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MEDITATION

Quickened With Christ

But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved); and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

Eph. 2:4-6.

But God!

There is an evident contrast here with the preceding verses of this chapter.

At the beginning of this chapter the apostle had purposed a different construction: "And you", he wrote, and, no doubt, intended to continue at once: "hath he quickened together with Christ". Of Christ, and of God's exceeding great power of salvation revealed and wrought in Him as He raised Him from the dead, and exalted Him far above all principalities and powers, and might and dominion, and every name that is named, of this glorious Head of the Church he had written in the preceding chapter. And now he was about to describe the riches of salvation the Church has in that Christ: "and you". . . .

But as he thinks of that exceeding great mercy of God whereby He quickened believers, he cannot but divert his thoughts to the depth of misery from which they have been delivered.

O, it is, indeed, a great love, a marvellous grace that quickened us with Christ.

And to measure at all the greatness of that mercy we must remember where we were when it found us, in what depths of misery we had been submerged when it began to draw us up on high. And you. . . who were dead through trespasses and sins! Such was our

condition. And in these trespasses and sins, in the sphere of them, having our delight in them, we walked: we thought and desired and planned and willed and spoke and acted; quite according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. And having our conversation among these children of disobedience, we walked according to the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling its desires: enmity against God; and thus we were children of wrath, none better than "the others"!

Quite worthless we were, or rather, worthy of damnation.

Desperate was our condition.

There was no ray of hope, as far as we were concerned; nor did we even look for one!

And you. . . .

But God!

Quickened, made alive!

He hath quickened us. . . together with Christ!

He hath raised us up together, and He hath made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ!

O, blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ!

The three terms belong together, are intimately related: quickened, raised up, made us sit in heavenly places!

We *were* dead, and He hath quickened us, made us alive. In the same sense in which we were dead, we are now living. Dead we were in trespasses and sins and unto righteousness; alive we are now against sin and unto righteousness. Dead we were so that all our thinking and willing and desiring were motivated by enmity against God; dead in darkness and unto light; alive we are now so that we mind the things of the Spirit in the love of God.

Yes, but the new life whereby He quickened us is not a return to the old life, only delivered from the

dominion of sin. It is resurrection life. For He hath raised us up together with Christ. And the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is no return to our earthly, mortal existence, but an advance into immortality, the state in which death hath no more dominion over Him, the life of perfect freedom that can be enslaved nevermore. It is the life incorruptible, powerful, glorious, as far above the life which Adam knew in his original state of integrity as heaven is above the earth, victorious, eternal life, life that can never die! And to be raised up together in Christ signifies that we become partakers of that resurrection life of Him Who is the Head of the body, the Church!

Hopelessly dead in sin; quickened unto eternal life!
Still more.

By the exceeding great power of God Christ was set at the right hand of the Most High in heavenly places. He is exalted. He reigns. He has all power in heaven and on earth. And when God quickened us together with Him, and raised us up together with Christ, He also exalted us with our Lord and Head, so that we are with Him in those heavenly places, partake of His heavenly glory and mighty dominion!

Quickened unto righteousness, raised unto immortal glory, exalted unto victorious dominion!

All with Christ, in Him!

He is the ground of it. For we are by nature children of wrath that are worthy of eternal death. But He is the incarnated Son of God, Who laid down His life for us, and by this voluntary sacrifice of love obtained for us the forgiveness of sin, eternal righteousness and life.

Through His obedience unto the death of the cross, death forever lost the right to have dominion over us!

And He is the principle of it!

For He was raised as the firstborn of the dead, preparing the way for all His brethren.

And He was made the quickening Spirit.

As such He is the Head of the body, the church, that through Him the whole body may be quickened!

And in Him and with Him they live forever!

Blessed Lord!

He hath quickened us!

And He *hath* raised us up together with Him, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ!

The quickening and resurrection and exaltation of believers with their Lord Jesus Christ is presented here as an accomplished fact.

Partly, this fact is an object of our faith.

We lay hold of it, so that we can appropriate the language of the Word of God here as our own, by that faith which is an evidence of things unseen, the substance of things hoped for.

For surely, it does not yet belong to the things that are perceived that we are quickened together with Christ, that we are partakers of His glorious resurrection life, and that we reign with Him in heavenly places. We are as yet on the earth, not in heaven. And we are earthy, not heavenly. And we are not glorious, but full of troubles and afflictions; not victorious, but often utterly defeated; not reigning in power, but oppressed by the enemy. And we still lie in the midst of death, bearing about with us the body of this death, mortal, corruptible, weak, and in dishonor. Nor is it true, according to all appearances, that we are delivered from sin's power. For, while we have a delight in the law of God according to inner man, we find another law in our members, warring against the law of our mind, and bringing us into captivity to the law of sin. . . .

O, wretched men that we are!

Yes, but from this depth of shame and misery, from this darkness of death in the midst of which we lie, we rise victoriously by faith! We look upon our crucified Lord, Who shed His lifeblood for our sins, and laid His life on the altar of perfect love before the face of God for our transgressions, Whom God raised from the dead, and in Whose exaltation to the right hand of power in heaven God revealed His exceeding great power; and we believe that God hath quickened us with Him, hath raised us up together, and made us to sit in heavenly places together in Him!

By faith we know that this glorification with Him is very really an accomplished fact.

For by faith we know that we are in Him, that He is the Head and we are the members of His body. We are in Him by an act of God's sovereign mercy, for He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world. In God's eternal and immutable counsel He and we are inseparably united, so that He is responsible for us, His work is imputed to us, what He does we do, what is done to Him is done to us. With Him we are united in His death, so that when He died we died; with Him we are united in His resurrection, so that when He was raised we were raised; with Him we were united when from the mount of Olives He ascended into highest glory, so that we were taken up in Him!

When Christ was raised, the body was quickened, raised up together with Him; when He was made to sit in heavenly places, the body was exalted together with Him, because it is forever in Him!

And by faith in Him we lay hold upon the accomplished fact of our being quickened and glorified with Him!

Partly, too, o, very much in part, but, nevertheless, very really, this quickening with Christ is a fact of our present experience. There are, indeed, those that would deny this. According to them, the Word of God

here and in other, similar passages speaks only ideally. Christ alone is quickened, raised, exalted; and of us this can be said only in as far as ideally we belong to Him, and lay hold upon Him and all His benefits by faith. The realization of this glory and life is all to come in the future. But, surely, we are also now quickened with Him, raised from the dead, exalted with Him in heavenly places. If it were not so, He would be a Stranger to us, and never could we even lay hold on Him by faith.

He dwells in us by His Spirit.

By that Spirit He quickened us, and instilled within our hearts the beginning of His resurrection life! Principally, we are very really dead to sin and alive unto righteousness. And our life is hid with Christ in God, so that we seek the things that are above. New creatures we are. We reign with Christ even in the midst of defeat. Old things have passed away, all things are become new!

Partly, this accomplished fact is still an object of hope!

For the complete realization of all this glory, the full manifestation of it, cannot come until He shall be manifested in glory and we shall be revealed with Him at His coming. For, even though, nay, because of the very fact that we have the firstfruits of the Spirit, we now groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body!

For we are saved in hope!

But hope that is seen is not hope! For what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?

But if we hope for that which we see not, we wait for it in patience!

For what is now true only in principle shall be fully realized when He comes!

We are quickened and we shall be quickened!

We are raised and we shall be raised together with him!

And our still unseen sitting with Him in heavenly places shall then be openly and universally manifest!

Death shall be completely swallowed up in life!

For ever and ever!

Wondrous love!

For of His great love wherewith He loved us all this glory is the revelation and realization!

He loved me, I know not why. . . .

Or rather: He loved me, and I know that it was not for any goodness or excellency that I possessed of myself, or as a response to the love wherewith I loved Him; but only for His own name's sake. The reason, the ground, the motive of this wondrous love, which I can never fathom is purely divine; it is hid in the

depth of the divine heart; it is sovereign; it is free; it is eternal. . . .

By grace I am saved!

By grace He elected me, knew me with a divine love, whereby I was wonderfully engraven in the palms of His hands. By grace He united me with Christ, His only begotten Son. By grace He beheld me in Christ, eternally, before the foundation of the world, justified, glorified, transformed according to the image of His Son, a proper object of His great love!

And *for* that love He blessed me with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ!

O, let us not overlook the beauty of this expression: *for* His great love! It does not mean the same thing as *through* His great love, or *by* His great love, or *out of* His great love; but it means *on account of* His great love wherewith He loved us! That love was the divine cause, hid in the unfathomable depths of the divine heart of God, of His act of quickening us with Christ, of raising us up together, and making us to sit in heavenly places together with and in Christ! That love was there. It was there eternally! It was there, in the heart of God, immutably. And it was great! A mighty, an unquenchable fire of love it is! It is eternally active. And, though this expression is far too human and too weak, we may say that this great love must be satisfied! God seeks and realizes the satisfaction of His own love in us!

O, marvellous, incomprehensible love!

For that love, on account of it, to satisfy it fully, He quickened us, He raised us up, He made us to sit together in heavenly places with Christ!

O, yes, that eternal love is the ultimate reason and cause of all!

It is the fountain, too, of the riches of His mercy!

For God is rich in mercy! He is blessed Himself, the infinite fulness of blessing. And He wills to make us blessed, too; blessed as He is blessed, in the sphere of perfect holiness. That will and strong desire to make us blessed with Him in His mercy. It reveals itself to us as great. For we were in the depths of misery and death, children of wrath, enemies of God, hateful and hating one another. But His love is immutable, and His mercy never faileth, and He drew us out of the depth of darkness and death into the glory of eternal light and life!

Riches of mercy!

Revelation of that great love wherewith He loved us!

The greatness of which was manifested in the death of His Son!

And the power of which is realized in our being quickened together with Him!

O, my God!

H. H.

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EDITORIALS

De Gronden

Uit het Agendum voor de Synode vernam ik, welke de gronden waren, waarop de instructie van Classis West gebaseerd is, om voortaan om de twee jaar in plaats van elk jaar als kerken in synode te vergaderen. Vertaald luiden ze als volgt:

1. Het is bewezen, dat er niet voldoende werk is voor een jaarlijksche synode.

2. Het geringe werk, dat de synode geroepen is te doen, weegt niet op tegen de onkosten aan eene synode verbonden.

We willen deze gronden in dit artikel beoordeelen.

Het mag allereerst wel opgemerkt worden, dat deze beide gronden feitelijk één zijn. De tweede grond houdt alles in: het weinige werk, dat de synode te doen heeft, is het geld niet waard, dat er aan besteed moet worden. Immers, als het niet was om de onkosten, maakte het geen verschil of de synode weinig of veel te doen had. Er zou dan geen bezwaar zijn, om toch elk jaar te vergaderen, ook al kon de synode haar agendum in één dag afwerken. Bovendien zal het duidelijk zijn, dat, indien het niet om de onkosten ging, de eerste grond ook zou kunnen worden ingebracht als een bezwaar tegen twee jaarlijksche synoden. Het agendum voor een twee-jaarlijksche synode zal weinig groter zijn dan van een jaarlijksche. De gewone belangen, die we gemeenschappelijk behartigen, blijven dezelfde. We hebben den eigenlijken grond voor de instructie dus in de tweede overweging.

Toch willen we den eersten grond ook onder de oogten zien.

En dan willen we allereerst letten op de bewering: "*Het is bewezen, dat er niet genoeg werk is.*"

Ik begrijp niet al te goed, wat Classis West daarmee bedoelt. Is het de bedoeling van deze bewering, dat er op de laatste vergadering van Classis West overtuigend bewijs is geleverd voor deze bewering? Dan heeft grond 1 zelf behoefte aan gronden. En dan ware het beter geweest, dat we de bewijsvoering, die door grond 1 wordt verondersteld, ook in het agendum hadden kunnen lezen. Zooals het nu staat, kunnen we niet eens een poging doen, om het bewijs, dat Classis West blijkbaar meende te hebben, te wegen en te beoordeelen. In dat geval zal het de taak der afgevaardigden van Classis West wel moeten worden geacht, om dat bewijs op de vergadering der a.s. synode te leveren.

Intusschen zal zulk bewijs zeker op feiten zich moeten gronden. En die feiten zullen moeten worden

CONTENTS

	Page
MEDITATION —	
QUICKENED WITH CHRIST.....	349
Rev. H. Hoeksema.	
EDITORIALS —	
DE GRONDEN.....	352
JAMMER	354
Rev. H. Hoeksema.	
THE TRIPLE KNOWLEDGE —	
EXPOSITION OF THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM.....	354
Rev. H. Hoeksema.	
THE PLACE OF THE BOOK OF ESTHER IN THE CANON	358
Rev. G. M. Ophoff.	
DE BOOZE MENSCH.....	363
Rev. G. Vos	
ERASMUS AND THE REFORMATION.....	365
Rev. H. De Wolf.	
IS CATECHISM PREACHING MINISTRY OF THE WORD?	368
Rev. M. Schipper.	
NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES.....	371
Mr. S. De Vries.	

ontleend aan de Acta der twee gehouden synoden, die van 1940 en 1941.

Welke zijn nu die feiten?

De synode van 1940, zoo leeren we uit de Acta, vergaderde vier en een halven dag, en hield negen zittingen. De Acta inhoudende het financieel rapport beslaan acht en zeventig bladzijden druks. Als we dit vergelijken met ons klein getal als kerken, dan mogen we zeker zeggen, dat dit een zeer lange synode was, en dat er zeker heel wat werk aan den winkel was. Hetzelfde geldt van de synode van 1941. Deze vergaderde ietwat korter, omdat de arbeid aanstonds beter georganiseerd werd en onder enkele commissies van preadvies werd verdeeld. Daaruit is het misschien te verklaren, dat, ofschoon deze synode slechts zeven zittingen had, de Acta langer zijn dan die der eerste, en met het financieel rapport zes en tachtig bladzijden druks beslaan. Wie zal nu bewijzen, dat er niet genoeg werk was voor eene synode, die drie of vier dagen vergaderde? Vergeet niet, dat gewone synoden, die slechts de gemeenschappelijke belangen der kerken behartigen, en die niet met bijzondere problemen hebben te worstelen, gewoonlijk niet de langste zijn. Als er moeite is over leer en tucht, als er allerlei protesten ter tafel zijn en zaken van appél, dan zit eene kerkelijke vergadering gewoonlijk voor een langen tijd. Zooiets hebben we op onze synodale vergaderingen nog niet gehad. We mogen dus uit de Acta veilig de conclusie trekken, dat op onze synodale vergaderingen gewoonlijk werk genoeg is voor drie of vier dagen. En ook al zou dit in de toekomst anders worden, zoodat we in twee dagen ons werk afkonden, dan zou dit nog geen grond zijn, m.i. voor de bewering van Classis West: *Het is bewezen*, etc.

Vroeger, toen we nog als ééne classis vergaderden, kwamen we van heinde en ver. We vergaderden toen twee- of driemaal per jaar. En er was een groot aantal afgevaardigden. En toch hadden zulke vergaderingen in den regel slechts werk voor twee of drie zittingen. Het waren gewoonlijk buitengewone, minder aangename zaken, die ons toen lang bezig hielden. Doch daarmee was het niet bewezen, dat er geen werk genoeg was voor die vergaderingen.

In elk geval zal het den afgevaardigden van Classis West niet zoo gemakkelijk vallen, om grond 1 uit de Acta (en dat wil immers zeggen: "de dingen, die vericht werden") te bewijzen.

Grond 2 dan? Het geringe werk is de onkosten niet waard? ("The small amount of business which Synod is called to transact does not compensate for the large expense involved.")

Er ligt aan dezen grond een waardschatting ten grondslag: te weinig werk voor teveel geld.

Maar naar welke maatstaf oordeelt Classis West hier? Is het eigenlijk wel "in dollars and cents" te berekenen, hoeveel het werk eener synode waard is?

Het antwoord op deze vraag zal wel ontkennend moeten wezen. Wie zal beoordeelen of uitrekenen, hoeveel het werk in Gods koninkrijk "waard" is, als het in geld betaald moet worden? Geld en de dingen van Gods koninkrijk zijn twee ongelijke grootheden. Er zijn maar twee gevallen denkbaar, waarin de tweede grond van Classis West steek houdt: 1. Het geval, dat het houden eener jaarlijksche synode geld verkwisten is. 2. Het geval, dat het houden eener synode een te zwaren geldelijken last op de schouders van ons volk legt.

Het eerste is zeker niet waar. We hebben reeds aangetoond, dat Classis West geen grond heeft om te spreken van een "small amount of business". Het is zeker geen geld verkwisten, dat de kerken eens in het jaar samenkomen om de gemeenschappelijke belangen van kerk en school en zending te behartigen. Classis West stelt voor, om eens in de twee jaar de toelage voor behoeftige kerken vast te stellen, en om het eind-examen voor kandidaten te laten geschieden door de theologische school commissie. Het eerste zal echter in de praktijk niet zoo gemakkelijk gaan. Het tweede zal wel kunnen; maar dan zal die commissie beter de kerken in het gemeen moeten vertegenwoordigen, dan ze thans doet, en zeker ook uit de kerken van Classis West moeten worden gekozen of benoemd. Maar er zijn ook andere zaken der school, die behartigd moeten worden. En dan is daar de zaak der zending, die door Classis West niet eens wordt genoemd. Deze en andere zaken zullen zeker beter behartigd kunnen worden, zoo de synode jaarlijks vergadert, dan wanneer ze om de twee jaar samenkomt.

Maar zijn de synodale onkosten dan misschien een te zware last voor onze kerken?

Uit het financieel rapport in de Acta 1940 vernemen we, dat de totale synodale onkosten voor dat jaar de som van \$887.52 bedroegen. Als we daarvan aftrekken de onkosten, die niet door de synodale vergaderingen als zoodanig werden veroorzaakt, en die blijven ook al zou de synode om de twee jaar vergaderen, dan blijft er over de som van 640.35 dollars. Deze som vertegenwoordigt de onkosten der vergaderingen en het publiceeren der Acta. Bij aanslag over onze kerken bedraagt dit ongeveer zestig cent per huisgezin, of ongeveer één cent per week. Een ondragelijke last kan dit zeker niet worden genoemd. Als Classis West spreekt van "the large expense involved", dan is dit, om maar zacht te spreken, wel een beetje sterk uitgedrukt.

Vergelijk hiermee, wat onze classicale vergaderingen kostten, toen we nog als ééne classis vergaderden. In de Acta 1940 kunnen we het laatste financieele rapport daarvin vinden. In 1939 bedroegen de classicale onkosten de som van \$2,435.07. Trek hiervan af de onkosten, die niet direkt met de vergaderingen in verband stonden, en ge houdt over de som van \$1,

710.55, of twee en twee derde maal zooveel als onze synode kost. Als ik het goed begrijp (er is hier een drukfout in het rapport ingeslopen) dan vertegenwoordigt deze som de onkosten van twee vergaderingen (7 Jan. en 11 Juni).

Maar ge merkt op, dat we intusschen ook aparte vergaderingen van Classis Oost en Classis West gehouden hebben. En in dezelfde Acta van 1940 vinden we ook een rapport van de onkosten van drie vergaderingen van Classis Oost en twee van Classis West in 1939-40. Met aftrek van de onkosten, die niet door die vergaderingen als zoodanig werden gemaakt, kosten die zeven vergaderingen de kerken \$1,105.97. Zoodat die zeven classicale vergaderingen plus de synode van 1940 tezamen de kerken ongeveer precies zooveel hebben gekost als de twee classicale vergaderingen van 1939 boven genoemd.

Alles tezamen genomen komt het mij voor, dat de gronden voor de instructie van Classis West niet bijzonder zwaar wegen, en dat we aan geestelijke vrucht en kracht teveel verliezen, zoo ze zou worden opgevolgd.

Doch zooals ik reeds schreef, we weten niet, welke gronden Classis West heeft voor haar "It has been proven."

Misschien komt de zaak wel in een heel ander licht te staan, als we die bewijsovervoering hooren.

H. H.

Jammer

In "Our Church News" van 1 Mei, 1942, komt een bekendmaking voor van den kerkeraad der gemeente te South Holland, die zeker bij velen van de lezers van dat blad, die van "de geruchten" in die bekendmaking genoemd niets gehoord hebben, verwondering zal hebben gewekt.

Ik vind het jammer, dat zulke "bekendmakingen" gepubliceerd worden. Van den kerkeraad vind ik het niet wijs, dat hij zich voor zulke dingen laat vinden. En "Our Church News" moest zulke dingen niet opnemen.

Bloote geruchten loopen dikwijls lang niet zoo ver en wijd, als zij, die zich er door gekrenkt gevoelen, wel meenen. Daarom maakt men de geruchten gewoonlijk maar erger door ze in het publiek te bestrijden. En laat men ze loopen, en zijn het bloote geruchten zonder eenigen grond, dan loopen ze vanzelf dood.

In classicale rapporten, die in het publiek verschijnen, worden in den regel alle persoonlijke zaken zooveel mogelijk vermeden. Waarom moet nu de kerkeraad van South Holland aan al onze kerken laten weten,

dat er geruchten in omloop zijn?

Des te meer is het te bejammeren, dat de kerkeraad van South Holland de bewuste bekendmaking in het licht gaf, omdat hij den vorm dier bekendmaking zal moeten veranderen, wil hij de waarheid spreken. Zooals ze daarstaat ("al de geruchten. . . zijn absoluut valsch") is de bekendmaking eenvoudig niet waar, zooals velen wel weten.

De kerkeraad zal dus den vorm dier bekendmaking zóó moeten veranderen, dat ze de waarheid zegt. Hij is dit aan de waarheid verplicht, maar ook aan velen, die door deze bekendmaking in dezen vorm als leugenaars aan de kaak worden gesteld.

Doet hij dit niet, dan zal er meer moeten worden gezegd.

H. H.

The Triple Knowledge

An Exposition Of The Heidelberg Catechism

IV.

LORD'S DAY III

4.

Total Depravity. (FINIS)

However, if the theory that there is some other kind of grace than that which regenerates a man, must be rejected, the question returns: what is the implication of the doctrine of total depravity? How can the answer of the Heidelberg Catechism to its eight question be squared with many phenomena in the actual experience and every day life in the world of men that appear to contradict the severe judgment of our instructor: we are incapable of doing any good and inclined to all evil, unless we are regenerated by the Spirit of God? In order to give the correct answer to this question it is paramount that we bear in mind that the Catechism is speaking of ethical good and evil, and to ask ourselves: what is meant by this?

Sin did not and could not change man essentially, i.e. it did not change him into some other kind of being. By the fall he did not change into a devil or demon, nor was he degraded to the level of the animal. It is often alleged that man would have been changed into some kind of a devil immediately when he fell, had not God intervened at once through the operation of

His common grace. But all such statements are erroneous. Sin could not change the being of man. It is moral, ethical corruption. Man was created a psychico-physical being, a creature consisting of body and soul, possessing intellect and will. And after the fall he still is such a psychico-physical, rational and moral creature. Sin did not cause mental derangement or intellectual incapacity in man. It is true, that even these natural gifts and powers are greatly marred and weakened through the fall; but they are not lost. Nor has his essential relation to the world about him been changed. It is true that the world bears the curse for his sake: the earth brings forth thorns and thistles, and the creature is in bondage to corruption; it is subject to vanity and it toils and labors in vain. But even so, man is still king of the earthly creation, and exercises dominion over all things. Although he rules in the sphere of vanity, so that no definite goal is to be attained by the "culture" of the world, man, nevertheless, reigns over the earthly creature. He "cultivates" that creation with all its powers and treasures and in every department of its existence and life. The result is that the natural man is able to perform and accomplish many things that are formally correct, and that are well-nigh perfect from a mechanical viewpoint. He makes the world about him, as well as his own existence and life, object of his scientific investigation; he discovers the ordinances of the Creator in all things, and arranges his own life accordingly; he brings to light the hidden wonders of the works of God, and presses them into his service. He can build a good house, and construct a wonderfully perfect machine; he understands the laws of the soil and of the seasons, of summer and winter, of heat and cold, of winds and rain, and he causes the earth to yield the best possible crop. He studies the laws of gravity and gravitation, of steam and electricity, of light rays and sound waves; his searching eye roams through the immensity of the firmament and he predicts the exact course of the heavenly bodies millions upon millions of miles distant from the earth; and he penetrates into the mysteries of matter, and discovers the ordinances of atoms and molecules. And he invents the telephone and telegraph, the radio and cinematograph, and causes his voice to be heard to the ends of the earth. He speeds along the road in his automobile, he flies through space in his aeroplane; he swallows up both space and time, and makes the world very small. He is able to make terrible instruments of destruction in the form of guns and tanks, submarines and torpedoes, bombs and shells; but he also heals the wounds and fights disease and death, prolonging human life and alleviating human suffering. And much he can do to enrich his earthly life and to make it more abundant. He surrounds himself with means that make his life both pleasant and comfortable: he eats and drinks, he

plays and dances, and fills his heart with gladness. All these things the fallen sinner can perform quite well. In this sense he is not incapable of doing any good, or prone to do everything wrong. Sin did not change the being of man, nor his essential relationship to the world about him.

The natural man is even able to conform his external life and walk in the world to a certain extent to the moral law of God. He is not morally incompetent in the sense that he can no longer discern the difference between good and evil. As we have seen in our discussion of Rom. 2:14, 15, the natural man does by nature *the things* of the law, and by rather clearly discerning between good and evil and making his laws accordingly, he shows that he has the work of the law written in his heart. And there is even an attempt on his part to regulate his life and the life of the community in which he lives according to the law of God. A complexity of motives such as fear of punishment, vain glory, ambition, the urge of self-preservation, shame, and the like, govern him in this attempt. In general we may state that the natural man consents to the law that it is good, and that it is salutary for him to keep it, while the wages of sin is always death. Too much adultery and debauchery undermine the body and have a corrupting effect on society; too much greed and covetousness disrupt economic relations, cause revolutions and wars; too great a laxity in the laws governing marriage and divorce destroys the home and the nation; if the practice of deceit and dishonesty in business is not curbed the result is lack of confidence; the murderer and highway robber are detrimental to society. All this the natural man discerns very clearly. And the love of self and the desire for self-preservation urge him to curb his lust and to conform his outward life as much as he considers expedient to the precepts of God's moral law. Ultimately he fails in this attempt, for the love of God is not in his heart, and he follows after his sinful lusts. But all this readily explains that in the world of fallen man there is a certain "regard for virtue and external orderly deportment" as the Canons express it.

Yet, in all this the natural man performs no good in the ethical sense of the word. It must still be said of him that he is incapable of doing any good and inclined to all evil. For what is good? It is the perfect keeping of the law of God with all our heart and mind and soul and strength. But what is the law of God? As we have seen in our discussion of question 4 of our Catechism, it is the expression of the living will of God that man shall love Him. To love the Lord our God with all our heart and with all our mind and with all our soul and with all our strength, to love Him in all that we do, to be motivated by that love of God in all our thinking and willing and desires and actions,—that

is good, and nothing else is good. All that is not of the love of God, however noble and charitable and beautiful it may appear as far as the outward act is concerned, is certainly evil. And the natural man does not love God, nor is he capable of loving God. On the contrary, he hates Him. For "the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Rom. 8:7. Hence, all he does is motivated by enmity against God, by love of self apart from God. He seeks his own glory instead of the glory of God. And because of this evil motive and purpose, all he does is always sin. He may be honest in business, he may refrain from drunkenness, he may lead a clean life, he may be charitable to his neighbours, he may be scrupulously correct in his dealings with others, he may even be religious, attend church, give liberally to the poor and to the cause of God's kingdom,—but he is incapable of doing any good and inclined to evil nevertheless. For always he seeks himself and does not love God. If a superintendent of a factory were to expel his employer and propose to run the shop for his own benefit, he might do so very efficiently, but in all he does he sins against his employer. He may very ably manage the establishment, so that production increases and the work he delivers receives highest praise; he may treat his employees kindly and pay the highest possible wages; but as long as his attitude against his employer is one of rebellion, he sins in all he does. The same is true of man in relation to God. He was created to be God's servant-friend. And he was appointed superintendent over all the works of God's hands, to develop them, to rule over them in the name of God and in love to Him, in order that God might receive all the glory. But he became a rebel, proposed to expel God from his heart, and now intends to run God's establishment as God's enemy and for his own pleasure and glory. He may still be an efficient superintendent, but all he does in that position of rebellion against God is certainly evil. And total depravity means principally that man is incapable of doing anything from the love of God, and that he is always prone to hate Him. In his inmost nature he stands opposed to the law of God.

And this deepest principle of enmity against God also reveals itself in all his life and conversation. For, let us not imagine that man can hate God and love the neighbour, that he can violate the first table of the law and keep the second. He cannot expel God from his life and for the rest live in moral rectitude. God will give His glory to no other. He cannot be mocked. He is terribly displeased with all the ungodliness of wicked men that hold the truth in unrighteousness. And He reveals His wrath from heaven by giving over the ungodly to the lusts of his flesh. And so, ultimately his attempt to show regard for virtue and for an orderly external deportment always fails. Very

really the natural man corrupts all life and destroys the earth. The enmity against God that is in his heart becomes a foul fountain of all manner of iniquity. From this corrupt fountain gushes forth spiritual darkness that envelops his mind, so that he loves the lie and pursues it. From that source of enmity against God there issue forth evil desires that corrupt the will, and cause him to pursue after the things of the flesh. From that fountain of evil in his heart proceed not only actual sins against God directly such as idolatry, profanity, rejection of the Word of God, worship of man's wisdom, ungodly philosophy, cursing and swearing, pride and rebellion, rejection of Christ and hatred of His people; but also those sins that corrupt all of human life in every relationship, such as malice and envy, greed and covetousness, lying and deceit, strife and contention, war and destruction, murder and robbery, fornication, adultery, divorce, love of pleasure, faithlessness, and the like, of all which the world of today is a living testimony.

To be sure, there is difference between one man and another, just as there is difference between one age and another. Not every man commits all sin. Each individual is but a branch in the organism of the human race, and he bears that particular fruit of the root-sin of Adam which is in harmony with his place in the organism. Men differ as to character, power, gifts and talents, means and circumstances. One man is bloodthirsty by nature, another is afraid to see blood; one is a spendthrift, another is a miser; one is weak, another is strong; one has great intellectual capacity, another is dull of mind; one loves pleasure, another loves the honor of men; one is poor while another is rich. And there are coarse sins, but there are also sins that are very refined. Some sins are done in secret, others are openly displayed and extolled on stage and screen. There are individual sins and group sins, social and national sins. There are sins that are punished by the government, and there are sins that are committed by the magistrates. But always the natural man commits iniquity. He is incapable of doing any good and inclined to all evil. Motivated by enmity against God he is corrupt in all his ways. There is no fear of God before his eyes.

Nor is the world improving. On the contrary, there is an organic development of sin, that is, sin develops and increases even as the organism of the race develops. Even as there is no restraint of sin in the heart of the individual sinner, so there is no check on the process and progress of sin in history. As the race develops in "culture" and civilization, sin grows in proportion. It is for this reason that it is possible that in the day of judgment it will be more tolerable for one generation than for another. More tolerable it will be for Sodom and Gomorrah than for Jerusalem, for Tyrus and Sidon than for Capernaum,

for the "world" that crucified Christ the first time than for the "world" that crucifies Him afresh. And thus the development of sin continues until the day of the culmination of the antichristian power. The measure of iniquity must be filled. For sin must become fully manifest as sin in all its horror, that God may be justified when He judgeth, when He casts all the wicked into the pool that burneth with fire and sulphur, where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched, and the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever!

V.

LORD'S DAY IV

Q. 9. Doth not God then do injustice to man, by requiring from him in his law, that which he cannot perform?

A. Not at all; for God made man capable of performing it; but man, by the instigation of the devil, and of his own wilful disobedience, deprived himself and all his posterity of those divine gifts.

Q. 10. Will God suffer such disobedience and rebellion to go unpunished?

A. By no means; but is terribly displeased with our original as well as actual sins; and will punish them in his just judgment temporally and eternally, as he hath declared, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things, which are written in the book of the law, to do them."

Q. 11. Is not God then also merciful?

A. 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.

1.

The Justice Of God's Demand.

This Lord's Day is the last chapter of the first part of our Heidelberg Catechism, whose main theme is "the Misery of Man". The three questions and answers contained in it are very intimately related. They are based on a common principle. They have a common source. All three questions might be expressed in the one query: Is there a way out as far as sinful man is concerned? Is there a possibility for man in his fallen state and depraved condition to be blessed, to escape the wrath of God and punishment? Considered in this light the three questions represent a very common attempt on the part of fallen man to persuade himself that he can maintain himself in his sin without suffering the consequences. The attempt

is characteristic of unregenerate man. He is not really sorry for his sin. On the contrary, he has his delight in iniquity. If only there were no evil consequences connected with the service of sin, if only he could sin with impunity, he would not worry about sin at all. But he is afraid of the results. He dreads the punishment of sin. He would like to escape death and hell. He likes to feel safe and secure in the service of sin. It is this fundamental characteristic of the unregenerate man, this urge to escape the dire results of sin for himself and for society in general, that frequently constrains him to curb his lust, and to have a certain regard for virtue and for an external orderly deportment. It is also to this deeply rooted desire that many a social reformer, who denies Christ and His atoning blood, who will have nothing of forgiveness based on God's justice and denies the power of regeneration, appeals in his battle against all sorts of crimes and vices. "Crime does not pay" is their slogan, and by a vivid picture of the misery and suffering connected inseparably with a life of dissipation they attempt to frighten men into a life of external virtue. Man loves sin, but he dreads hell. And so he makes an attempt to escape the one while continuing in the other. And it is this possibility that is the subject of discussion in this fourth Lord's Day.

However, there is only one conceivable way in which this attempt to sin with impunity could possibly be successful; or rather, that one imaginary way is really quite inconceivable: God must be changed! And the sinful heart and mind do indeed make the bold attempt to change the living God. It is thus that the sinner tries to entrench and fortify himself in his sin! He makes a god of his own imagination, after his own sinful heart, before whose face he can sin and feel safe. He invents his own god, an idol that is wholly like unto himself. He deprives God of His sterner attributes of righteousness and justice, and speaks of a god of mercy and love that will wink at sin, and make the ungodly the object of His blessing. And thus he tries to quiet the voice of his own conscience, and partly succeeds to create for himself a sense of safety in the way of sin, until he meets the living God in the day of the revelation of His righteous judgment and discovers that he believed a lie, that he followed after a delusion, and that the eternal God cannot be mocked!

It is this truth which the Catechism expounds in the three questions and answers of this fourth Lord's Day. Can God be changed? Can He be changed in His demand of the law that we love Him with all our hearts and mind and soul and strength, so that He comes down to the level of the sinner, and can be satisfied with what sinful man is able and willing to do? We cannot perform the demands of the law. Well, then, if God could be satisfied with the best we can do, all would be well. Or, if that is not possible, cannot

God relinquish the strict demands of His justice, so that He does not empty the vials of His wrath upon us, but leaves our sin unpunished? If only we could feel that there were no hell and damnation, our sinful heart would be at rest, and we could safely continue in the way of iniquity. And if, finally, the answer to this second inquiry must be that God's justice is unchangeable, can we not make an appeal to His mercy? Is it not possible to conceive of Him as a God Whose mercy overrules His justice, so that, even though His justice should urge Him to cast us into everlasting hell, His mercy so moves Him with pity and compassion, that He could not possibly behold us in the throes of His wrath? These three inventions of the lying imagination of sinful man the Catechism here investigates, and exposes as so many delusions of the darkened mind of the sinner.

H. H.

The Place of the Book of Esther in the Canon

In my previous article on this subject I was busy making it clear that our book is wanting in that religious spirit which we find in the other Old Testament books. Neither Mordecai nor Esther make the impression of being true believers.

Before Esther went in unto the king to make supplication to him, she made request that Mordecai together with the other Jews in Shushan, fast for her. It may be questioned whether she expected to receive, in answer to this fast, the help and protection of *God* in behalf of herself for this eventful hour. Her last words, "If I perish, I perish," bespeak despair and an unwilling submission to fate rather than faith in the power and willingness of God to be the protector and avenger of those who trust in Him.

Then, too, the action which Esther and also Mordecai took against the hostile heathen bespeaks unbridled rage and desire for revenge. In all that they say and do there is to be discovered not the slightest evidence that they were speaking and acting from true principle. Let us get their words and deeds under our eye and see how true this is.

When Haman sees that the accusing finger of Esther is pointed at him, when he hears her saying to the king, "The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman," he is sore afraid. The king at once becomes terribly angry and goes out into his palace garden. During his brief absence Haman makes request for his life to the queen. He implores her to intercede for him with the king, for he perceives that on the part

of the king there is no hope for him, if she will not interpose.

It is going too far to say, as some have said, that it was her duty to second Haman's request that his life be spared. But what she might have done is to refrain from throwing all the blame on Haman for the plight of her people—the king was also to blame—and to remind the king that it was his duty, as civil magistrate, to give Haman a fair trial. For all that she and the king knew, there might be an element of truth in the charge that Haman had lodged against her people. Let the king investigate and then take action. But Esther was too furious with Haman and too violently perturbed to consider what justice might be requiring of her. She was thinking only of her people and of herself. She wants Haman put out of the way and this not out of religious considerations, not because Haman as an Agagite and as an Amalekite, represented the cause of evil in opposition to the cause of God and *His* people, but solely because Haman had placed in jeopardy, exposed to destruction, her life and the life of her people. "If it please the king, let my life be given me at my petition and my people at my request" (chap. 7:3). "For how can I endure to see the evil that shall come unto my people? or how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred" (8:6). Such is the language of her plea.

It can be easily shown that the king's share of guilt was exceedingly great. Was it not he, as well as Haman, who had ordered the destruction of the Jews and this on the ground of their alleged seditious tendencies? Their laws were diverse from all people. They kept not the king's laws so that it was not for his profit to suffer them (3:8). So Haman had testified before the king. Such had been his counsel. And so little value was the king placing on the lives not only of the Jews but of all his subjects of whatever nationality, that without even first inquiring who that people might be and without first ascertaining by thorough investigation whether the charge was true, he had given Haman his seal-ring and thus had caused the public proclamation to be made. If Haman was moved by malice against a single and definite people, the king coveted the spoils of whatever people Haman had marked for destruction, for he needed much money (3:9, 13). Whoever that people might be—the king knew not—let Haman do with them as it seemeth good to him (3:11). So the king had spoken. It shows that he had no preference among the nations of his realm. The one was of no more account to him than the others. All were equally worthless in his sight. He would sacrifice any one of them on the altar of his avarice.

But however great the share of his guilt may be, the king is resolved that Haman die. Whether Haman has spoken the truth in accusing the Jews, matters

little with him. His sole concern at this juncture is Esther, his favorite wife—Esther the beautiful. She powerfully appeals to him now. Her fresh loveliness bewitches him as at no time previous. The spectacle of crestfallen Haman, crouching in fear and with base humility at her feet, pleading for his life, fills him with a jealous rage. Hear him scream, “Will he force the queen also before me in the house?” To think that this wretch dared to trick him into decreeing her death. He shall die for this. Presently the word goes forth out of his mouth and they cover Haman’s face. One of the chamberlains, who stands near the king, now ventures to speak. “Behold,” says he, “also the gallows fifty cubits high, which Haman has made for Mordecai, who has spoken good for the king, standeth in the house of Haman.” Then the king said, Hang him thereon. So they hanged Haman on the gallows prepared for Mordecai. Then was the king’s wrath pacified.” To appease Esther, he, on the very day in which Haman falls, gives to her the house of Haman, the people in it, and the entire possessions belonging thereto. Esther in turn places Mordecai, whom the king has made one of his officers who see his face, over the house of Haman, i.e., leaves to him the lucrative management of the large estate thus reverting to her. Herewith the king considers the case closed. That the Jews are still exposed to annihilation does not trouble him.

This king is a veritable monster in wickedness. Yet Mordecai married off his adopted daughter to such a man, and this under the impulse of lust of power and influence, because he thought it advantageous to his cause and the cause of his people. The both of them—Mordecai and Esther—covet and accept his favors and bask themselves in his depraved love. But not once do they openly rebuke him on account of his wickedness. Though he, in collaboration with Haman, has brought their people to the brink of ruin, they exonerate him and cast all the blame on Haman. And they hold their peace, when the king in a blind, jealous rage, orders Haman’s execution. Though in their hearts they revile him—the king—as much as they do Haman—it can’t be otherwise—their treatment of him is characterized by greatest respect and diffidence. They know better than to show that they are angry with him. He is useful to them. So they vent their wrath on Haman and allow themselves to be enriched at the expense of his house, in whose destruction they acquiesce. Can we imagine Daniel doing this, or Isaiah or Jeremiah or any of the other true servants of God?

The king, as was just said, considers the case closed. But not so Esther. Her mourning cannot cease until full deliverance comes to her people. So she again intrudes upon the king unsummoned. Falling down at his feet, she beseeches him in tears to put away the mischief of Haman and his device that he

has devised against the Jews. The king responds by again stretching forth his sceptre toward her. She rises and stands before him. Her request now is that the king cause to return, that is, recall, the letters which contain Haman’s device for destroying the Jews. That she, by descent nothing but a poor and despised Jewess, should propose to the great king of the Persians, that he revoke an edict whose irrevocable character as a Persian dogma was fixed, was something extraordinary. This is a command that he run the risk of unsettling the faith of the people in him. Will he not resent such boldness? But how can she endure to see the destruction of her kindred! She may calm herself. The king is still her slave. He reminds her of what he has so far done for Esther and Mordecai. He has given them the house of Haman, “and him they have hanged upon the gallows, because he laid his hands upon the Jews” (8:8). Does this not indicate that his good will abounds toward them? And now he cannot revoke the decree. “For the writing which is written in the king’s name, and sealed with the king’s ring, may no man reverse.” Still, their case is not hopeless. Something can be done to help them without revoking the decree. Let them also write for the Jews, that is, let them cause to be made also for the Jews a public proclamation that will make the first decree—that of Haman—powerless in effect. Just what kind of writing will accomplish this purpose, the king does not say. Nor does he care. This he leaves to the inventive power of Esther and Mordecai. They may write as it pleases them in his name (8:8). Their minds are equal to the task. Mordecai in the name of the king sends an edict to the Jews in which it is granted them to gather themselves together in every city “and to stand for their life, to destroy, to slay, and to cause to perish, all the power—the forces—of the people and province that would assault them, both little ones and women, and to take the spoil of them for a prey” (8:11). Just what are the grants of this edict? For one thing, it allows the Jews to collectively prepare and arm for the common defence, to act as one man against all the assaults and reverses which in case of their standing disunited will certainly befall them. This means is wholly justifiable. It is the only means that will avert the threatened calamity.

But the decree seems to grant still more. It allows the Jews not only to fight if and when attacked but to take the initiative in the impending warfare, and to search out, run down and put to the sword, on the day that was selected for their destruction, as many of the heathen as are known to them to be hostile and to do so with the aid of all the heathen who are well-disposed toward them. It permits them further to slay not only the armed man-power of their opponents but also their young and old, their defenceless women and children. Finally, the edict also specifies that they

take the spoil of the adversary. In a word, Mordecai and Esther grant them the same which, according to Haman's edict, was granted to the heathen. The edict, it would seem, is excessively and unnecessarily severe. We have a feeling that it was inspired by a lust to reward evil for evil. Even the Jews in the provinces seem to sense that Mordecai has gone too far in his zeal for his people. For if the edict decrees that the spoil of the enemy be taken, these Jews refrain from this. The statement thrice occurs, "but they laid not their hands on the prey" (9:15, 16).

As the grants of the two edicts—the edict of Haman and that of Mordecai—are the same, it would seem that the Persian empire in all its provinces approaches a terrible civil war. Yet when the day appointed finally arrives, there is properly speaking no such war, no pitched battles between the armed forces of the hostile heathen and the armed forces of the Jews. What takes place is a great and terrible slaughter with the hostile heathen as the sole victims. The sacred narrative makes this plain. The Jews smite all their enemies "with the stroke of the sword, and slaughter and destruction and do what they will to those that hate them" (9:5). "No man could withstand them" (9:2). In Shushan the Jews slay eight hundred men; in the provinces seventy five thousand. No mention is made of the slaying of a single Jew. It would seem that the hostile heathen offer no resistance whatever and that the will to fight is all on the side of the Jews. They are the aggressors and the resistance offered them is so feeble as to be insignificant.

The explanation of this is that the fear of the Jews was fallen upon all the enemies (9:2) and the fear of Mordecai especially. For, so the sacred narrator continues, "Mordecai was great in the king's house, and his fame went out throughout all the provinces: for this man Mordecai waxed greater and greater" (9:4). The fact of the matter is this: The people heard that the Haman party had fallen at the court, that their leader was killed and that Mordecai was elevated to the position formerly occupied by him and was ever growing in influence. The result was that the hostile heathen were afraid to lay violent hands upon the Jews. The second edict showed that they now had the upper hand at the court and that, although the first was not revoked, it was against the will of the king to act in accordance with it. The dread of the Jews in all parts of the empire was so great that many of the heathen of the land became Jews, that is, united with them in opposition to the Haman party (8:17). Even all the rulers of the provinces, and the lieutenants, and the deputies, and officers of the king went over with their Persian armies to the side of the Jews to help them (9:3). The result was that when the day appointed by Haman for the destruction of the

Jews arrived, all open hostility had vanished and the hostile heathen were no longer a menace. Yet out of fear of the Jews they did assemble not for attack but for the defence of themselves and of their own. For they knew that they had been marked for destruction. It is the Jews who took the initiative in this warfare. They fell upon their enemies with a fanatic zeal that rendered them irresistible. The hostile heathen already devitalized by fear before the commencement of the conflict were no match for them. Seventy five thousand of their number were slain. One wonders whether the Jews could not have been more lenient with their enemies, seeing that they had really gained the ascendancy over them before the beginning of the conflict.

The number of those that were slain in Shushan was reported to the king. He communicated it to Esther, adding, "What have they done in the rest of the king's province?" i.e. how many must they have destroyed there? The bloody events of the day leave him unaffected. Not a word of remorse or regret comes from his lips. He is solely interested in knowing whether Esther is now satisfied. "What now is thy petition? And it shall be granted thee. . . ." Five hundred have been slain in Shushan, Haman's sons are dead. "What is thy request further? and it shall be done."

Esther still has a request or two. "If it pleases the king let it be granted to the Jews which are in Shushan to do tomorrow also according unto this day's decree." It was granted her. So on the morrow the Jews assembled and slew three hundred more men at Shushan. It must be that she feared the vengeance of some of the hostile party who had not yet been vanquished. Her final request is that the dead bodies of Haman's ten sons be crucified in order to increase the disgrace of their execution and in order to fill the measure of fear of the Jews.

Were Esther and Mordecai people of true faith? It shall have to be admitted that their words and actions do not bespeak such faith.

As to the author of our book, it would seem that he was just as irreligious as Mordecai. Some claim that Mordecai was the author. But the words at chapter 10 verse 3, which sum up his life work, imply that when the book was written, Mordecai had passed away. Whoever the author was, he failed to write his book after the manner of all the other canonical books of the Old Testament. Not once does he make mention of the name of God, much less of Jehovah. Nowhere does he make apparent that the measures taken by Mordecai and Esther for the deliverance of their people were necessary for the maintenance of true religion. He speaks only of the honor which Mordecai attained by adopting these measures which the king sanctioned. He states that Mordecai went out from

the presence of the king in royal apparel of blue and white and with a great crown of gold and that the city of Shushan rejoiced and was glad. Nowhere does he state that the transactions of our book had a religious import. He fails to designate his own people as the people of Jehovah, in opposition to the heathen. Instead he terms them Jews merely with a task and principle no higher than that of the other nations. Nowhere does he derive the incidents which he describes from God or from His justice or yet from His gracious intentions toward His people. Nor does he show the bearing of that which has been attained upon the glory and honor of God. From beginning to end the book is devoid of expressions of religious feelings or thoughts in the persons of whom the author writes.

How different, from the point of view of mode of religious statement, our book is from all the other books of the Bible is best brought out by the making of a comparison. At Judges 2:13-18 we read, "And they (the people of Israel) forsook the Lord and served Baal. . . . And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of the spoilers that spoiled them. . . . Nevertheless the Lord raised up Judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them. . . . And it came to pass when the judge was dead that they returned and corrupted themselves." Written after the manner of writing of the Author of the book of Esther, this would read, "And it came to pass in those days that the enemies often crossed Canaan's borders and spoiled the Jews. At such times Judges came forward and delivered them out of the hands of their enemies. But when the judge was dead the enemy returned to spoil them." To the notice (contained in the book of Esther and found at chapter 9:5), "Thus the Jews smote all their enemies with the stroke of the sword. . . ." the more ancient authors would have added some such statement as, "So did the Lord deliver the enemies of his people into their hands." They also would have explained that the king accepted Esther's countenance, because the Lord gave her favor in his sight. But the author of our book ascribes her influence over the king to her physical attractions.

Thus not only Mordecai and Esther but the author of our book as well fails to confess his faith to Jehovah. It means if they on this ground must be held to have been lacking in true faith, then likewise our author. It is therefore very necessary for a correct understanding of our book to enquire after the reason of the above-cited phenomenon.

More than one explanation has been offered. The Rabbins held that Mordecai, being the author of the book, had purposely expunged the names of God in it in order that they might not be desecrated by the

Persians, if they made use of it.

Another explanation, substantially identical to that of the Rabbins, is that the Jews were in that age very sensitive not to manifest their innermost and holiest thoughts to the gaze of the day after the manner of their forefathers. It was a great satisfaction to the Jewish national feeling to know that the secrets of their faith and law were well known and understood by themselves without having to enter expressly upon a declaration of them; and also that they were unknown and unattainable by the heathen.

This solution cannot possibly be the correct one. What is meant is that our author (as also Mordecai and Esther) in common with all the God-fearing Jews in that age, revered the names of God too deeply to make mention of them before the heathen in their public utterances and writings. Now this is not true. The God-fearing Jews revered the name of God certainly. But that this reverence neither might nor did prevent them from confessing these names before men, even before the heathen is very evident from the writings of Nehemiah, Ezra, Daniel, Haggai and Zachariah, all of whom were contemporaries of Mordecai, Esther and our author. From the deliverances of these servants of God there animates that same religious spirit which we find in all the other books of the more ancient authors, that same "religious pragmatism—a pragmatism that throws a supernatural illumination on all the events transpiring. In all their writings the name of God occurs over and over. The book of Ezra sets out with this significant statement, "Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the *word of the Lord* by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, *the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus* king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing. . . ." Penned after the mode of statement of our book, this would simply read, "Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, the king made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom." Ezra even introduces king Cyrus himself as saying that he gave permission to the exiles to return to Canaan, because "the Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem."

Another proffered explanation of the phenomenon with which we now have to do is this: More than sixty years had passed since Cyrus had given the Jews permission to return. The vast majority of the people remained, nevertheless where they were. Some, like Nehemiah, were restrained by official and other ties. The rest were indifferent and declined to make the necessary sacrifices of property and rest. With such as these last the history of God's work in this earth can never be associated. In His providence He will watch over them and deliver them; but their

names and His will not be bound together in the record of the labor and the waiting of the earth's salvation.

In other words, the reason that our author refrained from mentioning the name of God in his book is that to have done so would have been to associate this name with infidel Jews. This he is supposed not to have deemed permissible. But the more ancient authors were not of this conviction. They had understanding of the truth and fact that all creatures live and move and have their being in God and that thus God and all creatures including the wicked are bound together not certainly in the power of His love but in the power by which He sustains all things and uses all things for the promotion of the ends of His kingdom. Accordingly, Ezra declares that the Lord stirred up the spirit of the infidel Cyrus. He thus binded together Cyrus' name and the name of God in the record of the earth's salvation.

Besides, it was not in behalf of the infidel Jews in Babylon but for the sake of His believing people who had returned to Canaan that the deliverance recorded in our book was sent. Also Canaan was one of the provinces that formed the Persian empire. The church, too, had been exposed to annihilation by Haman's edict. Why could not our author have included the name of God in his record by some such statement as, "So did the Lord send deliverance to His people". Were but a single statement of this character found in our book, we would know where our author stood. Because of this lack, our book is decidedly deistic as to its mode of statement. Interpreters on a whole deny this. They everywhere find concealed in our book a copious religious sentiment. They ascribe to Mordecai and Esther a saving faith so firm and heroic that, had they actually been the possessors of such a faith, they would be standing before us in our book as two of the most remarkable saints in all the Scriptures. But the fact is that our book contains not a shred of real evidence of either they or our author having had any such faith at all.

Still another explanation runs as follows. The style of our book is most appropriate to its contents. The deliverance of the Jewish people within the Persian dominion, which forms its subject, was in itself a great and important event. But this was not brought about by a divinely inspired hero, nor by the faithful valour of the people, but through the influence which a woman exerted over a king through her charms of the flesh. To have exalted such characters to a higher and holier tone, by which they would have been brought into an immediate relation to God, would have created a discord. This would have been a cause for irritation.

But it is not exalting such characters to a holier tone to bring out that their hearts are in God's hand and that with all things they are made by Him to

work together for good to them that are His. This creates no discord certainly.

It is plain that the phenomenon under consideration is still unexplained. Does then the irreligious mode of statement of our book find its proper explanation in the religious indifference of both its author and its characters? As far as can be determined, it does this. There is no other explanation that holds. However, "prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." 2 Peter 1:21). According to this scripture the writers of the books contained in the Canon were holy men. If this was invariably true, the explanation last suggested must likewise be set aside as being untenable and then we are wholly at a loss to know how to explain the mode of statement of our book. However there is in the Scriptures more than one case on record of God communicating His Word to His people through the agency of unbelievers. Balaam, a thoroughly dissolute character, gave utterance as an organ of revelation to the sublimest truths—such truths as, "Lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations (Num. 23:9). He hath beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel: the Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them. . . ." (23:21). It is expressly stated that these were words put into his mouth by the Lord. Another such case is the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar. We have from him words such as these, "And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven—and I blessed the Most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth forever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation: and all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him what doest thou" (Dan. 4:34, 35). The first impression that this prophetic ebullition makes on us is that this pagan king was a true believer. Yet he was a godless man who perished in his sins.

Now the function of our author was to truthfully and accurately record past events. Was he disqualified for this task by his unbelief? Let us put the question this way: Could God use such a man to produce infallible written history? God being what He is, namely, God, this question is really pointless. If our author was religiously indifferent, God simply did use such a man to produce written history of this character. This of course does not imply that he labored under the impulse of love of God. If he was an unbelieving Jew, he was devoid of love. But it does mean that the Spirit gendered in him the inflexible will to write reliable history and that He so guided

him in the performance of his task that he *could* not falsify the facts.

The Church, guided by Christ's Spirit into all truth, did not err in incorporating our book in the canon of the Holy Scriptures. Hence, its being there is all the proof that we need of its belonging there. But it is not hard to discover the reason of its inception into the canon. Certain it is that, although our book takes no notice of religion, still it forms an essential part of the religious history of the kingdom of God. Just what is its place in the Canon; and what may be its canonical significance and dignity?

Our book does not cultivate religion as such, as does, for example, the book of Psalms and of Ecclesiastes. It cannot do this, as it is completely devoid of religious sentiment. Its principal significance is that it records the preservation of the church, whose very existence was being threatened by the hostile heathen as represented and headed by Haman the Agagite and Amalekite and as inspired by his evil genius. Thus the story of our book is at once prophetic of the final triumph of Christ's kingdom over all the forces of darkness. In addition to this the book is evidence that God saves His people not despite but even through the evil devised against them by their enemies. And it presents these enemies as falling into the very pit that they dig for the elect.

G. M. O.

De Booze Mensch

(Psalm 53)

De waarheid van dezen psalm moet wel heel fundamenteel zijn. Hoe kunt ge het anders verklaren, dat hij tot tweemaal toe in den psalmbundel opgenomen is? We stemmen toe, dat er wel eenige woorden en phrasen zijn die anders zijn hier, dan in Psalm 14. Dit neemt echter niet weg, dat Psalm 14 en Psalm 53 aan elkaar gelijk zijn. Ze hebben beiden één beteekenis, strekking en doel. Daar is men het aardig over eens. Daarom zijn wij tot de conclusie gekomen, dat deze psalm van zeer fundamenteele beteekenis is. Zoo deed de Heere toch wel meer? Toen Hij droomen zond in diepen nacht en dezelfde zaak tot tweemaal deed geschieden in het rijk der droomen, toen zeide Jozef toch op bevel van God, dat de zaak tot tweemaal toe geschied was omdat het bij den Heere vastelijk en zekerlijk besloten was om zus of zoo te behandelen? En ook Jezus, als Hij dingen van fundamenteelen aard besprak, zeide meer dan eens: Voorwaar, voorwaar! Herhaling in des Heeren mond beteekent altijd groote ernst, zwaarte, belangrijkheid.

Wel, dat kunnen we best begrijpen bij de studie over dit lied.

Toen ik over den 14den psalm schreef zette ik er boven: VOOR DEN OPPERZANGMEESTER? En met dat vraagteeken bedoelde ik wat. Degenen die het stukje lezen hebben dat wel gemerkt. In weinige woorden weergegeven: ik bedoelde daarmede, dat ik mijn verwondering uitsprak, dat David zulk een lied bedoelde voor den opperzangmeester. Dat het vandaag niet zoo gemakkelijk zou gaan om de inhoud van dit lied door de geheele gemeente van Israel gezongen te krijgen. Dat men hem hartelijk bedankt zou hebben om dit verschrikkelijke lied te zingen. Dat de opperzangmeester van de 1924 Synode er ook hartelijk voor bedankt heeft om dat vers te zingen. Dat er een tweetal strijders bleven aanhouden om toch met hen psalm 14 te zingen. Doch dat men hen verachtte. En dat men een zang gereed maakte die in klankgeslacht naar was. Een zang die fundamenteel van dit lied verschilde, er tegen in broeide en verachtelijk was. Doch sterkte mij in mijn God, met de gedachte, dat de notulen van die vergadering in Israel nooit door God goedgekeurd zullen worden in den dag wanneer Hij alles zal richten. En dat dit tweetal moede strijders zich daar maar mede moesten troosten. En dat kon gereedelijk, want hun zang en de zang van God zijn gelijk in tempo en beteekenis.

Ik heb dit lied een verschrikkelijk lied genoemd en ditmaal zet ik boven den psalm: De Booze Mensch.

't Is dan ook verschrikkelijk zooals we er uit zien hier. Ik kan er inkomen, dat een man als Dr. Kuyper Jr. den dans ontspringen wilde. Niet dat ik hem gelijk geef. O neen. Dat zal ik in der eeuwigheid niet doen. Doch ik kan begrijpen, dat hij zich in allerlei bochten wringt om den dans te ontspringen. Het gaat in dezen psalm over ons. Als er een bijvoeglijk naamwoord predikatief gebruikt wordt om uit te drukken hoe slecht en verfoeilijk wij geworden zijn door de zonde, dat vertaald wordt door *stinkende*, dan, ja, dan kan ik het mij voorstellen, dat het groote vernuft van mannen als Kuyper gaan zoeken, zoeken, zoeken, om toch maar te ontkomen aan zulk een waardschatting van al ons glimlachen, lieflijkheid, nobiliteit, waardigheid, barmhartigheid, goedheid en wat dies meer zij. Moeten wij dat alles stinkende noemen? En dan gaat men aan 't filosoferen om toch maar dien vreeselijken dans te ontspringen.

Maar 't kan niet.

't Gaat ook niet aan om hier te zeggen, zie menschen, het is te diep: we kunnen er niet bij! Dat mag waar zijn in sommige brieven van Paulus, zooals Petrus ons zegt. Doch dat kan hier zeker niet. Een jong kind kan het alles verstaan. 't Is Goddelijk eenvoudig.

En wat zeide Dr. Kuyper Jr. er dan van? Dit: zoo zou de mensch geworden zijn als de Heere geen

gemeene gratie gezonden had. En ik moet het U openhartig zeggen, dat dit zoo ongeveer de allergemeenste aanwending is van dit zoogenaamde dogma. Gemeener kan het niet. De Heere zegt: Ik heb van den hemel neergezien en ik heb geroken aan den mensch en uitgevonden, dat zij allen stinken van boosheid, en dan zegt Dr. Kuyper: Neen, zij zouden stinken, als de Heere geen gemeene gratie zond. Zulk doen is vreese-lijk.

't Schijnt wel alsof de toestand er nog benauwder op geworden is, sinds David psalm 14 dichtte. Daar zeide hij dat de kerk zuchtte om de verlossing van Israel. Hier zegt hij, dat zij zucht om de verlossingen van Israel. In 't meervoud. 't Is erger geworden in den tijd die er verliep tusschen het dichten van psalm 14 en psalm 53.

Hoe zal het er dan nu bijstaan? Gij weet het. En de blindheid der afvallende kerk is met gelijk tempo doorgesneld.

En nog steeds zegt de dwaas in zijn hart: Daar is geen God!

Let wel, hij zegt dat in zijn hart. Daar zit dit in: God zegt in zijn hart, in elk hart van elken mensch: Ik ben God. Doch nu haat de mensch God zoo erg, dat hij tegen die stem van God in zijn hart zegt: En ik zeg U: Gij bestaat niet voor mij! De psalm begint met de grootste zonde die een mensch begaan heeft. Het is de hoogmoed.

Daarom volgen alle andere zonden uit die wortelzonde. Ze verderven het en zij bedrijven gruwelijk onrecht; daar is niemand die goed doet.

Zij verderven het is een algemeene uitdrukking. Dat sluit het geheele leven van den mensch in. *Het* beteekent het werkkapitaal hetwelk de mensch ontvangt. *Het* is de tijd en de ruimte, hun eigen lichaam en ziel en die van hun naasten, geld en gaven, positie en eer, rijkdom of armoede, kortom, alle dingen die ze hebben of mee in aanraking komen. En: *zij verderven het*. Ze verknoeien alles en trachten elken dag om alle dingen op hun kop te zetten. Het werkkapitaal moet aangewend tot eere van den aanbiddelijken God en zij wenden het aan voor zichzelf of voor een ander of voor den Satan. Dat is de beteekenis van *verderven*.

En dat te doen is gruwelijk onrecht. Zóó wordt de zonde verder omschreven. Recht is het waarlijk goede. Het is datgene hetwelk overeenkomt met den standaard van 't hoogste goed, en dat is God. Onrecht is het kwade in den wil van den mensch. Hij heeft zijn eigen standaard, doch die is krom. En leelijk.

Daarom: daar is niemand die goed doet.

Ik geloof niet, dat Ds. H. J. Kuiper de Standard Bearer leest. Ik wenschte van harte dat hij zulks deed. Want dan moest ik hem al weer er aan herinneren, dat hij tegen deze uitspraak van Gods Woord grootelijks en bedroevend zondigde toen hij op zijn

studeerkamer moest uitmaken wat titel te kiezen voor zeker strijdschrift. Eindelijk maakte hij het: *The good that sinners do!* Dat uitroepeteeken is van mij. Let wel, God zegt: daar is niemand die goed doet. Ook bewijst de Heere het. Hij heeft den mensch gadege-
slagen en zag dat hij alles verdierf en gruwelijk onrecht deed, zoodat God tot de conclusie kwam: Er is niemand die goed doet. Doch Ds. Kuiper weet het beter: *The good that sinners do*. Ik heb mij destijds geërgerd. En 't wordt er niet beter op. Ik kan, ik zal en ik mag het niet vergeten. Ik wilde wel, dat de arme man het terugnam.

God zag neder van uit den hemel om te zien of er ook iemand was die verstandig ware: die God zocht. Dus hier hebben we ook een omschrijving van het ware verstand. Een verstandig man zoekt God.

En wat is het resultaat? Dit: een ieder van hen is teruggekeerd, te zamen zijn zij stinkende geworden, daar is niemand die goed doet, ook niet één. Ik vraag U in allen gemoede: Is dit nu niet duidelijk? Zou een kind zich hier kunnen vergissen in de bedoeling van dan aanbiddelijken God? Neen toch? Een ieder is teruggekeerd. Dat ziet allereerst op Adam. Die keerde God den rug toe. En die trek vindt ge in elk mensch. Om zich voor God te verbergen. Men is liever niet in Gods bijzijn. God is licht en wij zijn duisternis en daarom gruwen we van het licht. We zijn zóó boos, dat wij van datgene wat eeuwiglijk schoon en lieflijk is zeggen: Wijk van mij: aan de kennis Uwer wegen heb ik geen lust.

Dat is dan ook het stinkende van den mensch. Er heeft zich een gedachte vast gezet in het oordeel der menschen, ook kerkmensen, dat alleen de dronkaards, uiterlijke hoereerders, moordenaars, enz., stinkende zondaars zijn. Van zulk soort menschen keeren we ons af. Noemen ze liederlijke schepsels, tuig, afschapsel van de maatschappij. Doch om nu het geheele menschedom *stinkende* te noemen, ziet, dat is toch wel wat al te bar.

En toch is dat de waarheid. Een ieder die zichzelf heeft leeren zien bij de verlichtende werking des Geestes en de wijsheid van het Woord, zegt hier van harte Amen op.

God vraagt verder: Hebben dan de werkers der ongerechtigheid geen kennis, die Mijn volk opeten alsof zij brood aten?

Ja, die vraag komt als vanzelf op. Is er geen kennis bij de goddeloozen? En het antwoord zit er ook in. Neen, ze hebben geen kennis. Ge gevoelt het, hier wordt niet gehandeld van bloot intellectuele kennis. De mensch weet met een formeel weten vele dingen. Doch hier is sprake van de zaligmakende kennis der ziele, des harten en des verlichten verstands. Denkt aan de strophe: Wees die U kennen mild en goed!

Het antwoord is: Neen, de goddeloozen hebben geen kennis. En dat ontkennende antwoord lezen we

in deze zinsnede: Ze roepen God niet aan. Daar ligt alles in. Ze roepen Hem niet aan, want ze hebben de duisternis liever dan het licht. God is een Licht. Ze roepen Hem niet aan, dus blijven zij in de duisternis. En die sfeer is zóó vreeselijk, dat zij het volk van God opeten alsof zij brood aten. Ze haten God zóó, dat zij zich in arren woede keeren tegen Zijn kinderen. God kunnen zij niet beschadigen. Wel, dan moeten Zijn kinderen er aan gelooven. En zij hebben er ook schik van. Dat kunt ge merken uit de vergelijking. Zij eten Zijn volk op als brood. Ge weet met welk een innerlijk welgevallen men soms brood kan eten. Dan zeggen we: het smaakt als koek. Welnu, zoo heeft de natuurlijke mensch schik om Gods volk te plagen, te trijteren, te verscheuren, te dooden, den ganschen dag: Psalm 44.

Doch ze hebben geen makkelijk leven, die goddeloozen.

Ze zijn met vervaardheid vervaard geworden waar geen vervaardheid was. De dwazen. Hebt ge het nooit gemerkt? Laat er iets gebeuren in de natuur. Soms is een donderslag genoeg. Of een aardbeving. Of een eigenaardig geluid in den nacht: het kraken van het behangsel. De mensch is niet geloovig. Dat wil hij niet. Hij haat God. Maar hij is wel bijgeloovig. Dat is ook zijn smart.

En dat komt hier vandaan, dat God de beenderen dergenen, die zich tegen Zijn volk keerden, verstrooid heeft.

Ook kunt de Heere U een blik in Zijn diepste werken. Eenvoudig staat het daar. En het heeft mij ook doen sidderen. De Heere heeft de goddeloozen met vervaardheid geslagen door hun beenderen te verstrooien, *omdat Hij ze verworpen heeft!* Dat uitroep-teeken is weer van mij. Hij wilde uitdrukking geven aan die eerder genoemde siddering. Siddering, want het valt niet mee om van God verworpen te zijn. Voor- al als men bedenkt, dat wij geen haar beter zijn dan de goddeloozen.

Van God verworpen! Vreeselijk. En dat verwerpen houdt nooit op. Dat gaat door tot in alle eeuwigheid.

Al het bovenstaande in den psalm heeft Gods volk moede gemaakt. En zij verlangen naar het einde.

Dat verlangen vindt zijn uitdrukking in het laatste vers. "Och, dat Israels verlossingen uit Sion kwamen! Als God de gevangenen Zijns volk zal doen wederkeeren, dan zal zich Jacob verheugen, Israel zal verblijd zijn!

Dat beteekent eerst Jezus.

Dat zit zóó: De gevangene is Jezus in banden van den dood, waar d'angst der hel Hem alle troost deed missen. Toen heeft Hij geschreeuwd: Mijn God, Mijn God, waarom hebt GIJ Mij verlaten?! Jezus is naar onze natuurlijke gevangenis gegaan en heeft onze boeien op Zich genomen. En die gevangenis is: be-

sloten te zijn onder den last des toorns Gods.

Maar God heeft den gevangene, Zijn Zoon, doen wederkeeren. Hij deed dat geschiedenis worden in den hof van Jozef. Het is de opstanding.

Ja, toen heeft Zich Jakob verheugd, Israel was verblijd. En dat is de blijdschap van Jezus in den hof. Toen is Hij gaan zingen. En Hij zingt nog.

Daarna die van Jezus zijn. Men zag welhaast een groote schaar!

De gevangenis van Zijn volk wordt gewend. Ze mogen naar buiten treden in 't volle licht van Gods vriendelijk aangezicht. En dat is weer Jezus.

In beginsel ondervinden wij die verheuging nu al. Doch wij zingen door de snikkingen heen. Want men eet ons nog op, alsof zij brood aten. 't Is nog maar in beginsel.

Dat wordt straks anders. De psalm spreekt apokaluptisch. 't Ziet op het heerlijk einde. Dan zullen ze aankomen al zingende bij God in den hemel.

Zoo zult ge ook verstaan, dat er staat: Och! Dat och roept om God.

G. V.

Erasmus And The Reformation

The Man.

Sometime during the period, known in history as the Renaissance, a forgotten woman gave birth to an illegitimate son, who was destined to make a name for himself in the sphere of learning in his day. This nameless thing, the son of a Catholic priest, in later years assumed the name, Erasmus Roterodamus and is consequently referred to in books of history as, Erasmus of Rotterdam, Erasmus Desiderus, or simply Erasmus. The date of his birth is uncertain but it is usually assumed that he was born about 1466 or 1467. He himself is to blame for this obscurity in respect to his birth and childhood for he disliked saying even the least thing about that time of his life. The reason for this silence is not hard to understand in the light of what has been said above. Socially, Erasmus was a "parasite". History relates that his parents died early and, very naturally, the relatives, who had perceived the burden of caring for the unwanted child, were only too eager to have him reared as cheaply as possible. The Church, on the other hand, was glad to take charge of this child, who, though very young, showed definite promise in the way of learning. At the age of nine years Erasmus was sent to the school at Deventer and later to Hertogenbosch. He entered the Augustinian monastery at Steyn in 1487 and was ordained a priest by the Bishop of Utrecht in 1492. Later he became

an Augustinian canon. It is only proper to mention at this time that he entered the Augustinian monastery not so much for religious reasons as for literary ambitions; this monastery possessed the finest library of classical literature in that country at that time. Also the years which he spent in the cloister were passed not in the exercise of religious duties but in studying the fine arts and reading the classics.

Thus began a life of borrowing on the livelihood of others. Erasmus had the Church to thank for all of his education. What was true of his early life was equally true of all his life, for this "social parasite" was forced, even when his hair was grey, to eat the bread of charity. He was a confirmed beggar and made his way through life on the doles of the rich and begging his way as best he might. Someone has written of him as follows, "Endless are his dedications, his flattering epistles which form a major part of his correspondence and could well become the textbook of those who should wish to learn the craft of writing begging letters; subtle and cunning as they are to the verge of a fine art."

The Epicurean.

One might assume that a man so disposed would be satisfied with anything that he might receive as long as it would serve the purpose of his existence. But not so Erasmus. He was by nature an Epicurean and therefore had a high regard for his personal well-being. He despised all that which was of an inferior grade and could be satisfied with only the best. The following description is very interesting and also gives us, at the same time, a rather good insight into the man's character. "During the seventy years of his life he was perpetually afflicted by bad health; for what nature had deprived him of in the way of muscle, she had supplied to excess in the matter of nerves. . . . The protective covering of health was too thin to secure him from assault, so that if he was not plagued with one petty ailment, he was afflicted with another, slight, maybe, but undermining. His digestion gave him unceasing trouble; his limbs were often racked with rheumatic pains or with gout; he 'suffered from the stone'; every breath of keen air acted upon his delicate constitution like ice upon a decayed tooth; he was sensitive to the slightest change in climate. In almost every one of his letters he complains of not feeling well. In no place did he feel at ease: heat undid him; fog rendered him melancholy; he detested the wind; he shivered in the cold; stove-heated rooms oppressed him and made his head ache; stuffy air gave him nausea. . . . He needed to be particular as to what he drank and the wines of Burgundy were the only ones capable of whipping up his chilly blood into a semblance of warmth. . . . He fought shy of badly

prepared food, his stomach refusing to assimilate indifferent meat, while the smell of fish revolted him. Such constitutional frailty rendered a certain degree of physical comfort indispensable. He needed soft, warm materials for his attire; a clean bed; costly wax candles instead of the usual dip. . . . During his sojourn in Basle he had, day after day, to make a detour in order to avoid a peculiarly evil-smelling street, for every form of stench, of noise, of garbage, of reek, of rudeness, and of tumult afflicted his mind as well as his body and wrought his soul up to the pitch of murderous frenzy. . . . His greatest dread was that he should be attached by the plague, which was raging throughout every land at that time and causing terrible havoc. If he learned that the disease was epidemic in a region one hundred miles away, he shuddered with apprehension and decamped panic-stricken, no matter whether the emperor had summoned him to a council or the most attractive proposal had been made to him. He felt personally humiliated if he found vermin upon him, or pimples, or a boil. . . . he was by no means ashamed of avowing that he trembled at the merest mention of death."

This regard for personal well-being was by no means limited to the sphere of food and shelter. It manifested itself also in his relation to all with whom he came into contact. Erasmus was interested solely in himself, in his own safety and security, and he had an utter disregard for the feelings and safety of another. He was guided, in every social relationship, by the animal instinct of self-preservation, so that even when great issues were at stake, whenever an issue became serious, he slipped away out of the danger zone. No one could elicit from him a plain "Yes" or "No", but would instead be met with such terms as, "If" or "Insofar". He refused to make any decision, lest he should in some way bind himself. Hence, anyone putting his trust in Erasmus as an ally, would be mercilessly let down, for he could be faithful only to himself. At heart, the man was thoroughly selfish and he did not hesitate to unscrupulously sacrifice his best friend or most liberal benefactor upon the altar of his own selfish interests.

The Humanist.

Although Erasmus was an ordained priest in the Church, he consistently refused to act in that capacity and the record of his life and work fails to show any active exercise of that office. Already in the early years of his priesthood, he had by cunning and clever scheming won permission to cast off the official garb and from living in the depressing confines of the cloister. From this bastard son which the Church had dutifully reared at her own expense, she received but little compensation in return for all her labors in the

way of positive fruit for the Church. In reviewing the life of Erasmus, one can easily forget this official capacity and it is not difficult to understand that Luther would write to him, ". . . I pray you, remain content with your own proper gift. Study, adorn, and promote literature and languages, as you have hitherto done, to great advantage. . . . But as to this our cause: to this, God has neither willed, nor given it you, to be equal. . . ." (The Bondage of the Will, p. 392) —

Erasmus was more the humanist than the priest. His interests settled in man rather than in God. He was concerned about the peace and security of mankind rather than the honor of the Sovereign God. Like all humanists, Erasmus firmly believed that a realm of peace and happiness, devoid of all fanaticism, hatred and malice was possible upon this earth. Moreover he was convinced that such a state could be realized by means of enlightenment and education. To the realization of this ideal he was given. This utopian philosophy and this desire for conciliation was recognized by his contemporaries when they coined the term, "Erasmism". In the pursuit of the statement of this humanistic ideal, Erasmus found his life's mission. Toward the goal of its realization he set himself with great zeal and with all the keen intellectual gifts at his disposal. In this great struggle for the unity and peace of all mankind, to which he had dedicated his life, he used but one means, *his pen*. In all fairness to Erasmus it must be said that he was a brilliant writer. Although the many books which he wrote are today covered with dust and are regarded as of little value today, they were nevertheless in great demand in his own age and almost everyone of them enjoyed worldwide fame for a time. But perhaps an even greater and more lasting achievement than any book which he wrote was that he converted the Latin, the supranational language of his day, into a more literary and flexible tool for the conveying of thought.

There can be no doubt but what Erasmus was a great scholar. He had a keen insight into the weaknesses and evils of the human nature against which he had set himself in his pursuit of the humanistic ideal of a better world. He was not a profound thinker who produced new truths. He was, however a clear thinker, a correct thinker. He did not find his material within himself but in the exterior world and was therefore to be characterized more as a collector, a commentator and a seeker. Also his style of writing differed from the heavy, straight-forward method employed by the majority of his day, which undoubtedly constituted a factor in the great popularity of his books. He wrote in a light vein; humor and satire constituted the garb of every address. It was this feature of his writings that gave his books ready access to the homes of the great as well as the common people. While, at the same time, underneath this external dress, he set

before his public the principles of human reform for which he strove. It has been said of him, "Erasmus packed his wares so cunningly that he was able, unbeknownst, to smuggle all the contraband of the Reformation into cloister and court."

He reached the height of his popularity between the ages of forty to fifty. No other author in his day saw his works published in so many editions. He was called "doctor universalis", "prince of scientific learning," "father of study" and the "light of the world". In fact no praise seemed too high for him. "Emperors and kings, princes and dukes, ministers and professors, popes and prelates, were all of them rivals for Erasmus' good will. Charles V, ruler of the New World and the Old, offered him a seat in the Aulic Council; Henry VIII wanted him to reside in England; Ferdinand offered him a pension if only he would consent to go to Vienna; Francis I promised him a fine reception in Paris; the most tempting invitations came from Holland, Brabant, Hungary, Poland and Portugal; five universities strove to obtain the honor of placing him on the staff; three popes wrote him letters full of veneration. His room was cluttered with tokens of esteem, free tributes from wealthy admirers. There were golden goblets and silver table-services; casks of finest wines were sent to him; rare and precious books."

There is no doubt but what for a time the influence of this man was very great and made itself felt upon a world-wide scale. The humanist had gained the favor of all men and seemed to be well on the way toward the realization of his goal, the unity and peace of all mankind in a world devoid of hatred and strife and war. But, as surely it must, this dream was doomed to failure. And this one popular man died a forgotten and forsaken individual.

The Traitor.

When we speak of Erasmus as a traitor we do not mean that he was a traitor to himself and his own ideals. He remained true to his humanistic principles to the very last and it was exactly that fact that caused him to be branded a traitor by both the Catholic Church and the Reformers. Actually he was traitor to neither one because he never once championed the cause of either one over against the other. Some seem to think that Erasmus played a major role in the success of the Reformation but we fail to find any proof on that score. He was in sympathy with the Reformation only in as far as he thought that it would serve the purpose of removing from the Church the evils that were present in it. He supported the movement in as far as it could serve as a tool for the attainment of his humanistic ideal. He was not interested in the truth which was at stake nor would he have any-

thing at all to do with the titanic struggle that resulted. He hated the narrow-minded fanaticism of the Catholic Church but he regarded Luther as a fanatic equally well. Hence, since he would be faithful only to himself and his own humanistic philosophy, he had to be a traitor to any cause that trusted in him for support. Erasmus was an advocate of compromise and conciliation. He regarded every schism and revolution as barbaric and withdrew himself from every open strife, no matter what issue might be at stake. At the outset of the great struggle, both sides "could make neither head nor tail of his attitude; he addressed them gently, and each side hoped to win him over." There is no doubt but what this man could have been a great power for good with a view to the Reformation if he had so desired. But although many opportunities presented themselves for his open and unequalled support, he consistently refused to make use of them. Only once was anyone successful in drawing him out of his peaceful seclusion, so that he could not avoid making a clear statement of his stand in respect to the struggle of that time. When accused by a dying man, whom he had once befriended, of betraying the cause of the Reformation, he gave out the following statement, "In many books, in many letters, in many disputations, I have unfalteringly declared that I refuse to mix myself in the affairs of any party whatsoever. When Hutton rails at me because I have not rallied to Luther's support, as himself would have me do, he fails to remember how three years ago I explicitly asserted that the Lutheran party was alien to my outlook and that it would always remain so. . . . I love freedom, and I will not and cannot serve any party." It is not difficult to understand that a man like Luther could not tolerate such an apparently spineless individual who did not have the courage of his convictions to openly take his stand on the side of the truth. Nor is it difficult to understand that a man like Erasmus could have no use for an individual like Luther who was willing to cast the whole world into confusion for the sake of his belief. To Erasmus no truth was worth a split in the Church and surely not worth bloodshed. Erasmus would not be martyr for any cause, no matter what it might be.

Erasmus knew no religion but that of humanism.

That was undoubtedly his greatest weakness.

Note:—

We wish to acknowledge the book of Stefan Zweig, "Erasmus of Rotterdam" which we have liberally consulted and from which most of the quotations in this article have been taken.

H. D. W.

Is Catechism Preaching Ministry Of The Word?

When our institutions are attacked, we will defend them. When they are threatened, we may assume the offensive. Such are the attitudes expressed in our day with regard to the war situation. Though we were caught off-guard, and Pearl Harbor was attacked, it did not take long before military machineries were being rushed to their strategic positions of defense. And now because of the declared threat of the Nipponese to invade even our continent, the cry has gone up to take the offensive. For it is the experience of modern warfare that mere defense is fatal and the aggressor proves victorious especially if he can strike quickly and with sufficient force.

In most any kind of a conflict I suppose both of these kinds of strategy are necessary and must be used to effectively thwart the enemy. Yes, even when doctrinal issues are at stake or age-old institutions or customs are threatened.

Since the last World-War, and especially immediately thereafter, there was a growing tendency and a marked incline toward what is known as undenominationalism. Its program and constituency is undoubtedly well-known to most of us. Their chief tenet was: "No Creed, but Christ." In fact that is still their creed. If we understand their cry correctly, they mean to imply that 'old cut and dried' doctrines must be put away. The 'time-worn creeds' of the church are antiquated. The tendency of these creeds to formalism is killing. Their maintenance leads to dead orthodoxy. We want 'life'. We want a return to the Scriptures. Give us the living Christ once more, and throw away 'your old forms of unity'.

With their emotional appeal and Arminian evangelism, they attacked the churches by the name of Reformed and carried away captive not a few who readily succumbed to their well-timed bombardment. Many of these victims, when carefully interrogated, proved to be sorely lacking in the knowledge of Reformed doctrine and were therefore unable to defend themselves, or they were of the number who long ago had acquired an aversion for fundamental doctrinal instruction and were crying exactly for the things undenominationalism had to offer.

Occasionally one finds even in our circle one who, though in name is Reformed, has acquired the speech of the above described sect. He may not speak so boldly and pointedly, and for fear that he be uncovered, he may gleefully rehearse the early history of our churches, pointing to the church-property trouble, the court-case, etc. He may try to make you think that things were hot for him and his contemporaries. Yes, he will even describe in detail the

inconveniences they had to forego in the days of organization. But noticeably he does not once mention the doctrinal issues involved. Either he does not know them, or they were of no special interest to him. These individuals are the same from whom you may hear the complaint that we should have less doctrine and more 'gospel'. They are bored to hear persistent preaching on the Heidelberg Catechism.

It is not impossible that the knowledge of this element occasioned the question which heads this article. For that is also the question of the above described individuals to which they as well as any undenominationalist would answer emphatically, No!

Should we not then take up the defense, yea, even assume the offensive when our institutions are attacked? I trow—Yes! and most emphatically—Yes! because this danger threatens from within. In our day a quizzling proves to be just as effective opponent as the dive-bomber and the armored tank.

We think it therefore not superfluous to devote a few moments of thought to the above named question not only to defend the custom of Catechism preaching, but to assure ourselves anew that the keeping of the custom is right and proper.

Before we proceed, however, we shall have to concede that mere catechism preaching need not necessarily be ministry of the Word. In other words, just because one preaches on the catechism, does not necessarily mean that he is preaching the Word of God. It is conceivable and exactly true that one can speak on a section of the catechism and not preach the Word at all. Just as it is conceivable and exactly true that one can preach on a certain text of Scripture and still not preach the Word of God. Therefore we shall have to show not only that Catechism is ministry of the Word, but also why and when it is.

Shall we answer our question intelligently, we should understand well what is implied in both of the elements in the question, namely, What is ministry of the Word? and, What is Catechism Preaching? In respect to the first of these elements, we can define the ministry of the Word as that act of God whereby He through Christ Jesus in the divinely designated office and through the divinely called office-bearer in His Church proclaims His own Word. He has given authority to His exalted Son, our Lord, to set up in the institution of the Church the office of teaching and preaching elder through which He will minister His Word to all those whom He in His good-pleasure will send it. God, it must be maintained, always ministers His own Word. Mere man can never speak God's Word, neither can he ever minister that Word. However, the Lord does minister His Word through human media. These latter He calls, appoints, and

qualifies to speak His Word. And these only, in distinction from others in the institution of His Church, have this high office and calling. It must be maintained further that when we state that God speaks His Word through them, He does not treat them as some talking machine on which He transcribes and broadcasts His Word. No! These officebearers are rational-moral beings, who are conscious, thinking, willing, planning, responsible creatures who live in the flesh. Besides, God does not come to them at set times in an inner chamber and mysteriously delegate them to speak a certain message for Him. Neither does He, as some would have it, merely lay the words on the opening of their mouths. No! God lays at their disposal the one and only Word of God, the Scriptures, written on paper with ink. The same Scriptures which He so wonderfully formed through the ages past and delivered by His holy apostles and prophets, through His Son, the Word, to the Church. It is the same Word which is the possession of the whole Church, rich and poor, old and young, wise and simple, parents and children, clergy and laity, alike. Regarding that Word, it is the specific calling and task of the minister to prayerfully analyze and study it. And only when he has laid hold on it and it becomes a definite part of his thought structure and a lively testimony within him, can he speak it as a living witness and be instrumental in administering it to his divinely appointed audience. When he speaks on a certain text of the Scriptures he ministers the Word of God only as the light of the whole Scriptures is cast into the mold of the exposition of the one text. Shall the Word be truly ministered, therefore, it is his task to rightly divide the Word of truth and direct it to the hearers in such a way that it fits their needs and applies to their conditions, ability, etc. God applying it to the heart in such a way that it is a savor of life or of death.

Much more could be said regarding this particular phase of our subject, but this will suffice to define what we understand by the expression: Ministry of the Word. We conclude then that the Ministry of the Word is God's work through human media especially prepared by Him whereby He imparts to men, predestined in His good-pleasure, His Word in such a way that the light of the entire written Revelation is cast into the mold of each portion administered, and applied to the mind and heart of the appointed objects whether it be to life or to death. And in regard to the human media through whom He ministers, we conclude that they are living, rational creatures of flesh and blood, sinful men, in whom the administered Word is consciously taken up and becomes a living testimony expressed intelligently in human sounds.

Regarding Catechism Preaching, we may state briefly that it is an expression signifying that form

of preaching which follows the line of instruction prescribed in the Heidelberg Catechism. The latter is that book of instruction, in question and answer form, formulated by the celebrated Zacharias Ursinus, a German professor, in the University of Heidelberg, Germany, in the year 1563, and adopted by the Churches of the Palatinate of southwest Germany as a guide for the instruction of the youth in opposition to the Lutheran and Catholic confessions and instruction then prevalent. It was adopted by the Reformed Churches represented in the Synod of Dordt in the years 1618-'19 as one of the forms of unity in conjunction with the Belgic or Netherlands Confession and the Canons of Dordt. Besides adopting the Catechism as a form of unity, the Reformed Churches also insisted on and enforced through its Church Order that the Churches should devote at least one service each Sabbath to the exposition of doctrine as formulated in the Heidelberg Catechism. This good custom has been commonly referred to as preaching on the Catechism.

To anyone acquainted with the form and contents of the Catechism, it must be evident that it purposes to set forth doctrines or truths of Scripture which are the object of faith as it is experienced in the life of the Christian. Each of these truths are based on the Word of God. The Catechism was not intended to be a book of instruction next to the Scriptures, neither is it above the Scriptures, but it was intended to be a collection of the truths that make up the Scriptures. The Catechism is but the echo of the Scriptures, and having received its contents from the Word of God, it purposes to lead us back to that Word.

It must therefore be maintained that all Catechism preaching that does not lead us to the Scriptures cannot properly be called: Ministry of the Word.

As was said before, it is conceivable that one preach on the Catechism without preaching the Word of God, just as it is possible to preach on a certain text of Scripture without preaching the Word of God. In regard to the latter, we may say that the Word of God is one. Should the preacher speak that Word in such a way that a portion of it be administered irrespective and apart from the whole, he not only destroys the unity but at the same time he preaches the word of man. To illustrate: Suppose one chooses to preach on the well-known Scripture that deals with the prayer of the Publican "God be merciful to me, a sinner." Suppose further that he explains the fact that the publican knew himself to be a great sinner, as well as the fact that God was indeed merciful; and that the sinner conscious of his sin and of God's great mercy cries for that mercy. Should the minister orate on and exposit these facts stated in the text without showing from Scripture how God

can be and is merciful only on the basis of strict justice, or by presenting, as is commonly done, the sinner as of himself knowing his sin, he would not be preaching the Word of God. In other words, the light of the whole Word of God must be cast on the text exposit, and the text preached on must not be made to militate against other truths of the Word.

Much in the same manner it is possible to preach on the Catechism without preaching the Word. When God speaks His Word, He does so infallibly. On the other hand, when man interprets and gives expression of the truth of God's Word, he does so fallibly. Further, though the Catechism cannot be said to be an infallible symbol as the Scriptures is the infallible Word of God, it cannot be gain-said that the same Spirit that guided the formation of the Scriptures also led the Church in the formation of the Catechism. And it was and is evidently the intent of the Church that the Catechism, though perhaps inadequately and incompletely, should form a unity of expression of the faith of the Church as it is grounded in the Scriptures, and lives in the heart of the Christian. This unity is best expressed in the triad of truths designated in the triple division of Knowledge of Misery, Redemption, and Gratitude. It is the purpose of the Catechism to express in this triple division therefore the knowledge of the Word of God in its entirety as it lives consciously in the faith and experience of God's children.

In the measure that one, preaching on the Catechism loses sight of the trilogy of the truth and emphasizes one department to the exclusion of the other, or treats each department apart from the others, he cannot be said to be ministering the Word of God which is expressed in the whole. In other words, as the knowledge of misery, redemption and gratitude are simultaneous in the experience of the Christian, and together make up his knowledge of the truth of Scripture, which contains this triple revelation, so the three parts must be preached on as constituting one whole. To preach on misery without any connection with redemption and gratitude is an error, and is not a ministry of the one truth of God. Truly, we may distinguish truths as the Scriptures also presents distinct truths, but we may never separate them and treat them apart from the whole of Revelation.

We conclude, in answer to our question, that Catechism preaching is ministry of the Word, when that preaching, which follows the line of instruction presented in the Catechism, presents the doctrines of Scripture contained therein, not as separate truths but as integral parts of the whole Revelation contained in the Scriptures. If ministry of the Word is what we have described it to be, it must become evident that Catechism preaching can be and is ministry of the Word when it coincides with and does what the Ministry of the Word does. Catechism Preaching,

therefore, does not become ministry of the Word just because the minister reads a few texts of Scripture before he begins his exposition on a certain Lord's Day. Neither does the Catechism preacher minister the Word as God's mouthpiece when he exegetes and expounds the Lord's Day apart from Scripture. He ministers the Word, or rather, God ministers His Word through this human medium when that exposition of the Catechism is thoroughly based on Scripture and leads us to the Scriptures, so that we can see and understand particular truths in the light of the whole truth and revelation of God. In the measure that Catechism preaching departs from this principle, you have a word of man.

Finally, let us, as Churches and as divinely appointed agents of God to preach His Word, continue to preach the Word and maintain the custom of Catechism Preaching. For God, Who ministers His own Word according to His good-pleasure, has called us to hold high the banner of the whole truth in order that we may be thoroughly grounded and established in the truth. And all those who would discard the custom and stop the mouths of the faithful expositor of the truth as contained in the Scriptures and formulated in the catechism close their ears to the Word of God. For the Catechism tends not to shackle the minds and hearts of the children of God as some would accuse, but it makes us free because it presents the only comfort in life and in death. And the truth shall make us free.

M. S.

News From Our Churches

(Continued from last issue)

The Rev. Baker is of the opinion that the Christian Reformed Churches still believe and teach that the Christian should live a life of spiritual separation from the world. Fact is, however, that they do not practice it, and they never will, as long as they do not go back to the Scriptures, and discard the doctrine of common grace.

The writer of the little pamphlet also makes the statement that the Christian Reformed Church teaches that the education of the children is the task of the parents, and that it is proper to organize Christian Elementary and High Schools for the purpose of assisting them in bringing up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Of course we fully agree with that, but remember, also in this respect the present Christian Schools wean

away from the Reformed truth, and they lose their Reformed distinctiveness ;and therefore as Protestant Reformed Churches we must have our own schools.

Christian Education is most essential; and in this intoxicating free-will church-world of today we must have sound Reformed Education given by thoroughly Reformed educators. Education which must be God-centered and not man-made; for let us remember that covenant children are a heritage of the Lord. Christian Education should be a true connecting link in our Reformed thinking.

If our children shall grow up as sturdy Reformed men and women then they must not only have a conception of truth in general, but in particular a distinctive Protestant Reformed teaching.

Schools must be thoroughly fundamental in their teaching. The Public Schools help produce the greatest reign of crime that American history knows. That is why parents in our own midst should not send their children there. They must bring them up in the fear of the Lord. That was their promise at baptism.

We must have schools of our own, which systematically teach our Protestant Reformed principles. Protestant Reformed parents teach their children in the home in accordance with our thoroughly Reformed truth (do they not?), and therefore as we plan to have a school of our own in the future, let it be our aim to help in this noble cause, and let not one of us minimize the importance of this worthy movement.

What would you think of Roman Catholic parents sending their children to a Lutheran school, or an Adventist who entrusts his child to a Reformed school, or Lutheran parents who send their children to a Roman Catholic school? You say, that is inconceivable, and you are right. And I assure you that a Christian Reformed parent will not send his child to a Protestant Reformed school. No one can blame us that we like to have a school of our own in the which our principles are taught.

Let us never forget, the Christian Reformed Church made a breach through their common grace doctrine; and they have used it, and still use it, as a bridge to meet the world, and enjoy mutual friendship together, but that bridge is not constructed for a true believer.

You may say: The present school has been good enough so far, but is this true? There was no other way, and of course the Public school,—that is out of the question. You may think there is nothing the matter with the present teaching, but have you investigated? This is everybody's duty. You also may claim that it is not the time for it. How do you know?

Of course, those who are of the opinion that this movement is wrong, that we are not in the Lord's way, that He frowns upon us, must refrain from supporting this noble cause. However, I have not heard one so

bold in his speech. Let us put all our own petty notions away, and as one man steer in this one direction, namely, to have a school of our own; and then it does not make a particle of difference if we are married or single, if we have children or no children. "This is a common cause, and it means you!"

Furthermore, let us not grudge, but rejoice that we are deemed worthy to be co-workers with God, to bring up our children, which are His, in the fear of His name and in our Protestant Reformed principles; and let us show that we have not lost our distinctiveness.

Can we as Christians perform Sunday labor in our defense industries during the present National Emergency?

That was the topic of the lecture delivered by Rev. P. De Boer in the Fuller Ave. Church; April 9, which was very interesting and worth-while listening to, although it was discouraging that so few were present.

The speaker commenced by saying, that this question is not new. It refers not only to soldiers but also to civilians, especially in our own day. This question is often approached, not in the first place on a doctrinal basis but more on the basis as the need of the hour. But first of all we are interested in the Scriptural principle of it. May we perform labor on the Sabbath? and is it in accordance with Scripture, and if not, we must refrain from doing so.

Now, as Protestant Reformed people we interpret Scripture in its own light. We can not take the fourth commandment strictly literally: Thou shalt not do any manner of work. The Jews knew this too, for on the Sabbath they did work. They killed their animals, as a sacrifice for their sins, by the thousands. Jesus also worked on the Sabbath day. He healed many sick, and He told the Pharisees and Scribes to free their ox and ass out of the pit on the Sabbath.

The fourth commandment has also meaning for us in the New Dispensation, although there are elements in it only for Israel of old. We have a freedom but not in sin, for we must use it to the glory of God. It is a positive and not a negative teaching.

The Synod of 1618 decided that work of mercy might be performed on Sunday, and also our Heidelberg Catechism speaks in this manner. The Rev. De Boer makes it clear, that work on the Sabbath can not be placed in the same category with other commandments, for instance, you necessarily can not kill, or steal, or commit adultery. The Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath. God brings necessary work to us on the Sabbath, and in this modern world we can hardly escape doing it.

In conclusion the speaker said: that the Govern-

ment may require necessary work of the soldiers, and that holds also for the civilian. However, the true Christian will not say quickly, that Sunday labor is necessary. He knows the commandment, six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work; but on the seventh day thou shalt rest, and thus have a foretaste of the heavenly Sabbath above.

S. D. V.

NOTICE

Young men aspiring to the ministry of the Word in our Churches and desiring admittance into our Theological School are requested to appear before the Theological School Committee at its next meeting, June 1, 1942, in the Fuller Avenue Church parlors. Aspirants must present a certificate of membership and recommendation from their consistory and also a certificate of health from a reputed physician. Application for financial support can be made directly to the Synod.

The Theological School Committee.

NOTICE

The Consistory of the First Protestant Reformed Church wishes to call to the attention of our churches that Synod will meet D. V., on Wednesday, June 3, 1942 in the parlors of the Fuller Ave. Church. This is to be preceded by a prayer service on Tuesday evening, June 2. The President of the former Synod, Rev. H. Hoeksema, will preach the sermon on this occasion.

The Consistory,
of the First Prot. Ref. Church,
G. Stonehouse, Clerk.

ATTENTION

The Editorial Staff of The Standard Bearer will meet June 4, at 7:45 p. m., in the Fuller Ave Church. All the members of the Staff are kindly requested to be present, if possible.

G. M. Ophoff.