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MEDITATION

The King And The Bread Question

Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world. When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone. . . .

Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it? From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. John 6:14, 15; 60, 66.

Crown Him!

From that time many of his disciples went back and walked no more with Him!

Hosanna! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord!

Crucify Him!

But why the change from one extreme to the other in the popular sentiment concerning Jesus of Nazareth? The transition from one state into the other was made quickly enough: in Capernaum it was made overnight; in Jerusalem it required but a few days!

Had Jesus changed?

Indeed not! He is the same yesterday, today, forever!

But the conception of the multitude, of many of them, had been altered.

Crown Him! This was addressed to a Jesus of their own illusions and carnal desires, a great man, but earthy, capable of fulfilling their earthly needs and satisfying their carnal desires. Crucify Him! That

concerned the real Jesus, that had come down out of heaven, and intended to return thither, Who said: "The flesh profiteth nothing, it is the Spirit that quickeneth!". . . .

The bread question!

Forevermore the bread question!

This is indeed that prophet! Give us bread!

This is a hard saying: the flesh profiteth nothing!

The flesh and the Spirit!

Bitter conflict!

Crown Him!

So they shouted,—and they were about to realize their enthusiastic purpose by making Jesus king by force,—when they had witnessed what may be considered the greatest miracle they had even seen!

It was approximately one year before Jesus' suffering and death, for "the passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh", the one next to the last.

A long time Jesus had sojourned and labored in Galilee, making Capernaum the center of His activities. He had preached the kingdom of heaven, and instructed the people in its mysteries. And, though He had not directly proclaimed Himself as the Messiah that was to come, His works had abundantly testified to that fact. Many miracles He had performed; many mighty works had been done in Capernaum, in Bethsaida and Chorazin. And He had become popular because of these glorious works. For "a great multitude followed him, because they saw his miracles which he did on them that were diseased." Yes, indeed, He had healed the sick, He had cleansed the lepers, He had caused the lame to leap with joy; He had made the deaf to hear, and the eyes of the blind He had opened. And He had raised the dead!

And the people saw it and rejoiced.

And they followed Him!

But just now, towards evening of the day when their enthusiasm reached the highest pitch, they had

been witnesses of the mightiest miracle they had ever beheld. Five loaves and two fishes had proved sufficient in His mighty hands to feed the whole multitude of five thousand!

Indeed, this was sufficient to arouse them to action! After all, the other miracles, wonderful and mighty though they were, had concerned only a few, the weak and lame and leprous, the less fortunate of society; but this last wonder concerned them all. Jesus could provide bread for all, and bread in abundance, for they had seen how the disciples had collected no less than twelve baskets of the fragments that remained!

He is indeed that prophet! Crown Him!

They thought that they had seen Jesus. . . though they had not, and what was worse, though they had formed an utterly erroneous conception of Him!

How can this be explained?

Let us remember that there was an earthly aspect to all Jesus' works, an aspect that was meant to be no more than a sign of their real character and purpose, but that could, nevertheless, be witnessed by the earthly eye, perceived by carnal men. When Jesus cleansed the lepers their visible and tangible flesh became sound and healthy; when He opened the eyes of the blind, their earthly eyes beheld once more, or for the first time, the light of the sun; when He cured the lame and paralyzed, they very really could be seen walking and running in the streets of Capernaum; and the dead that were raised returned to their earthly life! Earthly and physical pains and ills and defects and death were overcome by this prophet of Nazareth by the word of His power!

And now He had given them real bread to eat, bread that could fill their stomachs and satisfy their physical hunger!

That earthly side of Jesus' work these men had seen and touched and tasted!

No, indeed, all this was not the essence of Jesus' miracles. In and through them He meant to preach to them the mysteries of the kingdom of God, and reveal Himself as its mighty King. When He opened the eyes of the blind, He proclaimed Himself as the One that would deliver them from the darkness of sin and give them everlasting light; when He cleansed the lepers He preached and signified spiritual cleansing from the pollution of corruption; when He caused the deaf to hear, He promised them ears to hear the things of the kingdom of God; and when He raised the dead He loudly proclaimed that He is the resurrection and the life, and that one that believeth in Him would live though he were dead. . . .

And so on that day, in the country that lay on the other side of the Sea of Galilee from Capernaum, He had given them bread, to let them know that He is the Bread of life that came down from heaven!

But the earthly side was there, and it was very real!

And the earthly aspect appealed to the crowd!

And it aroused their enthusiasm!

King they would make Him!

Here was, indeed, a man, that could solve all their problems, social, economical and political. Him they wanted for their leader and king. He would deliver them from the oppression of the Roman yoke, and create prosperity and freedom in the land!

A carnal zeal.

And a purely earthly conception of Jesus!

Two years before this the Tempter had approached the Saviour with virtually the same proposition as these Galileans are now about to offer, yea, to impose upon the Christ.

All these kingdoms will I give thee!

This is the prophet!

Crown Him!

And Jesus?

He departed again. . . into a mountain. . . himself alone!

Such was His reaction to their zeal, and His reply to their apparent request to become their king!

Such was, at least, part of His answer, the negative part: I will not become your king; I will not supply you with earthly bread; I will not solve your economic or social problems; I will not bring you freedom in this world! The positive answer would be given on the morrow. . . .

And always the Lord gives the same answer still.

For these Galileans perpetuate themselves in history. Ever again they appear, though in many different forms. Some make Him their King to cure them of physical diseases and defects; and they claim that He evidently gave His consent: they tell you of wonders of healing, they show you their exhibits of crutches and canes and braces, that became unnecessary when they crowned Jesus king! Others crown Him king in times of depression, and call upon Him to set the wheels of industry aspinning. Still others crown Him their king in their battle for social justice. And often, very often, He was crowned king in times of war, that He might bring victory to the nation. . . .

Always the bread question!

Always they offer to the Christ of God the kingdoms of this world.

And always the Lord returns the same answer: "My kingdom is not of this world."

And He returns, departs to a mountain Himself alone!

There to be with the Father!

And to prepare for the battle!

For battle He must, He, the King of God, anointed

by the Father to establish His kingdom in the way of righteousness, the righteousness of God. And that way was the way of the cross, the way of death, the way of bearing the wrath of God against sin!

To that cross He must go, voluntarily!

And these thousands of Galileans now obstruct the way thither. They would fain keep Him in the flesh, crown Him king in the flesh, prevent Him from ever reaching the cross. . . .

Through them He must fight His way!

On the morrow!

Lord, always give us this bread!

Such was still the cry of the multitude at the end of the first stage of the battle that was waged by God's Anointed with the carnal multitude that would bar His way to the cross, and through the cross into His kingdom.

It was a battle that probably was begun on the streets of Capernaum, and that was finished in the synagogue.

The multitude had been in search of Jesus on the preceding evening and in the region across the Sea of Tiberias. But the Lord had mysteriously disappeared. And when they had not found Him, and discovered that also His disciples had gone, they had taken shipping and returned to Capernaum. The Lord, however, had joined His disciples, walking on the tempestuous waves of the sea, and with them had come to Capernaum. There the multitude found Him the following morning, and they expressed their surprise about His presence in the city: "Rabbi, when camest thou hither?" But the Lord, refusing to waste precious words about matters of no significance, at once begins the battle that must needs be fought, in the words: "Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled. Labor not for the meat that perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life". . . .

The bread question!

Around that question the battle is waged. And the battle is fought in three rather distinct stages.

The first stage is characterized by the fact, that the multitude still fails to understand that the Saviour is not speaking about earthly and physical, but about spiritual bread. And they seem to express a desire for the true bread of life in the prayer: "Lord, evermore give us this bread."

But gradually the misunderstanding is removed. It dawns upon them that He must speak about a totally different bread from what they desire and seek, when the Saviour announces that He Himself is the Bread of life that came down from heaven. They are disappointed. They do not want it so. They are looking

for earthly bread. And this prophet, they thought, was able to give them this bread. But how could He be the bread? And they at once convince themselves that this cannot be true: "Is not this Jesus, the Son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven?" Such is the end of the second stage. The mists of misunderstanding are being lifted.

And the battle is finished, when the Lord rather clearly announces that He can be and will be the bread of life to His own, only through His death on the cross. For they must eat His flesh, and they must drink His blood, thus He instructs them, in order to have eternal life! For His flesh is meat indeed, and His blood is drink indeed!

This is an hard saying!

O, whether or not it is true, does not concern them now. The saying is hard! It blasts all their hopes for an earthly kingdom. Hence, the flesh cannot hear it!

This is indeed that prophet!

Yes, but who can hear Him?

Only the spiritual ear!

The victory!

Yes, indeed, God's Anointed has the victory in the battle of Capernaum!

It may not appear so. According to the standard of all worldly battles He seems to suffer utter and decisive defeat.

For the multitude of the Jews murmured at Him.

And the disciples went back, and refused to walk anymore with Him. This had happened especially when the Lord had clearly announced that the flesh profiteth nothing, that only the Spirit quickeneth; that, therefore, even His own flesh would be of no benefit to them whatever: He would have to die in the flesh, in order that He might rise in the Spirit, and ascend up to His Father, in order that He might be the quickening Spirit, and as such feed His own with Himself as the bread of life!

Then they went back. . . . His disciples!

The multitude would henceforth be opposed to Him, so that He would find no longer a field of labor in the city. The larger group of His disciples, outside of the twelve, they that were wont to walk with Him, to follow Him, to listen to His preaching, to be witnesses of His works, His own "congregation", forsook Him!

The suffering King, despised and rejected of men! Yet, He had the victory!

For henceforth the way to the cross was open, and thither He would make His way!

To establish His kingdom forever!

In righteousness!

H. H.

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EDITORIALS

Nog Iets Over Den Zondagsarbeid

Van een paar broeders ontving ik een schrijven in verband met mijn artikel over den arbeid op Zondag tot vervaardiging van oorlogsmateriaal. We laten het ééne, dat als een “ingezonden” bedoeld werd, hier volgen:

“Ds. Hoeksema, redakteur *The Standard Bearer*.

Waarde en hooggeachte broeder:

Met belangstelling las ik uw editorial “De Oorlog en Zondagsarbeid.” Een opmerking omtrent dit artikel mag misschien bevorderlijk zijn tot beter verstand der dingen. Aler ik die opmerking maak, zou ik willen zeggen, dat ik het volkomen met u eens ben; alleen: de opmerking mag tot een verschil van gedachten leiden, wat in dezen misschien goede gevolgen zal kunnen afleveren.

Uw betoog komt op het volgende neer: Over de wijze en het rechtmatige van het hanteeren van dit oorlogszwaard oordeelen wij niet. We laten dit aan de overheid over. En dan uwe daaraan verbonden conclusie: Gehoorzamen is hier, m.i. beslist eisch. Over deze uwe stelling met hare conclusie zou ik eene opmerking willen maken.

Zoo ik hier oppervlakkig lees, zou ik kunnen aannemen, dat u het volkomen eens is met hen, die beweren, dat inzoover de aansprakelijkheid voor zonde hier in het geding komt, ook de *overheid alleen* verantwoordelijk is voor God, en de onderdanen zonder zonde in dezen voor God komen te staan. Zoo en op deze wijze is die zaak besproken in het publiek door sommigen van hen, die leiding geven aan den gedachtengang van het algemeen publiek. Mij dunkt, dat u zich nooit zou kunnen vinden in zulk eene leiding, noch in zulk een gedachtengang.

Want een oorlog heeft altijd twee zijden, een aanvallende en een verdedigende zijde. Nu zal het in de meeste gevallen wel zoo zijn, dat de aanvallende partij onrechtvaardig, de verdedigende partij rechtvaardig is in den oorlog. In een rechtvaardigen of verdedigingsoorlog is het dan zoo, dat de overheid onschuldig is, niet zondigt, wanneer ze haar soldaten op Zondag laat vechten, of ook de fabrieksarbeiders in verband met den oorlog op Zondag laat werken. En dan zijn de arbeiders ook allen zonder zonde in dien arbeid op Zondag. Maar laat ons nu het geval van een aanvallenden oorlog beschouwen. We veronderstellen, dat de overheid in een aanvallenden oorlog gewoonlijk onrechtvaardiglijk het zwaard opneemt. Onrechtvaardigheid is “crookedness”, en “crookedness” is zonde,

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Gaat het nu op om te zeggen, zooals die anderen beweren, dat in zulk een oorlog de overheid alleen zonde begaat en schuldig staat? En kunnen in zulk een geval de soldaten op Zondag vechten, en de fabrieksarbeiders op Zondag werken, zonder zich voor God te bezondigen?

Zulk eene stelling wil er bij mij niet in, en ik geloof ook niet, dat zulks uwe bedoeling was. Zulk eene stelling zou, dunkt mij, gelijk staan met de "Adam en Eva zaak", waarin ook heel eenvoudig het pak der zonde op de schouders van Lucifer, den engel des lichts, Satan, den vorst der duisternis gelegd werd.

Het zou heel eenvoudig de *persoonlijke verantwoordelijkheid voor God* wegnemen en oplossen. En dat kan niet, want de *persoon* blijft in alles verantwoordelijk.

Geheel de uwe, J. H. Hoekstra,
South Holland, Ill.

Op verschillende punten in bovenstand schrijven moet ik even terugkomen.

Allereerst wil ik opmerken, dat één ding bij mij wel vaststaat, en ook goed duidelijk behoorde te zijn uit mijn artikel over den oorlog en den Zondagsarbeid, dat geen onderdaan kan of mag zondigen op gezag der overheid. Zonde is en blijft altijd een persoonlijke zaak, waarvoor iemand in alle gevallen persoonlijk verantwoordelijk blijft, en waardoor hij, die de zonde bedrijft persoonlijk schuldig wordt voor God. Als dus de overheid ons gebiedt om te zondigen, dan weigeren we beslist, wat er ook van kome. We moeten Gode meer gehoorzamen dan de menschen. Daar kan niemand ooit voor weg. Wie dit ontkent, zet alles op losse schroeven.

In de tweede plaats heb ik juist daarom altijd het standpunt ingenomen, dat m.i. volkomen in overeenstemming is met Gods Woord, dat *op haar eigen terrein* (het terrein van het zwaard) de overheid beslist soeverein is, maar daarom dan ook alleen verantwoordelijk. Zij alleen heeft de bevoegdheid, de autoriteit en de roeping van God ontvangen om te beslissen, hoe ze het zwaard zal hanteeren. Zij oordeelt daarover en handelt overeenkomstig dat oordeel. De individueele onderdanen hebben noch de bevoegdheid, noch de roeping, noch de bekwaamheid om dit te doen. Daarom leert ons de Schrift dan ook, dat, zoolang de overheid op haar eigen terrein, en dus als overheid, optreedt, we aan haar onderdanig moeten zijn en hebben te gehoorzamen. Wie dit ontkent, verdedigt eenvoudig het beginsel der revolutie. Daarom is het ook nimmer de roeping van den individueelen burger, noch zijne bevoegdheid, om te oordeelen over de rechtvaardigheid of onrechtvaardigheid van een bepaalden oorlog, om dan overeenkomstig dat oordeel te handelen. Dit is het standpunt, dat door de Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken officieel werd ingenomen. Maar dat is

individualisme, revolutie. Wat zou er van onze overheid, wat zou er van ons land worden, als ieder burger naar zijn eigen oordeel over den tegenwoordigen oorlog handelde? Maar juist omdat dit het juiste standpunt is, daarom is een soldaat nooit verantwoordelijk voor den oorlog als zoodanig, zoolang hij niets anders doet dan op het gezag van en in gehoorzaamheid aan de overheid handelen. Hij kan natuurlijk wel persoonlijke zonden bedrijven in den oorlog, maar zoolang hij de overheid gehoorzaamt, bezondigt hij zich niet, al is de oorlog nog zoo onrechtvaardig. Voor dit laatste is alleen de overheid verantwoordelijk. Ik ben het dus volstrekt niet eens met Hoekstra, wanneer hij meent, dat de kwestie van den Zondagsarbeid afhangt van mijn persoonlijk oordeel over het al of niet rechtvaardige van een bepaalden oorlog.

Maar, in den derde plaats, hing het antwoord op de onderhavige kwestie wel af van de vraag of een oorlog rechtvaardig is of niet, dan zou men zich immers niet alleen bezondigen door op *Zondag* te vechten en te werken, maar dan zou dit ook gelden voor elken weekdag. Indien de oorlog en ons persoonlijk deel in den oorlog zelf zondig is, dan mogen we er hoegenaamd geen deel in nemen, noch op Zondag, noch op een weekdag. Zonde op Zondag is ook zonde op Maandag of Dinsdag, en op elken anderen dag. *En niemand mag zondigen op gezag der overheid!*

In de vierde plaats, de kwestie, wanneer een oorlog rechtvaardig of onrechtvaardig is, is in het licht van bovenstaande natuurlijk van minder belang. Alleen maar wil ik hier toch in het voorbijgaan even opmerken, dat die kwestie lang niet zoo eenvoudig is, als broeder Hoekstra haar voorstelt. Ik ben het lang niet eens met de onderscheiding tusschen aanvallende oorlogen als onrechtvaardige, en verdedigingsoorlogen als rechtvaardige oorlogen. Een overheid kan zeer best aanvallen in een rechtvaardige zaak; en evenzoo kan een overheid zich zeer wel verdedigen in een onrechtvaardige zaak. Of een oorlog rechtvaardig is of niet, hangt af van zooveel factoren, dat een gewoon burger gewoonlijk niet in staat is, een zuiver oordeel hierover te vellen.

Maar in de vijfde plaats had ik immers in mijn artikel zeer duidelijk het beginsel gehandhaafd, dat niemand ooit op bevel der hooge overheid mag zondigen. Daarom juist liet ik de kwestie van den Zondagsarbeid in verband met den oorlog afhangen van de vraag betreffende den Zondagsarbeid in het algemeen. Is het *per se*, en dus altijd zonde om op Zondag te werken, dan ligt het in den aard der zaak, dat geen overheid de bevoegdheid kan hebben, om ons Zondagsarbeid op te leggen. Poogt ze dit wel te doen, dan weigeren we beslist, juist omdat zonde altijd zonde is. Dit schreef ik heel duidelijk. Hoe broeder Hoekstra, ook zelf bij oppervlakkige lezing, den indruk zou kunnen krijgen, dat mijn standpunt herinnert aan wat hij

noemt “de Adam en Eva zaak”, is mij eenvoudig een raadsel. Als broeder Hoekstra van oordeel is, dat er nog religieuze beteekenis ligt, en dus rechtvaardigheid, in het vieren van een dag, dat is in het *niets doen* op een dag, zoodat het beslist en *per se* zonde is, om op den Sabbat iets te doen, dan mag hij niet alleen nooit de overheid in dezen gehoorzamen, maar dan zal hij ook den zevenden dag moeten vieren inplaats van den eersten. Maar ik nam juist het standpunt der Schrift en der Gereformeerden in, dat het niet *per se* zondig is om op Zondag te werken. Juist daarom was het mogelijk, om b.v. de uitzondering te maken, dat *werken van noodzakelijkheid* op Zondag geoorloofd zijn. Het is dus niet noodzakelijkerwijs zondig om de overheid te gehoorzamen in het onderhavige geval. De eenige vraag, die hier overblijft, is of het noodzakelijk is vanwege den oorlog om op Zondag te werken. En ik nam het standpunt in, dat over deze kwestie, niet de individuele burger, maar de overheid alleen oordeelt. Dit behoort tot haar terrein, en daarvoor is zij dan ook alleen verantwoordelijk.

Dit neemt natuurlijk niet weg, dat de persoonlijke burger uit het bevel der overheid wel aanleiding kan nemen, om te zondigen. Hij zou b.v. om wat meer geld te kunnen verdienen opzettelijk een positie kunnen zoeken, waarin hij op Zondag moet werken; of hij zou, ook waar het nog niet beslist van hem wordt geëischt, zich voor Zondagsarbeid kunnen aanbieden. Maar een Christen, die de zaak ernstig neemt, en zijne Christelijke vrijheid niet gebruikt tot een oorzaak voor het vleesch, zal zich van zulke dingen verre houden.

Als dus broeder Hoekstra met mij over deze zaak in discussie wil treden, dan moet hij eerst trachten om mijne beschouwing goed te verstaan. En is hij het daarmee niet eens, dan staat het hem natuurlijk vrij, om zijn kritiek te oefenen. Daarvoor staat ons blad altijd open.

H. H.

The “Creature” Consciously Hoping?

From Sioux Center’s Men’s Society I received the following question:

“In Romans 8:19-22 we read that the creature hopes for the coming glory of the sons of God. How does the creature know about this coming glory?”

With thanks, H. Brands.

From the question I gather that the Men’s Society of Sioux Center had no difficulty in determining what is meant by “the creature” in the passage referred to. They evidently came to the conclusion that by “the creature” is meant the whole creation outside of all rational creatures, angels and men. Just the irrational, brute creature is meant. In this they are correct.

But from this it may also be safely concluded, that this brute creature does not know of the hope of the children of God. In so far the passage is poetical, just like e.g., Ps. 96:11-13; 98:7-9, etc. But there is more than mere poetry in all these passages. What we have here is the interpretation of the suffering and groaning creation by the apostle, and by the whole Church, in the light of the promise and through the Spirit of Christ.

H. H.

The Triple Knowledge

An Exposition Of The Heidelberg Catechism

IV.

LORD’S DAY III

4.

Total Depravity.

The last question and answer of this fourth Lord’s Day of the Catechism is concerned with the extent of the depravity of the human nature. Our corruption as a fact was stated in Question 5: “I am prone to hate God and my neighbour.” In the following two questions the problem of the origin of this corruption was discussed: it is not to be traced to creation, for God created us good and after His own image; but its cause must be found in the first sin of Adam and Eve in paradise. That sin was a fall. And by that fall not only their own individual natures, but the entire human nature became corrupt, so that we are conceived and born in sin. Now, in Question 8, the Catechism touches upon the matter of the degree or extent of our depravity, and insists that it is *total*. “Are we then so corrupt that we are wholly incapable of doing any good, and inclined to all wickedness? Indeed we are; except we are regenerated by the Spirit of God.”

Now, it would seem that this is the only possible position to take, if we would maintain that the human nature became corrupt at all through the fall and disobedience of our first parents in paradise. For by ethical corruption is meant corruption of the heart, and from the heart are all the issues of life. An apple may be rotten in part; you may cut out the rotten spot and eat the rest. But this is quite impossible in an ethical sense. Either the human nature is sound in heart, and in that case it is wholly good; or it is corrupt in heart, and then it is entirely depraved. Total depravity, then, means, first of all, that the

whole man is depraved, and not merely a part of him. It does not mean that his mind is somewhat darkened, but that his will is sound; or that the desires are impure but that the mind is ethically good. But it implies that the heart is corrupt, and that, therefore, the whole nature is depraved. And, in the second place, total depravity signifies that the corruption itself is complete. It is not a certain weakness of character; it is ethical perversity. It is not a moral sickness; it is death. It is not a mere lack of righteousness; it is opposition to the law of God. It is not a want of love; it is enmity against God. And it is all this constantly, all the time, unchangeably, unless a wonder is performed upon that corrupt nature: the wonder of regeneration. This, I say, is the only possible position one can take, if he would maintain depravity of the *nature* at all. The only other position conceivable is that of Pelagianism. According to the latter, the human nature is never depraved, the heart is never corrupt, the will is never in bondage: sin remains a matter of the *act* only; the will, therefore, must always be free to choose in favor of good or evil. The nature may be weakened by the sinful deed once performed, by the temptation to which one has yielded; the will may be hampered by an evil environment, so that it would be easier for it to yield to the seductions of evil than to that which is good, but it always remains free: man is inherently good. A third position is fundamentally impossible. To speak of *total* depravity may be expedient for practical purposes, it is really tautologous because ethical depravity of the human nature is necessarily total.

It follows that all deviating views, all theories that deny to any degree the totality of depravity of the human nature, stand opposed to the doctrine of depravity itself, are Pelagian. This is true of what is known as semi-pelagianism, a term that is really a misnomer. It attempts to attribute some good to man by making a distinction between the "natural" and the "spiritual". These it really separates. Man was created *naturally* good, good "in puris naturalibus". As such he was able to do that which is good in the natural, earthly sense of the word; in these he could walk according to the ordinances of God, his Creator. But without something additional he could not perform "spiritual" good, he could not seek the higher, the heavenly things and attain to them. However, he was endowed originally also with this additional power that enabled him to seek the things above and to perform the spiritual good. That power is the image of God. When he sinned and fell, he lost this image of God, so that he has no longer the power to perform spiritual good. But "in puris naturalibus" he can still do that which is good. It is easy to discern that this is fundamentally Pelagian. After all, though man lost something, his nature is sound and good; and

his will and mind, though not capable of seeking the heavenly things, are free to do good with respect to things earthly and temporal.

The "common grace" theory, as developed by Dr. A. Kuyper, and as adopted by the Christian Reformed Churches in 1924, as their official doctrine, reaches the same conclusion, though it travels a different way to arrive at it. It, too, is Pelagian. We must not say that it denies *total* depravity, for partial depravity is a contradiction in terms, by the same token that "total depravity" is a tautology: it denies depravity. It is true, of course, that the official doctrine of the Christian Reformed Churches is still that man is depraved, for this is the teaching of the "Three Forms of Unity"; it is true, too, that in connection with the question of the Catechism we are now discussing, preachers in those churches will proclaim this truth sometimes; but in as far as they adhere to and preach the truth of the depravity of the human nature, they deny the doctrine that was declared in the second and third points of 1924, and exactly in the measure that they attempt to maintain the latter they deny the doctrine of the depravity of the human nature. This flagrant contradiction also explains the fact that in 1924 they could condemn and ultimately depose ministers of the gospel of whom they testified that they were reformed with respect to the fundamental doctrines of the confessions. All this shows that the doctrine that was adopted in 1924 stands opposed to what is plainly taught in the standards of the Reformed Churches: it is Pelagian. The second and third points of 1924 arrive at the conclusion that the human nature is not really depraved. It would have been, had not God administered the preventive of "common grace" as soon as man fell; and it would be, if God did not continue to administer this antidote of common grace. By the operation of common grace ethical and spiritual corruption was and is checked. The result is that man can still do good "in puris naturalibus". He is not depraved.

That this is, indeed, the implication of the theory of "common grace" may be proved by many passages from *De Gemeene Gratie* of Dr. Kuyper, as well as by the declarations of the Synod of the Christian Reformed Churches of 1924. From the former we quote the following:

"The Reformed churches confess in harmony with Holy Scriptures, that by what happened in Paradise 'our nature is become so corrupt, that we are all conceived and born in sin'; and that, too, in this sense, 'that we are wholly incapable of doing any good and inclined to all evil'. A condition that cannot be changed, 'unless we are regenerated by the Spirit of God'.

"Now, one cannot assert of this confession that it is in accord with our personal experience, nor even

with much that we read elsewhere in Scripture. *Not* with our personal experience, for even with people that are complete strangers to the faith and by whom we certainly cannot suppose regeneration to exist, we meet with all sorts of life-manifestations that make a lovely impression, and that, rather than to be inclined to evil, oppose it. And similarly, *not* with what we find elsewhere in Scripture. Abimelech seems to put to shame even Abraham, the friend of God.—The contradiction implied in this is completely solved by the confession of common grace. The phrase ‘inclined to all evil and incapable of doing any good’ then declares how every man, apart from regeneration, would actually reveal himself, if common grace did *not* restrain his evil passion; and experience shows us how the power of the Lord makes ‘the evil nature’ largely harmless behind the bars of common grace. In that case, the expression ‘incapable of doing any good and inclined to all evil’, does not indicate what we find in ‘the regenerated’, nor of what we may discover in the life of all the unregenerated; but is the acknowledgment of what is hid in the passion of our corrupt nature, and of what would actually come forth from it, as soon as God would cease from restraining this evil inclination by His common grace.” II, 49, 50.

It is evident that, according to Kuyper, our confession in the eighth answer of the Heidelberg Catechism does not declare what actually exists, but merely what would be, if there were no common grace. Actually men are not wholly incapable of doing any good and inclined to all evil. What the power of this “common grace” actually accomplishes in fallen man, may become evident from the following:

“If in this spirit we ask concerning the condition of man before regeneration, that is, not of man in general, but of an adult man of integrity, then we learn that he is ‘dead in sins and trespasses’, but that there are, nevertheless, a few ‘remains’ or ‘sparks’ of good left in him, and that he, being supported and strengthened by common grace, is capable, not of doing any saving good, but surely of what is called ‘civil righteousness’. This gives rise to numerous questions, of which this is the most important: how anyone that is dead can still be active in works, and how the restraint of common grace can have the result, not merely that sin fails to reveal itself or is decreased, but that he performs something that is *positively good*, even though it be only in the sense of civil righteousness.” II, 299, 300.

Here we learn, that the power of common grace does not merely act upon the sinner as a restraint, but enables him to do that which is positively good. It does not merely act as the bars that keep the wild beast in its cage in the zoo, but it positively improves his nature. How far this improving or reformatory influence of common grace goes may be gathered

from what Dr. Kuyper writes on p. 306 of the same volume. There he makes a distinction between the *center* of our being, which is our *I* or *Ego*, according to him, and the circumference of our existence: the actual manifestations of our life. And again, he distinguishes between the *Ego* in the narrower sense on the one hand, and our inclinations, our mind and our will. And once more he tries to distinguish in the *Ego* between the center (“kern”) of the *Ego* and its activity. And then he draws the conclusion that, apart from regeneration but under the salutary influence of common grace, only the inner center of the *Ego* remains corrupt, all the rest is improved. “When it (common grace) takes hold of the line (of our inner life) at whatever point that may be, and bends its further course to the right, the result is a tension or pressure downward toward the center, which can never affect the *inner center* of our *Ego*, but which, nevertheless, exerts its influence on the inclinations, the consciousness, and the will of man. And thus it is explained that the unconverted can undergo the influence of common grace even in his inclinations, in his consciousness, and in his will”.

From this it should be evident, that after common grace has exerted its influence upon the sinner, he is no longer depraved. His inclinations, his mind and will are his nature. And it is that nature that is improved, regardless of what may become of the “inner center of the *Ego*.” And, surely, the Heidelberg Catechism does not teach us, that this “inner center of the *Ego*” (whatever that may be) is corrupt, but that “our nature has become so corrupt that we are all conceived and born in sin”, and that “we are wholly incapable of doing any good, and inclined to all evil.” Nor does the Catechism here refer to a mere abstraction, to man as he might have been without the influence of common grace, but to the actually existing man, as he is born of woman, and as he lives and acts in the present world. It requires considerable “hocus pocus” of sophistic reasoning to prove that this philosophy of common grace is in accord with the teaching of the Reformed Churches as contained in their standards. But one who reads intelligently, and who is acquainted with the Reformed truth, cannot be deceived by this sophistry, but soon discovers that it is the doctrine of Pelagius that is seeking entrance in the Reformed Churches, disguised in the cloak of ambiguity.

And the same is true of the doctrine that was officially adopted by the Christian Reformed Churches in 1924. Point II, and III of the doctrinal declarations of that Synod read as follows:

“II. Regarding the second point, touching the restraint of sin in the life of the individual man and of society, Synod declares that according to Scripture and the Confession there is such a restraint of sin.

This appears from the passages of Scripture that were quoted, and from the Netherland Confession, Art. 13 and 36, which teach, how God, by a general operation of His Spirit, without renewing the heart, restrains the unbridled manifestation of sin, through which life in human society remains possible; while quotations from Reformed authors of the best period of Reformed Theology prove moreover, that our fathers in the past maintained this view.

"III. Regarding the third point, touching the performance of so-called civil righteousness by the unregenerated, Synod declares that according to Scripture and the Confession the unregenerated, though incapable of doing any spiritual good (Canons of Dordrecht III, IV, 3) are able to do such civil good. This is evident from the passages of Scripture that are quoted, and from the Canons of Dordrecht, III, IV, 4, and the Netherland Confession, Art. 36, which teach that God, without renewing the heart, exercises such an influence upon man, that he is enabled to perform civil good; while it is moreover evident from the quotations made from Reformed authors of the best period of Reformed Theology, that our Reformed fathers from of old defended this view."

Now, it is at present not our purpose to criticise these declarations and refute their doctrine, nor to expose how utterly incompetent are the references to Scripture and to the Confessions to sustain them. What we do wish to point out is, that these declarations are a denial of the doctrine of depravity, and, therefore, are fundamentally Pelagian. They teach: 1. That, apart from the wonder of regeneration, there is a gracious operation of the Holy Spirit on fallen man restraining the manifestation of sin. 2. That, however, this operation of the Holy Spirit is more than a mere restraint, for it is an influence of God upon man whereby he is able to live a good life in this world. This is the same view of man as that of the so-called semi-pelagians, only arrived at from a different direction. The latter maintain that man has lost only the power to do spiritual good, while his nature remained intact; and so he can do good "in puris naturalibus". The declarations of the Christian Reformed Synod of 1924 teach that man has really become corrupt through the fall, but that his nature is so changed by common grace that he can live a good life in the world, can do good "in puris naturalibus". But what is the difference? In principle there is no difference. Both teach that man's nature is capable of doing good. Both deny the depravity of the human nature. If the natural man does evil "in puris naturalibus", in civil and natural things, he does so, not because by nature he could do no different, but because by an act of his free will (free to perform civil and natural good) he chooses to violate the law of God and to resist the influences of the Holy Spirit. And

all the sophistry of those who, after 1924, have exerted their powers to prove that these declarations are in harmony with Reformed doctrine, cannot suffice to deceive the truly Reformed heart and mind. They are Pelagian.

Over against all these Pelagian doctrines and tendencies the Reformed Confessions teach in language that is free from all ambiguity, that man is depraved. This depravity implies that his nature is ethically corrupt. His nature is his heart, his mind, his will, all his desires and inclinations as they function through his present corrupted body, and thus constitute "the members that are upon the earth." Col. 3:5. If his mind is corrupt, i.e. so perverted ethically that it cannot conceive the good; if the will is corrupt, i.e. so in the bondage of sin, that it can never determine to do good; if the desires and inclinations are corrupt, i.e. so defiled and impure that they can only lust after evil; if the heart is perverse, so that it can only hate God and is incapable of loving Him,— then, it is evident even to the most simple that a man who has such a nature, can never perform anything good, either in the saving sense, or "in puris naturalibus". This does not mean, that he cannot do natural things, but it does mean that performing them he cannot do good. And this is the doctrine of the Reformed Confessions. The answer of the Heidelberg Catechism to Question 8 is very plain and specific: "Are we then so corrupt that we are wholly incapable of doing any good, and inclined to all wickedness? Indeed we are; except we are regenerated by the Spirit of God." But the language of the rest of our Confession is no less unambiguous and to the point. Art. 14 of the Netherland Confession teaches the following:

"We believe that God created man out of the dust of the earth, and made and formed him after his own image and likeness, good, righteous, and holy, capable in all things to will agreeably to the will of God. But being in honor, he understood it not, neither knew his excellency, but wilfully subjected himself to sin, and consequently to death and the curse, giving ear to the words of the devil. For the commandment of life, which he had received, he transgressed, and by sin separated himself from God, who was his true life, having corrupted his whole nature; whereby he made himself liable to corporal and spiritual death. And being thus become wicked, perverse, and corrupt in all his ways, he hath lost all his excellent gifts, which he had received from God, and only retained a few remains thereof, which, however, are sufficient to leave man without excuse; for all the light which is in us is changed into darkness, as the Scriptures teach us, saying: The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not: where St. John calleth men darkness. Therefore, we reject all that is repugnant to this, concerning the free will of man, since man is

but a slave to sin; and has nothing of himself, unless it is given him from heaven. For who may presume to boast, that he of himself can do any good, since Christ saith, No man can come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him? Who will glory in his own will, who understands, that to be carnally minded is enmity against God? Who can speak of his knowledge, since the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God? In short, who dare suggest any thought, since he knows that we are not sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves, but that our sufficiency is of God? And therefore what the apostle saith ought justly to be held sure and firm, that God worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure. For there is no will nor understanding, conformable to the divine will and understanding, but what Christ hath wrought in man: which he teaches us, when he saith, Without me ye can do nothing".

H. H.

The Prophets

The only places in the Old Testament scriptures at which the expression "Day of the Lord" occurs are the following: Isa. 2:2; Jer. 46:10; Ezek. 30:3; Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11, 13; 3:4; Am. 5:18; Oba. 15; Seph. 1, 8, 14, 15; 3:14; Zech. 14:1; Mal. 4:5. Though the expression is not found in the discourses of the other prophets of this school, yet they, too, know of such a day as "The day of the Lord". (The one exception is Jonah). The term which they use in referring to it is "That day" or simply "The day". Also the discourses of the others contain these equivalent terms. The one exception is again Jonah. Daniel uses the expression "seventy weeks". And Moses, the only other Old Testament prophet to make mention of "The day of the Lord", also simply speaks of *that day*. (Deut. 31:18).

What was *that day* to these prophets? It was the *day of the Lord*, thus a day filled with His doings. And these doings were the fulfillment of all the predictions of each and every prophet of God. In this day *all* their prophecies were realized. The truth of this statement is born out by the fact that in their discourses the expression *that day* is associated with all their predictions.

Let us now address ourselves to the task of ascertaining: 1) the doings of the in *that day*; 2) The significance of *that day*; 3) The times of it's coming. As the doings of the Lord to be accomplished in *that day* are, as was just said, the very events foretold by each and every one of God's prophets, showing what these doings are is a task that consist in setting forth at least the substance of the

predictive sections of the discourses of these prophets.

In his parting addresses (Deut. 29-34, read especially Deut. 30), Moses predicts the dispersion of the Israel of the ten tribes, the captivity of Judah, the return of the exiles to the earthy Canaan, the destruction of foreign nations, the permanent dispersion of the Jews through the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., and the gathering of the church in the Gospel period (New Testament Dispensation). These discourses form the foundation of all later prophecy. Isaiah and the prophets that belonged to his school stood upon Moses' shoulders. But at the hands of these prophets the doings of God in *that day* receive a much more definite treatment than Moses could have given them. What must also be observed is that what may be termed definitely predictive prophecy, the forecasting of what the Lord would do in *that day*, practically ceased with the death of Moses and was not revived until the time of Amos and Isaiah. The reason is that at this time the day of the Lord was soon to come anew with exceptional terribleness. The calamities already foretold by Moses, and progressively fulfilled during the ages subsequent to his prophetic activity, were now soon to overtake the nation with marked severity. The people of Israel were to go into captivity. Their national existence was to be terminated by the exile. From then on the nation was to be ruled from out of the capital of heathen states. And the yoke of the foreign despots was to be hard. On this account there was need of a clearer and fuller prophecy than had thus far been given. Had this need not been met, the Church would have concluded that the hour of her extinction had come. So the Lord raised up prophets to speak to His people His word for a light upon their path in the wilderness of woe through which he was to lead and is still leading them on and on to His house, their everlasting habitation. There were in all sixteen such prophets whose discourses have come down to us. They comprise a group by themselves. They foretell, as did Moses, what the Lord will do in *that day*. They reiterate God's promises and shed new light upon them. They maintain that, contrary to appearances, the people of God have a glorious future, in that Zion shall be redeemed with judgment and her converts with righteousness.

The view that prophecy ceased for the time being with the death of Moses is, to be sure, thoroughly wrong. Prophecy could not cease then as the people of Israel in their very existence as a commonwealth of Jehovah, and in all their institutions and literature showed forth the realities of the kingdom of heaven. The thrust of the above observations is merely this that what ceased with the death of Moses is the making of more or less definite statements on the part of God's prophets as to what the Lord will do in *that day*.

Let us now get before us the substance of the dis-

courses of these late prophets. The prophecy of Jonah need not to be considered here as in the book bears his name, the expression "day of the Lord" does not occur.

Isaiah foretold the appearing of Immanuel the son of a virgin; the judgments of God to be accomplished by Assyria and to overtake the Israel of the ten tribes; the salvation of Israel through Assyria's destruction; the judgments of God to overtake the nations, to wit, Babylon, Assyria, Philistia, Moab, Damascus, Ethiopia, Egypt, Edom, Arabia, Jerusalem, and Tyra. He predicted finally the entire future salvation beginning with the Babylonian exile and concluding with the creation of a new heaven and a new earth.

Jeremiah foretold the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile and captivity of Judah; the return from captivity of both Judah and the Israel of the ten tribes in the remnant; the permanent stability and glory of the church; the advent of the Branch, his growing up and righteous rule; the coming of Jehovah against foreign nations in judgment—against Egypt, the Philistines, Moab, Ammon, Edom, Damascus, the Arabians, Elam and Babylon. As Jeremiah was a prophet who belonged to the fifth century, he did not announce the dispersion of the ten tribes, though he did foretell their return from captivity.

Ezekiel was a contemporary of Jeremiah. But in distinction from this prophet, who remained with the poor of the land in Judea after the destruction of Jerusalem, Ezekiel laboured among the exiles in Babylon. His task was to represent the glory of Jehovah in exile. But his active service began some years before the exile, for he sets out in his prophecy with a symbolical representation of the impending doom of Jerusalem and its inhabitants. In the 25th chapter he passes from the prophecy of judgment to the prophecy of mercy by means of the predictions of doom against Ammon, moab, Edom, the Philistines, Tyrus, Sidon, and Egypt. In the remaining section of his discourse he rebukes the unworthy shepherds; holds forth the promise of the Shepherd mercy of Jeovah toward His flock, and of His servant David; records his vision of the Resurrection and the quickening of the dead bones; forecasts the destruction of Gog of Magog for the glorification of Jehovah in the world; and ends with a description of the glory of the temple and its services and of the glory of the Holy land and the Holy City.

Daniel's services were spent exclusively in exile. His calling was to represent the sovereignty and glory of God in the courts of pagan monarchs. The visions which he receives forecasts the destruction of the world-kingdoms, of Babylon, the Medo-Persian empire, the world-power founded by Alexander the Great, the four kingdoms of the Diadoche, which should rise out of the Greek world-monarchy, and the southern

kingdom and the northern kingdom, which were to constitute the principal states that should arise from the ruins of the Macedonian world-power. The overturning of all these kingdoms is to be the accomplishment of a kingdom—the kingdom of God—that God Himself will establish on this earth. These prophecies are supplemented by a final revelation that pertains to the duration of the period of severe affliction for the Church of God before the coming of Christ's kingdom. The whole closes with an exhortation of the angel to the prophet to wait patiently until the end of all things, and until the resurrection to eternal life.

The date of Hosea is to be fixed during the latter half of the eighth century B.C. Hence his prophetic labors proceed the dispersion of the Israel of the ten tribes. He forecasts the judgments of God against these tribes and also against Judah without mentioning the human agent through whom these forecasts are to become accomplished facts. Yet he does suggest who this agent will be through his affirming that the apostate nation will return to Egypt, which is Babylon (7:13). He also foretells the return from captivity and holds forth the promise of a glorious and permanent restoration of Israel to intimate fellowship with Jehovah.

Joel is to be dated about 830 B.C. He shows the approach of terrible judgment against Zion and Israel. He forecasts the repentance of the people, the restoration of Jehovah's presence, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon all flesh, the judgment of the nations who wronged Jehovah's people, and ends with a description of the judgment scene and the glorification of the Church.

According to 1:1, Amos prophesied while Jeroboam was king of Israel, and Uzziah king of Judah. Hence his date is to be fixed at approximately 810-783 B.C. He announces the approach of judgments that come against both the Israel of the ten tribes and Judah. He predicts the overthrow of six foreign nations on account of the sins which they committed against God's people. The nations mentioned are: Syria, Philistia, Phoenicia, Edom, Ammon, and Moab. The epilogue of this prophecy holds out promises of a glorious future for the Church: the Davidic dynasty will be restored; the surrounding nations will be conquered; there will be extraordinary fertility of the soil of Canaan; the exiles will return and be permanently re-established in the promised land.

G. M. O.

CLASSIS EAST

will meet in regular session Wednesday, April 1, at 9:00 A. M., at Fuller Ave.

D. Jonker, S. C.

God Zelf Is Rechter

(Psalm 50, Tweede Deel)

In het derde vers van dezen psalm had de Heere van den hemel geroepen. Hij had gezegd: "Verzamelt Mij Mijne gunstgenoten, die Mijn verbond maken met offerande!" Toen had de Heere zeer ontdekkende woorden gesproken. Hij had Zich aangediend als de Richter van hemel en aarde en het Zijn volk verkondigd, dat Hij hen eerst zou richten aangaande Gode aangenamen godsdienst. Zeer ontdekkende woorden, want de Heere had het met nadruk gezegd, dat Hij hen niet zou straffen om hunne offeranden. Het is en was Hem altijd te doen om het hart. Niet het aangezicht, doch een dankbaar, lovend en prijzend hart is den Heere welgevallig. Dan volgen de werken van zelf.

Ja, Hij had bevel gegeven om Zijn volk te vergaderen ten oordeel.

Doch er kwamen er meer dan juist maar Zijn volk. Er kwam een ander volk mee. De Heere noemt hen kortweg *goddeloozen*!

Toch zijn het niet de mensen die wij doorgaans met dien naam noemen. Wanneer wij spreken van den goddelooze, dan bedoelen we daarmee de mensen die zonder God en zonder hoop in de wereld omzwerven. Dan hebben wij het oog op mensen die alle dagen het ons luide toeroepen: Aan de kennis van Gods wegen hebben wij geen lust! Goddeloozen noemen wij mensen die geheel en al gespeend zijn aan de kerk, den godsdienst, de vreeze van Zijn Naam.

Doch de Heere heeft dat volk hier niet voor den aandacht. Hij bedoelt met dien naam een zeer bijzondere soort mensen. En ik ben er van overtuigd, dat dit volk hetwelk hier bedoeld wordt het ongelukkigste soort volk is, dat ooit op oorde rondwandelde. Het zijn de mensen die den Heere dienen met het aangezicht, terwijl hun hart zich met voorbedachte rade verre van Hem houdt. Hun eerste vader was Kaïn. Terwijl Adam en Eva met hun zoon Abel zich voor God in het stof bogen met belijdenis van zonde, wilde hij voortgaan met den dienst van 't eerste paradijs alsof er niets gebeurd was. Daarom wilde hij niets weten van een bloedend lam op het altaar. Hij bracht van de vruchten des velds. Doch Abel bracht "een meerdere offerande". En dat "meerdere" van zijn offerande kwam uit in dat bloedend schaap. Daarin zien we dat de godsdienst van Abel een dienen van God was met zijn hart. Doch niet alzo Kaïn. Zijn hart was goddeloos. Hij wilde zich niet vernederen en uit benauwdheid tot God roepen. De verbrijzeling des harten, hetwelk luide sprake in het bloedig lam, was hem vreemd.

En door de eeuwen heen zijn er ontelbare scharen geweest die juist zoo dwaas handelden. Ze werden in

de kerk geboren. Naar het vleesch was hun naam Israel, doch zij waren toch niet het ware Israel. Zij zijn de vleeschelijke kerk, een zaad der boosdoeners, verdervende kinderen. Jesaja zegt van dat soort volk: "Zij hebben den Heere verlaten, zij hebben den Heilige Israels gelasterd, zij hebben zich vervreemd, wijkende achterwaarts." Jezus noemde hen veinzaards, geveinsden. Een vreeselijk volk.

En de Heere heeft ook voor dat vreemde volk een boodschap. Ze waren met Gods volk aangekomen tot voor Zijn troon en moeten het nu hooren: "Maar tot de goddeloozen zegt God: Wat hebt gij Mijne inzettingen te vertellen, en neemt Mijn verbond in uwen mond?" Let er op: zij zijn goddeloos en toch nemen zij Gods inzettingen in hun mond. Vreemd gedoe. Ze zijn leden van de kerk van Christus en hebben den mond vol van Zijn inzettingen, ja, zelfs van Zijn verbond. Jesaja heeft hierop een vreeselijke kommentaar. Hij beschrijft hen als volgt: "hoewel zij Mij dagelijks zoeken, en een lust hebben aan de kennis Mijner wegen; als een volk dat gerechtigheid doet en het recht Zijns Gods niet verlaat, vragen zij Mij naar de rechten der gerechtigheid, zij hebben lust tot God te naderen." En toch, als ge verder leest en ook het eerste vers van Jesaja 58 leest, bemerkt ge, dat het een werktuigelijke, ledige godsdienst is die hier beschreven wordt. Daaronder zijn natuurlijk ook ware Israelieten, doch het geheel van dit gedoe wordt als zonde beschreven. Want het hart werd gemist. Het was uitwendig en dus zonder waarde.

Zoo ook hier. Dit volk nam de inzettingen Gods misgaders Zijn verbond in den mond. Verder kwam het niet.

En hun hart? Luistert—en beeft. "... dewijl gij de kastijding haat en Mijne woorden achter u henenwerpt!"

Dat is de beschrijving van hun hart. Met het hart hebben we lief en met het hart haten we.

En de zonde wordt grievender als we bedenken, dat hetgeen zij haten is de Goddelijke kastijding; en hetgeen ze als het vuil der straten verwerpen zijn de Woorden Gods. Vreeselijke gedachte.

Laat mij dit even verklaren.

Ziet ge, Gods kinderen zijn een gezegend volk, doch dit beteekent niet, dat zij naar het vleesch, voor dit leven op aarde, altijd voorspoed hebben. Veeleer is het tegendeel waar. Luistert naar den schrijven van den brief der Hebrëen: "Want dien den Heere liefheeft, kastijdt Hij, en Hij geeselt een iegelijken zoon dien Hij aanneemt!" Dat is eenvoudig de ervaring van alle kinderen Gods. En het doel is, dat wij er door geheilgd worden. Al die kastijding is tot ons eeuwig nut. Dat begrijpt een kind van God en daarom verdraagt hij die kastijding en kust de roede Gods. In de grootste smarten blijven hunne harten in den Heer gerust. Job zondigde in dit alles niet en schreef

God niets ongerijmds toe. Daar hebt ge de gestalte van het ware volk van God.

Doch dit goddelooze volk verzet zich tegen de kastijding. Zij haten die geeseling. O, als alles voor den wind gaat en een iegelijk U tegenlacht, dan is het zoo gemakkelijk om het verbond Gods in den mond te nemen. Doch als God U tegenkomt met plagen en met smarten, dan komt het uit of ge Hem bemint in 't diepe hart door Zijn overvloedige genade over ons.

Doch dit goddelooze volk haat Zijn slaande hand. En als Gods profeten in de Theodicea God verdedigen en het duidelijk maken door de Woorden Gods waarom Israel naar Babel moet of de Filistijnen voor tijd en wijle over hen moet triumfeeren, dan werpen zij die Woorden Gods van zich als vuilnis en vloeken Hem, wiens Naam zij beleden.

En toch bleven zij en bestendigden hun lidmaatschap in de kerke Gods.

Worden dan de kinderen Gods opgeroepen om voor God te verschijnen, dan komen zij ook. De Heere Jezus heeft er al van geprofeteerd. Hij zeide van dien dag des oordeels: “. . . nadat de Heere des huizes zal opgestaan zijn (o, als God opstaat in dien Dag!) en de deur zal gesloten hebben, en gij zult beginnen buiten te staan en aan de deur te kloppen, zeggende: Heere, Heere, doe ons open! en Hij zal antwoorden en tot u zeggen: Ik ken u niet vanwaar gij zijt!” Dan zal dit volk achter de gesloten deur in doodsangst roepen: “Wij hebben in Uwe tegenwoordigheid gegeten en gedronken (gedenkt hier aan het Heilig Avondmaal des Heeren en huivert), en Gij hebt in onze straten geleerd!” Doch van achter de gesloten deur zal de Heere zeggen: “Ik zeg u, ik ken u niet van waar gij zijt: wijk van Mij af, alle gij werkers der ongerechtigheid!”

Heb ik te veel gezegd, wanneer ik dit soort volk het ongelukkigste noemde van alle menschenkinderen? Zij hebben den weg geweten en nochtans geweigerd hem te bewandelen. Dat wil zeggen, met het hart. Want daar begint de wandel des menschen en daar in dat hart ligt het beginsel van de uitgangen des levens des menschen.

Dan volgen in de volgende verzen de bewijzen. De Heere zeide: Gij haat Mijne kastijding en gij werpt Mijne woorden achter u henen. Gij zijt eigenlijk geen kinderen doch werkers der ongerechtigheid. Welnu, hier zijn de bewijzen. Als gij een menschenkind ontdekt die steelt, voelt ge U tot hem aangetrokken. Ge gaat dan met hem loopen. Dat wil zeggen, ge bemerkt, dat zulk roovend wandelen is in harmonie met uw eigen hart. Stelen en rooven is uw levenselement. Bovendien is uw deel met de overspelers. Ge hebt schik in hoererij, alle verbondsbreking is U aangenaam. Misschien doet ge het zelf niet, doch zooals

Paulusveel later zou zeggen: “een welgevallen hebben in degenen die ze (booze werken) doen.”

Rondom dit volk is er de openbaring van het kwade. Er zijn kwade woorden en handelingen te over. Er zijn stroomen van kwaadaardigheid en groote boosheid in de wereld. Welnu, waar ge dan ook die groote boosheid ziet, daar steekt ge uw mond in om met wellust mee te spreken en te verdoemen. De tong koppelt bedrog. Gij zit. Let er op: gij zit. Het doet ons denken aan den eersten psalm: “noch zit in het gestoelte des spotters.” Men zit waar men zich te huis voelt. Men heeft schik in de plaats waar er gelasterd en geknoeid wordt. Men heeft een thema van gesprek en gezellig onderhoud gevonden. Mijn broeder, de zoon mijner moeder komt op het tapijt. Komaan nu, laat ons de zaak nu goed bezien: hoe kunnen wij hem bevuilen met woorden, woorden, woorden. In zulk gezelschap worden de tongen spiesen en de monden zwaarden. Onder de lippen sist het gif van den adder. Heere, bewaar ons! We vergaan.

Dat volk nu noemt zich met den naam des Allerhoogsten. En toen de proclamatie van uit den hemel kwam om het volk Gods te vergaderen, zijn zij ook gekomen. Ze hadden een mengsel in den mond: ter eener zijde, het Verbond Gods; en, ter anderzijde, haat, diefstal, overspel, lastering. Ook kwam er geen kreet van smart en berouw en angst om zoo gruwelijke zonden. Men bekeerde zich nooit, noch kermde: Och, Heer, och wierd mijn ziel door U gered!

Neen, verre van daar. Alle deze dingen deed men terwijl God zweeg. Dacht men al aan God, dan oordeelde men over Hem als een menschenkind. Men dacht: Hij hoort, noch ziet. Hij heeft er niets van bemerkt, dat we deze week flink bezig geweest zijn met stelen en lasteren. We zitten nu weer in de kerk met uitgestreken aangezichten.

Leest het maar in vers 21: “Deze dingen doet ge, en Ik zwijg; gij meent dat Ik ten eenemale ben gelijk gij!”

Men heeft nooit gedacht aan het ontstellende feit, dat God alle dagen oordeelt; dat Hij altijd aanwezig is, ook dan terwijl wij aan 't zondigen zijn.

Gods volk weet dat en daarom zondigen wij anders dan de goddeloozen. Wij strijden tegen de zonde en haten de zonde; wij bidden tegen het zondigen en smeeën om vergiffenis. Gods volk is zich bewust, dat God elken dag oordeelt met luide stem in 't veroverde hart en dat volk is van Gods partij, want ze gaan heel dicht bij dien veroordeelenden God staan in 't gericht in 't diepe hart. Luistert maar naar hun getuigenis: “Een iegelijk bedenke zijne zonden en vervloeking!” (Avondmaalsformulier).

Doch de naam-christenen denken daar nooit aan. De mensch zag het niet, dus God ook niet. Niemand verdoemt ons nu in 't oordeel, dus gaan wij vrij uit.

Doch, o wee! De Heere zegt: “. . . en zal het ordelijk voor oogen stellen.”

Dat beteekent eerst, dat de Heere alle zonden precies zooals wij ze gedaan en bedoeld hebben zal openbaren. En ook, dat Hij alle zonden in hun onderling verband en in de juiste volgorde van de wieg tot den laatsten snik zal voorstellen. Wie huivert niet bij die gedachte? O God, wees ons, zondaren, genadig!

Ik denk, dat we wel klaar gemaakt zijn voor het dubbel slot van dezen psalm. Indien er onder U zijn die meenen, dat we het te erg maakten, zullen van dit oordeel terug komen bij het lezen van het voorlaatste vers: “Verstaat dit toch, gij godvergetenden, opdat Ik niet verscheure en niemand redde!”

Wat schrikkelijke woorden.

Verscheuren! Het is het woord, dat aanduiden moet de verdoemenis voor lichaam en ziel in de hel. Daar wordt lichaam en ziel en geest verscheurd. Ik heb het soms gezien en zelf ervaren: als men zeer woedend is voelt men er naar om te scheuren, te rukken, te verbrijzelen.

En als dat ons deel moet zijn, wie zal dan uit de handen des Heeren redden?

Paulus zal het ons veel later zeggen: Vreeselijk zal het zijn te vallen in de handen des levenden Gods!

Daar tegenover een woord van onderwijzing.

En dat woord is voor al Gods volk ook. Want wij zijn allen behept van nature met al de gruwelen, waarvan dezen psalm spreekt.

Hier is het liefelijke slot: “Wie dank offert, die zal Mij eeren; en wie zijnen weg wel aanstelt, dien zal Ik Gods heil doen zien!”

Direkt bij het lezen en neerschrijven van deze woorden komt er een hunkering in onze ziel: Och of nu al wat in mij is Hem preez’.

Ik behoef nu niet uit te weiden meer over het dank offeren van God. Dat heb ik verklaard in het eerste deel van dit artikel. Kortweg: Vol zijn en woorden van ’s Heeren goedertierenheeden en dan zingen, jubelen voor Zijn aangezicht. In alle levenopenbaringen. Dat is het wel aanstellen van Uwen weg.

Dan glimlachen de Engelen Gods.

Dan blikte de Zoon in welgevallen neer op Zijn Middelaarswerk.

Dan ziet Gij allen het heil van God op Golgotha.

En dan wordt de DrieEenige God geëerd.

En dáár wordt den hemel gekonstitueerd verklaard.

Zegt voorts den kinderen Israels dat zij voorttrekken de eeuwigheid in. De notulen van den Oordeelsdag werden gelezen.

Voorts mogen ze beginnen vroolijk te zijn. Ik meen in de erten der tijden de hallels te hooren. En mijn ziele smacht.

G. V.

De Beteekenis Van Huisbezoek

Het is naar ouder gewoonte dat de plaatselijke kerkeraden eenmaal per jaar huisbezoek doen bij de leden hunner gemeente. Dit jaarlijksch huisbezoek is eigenlijk een specifiek Gereformeerde instelling. Ook de geestelijkheid in de oude Roomsche Kerk bemoeide zich wel met de gezinnen en individuele leden hunner kerk, maar toch kende men niet en kent men nu nog niet in de hedendaagsche Roomsche Kerk zooiets als wat onder ons bekend staat als huisbezoek. Ook de Lutherschen weten van geen huisbezoek. Wel tracht de Roomsche geestelijkheid voortdurend contact te houden met de leden hunner ‘parish’, maar dat persoonlijk contact is er vooral in de biecht. En de Lutherschen kennen wel zooiets als pastoraal bezoek maar dat is toch geheel iets anders dan wat wij verstaan onder huisbezoek. Dat de genoemde kerken geen huisbezoek kennen vindt zijn oorzaak mede hierin dat en in de Roomsche en in de Luthersche Kerk het ouderlingen-ambt is verwaarloosd.

De geschiedenis leert dat Calvijn een groote voorstander was van huisbezoek. En zijn opvolger Beza schrijft dat getrouw huisbezoek rijke geestelijke vruchten afwierp in de gemeente te Geneva. Op verschillende Classicale vergaderingen en Synoden in Nederland gehouden gedurende en na de Reformatie dagen kwam de kwestie van huisbezoek telkens weer ter sprake. En op onderscheiden kerkelijke vergaderingen werd dan ook tot huisbezoek besloten, en de plaatselijke kerkeraden werden er toe aangespoord. Ook de groote Synode van 1618-’19 nam een besluit betrekking hebbende op het huisbezoek. Onze Dordtsche kerkenorde spreekt over het huisbezoek in artikel drie-entwintig in verband met het ambt der ouderlingen.

De vroegere praktijk der Gereformeerde kerken was dat huisbezoek werd afgelegd door den predikant en de ouderlingen. En het was vroeger ook gewoonte in de Gereformeerde kerken om alle gezinnen te bezoeken voor elke avondmaalsviering. Langzamerhand is deze gewoonte echter in onbruik geraakt, behalve misschien op enkele uitzonderingen na. Onze vaders brachten huisbezoek dus vooral in verband met de viering van het heilig avondmaal, men stond er op dat de leden der gemeente waardige dischgenooten des Heeren waren, en ook informeerden de ambtsdragers naar de vrucht van de viering des avondmaals. En hoewel de oude gewoonte van vier bezoeken per jaar verviel, het bleef echter gewoonte in de Gereformeerde kerken om minstens eenmaal per jaar huisbezoek te doen bij alle leden der gemeente en ook bij degenen die geregeld met de gemeente saamvergaderden hoewel ze geen lid waren. De kerken van 1834 namen deze goede oude gewoonte over en brachten het huisbezoek weer op een hooger peil. Niet anders was het

met de Doleerende kerken. En ook hier ten onzent deden de Christelijke Gereformeerde kerken getrouwelijk huisbezoek. En deze oude gewoonte hebben ook wij als Prot. Geref. kerken overgenomen. En voorzoover de ondergeteekende weet wordt huisbezoek gedaan in al onze kerken, minstens eenmaal per jaar. En dus trachten ook wij de hand te houden aan artikel 23 der Kerkenorde.

Het is natuurlijk overduidelijk uit de Schrift dat de kerk zich wel terdege met de individueele personen en huisgezinnen in het midden der gemeente heeft te bemoeien, hun geestelijk heil ten allen tijde moet zoeken en bevorderen. Zoo lezen we b.v. in Hand. 20:28: "Zoo hebt dan acht op uzelve, en op de geheele kudde over dewelke u de Heilige Geest tot opzieners gesteld heeft, om de gemeente Gods te weiden, welke hij verkregen heeft door zijn eigen bloed." En zoo ook lezen we in I Thess. 5:12, 13: "En wij bidden u, broeders, erkent degenen die onder u arbeiden en uwe voorstanders zijn in den Heere en u vermanen, en acht ze zeer veel in liefde, om huns werks wil. Zijt vreedzaam onder elkander." We zouden teksten van dergelijken inhoud met ettelijke kunnen vermeerderen. Eveneens zouden we de praktijk van Christus zelf, tijdens zijn omwandeling op aarde, alsook de praktijk der apostelen kunnen aanhalen als voorbeelden om te bewijzen dat individueele bearbeiding van de gemeenteleden wel degelijk de roeping is van de ambtsdragers in het midden der gemeente.

We zouden het doel van huisbezoek dan ook kortelijks als volgt kunnen omschrijven: "Het is de systematische ambtelijke bearbeiding van de individueele leden en gezinnen van de gemeente des Heeren die ten doel heeft om de geestelijke welstand van de leden der gemeente te zoeken en te bevorderen". En omdat het een bezoeken is van gezinnen draagt huisbezoek uit den aard der zaak een intiem karakter en is een geheel eenige geestelijke bearbeiding van de gemeente ds Heeren. Uit het voorgaand blijkt duidelijk dat huisbezoek ambtelijk karakter draagt. Het is maar niet een bezoek van broeder aan broeder, maar draagt een officieel ambtelijk karakter. Een predikant alleen kan dan ook geen huisbezoek doen. Het is wel noodig, nuttig en ook vruchtbaar wanneer een herder zijn schapen opzoekt. Zoo heeft iemand b.v. gezegd: "A housegoing pastor makes a church going people." En daar schuilt ook heel veel waarheid in. Uit velerlei oogpunt is het gewenscht dat een herder in nauw contact leeft met zijn schapen en ze daarom ook gedurig opzoekt voorzoover tijd en gelegenheid dit toelaten, maar dit alles is nog geen huisbezoek. Huisbezoek is kerkeraadswerk en wordt door een commissie van de kerkeraad verricht. Zoowel de ambtsdragers zelf als ook de gemeenteleden moeten zich ten allen tijde bewust zijn dat huisbezoek een officieel ambtelijk karakter draagt.

Huisbezoek is een heerlijk werk, hoewel niet een gemakkelijke taak, als men tenminste ernst maakt met dien arbeid en het jaarlijksch bezoek niet een werktuigelijk iets wordt. Als het huisbezoek niets meer is dan een formaliteit, zooals naar mijn bescheiden meening dit meer en meer het geval wordt met onze kerkvisitatie, dan kunnen we er gerust mee ophouden en zal het geen vruchten afwerpen ten goede. In het huisbezoek heeft men een schoone, *de* schoonste gelegenheid om van hart tot hart met de leden der gemeente samen te spreken. Het huisbezoek is dan ook van intiem en vertrouwelijken aard. Men zei vroeger wel eens: "Met huisbezoek dan moet het hart op tafel." Daar schuilt veel waarheid in, en dat kan ook heel best zonder dat men in ziekelijke mystiek vervalt. Zal het huisbezoek dan ook werkelijk slagen zoodat er geestelijke vrucht uit voort komt dan moet er de rechte stemming heerschen en onderling vertrouwen zijn. Dit eischt van de ambtsdragers o.a. dat zij nooit het vertrouwen der gemeenteleden schenden. Vooral de leeraar moet trachten om een vertrouwelijke atmosfeer te scheppen, en de gezinnen moeten als bij intuïtie gevoelen dat de herder het waarachtig, geestelijk welzijn der schapen zoekt. Hij zij geen Roomsche priester die komt om de biecht af te nemen. Ook moet hij niet van uit de hoogte met zijn schapen beginnen te rede-neeren. Hij zij den Jood een Jood en den Griek een Griek in den goeden zin des woords. Huisbezoek vereischt in de ambtsdragers o.a. geloofsovertuiging, liefde voor Gods volk, Schriftkennis, zelfkennis, menschenkennis, en een groote mate van tact. En de gemeenteleden moeten zich eerlijk en openhartig openbaren tegenover de ambtsdragers, in het vertrouwen dat de ambtsdragers hun geestelijk in eeuwig heil zoeken naar den eisch van den Woorde Gods. Immers de ouderlingen zijn gezet over de gemeente als degenen die waken over de zielen die gekocht zijn door het bloed van Christus.

Veel en velerlei kan er ter sprake komen op huisbezoek, en geen twee gezinnen zijn er gelijk. En de leiding van het gesprek ga uit van de ambtsdragers. Soms moeten de ambtsdragers vooral nadruk leggen op den troost eens christens. Bij andere gezinnen is het vooral het element van vermaan dat op den voorgrond moet treden. Altijd en overal moeten de ambtsdragers informeerden naar de geestelijke welstand der gezinnen. Ook moeten ze immer weer aandringen op den strijd des geloofs, getrouwe samenkomst met de gemeente, de roeping eens christens in de verschillende sferen des levens waar God hem plaatst, en wat dies meer zij. Soms zijn er geheel bijzondere omstandigheden en problemen dit ter sprake komen, b.v. wanneer er misstanden zijn in het gezin, verkeerde verhouding tegenover den broeder, een genegenheid tot dwaling, en zoo zouden we veel meer kunnen noemen. En altijd en overal moeten de ambtsdragers het licht

van Gods Woord laten schijnen. Dat Woord is een lamp voor onzen voet en een licht op ons pad, en dat Woord geeft ons ook de sleutel voor de oplossing van alle problemen. Het is de staf des levens, maar het is ook het brood des levens.

Huisbezoek mag natuurlijk nooit ontaarden in een debat om elkanders krachten te meten of om elkanders kennis te toetsen. De tijd van huisbezoek is al evenmin de gelegenheid voor de gemeenteleden om allerlei dingen uit te braken en persoonlijke grieven uit te dorschen die met huisbezoek niets te maken hebben. Het huisbezoek is ook niet de gelegenheid om de dominee en de ouderling nu eens goed te zeggen waar het op staat. Als men daar behoefte aan heeft dan doe men dat bij een andere gelegenheid en ga maar eens op persoonlijk huisbezoek bij de dominee of de ouderling. Men vermijde alle hatelijkheden en twistgesprek dat het zielsbezoek onmogelijk maakt. De ambtsdragers moeten in dezen met wijsheid en tact weten te handelen, en de gemeenteleden moeten de ambtsdragers eeren om huns ambtswil. Als men wil dan kan men de ambtsdragers het huisbezoek natuurlijk altijd wel onmogelijk maken. Doch dit is niet alleen diep zondig, maar zelf wordt men daardoor ook geestelijk geschaad.

Ook blijve huisbezoek wat het woord zegt: *huisbezoek*. Met andere woorden *het huisgezin* moet vertegenwoordigd zijn. Dat sluit nog niet in de kleinste 'baby', die misschien het grootste woord zou hebben, maar dat sluit wel in de overige kinderen en ook de dienstdoenden.

We moeten echter ons onderwerp beëindigen, we zijn reeds buiten de perken gegaan beide wat de plaatsruimte ontbreekt ons daartoe, om duidelijk te maken tot de slotsom dat huisbezoek is de huiselijke, en daarom ook intieme, vertrouwelijke, geestelijke bearbeiding van de gezinnen der gemeente door de ambtsdragers, waarbij Gods Woord ten licht en richtsnoer is. Daarin ligt dan ook de beteekenis van huisbezoek. En we behoeven niet allerlei bijzonderheden te noemen, de ruimte ontbreekt en daartoe, om duidelijk te maken dat deze arbeid rijke vruchten afwerpt voor de gezinnen en voor de gemeente als geheel. Maar ook moeten we de vrucht voor de ambtsdragers zelf niet gering schatten. Ze komen en blijven op de hoogte van de geestelijke toestand der gemeente. En het is vooral door huisbezoek dat de herder, meer dan door enig ander middel, zijn schapen leert kennen. En naar mate hij de schapen kent kan hij ook te beter van den kansel hun het Woord bedienen overeenkomstig hunne behoeften. Een predikant moet zijn gemeente kennen zal hij gemeentelijk kunnen prediken. Maar ook voor eigen geestelijk leven kan huisbezoek rijke vruchten afwerpen voor de ambtsdragers, zoowel leeraars als ouderlingen, mits natuurlijk het huisbezoek geschied naar den eisch en de regelen der Schrift.

J. D. de J.

Making Confession Of Faith

It is a solemn and sacred hour for the Church of Jesus Christ when in her midst individual Christians arise to make confession of faith. For the one making confession it is no less sacred since it seems to mark the climax of one's life; somehow one feels as if the summit of faith has been reached. Yet, the hour of our confession does not mark the *end*, but rather the beginning. Hence, the sorrow of the church when there are matured baptized members in her midst who have not confessed their Lord, for it means that these have not yet *begun*!

However, it seems to be an accepted fact by the greatest majority of those having made or contemplating the making of confession that it marks the end, the goal of their spiritual endeavors. Sorrowing we must admit that it has been that for many. With a sigh of relief, too, many have exclaimed, or secretly thought, after their public confession: "There, at least that is finished". If they really mean what they say, we only add that theirs was a false confession. Such complacency can only indicate that faith was never present even though confession was made.

The conception that confession marks the end of spiritual endeavors, rather than the beginning, finds its origin in an erroneous conception of the Church and her membership. It is generally thought that one does not become a member of the Church until he has publicly confessed his faith. For this reason, when referring to the public confession of faith, many speak of "joining church" or of being "received by the church". In other words, as long as public confession has not taken place one is outside of the church.

The terrible results of this conception are easily surmised. It simply means that the non-confessing member is licensed to live and do as he pleases. He has no christian responsibility of any kind. No church government can frown on his attending the theatres, dances and other places of amusement prohibitive to confessing members. No one will accuse him of walking unruly if he should attend parties and do things which members in full communion may not do. No one expects him to live an exemplary christian life as would be expected of one having made confession of faith.

Naturally this conception of church-membership makes confession of faith difficult for many. They now enjoy pleasures which, so they think, are legal, but which they must renounce as soon as confession is made. Their life is now easy and care-free, but then it will be bound. Now they have no responsibilities at all, then it will be different. Now no one criticizes, then everyone will mark them with critical eye. To add to this terrible state of affairs, many parents are

found who more or less adhere to this opinion of youth. When such young folks are officially admonished by the church, father or mother soon add: "It is too bad, but after all they are as yet no full members of the church, and we hope that in the course of time their wild oats will have been sown; we were very little better in our day".

All such reasoning is due to no other cause than that of a baptized member is considered to have no responsibilities since he is really no Church-member at all. Only upon confession of faith does one "join church" and become one of its members, and only then do the real responsibilities begin. When, therefore, a young man or young woman can overcome the joys and pleasures denied to confessing members and forsake the frivolous ways of youth confession can be made, the battle is then won and the making of confession is then the *end* not the *beginning* of the battle of faith.

Let us not be deceived by such reasoning. No man's responsibility lies in his church-membership, but rather in God! Primarily we are not responsible to a church, but to God. It is true, church-membership does add to responsibilities since such membership gives privileges and privileges always involve obligations; but the church does not call us to exemplary christian life, but God! Since it is God that calls not only church-members are responsible, but *all* men are responsible; for all were created by God for His glory. A non-confessing church-member has no more license than a member in full communion.

On the other hand it must be understood that confession of faith is not an act of "joining church". A child born in the covenant already became a member of a given church when it was baptized in infancy. By baptizing this child that church incorporated it as one of its members. Hence, the child has belonged to that church from the very moment of baptism. However, in Reformed circles Baptism is not considered a form of some local church through which she inducts members into her fellowship. To the contrary, the sacrament of Baptism was given by God and is a sign and seal of the eternal Covenant which He established with believers and their seed. In this Covenant God has promised that He builds His Church of the believers and their seed in the line of generations, and He signifies and seals this very fact by Baptism. Therefore the Reformed parent does not confess that Baptism causes a child to become a member of the church, but he acknowledges: "Although our children are conceived and born in sin, and therefore are subject to all miseries, yea, to condemnation itself; yet they are sanctified in Christ and therefore, *as members* of His Church ought to be baptized". (Baptism Form). Hence, they are not baptized to *become* mem-

bers of the church, but because they *are* members, and that by God's eternal elective grace.

This Scriptural truth ought to abolish all references to confession of faith as an act of "joining church". It, too, should impress upon every covenant youth that a baptized member has no more license than a member by confession. Neither has a baptized member ethically less responsibility than a member in full communion. Everyone bearing the sign of Baptism is a member of the Church and has the calling to reveal it in life that: "Christ doth wash us in His blood from all our sins, incorporating us into the fellowship of His death and resurrection". Therefore, "are we by God *through Baptism*, admonished of and obliged unto new obedience, namely, that we cleave to this one God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost; that we trust in Him and love Him with all our hearts, with all our minds, and with all our strength; *that we forsake the world, crucify our old nature, and walk in a new and holy life*". (Baptism Form).

Besides this sacrament of Baptism, however, there is a second, namely, Holy Communion. Between these two sacraments stands the making of confession of faith. It must not be supposed that confession of faith separates the two, but to the contrary, it joins them. By making confession of faith access to the second sacrament is obtained, without which the first sacrament, Baptism, with its comforting significance, cannot continue to exist.

The two sacraments together form one complete whole and are signs and seals of the one and the same Covenant of God. Both fix our faith and hope upon the sacrifice of Christ, once offered on the cross, as the only ground of our justification and salvation. Baptism, on the one hand, is the sign and seal of our *entering* into this Covenant of God, of our being regenerated by the Spirit and being washed in the blood of Christ, and of being incorporated in to His Church. This sacrament can, therefore, be administered to infants. In Holy Communion, on the other hand, fellowship and communion with Christ, through active and living faith, is signified. By an act of conscious faith we must take the bread and receive the cup. Hence, the rightful partaking of Communion requires the ability of being able to know ourselves and so search our hearts and lives that we may rightly discern the body of Christ and eat and drink in remembrance of Him.

It stands to reason that children cannot partake of this sacrament, it requires a confession of faith, of consciousness of being a member of Christ's body. To attend Holy Communion it must be established by the church, as far as is possible, that those partaking have faith, are conscious members of Christ's body, and are thus able to partake as Christ has commanded. This takes place when confession is made.

Thus it has become evident that when Covenant youth desire to make confession of faith they do not ask permission to "join church" but before the church, of which they are members by Baptism, they publicly express that it is their earnest desire to take upon themselves the *obligations* and *full responsibilities* of their Baptism, and be allowed to partake of the Lord's Supper as conscious and living members of the body of Christ. They confess thereby that God in His infinite mercy adopted them as His children, and that now, having reached maturity they desire to express in all humility and yet with certainty and in faith that God is their God. When God says: "I am your God", he that makes confession says: "O Lord, I am Thy servant, the son of Thy handmaid; Thou hast loosed my bonds". He confesses that God has brought him to the consciousness of being one of His children.

This being the implication of making confession of faith we readily understand that it does not mark the *end*, but rather the beginning of conscious and active spiritual endeavors and the full life of faith. The solemn hour of confessing Christ in the midst of His Church cannot be closed with: "There, that's finished", but with the prayer: "Lord, lead me to the Rock that is higher than I, so that I may do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me".

Confession of faith being made in this manner will not only be made in that sacred hour in the midst of the congregation when we pledge our loyalty to Christ and His Church, but it will be a confession every time we go to the house of God. It will be a confession continuing throughout our whole life. It will be a confession of the heart and with the mouth; for when there is faith there must be confession, for faith must speak. "I believe, therefore have I spoken".

He who believes makes confession always again; not only on Sunday but also during the week; not only at home but also in school, in the shop, in the office, in the camps or wheresoever God has called.

This confession will become evident in our attendance of divine worship, in the maintenance of the Church and the Christian School, in our giving to the poor, in the feeding of the hungry, in clothing the naked, in comforting those that mourn, in admonishing those that err, in seeking the ones that stray.

That we may thus make confession we must be trained, thoroughly equipped; not only for a few months before making confession, but from earliest infancy. We must know what it means to say: "I believe" and "I confess". We must know the Church and her doctrine, her King and His will and thus walk worthy of our calling and confession.

Where there is faith it shall speak! He that believes shall confess! His whole life will be one continual confession; a living, holy sacrifice in Christ Jesus acceptable to the Lord.

A. C.

Current Events

The events which have been prophesied have taken place. When the war with Japan began the leaders promised many reverses before victory could be expected. Now the fall of Singapore and the threat of Japanese aggression in every place in the far east is a stark reality. On the Pacific coast preparation is being made for every emergency. The people have not only experienced a peaceful black-out but have also been rudely awakened by the thunderous firing of anti-aircraft guns. Whether it was for practice for the army or the populace is not the point. It seemed to bring the war very close to our shores. The feeling and experience of preparation is common to all. Many young men have had the experience of going to the training camps; some even to distant places of combat. Young Americans steadily are being inducted into the sacrifice for country. That the world situation is grave everyone realizes now. America, at first confident, now expresses itself about the future sometimes with a doubt. It has the feeling of confidence yet but realizes that our war effort may be too late. Therefore the urge in every department by our leaders for increased production.

In the very near future more strategic and valuable places in the far Pacific may fall into the hands of the Japanese. Though the war really was understood to be against Germany the Japanese seem to have diverted attention entirely to their effective attack upon the Allies. Today they attract all the attention of Americans. Perhaps in the spring other events on the German front will be recorded.

In the midst of these many important events which are taking place so rapidly we probably would rather hear some facts about the nations with whom we are fighting and those against whom we must defend ourselves. This big world has become so much smaller in so short a time and has brought distant peoples and places into close neighbourly contact that we have hardly had time as common folk to get acquainted with their history and background. We cannot, as you well understand even attempt a background of the nations of the far east which are destined to play an important role in future history. But there may be some points which are worth mentioning to gain an understanding of the great importance of the conflict in the far east. The nations of the Asiatic continent have for a long time been looked upon by serious Bible scholars as the nations of the four quarters of the earth mentioned in the Apocalypse of John.

Japan from the point of view of military strength is the strongest nation of the far east. It has a population of 72 million. But in addition it controls a great number of people for purposes of its war machine in

Manchuko and Korea. Her aim has been expressed in the well known expression, "Asia for the Asiatics." She gave the expression special emphasis because she desired to realize and maintain such a condition. In about one generation Japan has risen to a powerful and modern nation.

China has existed according to its leaders for about five-thousand years. It has a population of about 450 million. Her rulers were imperialistic and as the late Manchu dynasty sometimes very selfish and therefore an obstacle for the so-called progress of China. But since her struggle for her very existence began with Japan she has become decidedly democratic under the leadership of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek.

India has long been under the rule of England. Much trouble has it been for Britain. It has about 352 million inhabitants. A strong feeling of nationalism has arisen under the leadership of the pacifist Gandhi who has caused no little trouble for Britain.

Among these people which are the brown and yellow race, closely related to one another, strange things are happening. Easily can it be said that these nations are being born again, even under the leadership, because of necessity, of the western powers. Whatever the outcome of the war the far east will be entirely different than it ever was before as far as rule is concerned. This can be said of all nations also, but especially of the Asiatic nations. They are awakening. As the editor of the Los Angeles Daily News pointed out it is one of the most surprising developments that are taking place today and the Chinese and Indians take to the production of modern machinery as ducks take to water.

Furthermore there is the strange mission of Chiang Kai-Shek to India and his meeting with the seventy-three year old Mohandes K. Gandhi. For centuries the British have discouraged any attempt at collaboration between China and India. Now in order to obtain support for defense against extinction of British rule in the far east they encourage such a mission. The Generalissimo advised England in a wishful expression that India should be granted home rule. Other leaders including Pearl S. Buck are stressing democracy for the people of the Orient. They maintain the principles of the Atlantic Charter, as the president himself said, are for the whole world. However, as usual, there is, to quote Ernest K. Lindley in the *Newsweek*, "a thick vein of opposition among American officials to proclaiming an Eastern charter of freedom." And, whenever such a ruthless opposition gets into the saddle the grand schemes of world builders are spoiled. Such was always history. Dreams of union and peace were always destroyed by the greedy opposition. "The best laid schemes o' men an' mice gang aft a-gley", the world itself writes and quotes. God shall laugh at

them we read in the Word of God. Although to be sure, according to the Bible, God ordains an attempt at organization and union which shall reach a climax in the Antichristian power; but then He shall quickly and finally destroy all that is not of the kingdom of His Beloved Son.

We can easily see how that the position of the nations of the world hangs somehow together with this Asiatic question. The near future and the distant future welfare of the United nations including our country depends upon the attitude and its execution now taken. Many injustices have been committed. Besides, as one leading columnist wrote about the fall of Singapore, "the prestige of the white man has fallen." Any misstep on our part will close the door of Asia to us and ultimately threaten our safety. To quote Ernest K. Lindley again, "One of the most momentous political questions since the seafarers of Western Europe began to explore the globe and acquire empires in the fifteenth century is rapidly coming to a head. That is whether to renounce once and for all the traditional colonial system and to welcome the native peoples of the East as full partners in the war against the Japanese."

Current Attitudes. "With ears bent" the Christian reader of the news today is undoubtedly more interested in the attitudes of the leaders which mold the attitudes of the people, than even in the events themselves. The allied nations are facing the crisis of their history. In that crisis Churchill reshuffled his cabinet and pointed to America as their only hope in the dark hour of their history. The President of the United States spoke again to the nation, which sensed the gravity of their cause. What is the attitude of the leaders of the world in this crisis of civilization?

We know the attitude of the Axis powers. Their leaders in their dictatorial roles only blast out confidence to their peoples. They base their confidence in their meticulous preparation which has gone on for many years. They pledge in no uncertain terms the attainment of their objectives. It seems as though the hand of God which is revealed in the snow and in the lice cannot stop them.

The attitude of Chiang Kai-Shek is interesting, to take up the side of the Allies. In the preface to his wife's book, "China Shall Rise Again", published in 1940, he writes, "For the rebirth of a people certain factors are necessary. Of these one is that the people should go through a period of trials and tribulations.

"The most important, however, is that the people must have full confidence in their national destiny. . . .

"The Chinese have a culture and a history of more than five thousand years. They are now being threatened with extinction by the ruthless aggression of

Japan. In this unprecedented crisis, their national spirit has risen to the occasion: the longer they fight, the more determined becomes their will to survive and conquer.

"In writing this volume, the author has striven, as her religion and her patriotism have dictated to her, to point out the many shortcomings of her people which must be remedied, if China is to be regenerated.

"If a person can stand up to these questions; (questions of self-analysis which he enumerated, L.D.) wash his heart clean of past faults of character; turn his face to the future with determination to carry on the good fight, then only will he deserve the name of warrior in China's struggle for regeneration.

"He must feel it in his bones that his people are fundamentally sound, and their present confusion and weakness only temporary."

This is a typically democratic and western thought as is the content of Madame Chiang Kai-Shek's book. She was educated in the United States. She writes the book and expresses all her ideas under the theme, "Resurgam", the Latin for, I shall rise again. She saw that word written on an odd stone in the portal of St. Paul's Cathedral, London.

Our President in his confident and yet cautious speech referred to the days of George Washington and quoted the words of Tom Paine who wrote then, "these are the times that try men's souls". Further, "Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the sacrifice the more glorious the triumph." "So speak Americans today!" said the President.

Along with these leaders, men in various departments of life are speaking their mind for the post-war world. Vice-president Wallace writes in *The Atlantic*, of January, "Foundations of the Peace", "The overthrow of Hitler is only half the battle; we must build a world in which our human and material resources are used to the utmost if we are to win a complete victory." As one of the proposers of an ever normal granary he says that he hopes it may be realized on a world-wide scale, "A World Ever Normal Granary."

Alongside of such visions the expressions of God seem out of date. When one speaks about the future as the Bible foretells it so often, for example, in Matt. 24 and in Revelations it seems like a fanatical revivalist or a pessimist preaching the world is coming to an end. So it was in the days of Noah when he was building the ark. Bending his ears the Christian detects that which was spoken by Christ, many are saying, here is Christ and there is Christ, "Follow not after them."

L. D.

A Reply To Mr. B. Veldkamp

In reply to the article of Mr. B. Veldkamp, I would like to make the remark that I was very much disappointed with the brother's writing as it was of a more personal hatred towards me than towards my article and could not have been done in brotherly love.

The brother is constrained to make mention, that he disagrees with me in the manner I wrote my Church News Article. This of course is his good right. We don't have to agree on minor things.

The brother is of the opinion that I don't know much about the Unions. Of course he cannot prove this.

I write mysterious, and some of my sentences amuse him, and he also wonders if I know my own mind.

He also asks the lame question if Mr. De Vries is going to take care of us. He knows my answer. The Lord is able to do this, and He never will forsake His own.

I do not place all Unions on one level Mr. Veldkamp. I wrote about the C.I.O., and the A.F.L.; and to my knowledge of the two, there is no difference. Don't misrepresent my writings Mr. Veldkamp.

I hope you have noticed brother, that I did not come back on your article, for I came to the conclusion that you really have nothing against my article, but against me, and we must not discuss this in our Standard Bearer.

I advise you, Mr. Veldkamp, if you must write, then write in a brotherly tone; and let not hatred predominate your thoughts.

S. D. V.

IN MEMORIAM

Het behaagde de Heere om door den dood van ons weg te nemen onzen beminden Man, Vader en Grootvader

HENRY G. SCHUIL

in den ouderdom van 70 jaren en 7 maanden.

Dat hij in Zijn Heer en Heiland mocht ontslapen is ons tot troost in dit smartelijk verlies.

Mrs. Sadie Schuil—Pontier, Redlands, Calif.

Gerrit Schuil, San Bernardino, Calif.

Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Schuil, Patterson, N. J.

Mr. and Mrs. J. Noordmans—Schuil, Redlands

Mr. and Mrs. Joe DeBlauw—Schuil, Redlands

Mr. and Mrs. Ben Meelker—Schuil, Redlands

and 10 Grandchildren.