde is waar, wat is het voordeel of het profijt voor de gedoopten wanneer zij voor de doodten gedoopt worden? De Apostel zegt nergens in dit hoofdstuk, wat is de winste voor de doodten, doch wat is het profijt voor u wanneer gij u laat doopen, wanneer ge alleen in dit leven op Christ hopende zijt, als er geen opstanding der doodten is?

Ja maar, dat doopen voor de doodten dan?

Wat was het eigenlijk? Heeft men te Corinthe dan toch een soort doopspractijk gehad, waardoor bij het doopen aan de doodten werd gedacht?

Het ligt niet in onze bedoeling om over mogelijk en ook wel onmogelijke verklaringen, die omtrent dezen tekst werden gegeven te schrijven, schoon hier nog wel wat vrucht van verwacht kon worden, vooral de vrucht van hoe men *niet* moet exegetiseeren. Daarom zij slechts op een enkele gewezen. Ook ten tijde van

de Reformatie liepen de verklaringen alreeds ver uiteen. Sommigen meenden, dat dit doopen niets anders was dan het wasschen van de ontslapenen. Aldus was er dan ook eigenlijk geen sprake van doopen, waarover de tekst spreekt. Het Sacrament werd dan geloochend of men had dan in dit wasschen een symbool van den Doop: Een symbool van een symbool dus.

Of ook, men heeft verklaard dat dit doopen geschiedde om vergiffenis te verkrijgen voor bedreven doodelijke zonden. Ook hier weer een veranderen van het teeken in de zaak die het moest afbeelden, een veranderen van het Sacrament in de genade zelf. Al deze verklaringen, die dan van een enkelen tekst een dogma maakten, moesten tenslotte wel in grove ketterijen en een vernielen van de Waarheid, uitloopen.

Zij, die dien weg niet wilden gaan, verklaarden den tekst in verband met plaatselijke omstandigheden. Met liet zich doopen op de graven der doodten. Deze doodten hadden hun geloof bezegeld met hun bloed en de ledige plaats in de gemeente ontstaan, werd dan ingenomen door hen, die aldus gedoopt werden. Men wilde dan de tekst laten zeggen, met het oog op of ten behoeve van die doodten, liet men zich doopen. We gevoelen dadelijk, dat deze wijze van verklaren geen zin geeft. Gestel eens, dat men zich op de graven der martelaren liet doopen, waartoe zou dat alles dienen? Nog de gedoopten, noch de doodten, hadden er eenig voordeel bij. Men vorderde daar niets mee en de gemeente van Christus heeft daar toch allerminst behoefté aan? Trouwens, de doodten namen dan wel een zeer groote plaats in, die hen zeker niet toekwam. Dit was niets minder dan heilige vereering, iets dat veel later de Kerk is binnengeslopen. Waar dan nog bijkomt, dat waar men deze verklaring bouwde op het voorzetsel, (UPER), dit voorzetsel nooit de beteekenis heeft van plaats.

Nog vreemder wordt het wanneer men de gedoopten en de doodten vereenzelvigt. Men verklaart dan natuurlijker wijze niet den tekst, doch fabriceert een geheel nieuwe lezing van den tekst. Men laat de tekst dan zeggen, de doodten (geestelijk) laten zich doopen met het oog op hun dood, in verband met en ten behoeve van de wederopstanding, die eindelijk op den dood zal volgen. Dit kan dan weer op tweeërlei wijze worden opgevat. De bedoeling kan dan zijn, alle sterfelingen leven met den dood voor oogen, vragen met het oog daarop om den doop, om aldus verzekerd te zijn van de opstanding des lichaams, die aan het einde der eeuwen zal plaats grijpen. Alsof de hope der opstanding allereerst zou worden verkregen door het Sacrament, in plaats van het Woord. Of, gelijk we boven zeiden, deze gedoopten zijn van nature geestelijke doodten, die echter door den doop bij de levenden moeten gerekend worden en aldus gemeenschap hebben met de gestorvenen, die straks door Christus worden opgewekt, Die toch ook dood was en levend werd. Deze

soort van verklaringen zijn uiterst 'zwaar' en moeilijk te verstaan voor iemand, die gelooft, dat verklaring altijd het duidelijke van den tekst moet uitbrengen, zoodat de beteekenis gezien wordt.

Zelfs Calvijn schijnt met den tekst geen raad te weten en verklaart, dat de gedoopten catechumenen waren, die óf door krankheid óf toevalligerwijze bedreigd werden (door vervolging) door den dood en die om den doop vroegen—of ter hunner eigen vertroosting, of ter opbouwing der broederen. Dan worden de woorden 'voor de dooden' vertaald als volgt, met het oog op den dood, of in het gezicht des doods, liet men zich doopen, om zoo aanstonds met de dooden vereenigd te zijn.

We gevoelen direct, dat er ook aan deze verklaring iets niet in orde is. Het gaat er niet over in den tekst, noch in het verband, of er een vereeniging zal zijn van levenden met de dooden, maar wel, of er voor levenden en dooden een opstanding zal zijn en of de Doop een Sacrament is, waardoor men van de gemeenschap met het Lichaam van Christus (de dooden met de levenden dus), wordt verzekerd en verzegeld.

Want indien er geen opstanding der dooden is, dan is er immers ook geen behoefte aan den Doop? Dan is er in geen enkel opzicht eenige gemeenschap, noch met de dooden, noch met de levenden onderling, noch ook met Christus. De opstanding beslist hier alles. Dan wordt ook de Doop, met het oog op de dooden, dwaasheid. Precies als met het geloof, dat ons tot de ellen-digste van alle menschen maakt, zoo het ons alleen in dit leven hopende doet zijn op Christus. Daarmee staat en valt de zaak van het Christendom, van Christus en van God. Dan is er met den dood het einde waarop geen vervolg of voortzetting volgt.

En om nu maar niet meer te noemen, want het zou niet moeilijk zijn om nog vele andere verklaringen te memoreeren, er is ook nog een wijze van verklaren, die voor de dooden, 'Den Doode', namelijk Christus willen lezen. Hierover kunnen we echter zeer kort zijn. Deze wijze van verklaren is een verminken van den tekst en is vrucht van de allergrootste willekeur. De tekst spreekt niet over den Christus, doch handelt over de dooden en op deze dooden wordt dan met nadruk gewezen, tot tweemaal toe.

We willen nu alreeds voorop stellen, dat we er van overtuigd zijn hier niet te doen te hebben met een zekere gewoonte. Zouden we van die gedachte uitgaan, dan waren we als vanzelf direct over de moeilijkheid heen. Feitelijk is er dan geen moeilijkheid. We kunnen dan de tekst voorbijgaan. Want een voor ons verborgen gebleven gewoonte kan dan op zijn best ons doen gissen, omtrent de vraag wat die gewoonte geweest is. Maar dat zal niet bevredigen, want waarom zou de ééne gissing niet even goed, of niet even slecht, zijn als de andere?

Doch hierover een volgende keer.

W. V.

Government Relief And The Deaconate

The subject assigned to us touches upon many practical problems in the matter of giving relief to the poor, but it also touches upon the God-ordained office of mercy, as instituted in the Church of God by her head Jesus Christ. Especially in our day can such a discussion of Relief be of immense value, for many false theories and practices exist that should be abhorred by the people of God, and concerning which they should repent and return unto the way of Jehovah.

Often Relief is given the poor by both the government and the Deaconate, as though both these agencies operate for the same goal, from the same principle and unto the same purpose. Now this must be opposed with all that is in us. To give relief is an act of mercy and of love bestowed upon the poor and distressed. This act of mercy and love can impossibly be done by the government agencies, even if these agencies have been called into being for the expressed purpose of helping those who cannot help themselves. The government is not an agency of mercy and love, nor can it ever be this. It is not the calling of the government to show mercy unto the poor first of all. It is the government's calling to exercise the sword-power to protect the good and to punish the evil-doer. If now the rich exploit the poor and rob them of their meagre belongings, yes, then the government has the duty and obligation to protect the poor and punish the rich. The government's duty is then clearly not to allow the one unit of society infringing upon the rights of the other. But this does not mean that the government itself has then the right to infringe upon the rights of either of the units of society. The government may, strictly speaking, only be busy in the sphere wherein God has placed it, and regulate the affairs of its people in such a way, that each unit of society remains free and independent to exercise its own calling and duty.

We do not believe that the government can exercise relief to the poor, for it is not the agency wherein love and mercy are poured out. Even as our formula for the administration of the deaconate so plainly states, that to extend relief to the poor is not merely a matter of extending some financial aid, but "also with comforting words from Scripture", give spiritual "relief" for the poor is also one who is "poor of spirit". Therefore it is plain that the government has no calling whatsoever to speak comfortable words from Scripture, and to give spiritual aid and comfort in the midst of poverty. When the government provides relief to its poor, then it is but a matter of cold, hard cash, given to those who seek only the cold, hard cash and nothing more. Of course we realize that the government is interested in the fact that her citizens remain

as contented as possible, that all spirit of revolt and rebellion be as much as possible banished. Thus it is to the interest of good government to help the poor of the land. Yet we maintain that it is not the calling, nor the duty of the government to afford relief, for strictly speaking, it *can not* and *may not*.

The Deaconate, however, CAN, and MAY, and MUST administer relief to the poor. It CAN because it is the God-ordained office in the Church, to afford relief to the poor and distressed. There is no one who will deny that the office of deacon was instituted, according to Acts 6 to show mercy and love in the name of Christ our Merciful Highpriest. Officially the work of mercy had its origin then and there. Surely individual acts of mercy were performed long before this. This is plain from the first chapters of the book of Acts. However, the official, God-ordained work of mercy began when the Holy Spirit guided the Apostles to institute the office of deacon, in the Church of Christ. So that it is plain first of all that God Himself, when determining an agency for the relief of the poor, determined upon the Church as the agency of relief. This is of course perfectly understandable and logical, for the Church is the body of Christ, and consists of members wherein the love of God is shed abroad. In that body of Christ, each member has his or her own place it is true but they are members one of another. They serve one another and love one another. They together possess one spirit, have one hope, stand under one Lord, and are inseparably connected one to another. Therefore in that body of Christ, the love of God is shed abroad. This love is not merely a little sympathy for one another, but is a love rooted in God's own love, whereby He gave His Only Begotten Son. This Son loved them unto death, and unto the end. When on Pentecost Christ enters anew into His Church, He works that love in and through the members of His body. And let us not forget that His love is such that it gives its life, it offers Himself and all His benefits. He does not merely offer *something* of Himself, but completely does He give unto the members of His body ALL THINGS. Therefore when this love of Christ now meets with a poor or distressed member, it can only reveal itself in an act of mercy and love. For when one member suffers, all the members suffer. And this suffering of love with the distressed, is the root principle from which is born all work of mercy. Outside of this principle there is no work of mercy. There is essentially no relief outside the body of Christ.

The above stated principle therefore will result in two things. First of all as respects the Church of Christ, the Deacons will not want any of the poor to go anywhere else for relief, than alone to this God-ordained agency of mercy. To go anywhere else is a disgrace to the Deacons. The Deaconate refuses to

recognize any other agency than the one established in the Church. For the Deaconate represents Christ as the Sympathetic Highpriest. And this Sympathetic Highpriest comes to manifestation and revelation in the midst of the world, *only through the Highpriests office of Deacon*. Therefore the deacons alone CAN administer relief to the poor, for the more they relieve the poor the more they are busy in the work of Christ. Blessed the Deacons and the Church who has poor to relieve. On the other hand the above stated principle, will also cause the poor to seek their relief nowhere else than from the deacons. This does not mean that the poor will immediately apply to the deacons for aid when they are in need. They will surely recognize the duty of member of the same family to help in time of need. But when the resources of the family have been exhausted, or when the family has become so unspiritual that they do not care to help the other member of the family in his or her need, then the poor will desire to go to no one else than to the Deaconate. He is then poor of spirit also, desiring comfort from also the Scripture. He therefore turns to the sympathetic Highpriest, as represented in the Deacons, and prays for mercy and love, from the only body that can indeed give this mercy and love. Then the body of the deacons, being filled with bowels of mercy for Christ's sake, give aid and comfort and relief to the needy.

This body of deacons also MAY and MUST give this relief. It may do this, for it is capable of giving relief. God Himself gives the right to administer relief to the poor unto this body. Therefore the deacons have rights alone to officially give this aid. God produces in the members of the body of Christ, the desire to give liberally to the Deaconate, so that this body may administer its aid. It may do this in various ways, according to discretion and wisdom. In the earlier church the deacons even bought prisoners out of their prison cells. And this must all be done in the name of Christ, out of the principle of mercy and love of Christ, for the salvation of the sinners, pointing to the blessed, incomparable gift of mercy which God gave unto His people in giving His only begotten Son. And the Deaconate MUST give this relief, because if they do not, then they are withholding the mercy and love of Christ to the needy, which of course would bring the wrath of God upon those who are unfaithful. God loves a cheerful giver, both in the members of the body of Christ in general, but also in the Deaconate that remains faithful to its calling of being the administrator of God's manifold mercies.

The result of this all is then too that the poor are actually receiving aid from the God of their salvation. They then actually do not receive help from man, but from the Sympathetic Highpriest. It is because the

poor are conscious of this, that they are also poor in spirit. Truly they need not be beggars, but they also do not demand in a highhanded way. They desire then the mercies of Christ. They long for His love, and its manifestation. They are then also grateful and truly thankful for the aid extended them, and their own bowels of mercy will open for the poor and needy, when they can give of their abundance later.

In concluding this essay, concerning "government Relief and the Deaconate", let me state first of all that the members are duty bound then to furnish the deacons with the necessary funds and goods to provide for all the poor. Give liberally, even as God has dealt liberally with you. Government relief should not be necessary in the Church of Jesus Christ. The day will come when also the government will be part of the antichristian kingdom of this world. This antichristian kingdom will demand the mark of the beast on everyone of her citizens. Not to bring the members of the body of Christ in further distress, we may not allow its members to even ask the government for relief. In that day it may be necessary to share the very last crust of bread with another member of the body of Christ. Brethren let us be faithful. Secondly, let relief be given only in the name of Christ our Lord. That the testimony of the truth may resound into the homes and institutions of all those who are on distress or in need. Cutterville and Bethesda and all the institutions of mercy, must manifest in all its work that the Merciful Highpriest dwells there with His good and Holy Spirit of love and grace. So that when even the wicked enter such an institution, or receive aid from the Deacons, they may behold your good works and glorify God in the day of visitation. Surely we must take care first of all of the household of faith. But thereafter it is not our duty to shut up the bowels of mercy. It is rather our duty to continue this work of mercy, also to the world around us. BUT ONLY AS A TESTIMONY OF THE TRUTH, over against the tender mercies (?) of the wicked which are cruel. Thus shall the righteous sing of the tender mercies of the Lord, and they shall know that His mercy endureth forever, for time and eternity, in life and death, as to body and as to soul.

L. V.



Submission To Church Government

It stands to reason that when one writes a short article on the above mentioned subject he can not enter into every detail hence, several things must be taken for granted. Not having chosen this particular subject myself the undersigned does not know what was exactly in the mind of him who assigned it. Hence, it is very well possible that to a large extent

I will miss the particular point which was in the mind of our editor-in-chief who assigned all the subjects to the various contributing editors.

When we speak of submission to church government we have assumed already that there is such a thing as church government. We will not try to prove at length from Scripture that this is so but we go out from the assumption that there is. After all our readers are no little children who have never heard of church government. Let it suffice therefore that I quote one text from Scripture which plainly teaches that there is church authority and hence church government. I have reference now to the wellknown text in Matthew 16: "And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou wilt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. "Our reformed fathers have always explained this text, and that in connection with a host of other passages in Scripture, that the exalted Christ has given the Church authority, the power of the keys of the kingdom. We might also remark that our confessions deal with the subject of church government and church authority. In this connection we might mention Lord's Day 31, which discusses the subject of the keys of the kingdom of heaven, while Lord's Day 40 deals with the subject of authority and obedience as based upon the fifth commandment. Furthermore our articles of faith speak e.g. about the subject of church government in articles 30 and 32. And, finally, our reformed churches have their own church order which in more than eighty articles gives rules, regulations and stipulations for church government.

That the church has the authority to govern, to rule, to regulate, follows also from the nature of the case. There must be authority in the church as well as in the home, the State, etc. Although we should keep in mind that the power of the church must be distinguished from the power of the State and every other sphere of authority. That this is actually done also in Scripture itself is plain from the fact that the power of the State is symbolized by the sword, that of the church by the keys. The power of the State is also of such a character that it forces its will upon its subjects and is satisfied with a formal obedience, the power of the church is of a spiritual-ethical nature.

We should furthermore keep in mind that Christ is the supreme ruler of His Church. He holds the keys of the kingdom, He rules, decides, demands, lays down the laws. He opens and He shuts.

However, Christ has charged His office bearers on earth that they execute His commandments. In other words the church government rests with the office-bearers. And they can and may do nothing else but execute the will of Christ which He has revealed in His Holy Word. Therefore the Bible is the guiding

rule for church government. Church government must be in harmony with the principles of Scripture, the Church must always execute the will of Christ and always ask: "Lord, what wilt thou that we shall do."

Furthermore, it is the conviction of reformed believers that the local church is autonomous. The highest authority in the church, under Christ, of course, is not the congregation, but the consistory. Of course we do believe that the various churches which are one in confession should together form a denomination of churches. And in our Protestant Reformed Churches we distinguish between three different kinds of church gatherings: Consistory meetings, Classical meetings, and Synodical meetings. However, the power of the broader church meetings is not a higher power but a delegated power to which the local churches subject themselves voluntarily by mutual agreement. Therefore the highest authority in the churches is the consistory and although the broader gatherings also exercise a certain authority, this is not of a higher kind and it is not dictatorial at all but more of an advisory nature as far as the local church is concerned, and of a delegated character as far as the common interests are concerned. We can not enter into these things at present, we merely mention them.

And, finally, the church governs only in its own sphere and over its own subjects. Perhaps this sounds like a superfluous remark. However it is not, think of the conception of the Roman Catholic Church which even today, if it could, would subject to itself the power of the State.

Now, as to the question "must we submit to church government?", the answer is of course an unequivocal: "YES!" That is rather self-evident. As well as a child must submit to his parents, as well as the citizen must submit to the civil government ruling in its own sphere, so also must a church member submit to church government. All this follows from the nature of the case. Scripture tells us that we must submit ourselves to the God-given authorities. God is a God of law and order in every sphere and domain of life. Hence the individual member must submit himself to the government of the local church, the local church must submit itself to the government of the Classis and Synod, provided of course that the latter stay within their own very limited domain.

Life teaches us, however, that many a time those who should submit themselves to church government, refuse to do so. This is often the case with discipline cases. Those found guilty by the church will deny the charges or ignore the decisions and demands of their own consistory, the latter being often times supported by the classical and synodical gatherings. In such instances the church has no outward power to compel the recalcitrant member to submit to its government. The civil authorities have the sword and can enforce

their laws, the church has no sword but comes with the power of the Word, of the keys of the kingdom. But the keys do not administer bodily punishment, they bring no man in jail, they do not kill. The power of the church is of a spiritual-ethical nature. Knowing this the recalcitrant member also knows that the church cannot punish him bodily, or fine him, or force him to confess his sin, or submit to its government. He must voluntarily, willingly, by way of persuasion submit to church government, but no church can ever force him.

But are there no consequences connected with insubordination to the church? Of course there are. If the recalcitrant party refuses to submit to church government the church will at long last excommunicate him and declare that he has no part in the kingdom of heaven. Hence, the consequences are very serious indeed. Or if the insubordinate person refuses to be governed by the church, he merely withdraws as member from that church and by that very act he no longer belongs to the jurisdiction of that church. Of course withdrawal is usually, although not always, a cowardly act, it solves no problem, it clears up no case, it settles nothing before God.

We must say still more. Not submitting to church government means insubordination to and rebellion against Christ who called to authority. Again, not submitting to church government means not submit to the Word of God. Therefore we conclude that submission to church government is necessary for God's sake, for Christ's sake, for conscience sake. And submission to church government is actually submission to God, to Christ, to the Word.

However, even so not all is said that should at least be mentioned in this connection. (Perhaps much more should be said but our space is limited). In the first place we must keep in mind that the church through its office bearers is certainly not a perfect and infallible institution. The church can make mistakes, errors, the church can do wrong. Therefore we reformed people believe in the right of appeal. Submission to church government is not and should not be a blind submission, that would be hailing the hierarchical system of Rome. In the second place no one should submit to church government, and in this connection I mean certain rules, regulations or decisions, when he is convinced in his soul that the church is positively wrong. Then the word of the apostles counts: "We must obey God rather than man." Because in such instances the church no longer speaks the Word of God and functions as the agent of Christ but lords it over the flock. Submission must indeed be refused when the church demands things that are in conflict with the Word of God.

In the third place we also like to emphasize once more that the church only governs in its own sphere

and none need to submit to the church when that church arbitrarily demands submission to her in respect to things that lie outside of her domain.

And, finally, only when the church wants to be nothing else but the instrument of Christ, submitting herself to the Word, and when the members have a supreme desire to be obedient unto Christ, we can expect the ideal relationship between the members of the church and the office bearers whom Christ has invested with authority. For then the governing church will seek to glorify Christ, love the truth, maintain justice and be never a pleaser of men. And on the other hand then those who must submit themselves to church government will do so gladly, cheerfully, in the consciousness that the church seeks their spiritual and eternal wellbeing.

J. D.



The Christian School And The Church

Viewpoint of the Treatment of this Subject:

Looking at our subject, we notice that it is stated in its most general form. The main subject of this essay is not the "church" but the "christian school". And the idea is no doubt, that this school is to be viewed in its proper relationship to the church.

Whereas this relationship of the school to the church has various angles, it can be viewed from more than one viewpoint. First of all, the subject could be treated, from the viewpoint of the pedagogical need of essential harmony of the instruction given in the school and in the church. Viewing the subject in this light, the child to be instructed in both institutions would be brought into the focus-point. Secondly, to mention another viewpoint, attention could be called to the administrative relationship of the Christian School to the church. A question of interest in this connection would be: Should the schools be subsidized by the churches at large. This latter question is quite actual in some territories of our land, where the christian school movement is desired to be expanded to numerically small and financially weak churches. A third viewpoint is the question of the rightful God-ordained calling of the christian school in its teaching, in distinction from the church. What is the sovereign sphere of the school? Of the church?

To exhaust the subject from all these and other possible angles within the allotted space is out of the question. We will confine our treatment of the subject to the latter of the three viewpoints suggested in the former paragraph.

Definition of the Subject Proper:

It may be of merit to some of the readers of this essay, that we first of all define our subject. What do we exactly have in mind when we speak of the

"church"? Of the School"?

Speaking of the "church" there are two possibilities.

The first is, that we have in mind the church as a living, spiritual organism in Christ Jesus. This is the church as she invisibly dwells in the hearts of the regenerated elect. It is the body of the risen, glorified Christ. And this church reveals itself in confession and walk, as the "one new man in the Spirit". This is the holy Catholic church of which we make confession in the apostolic confession.

The second is, that we have in mind the church in her *institutional* life. We here have reference to that institution in which the living church is able to, in an orderly way, reveal herself in the midst of this world. Her task is, the preaching of the gospel, and the administration of the sacraments and the exercising of the christian discipline. Speaking of the preaching of the gospel we have in mind also the church's duty to train the ministry. To maintain the schools and the ministry, as spoken of in Lord's Day 37, Qu. 103.

In this article we will treat of the church as to her *institutional* calling, in distinction from the calling and sphere of the labors of the christian schools.

It is also necessary to define what to our mind is the *christian school*.

There is much in our day that is called christian, that is not worthy of this name. In the most general sense of the term, all that is not Mohammedan, Budistic, etc. is called christian. In this sense both Catholicism and Protestantism is "christian". To be sure, no well-thinking person, would concede that a school that is "christian" in that general sense is worthy of serious consideration. Neither is, to pass by Roman Catholicism, all that fall within the pale of Protestantism worthy of the name "christian". Think of all the modernism, denying the very heart of the christian religion, to wit, the Sonship of Christ, and His vicarious atoning labors.

A christian school to our mind is one that is distinctively reformed, and in this sense must of necessity of the present structure of things, be denominational. This latter statement is a "thesis" which the writer of these lines would be happy to defend in a separate article.

And a distinctively reformed school, be it primary, high-school, college or university, must be this minus cultural implications of points II and III of the Synod of 1924. This point we wish to illucidate upon presently. Our subject in the light of this definition, calls for an answer to the question: what is the proper task of the Christian School in relation to the task of the Church.

The Duty of Both Institutions Subjected to God's Sovereignty.

In view of the virtue of God's Unity , and also the

unity of His sovereignty in every domain, both institutions must be considered as in the service of the living God and His Christ.

This implies that we cannot put the duty of the school in the realm of "nature" and that of the church in grace. Apart from the fact that the construction "nature and grace" is not reformed, but Aquinian, Roman Catholic, it must be rejected as an untenable dualism.

Both the christian school and the church must view all things in the light of the glorious revelation of God in the face of Jesus Christ, and must insist, that apart from the regenerating influence of the Spirit of sanctification none can know God.

Neutrality in either institution is out of the question. It is either teaching the subjection to the law of God, in subjection to it, or to oppose it in bitter hatred and denial.

Both must teach in their respective fields, having the Word of God as a lamp unto their feet and a light upon their pathway.

Is the Christian School a Complement of the Church?

If the school and the church did not have their own divinely sanctioned domain of prescribed duties, they would be overlapping each other, and either the one or the other would have to be declared to have no right of existence. We believe each has its own task, which the one cannot perform for the other.

The christian school may never be an appendix to the catechism class. Its duty is not to teach reformed theology pure and simple. That is the duty of the church. Neither is the christian school another *Sunday school*. This latter motive could never warrant the existence of a separate school-institution.

Still the question of the priority of the institutions may be raised? And then it is our conviction, that as to the interpretive element in the school-subject-matter of instruction, the school must borrow the principles from the church. The church has felt the need of christian schools, to apply its teaching to all the field of the sciences taught on the school-curriculum. In fact, there is a separate article in the Church Order relative to the duty of consistories and the christian schools. During the annual "church-visitation" the question of the christian schools is also mentioned, not to forget the question at the end of each classical meeting.

There is a sense in which the school complements the work of the church as an institution. We do not here have reference to the factual, historical, scriptural knowledge imparted in the school. Its merit is an undeniable fact. And many are the ministers who gratefully acknowledge this fact. But this latter is not what we have in mind, since it does not touch the

genius of the duty of the christian school in distinction from the duty of the church.

To answer this question attention must be called to the specific field of the school. The subject matter of the school is not gathered from the Bible. The Bible is written in very grammatical language, but it does not teach us scientifically the laws of grammar. It is not the duty of the minister in the catechism class to teach grammar. Neither can we very well speak of a biblical physiology, describing scientifically all the functions of the body. It would be utter folly to try to collect the data of medieval and modern secular(?) history from the Bible. It is also ridiculous to speak of a scientific knowledge of geography in the Bible.

The data of these subjects taught in school is collected empirically by men and women, apart from the Scriptures. And the scientist, provided he remains a scientist, can go on collecting data indefinitely, and never will he lock horns with the believers in the infallibility of the Word.

But the mere collection of the data is not knowledge, and instruction. Knowledge deals with the totality of things, in the origin, existence and purpose. And the interpretation of things, is either a matter of God's revelation or of man's reason. It is in its total explanation, either theology or philosophy! It is a biblical life- and world-view, or a philosophic life- and world-view.

The church must develop the dogma, and the school applies it. And so the application in the school, is the leaven of the church in every domain of life. Does this tell the scientific meaning, of every detail? No, it does not. But it does afford the "vantage-point" of faith for believing perspectives.

Some Practical Implications.

If the reformed life- and world-view is to be applied to the subject matter in the school, it calls for instructors who have a deep and penetrating grasp of the reformed truth. This sets a high standard.

The christian school teacher must be a theologian plus being acquainted with the subject-matter of his particular field. If one reflects a bit he will detect that not all subjects lend themselves equally well to be placed in the broad perspectives of God's sovereign will. The teacher in the reading class may be able to call attention to words as "God" "must", and explain them, but then she is strictly speaking not limiting herself to "reading".

One teaching history has a far greater opportunity. Thus also one teaching geography, and civics.

It has been my experience, that too little attention on the part of educational committees has been given to these questions. School boards also ought to stress the need of truely christian schools. It is with mingled feeling that I visit the christian schools of our day.

The majority of the teachers have not seen the genius of christian schools. How can they teach?

In closing permit me to remark, that the goal set by our reformed fathers, is a lofty and exacting one. The difficulties are great with which a truly christian school has to contend. There is always and again the element of sin and laxity. Walk worthy of the high vocation wherewith you have been called, is the watch-word of the hour!

G. L.

Nieuws Van Onze Kerken

(Continued from last Issue)

Nu is het m.i. geen overbodige weelde om het zoo in te richten dat we jaarlijksche Synoden hebben. Men blijft beter op de hoogte met de samenleving der verschillende kerken van Oost en West. Zaken van meer ernstigen aard kunnen en moeten gezamenlijk worden verhandeld, en indien mogelijk spoedig afgehandeld, opdat het wel mag gaan ook met het Zion Gods onder ons. We moeten niet vergeten: de band der liefde moet niet worden gerekt maar wel nauwer aaneengesnoerd, en een Synode vermag dit dikwijls te bevorderen.

In de tweede plaats zijn we als Protestantsche Gereformeerde Kerken nog jong, en het is van veel gewicht dat een Synode de leiding geeft. We moeten het pand bewaren hetwelk ons is toevertrouwd. We hebben op elkaar toe te zien om uit ons eigen beginsel zoo veel mogelijk te leven.

Ik zag dan ook gaarne dat er werd beslist hoe b.v. Zendingswerk moet worden verricht. Dit is voor een kerkengroep als de onze van groot belang. Het is een vereischte dat er uitbreiding ook bij ons wordt gezocht. We hebben toch ook jonge mannen die worden opgeleid voor den dienst des Woords, om spoedig te worden uitgestoten in Gods Wijngaard. Maar als er dan geen plaatsen zijn, wat dan?

Mr. Kort gaf dienaangaande onlangs wel een kleine vingerwijzing. Hij was van oordeel dat Ds. Hoeksema voor een jaar verlof kreeg van zijn gemeente om Zendingswerk te doen. Dit is m.i. echter minder wijs. Een generaal heeft een enige plaats in een leger, en in dezen is ook de voorzichtigheid de moeder der wijsheid.

Men hoort soms ook stemmen onder ons dat preek en redevoeringen over de radio nuttig zijn voor Zendingswerk, en wie zou die durven tegenspreken. Dit heeft hier bij ons veel bijgedragen tot de verrijking van onze beginselen; tot de verheerlijking van Gods

naam; en tot troost van Zijn volk. En ook buiten onze kringen waren deze redevoeringen welkom, en er werd elken Zondag door velen naar uitgezien.

Zij die dan ook goed hebben geluisterd zullen wel hebben bemerkt dat het algemeene-genade-huisje is omvergetrokken. De jonge mannen vereeniging van Fuller Ave. doet dan ook goed nu ze weer een poging deed om de komende winter Ds. Hoeksema weer over de radio te laten spreken, D. V. Laat ons als gemeente deze poging ook financieel steunen.

Ook in het Westen ziet men zeer goed dat Zendingswerk over de radio doel-treffend is. Redlands' dominé doet dit op zijn eigen enige manier. Ik verbindt dit doen meestal aan zijn naam. Om sluw te zijn in den goeden zin van het woord is niet verkeerd. Met al dit mooie hebben we echter nog geen Zendeling in het veld. We moeten het eene doen en het andere niet nalaten.

Het is ook zeer gezond dat we van binnen uit uitbreiden. Hier in Grand Rapids zou een mooie gemeente kunnen worden gesticht, b.v. in de Oakdale Park buurt. Een beetje meer Westelijk van de plaats alwaar we onze school hopen te bouwen in de toekomst. Wie geeft de eerste stoot?

Het is, dunkt me, een prijzenswaardige zaak van al onze vrouwen hier en rondom de stad onzer inwoning dat ze willen helpen tot het verkrijgen van een eigen school. Waar liefde woont gebiedt de Heere Zijn zegen; daar woont Hij Zelf, en wordt Zijn heil verkregen. . . .

Ik vernam het uit goede bron dat het goed gaat met de Kalamazoo gemeente. Er kwamen enige huisgenissen bij, en anderen komen getrouw luisteren. Zeker een goed teeken, en een recht geaard Christen verblijd zich dat er welvaart is in eigen vesting.

Ik wil ook nog eventjes vermelden dat Creston gemeente in haar leeraar Ds. J. De Jong de rechte man heeft gevonden. Oud en jong is wel tevreden. Voor het overige weet ik niet veel van onze gemeenten in en rondom Grand Rapids.

Het is soms wel eens een beetje lastig wanneer men moet timmeren zonder gereedschap. Aan de andere kant is het echter ook weer mooi. Men kan dan meer schrijven in het algemeen over dingen die toch ook niet heelemaal buiten de gezichtseinder van onze kerken liggen, en haar nut kunnen hebben ook voor onze Standard Bearer lezers.

Ik ga nu maar eindigen. De vorige maal was ik een beetje lang van adem en schreef meer als ik eigenlijk wel mocht.

Ik wensch u voorts allen den "zegen des Heeren" toe, en de rust der ziele die we wel noodig hebben in een wereld van oorlog en ontevredenheid, van jammer en ellende.

S. D. V.