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MEDITATIE

Eindelijke Behoudenis

En de Heere, hun God, zal ze te dien dage behouden, als zijnde de kudde Zijns volks; want gekroonde steenen zullen in Zijn land, als eene banier opgericht worden. Want hoe groot zal zijne schoonheid wezen! het koren zal de jongelingen, en de most zal de jonkvrouwen sprekende maken.

Zach. 9:16, 17.

Door strijd tot overwinning!

Door lijden en worsteling tot de heerlijkheid der uiteindelijke en eeuwige zaligheid!

Dat is de regel voor de heirlegers des Heeren. Een andere weg dan die van worsteling en lijden is er naar de heerlijkheid niet. En de strijd des Heeren loopt zeker uit op de eeuwige overwinning. Want die strijd en die overwinning zijn beide Godes.

Daarom zingt dan ook Gods strijdend volk in de wereld:

De Heer zal opstaan tot den strijd;
Hij zal Zijn haters, wijd en zijd,
Verjaagd, verstrooid doen zuchten;
Hoe trotsch Zijn vijand wezen moog',
Hij zal voor Zijn ontzagg'lijk oog,
Al sidderende vluchten.

En daarom kan het ook nu reeds nog temidden van den strijd zich wetend, met het oog op de toekomst profetisch jubelen:

Maar 't vrome volk, in U verheugd,
Zal huppelen van zielevreugd,
Daar zij hun wensch verkrijgen;
Hun blijdschap zal dan, onbepaald,
Door 't licht, dat van Zijn aanzicht straalt,
Ten hoogsten toppunt stijgen.

Daarom gewaagt ook het einde van dit hoofdstuk in de profetie van Zacharia van deze uiteindelijke behoudenis en zaligheid. Van des Heeren strijd door en met en voor Zijn volk tegen de wereldmacht had het verband gesproken. De Heere zou immers Juda als Zijn boog spannen, en Efraïm als Zijn pijl daarop zetten; Hij zou de kinderen Sions verwekken tegen de kinderen van Griekenland, en hen stellen als het zwaard van eenen held; Hij Zelf zou aan de spitse treden, met de bazuin blazen, voorttreden met stormen uit het zuiden, Zijne pijlen doen uitvaren als de bliksem, en heel de schepping doen medestrijden voor de overwinning van Zijn volk; en Hij zou hen beschutten in den strijd en hun de volkomene overwinning geven over de vijanden.

En "te dien dage" zal Hij hen behouden, dat is, volkomen zaligmaken!

Tot op zekere hoogte vond deze profetie haar vervulling in den tijd der Makkabeeën tegen den Syrischen antichrist. Centraal werd ze vervuld in de worsteling en overwinning van den Knecht des Heeren aan het kruis en in Zijnen opstanding en verhooving. Nog altijd wordt ze vervuld in de worsteling der Kerk in de wereld tegen de machten der duisternis. Maar de finale vervulling wacht nog.

Ze komt in den dag van Christus!

"Te dien dage"!

Dan zal de Heere Zijn volk behouden!

Dan zal het geopenbaard worden, dat de strijd des Heeren is, en altijd geweest is, en dat de zake van Gods volk de zaak is van den Zone Gods!

Dan zal de blijdschap van Gods volk ten hoogsten toppunt stijgen!

De worsteling wordt dan bekroond met eeuwige overwinning!

Door lijden tot heerlijkheid!

Hoe groot!

Hoe onuitsprekelijk groot!

Hoe boven alle verbeelding groot zal zijn goed zijn, zal zijne schoonheid zijn! Hoe ondenkbaar heerlijk

zal de eeuwige zaligheid wezen!

Want hiervan gewaagt dit tekstwoord. De Heere zal Zijn volk te dien dage behouden. En behouden beteekent hier zaligmaken, doelt op de uiteindelijke, eeuwige zaligheid, en niet slechts op de verlossing uit de macht der vijanden. Van het laatste had immers het verband reeds gesproken. Bovendien is dit de beteekenis van het woord "behouden" in het Hebreeuwsch. En heel de verdere inhoud van deze verzen toont duidelijk, dat hier sprake is van de zaligheid, die God bereidt voor degenen, die Hem liefhebben.

Die zaligheid wordt hier geteekend als een groot goed, en als eene niet voor te stellen schoonheid.

Dit "goed" der eeuwige zaligheid is allereerst geestelijk inwendig. Het is eene goedheid in Gods volk, een geestelijk bezit. Want het is het eeuwige leven! Het bestaat in de allerhoogste realizeering van Gods beeld in Gods kinderen en in de volle, rijke, ongestoorde, hemelsche gemeenschap der vriendschap in den tabernakel Gods bij de menschen. Het is de volmaakte kennis Gods, die het leven is, in hemelschen vorm en op hemelsche wijze werkend; een zien aangezicht tot aangezicht, en een kennen, zooals we ook gekend zijn. Het is eene eeuwige gerechtigheid, de volkomene en nimmer te verstoren harmonie van onzen wil met den wille Gods, zoodat het ons hoogste zielsgenoegen zal zijn om Hem te dienen en Zijne geboden te bewaren. Het is vlekkelooze heiligheid, reinheid van hart, de werking en beweging van al de uitgangen van ons hart naar God toe, zoodat we Hem toegewijd zijn, en Hem liefhebben met geheel ons bestaan en al onze krachten.

Het eeuwig zalig leven met God!

Het leven in al zijn hemelsche volheid!

Het leven zonder den dood, en zonder de schaduw des doods!

Maar dat "goed" zal ook uitwendig zijn, bestaande in eene erfenis van hemelsche goederen, de onverderfelijke en onverwelkelijke en onbevlekkelijke erfenis, die in de hemelen bewaard wordt voor Gods volk. Want ook het schepsel zal vrijgemaakt worden van de dienstbaarheid der verderfenis. Nieuwe hemelen en eene nieuwe aarde zullen worden geroepen door Gods almachtig Woord uit den laatsten vuurbrand aller dingen; eene nieuwe schepping, waarin hemel en aarde vereenigd zullen zijn in den naam van Jezus, waarin God zal zijn alles en in allen, en waarin gerechtigheid woont.

Daarom zal dat "goed" ook schoon zijn!

Onuitsprekelijk schoon zal Gods volk zijn. Het goede, het waarachtig goede is altijd schoon, juist omdat het goed is. De zonde is altijd leelijk en mismaakt, afschuwelijk. God is schoon; de absoluut Schoone is Hij, want Hij is het inbegrip van alle oneindige deugden en volmaaktheden. Christus is schoon, want Hij is God in het vleesch, het beeld des onzienlijken Gods, en in Hem woont al de volheid der Godheid lichamenlijk.

De Kerk is ook schoon, want zij is de uitstraling van den rijkdom van God in Christus, van de menigerlei genade, die in Christus haar deel is. En dit alles zal worden opgeheven tot de hoogte van het hemelsche, en in hemelsche heerlijkheid schitteren, en dat in eene hemelsche schepping, waarvan Christus het eeuwige Hoofd is en alle dingen in hemel en op aarde in Hem vereenigd zullen zijn!

Als "steen van een kroon" zullen Gods kinderen schitteren, opgeheven als eene banier, die overal gezien wordt, in het eeuwige, hemelsche Kanaan!

Zoo toch is de gedachte. Niet "gekroonde steenen", maar edelgesteenten in een kroon zullen Gods kinderen zijn. Eén kroon zal er zijn: die van Christus, want alle andere kronen zullen niet anders zijn dan reflecties van die ééne kroon. En die ééne kroon van Christus zal op duizendvoudige wijze schitteren in en door de edelgesteenten, die in de kroon zijn ingezet. De heerlijkheid Gods in Christus zal in en door de milloenen op milloenen verheerlijkte heiligen uitstralen en schitteren, en dat in de schoonste harmonie, zoodat al de verscheidene schitteringen toch ééne schoone heerlijkheid zullen vertoonen!

Hoe groot zal zijn goed wezen! Hoe groot zal zijne schoonheid wezen!

Dat wil zeggen: deze goedheid en schoonheid zijn ten slotte voor ons onuitsprekelijk groot!

We kunnen er wel iets van zeggen. We kunnen er wel in zwakke, menselijke, aardsche woorden iets over stamelen. We kunnen ons er wel een bleke voorstelling van maken, zooals we eene voorstelling krijgen van de heerlijkheid der zon, als we ons oog richten op het schijnsel der maan. En ook die zwakke, aardsche voorstelling doet ons hart hier opspringen van vreugde in hope!

Maar als we alles in ons hebben opgenomen, wat Gods Woord ons er van heeft geopenbaard, en we hebben er alles van gezegd, wat in onze aardsche taal van die goedheid en schoonheid te zeggen valt, dan roepen we ten slotte toch uit: "hoe groot"!

Dat wil zeggen: we kunnen die heerlijkheid toch nooit ten volle voorstellen!

Dat wil ook zeggen: hoe meer we ons die hemelsche heerlijkheid indenken, hoe meer we er van trachten te zeggen in het licht van Gods Woord, hoe meer we gevoelen, dat ze al ons verstand te boven gaat, en dat we ten slotte niet beter kunnen doen dan uitroepen: hoe groot!

Want immers, die goedheid en schoonheid zijn niet slechts volmaakt, maar ook hemelsch; en wij zijn aardsch.

Ze behooren tot eene andere wereld dan de onze.

Het zijn dingen, die geen oog heeft gezien, geen oor heeft gehoord, en in geen menschenhart zijn opgeklimmen!

En daarom kunnen wij het hier nooit verder bren-

gen, dan dat we in aardse woorden nastamelen, wat de Schrift ons, ook in aardse woorden, van die hemelsche dingen zegt.

En als we alles gezegd hebben, wat er te zeggen valt, geven we te kennen, dat we wel gevoelen en verstaan, dat de werkelijkheid veel grooter, veel heerlijker zal zijn dan onze voorstelling.

En daarom roepen we uit: hoe groot!

Hoe groot zijn goed!

En die behoudenis is zeker!

Ze kan, ze mag, om Gods eigen naams wille nooit falen!

Want ze is gegrond in Gods eeuwige verkiezing, dat wil zeggen, in de eeuwigheid, bij den eeuwigen God, in Zijn raad en wil, is deze zaligheid Goddelijke werkelijkheid.

En wat in den Eeuwige werkelijkheid is, en bij den eeuwigen God vaststaat, moet ook in Zijne werken naar buiten worden gerealiseerd. Dat kan niet uitblijven, omdat God GOD is. Dat kan niet falen, omdat God nooit faalt. Dat mag niet falen, omdat God Zijn eer nimmer aan anderen geeft.

En zeg nu niet, dat we dit er nu maar bijslepen, en dat deze gedachte van Gods eeuwige verkiezing toch niet in den tekst staat. Want hoe zou de Schrift toch ooit kunnen spreken van Gods werk, zonder meteen te gewagen van Zijn eeuwig raadsbesluit? En hoe zou ze toch ooit kunnen zeggen: "De Heere, hun God, zal ze te dien dage behouden", zoo ze niet bedoelde te zeggen, dat deze uiteindelijke zaligheid en verheerlijking van Zijn volk zekerlijk zal geschieden? En wat andere zekerheid zou dit toch kunnen zijn, dan de zekerheid, die bij God vaststaat? En wat is dit anders dan de zekerheid van Zijn eeuwig raadsbesluit? Als God zegt: Ik zal ze te dien dage behouden, dan wil dit niets anders zeggen dan: Zoo staat het in Mijn eeuwig raadsbesluit der verkiezing!

Of wilt ge, hoe zou de tekst kunnen spreken van "de Heere, *hun* God", dan uit diezelfde eeuwige verkiezing? Waarom dan is de Heere *hun* God? Hoe verklaart ge het dan, dat de Heere *hun* God is, iets, dat toch zeker wil zeggen, niet slechts, dat Hij in algemeen zin God is over en van alle dingen en dus ook over en van hen, maar dat Hij in geheel eenige betrekking van liefde en vriendschap tot hen staat? Daar zit toch zeker onderscheiding in van andere volken, en daarom verkiezing? Is die verkiezing dan *hun* keuze? Hebben zij Jehova verkoren tot hun God? Immers, ge weet het, dat kan niet: het is Gods eigen eeuwige verkiezing, die zich in die woorden uitsprekt: *hun* God!

Of, zoudt ge nog niet voldaan zijn, lees het dan zelf, dat de tekst den eenigen grond voor de zekerheid van deze zaligheid duidelijk aangeeft in de woorden: "als zijnde de kudde Zijns volks". Hij zal hen te dien dage behouden, *als zijnde de kudde Zijns volks!* Daarom,

omdat ze Zijne kudde zijn, de schapen Zijner weide, zal Hij hen zeker behouden! En nu weet ge uit de Schrift, dat er in deze woorden is aangeduid, dat Gods volk Zijn eigendom is in een gansch zeer bijzonderen zin des woords. Alles is Zijn eigendom in hemel en op aarde, maar Zijn volk is Zijne kudde. Het zijn Zijne schapen, die Hij kent, die Hij liefheeft, die Hij beschut en behoudt, die Hij voedt en weidt, over welke Hij den goeden Herder heeft gesteld, Die Zijn leven geeft voor Zijne schapen. En hoe zijn ze dit alles geworden? Ge weet het: Hij heeft hen aan den goeden Herder gegeven. En deze goede Herder geeft hun het eeuwige leven, houdt hen in Zijne machtige hand, zoodat ze niet verloren kunnen gaan in der eeuwigheid! . . .

Hij zal hen behouden!

En Hij zal hen allen behouden, van den kleinste tot den grootste toe! Niemand hunner zal ooit verloren kunnen of mogen gaan!

Want ze zijn niet maar een troep schapen zonder bepaald getal. Ze zijn eene kudde.

Ze vormen een eenheid!

God verloor geen hoop menschen, maar eene Kerk!

Zoo er maar één der schapen verloren zou gaan, de heerlijkheid der ééne schoone kudde zou geschonden, de harmonie der ééne heerlijke Kerk zou gebroken wezen!

En daarom: Hij zal ze te dien dage behouden!

Om Zijns naams wil!

Juicht dan den Heere!

Juicht Hem thans, met het oog der hope op die zekere zaligheid!

Zingt vroolijk den God uwer volkomene zaligheid, want straks zult ge eeuwig overvloeien van lof en dank door diezelfde genade, die ge thans in beginsel bezit!

Immers: "te dien dage", in dien dag der eindelijke behoudenis, zal het koren de jongelingen en de most de jonkvrouwen sprekende maken! Koren en most waren verbondszegeningen in het land Kanaan. En daaraan is deze beeldspraak ontleend, want beeldspraak is het. Koren is voedingsmiddel, middel tot vervulling van onze levensbehoeften; most of wijn is beeld van overvloed en weelde. Zoo is het dikwijls in de Schrift. De Schrift spreekt van "wijn en melk", van het water en brood des levens. En dat alles is beeld van genade, van overvloeiende genade, van menigerlei genade, van gaven der genade, waardoor we eeuwiglijk zullen ontvangen gerechtigheid en leven, kennis en zaligheid in de gemeenschap der vriendschap Gods!

En die genade zal ons sprekende maken!

Letterlijk staat er eigenlijk, dat koren en most in de jongelingen en jonkvrouwen zullen opborrelen, opwellen, overvloeien!

Gods genade zal in de gezaligden opwellen, uit hun hart, en overvloeien op hunne lippen!

In eeuwigen lof en dank!

H. H.

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EDITORIALS

On Sunday Labor For Defense

Those that are able to read Dutch may omit this editorial, for it contains in the main a reproduction of what I wrote in the previous issue of our paper on the same subject.

The reason for this reproduction is a request.

Many, and, perhaps, they are chiefly found among those that are most directly concerned with this problem, cannot read the Holland language. And the request, therefore, is very reasonable, one, in fact, which I may not ignore and cannot refuse.

All the more gladly do I follow up this request, because in personal discussions it became evident, as I feared and as, indeed, might be expected with regard to a question that involves the sabbath, that there is by no means unanimity of opinion among our men. And that our men are looking for a satisfactory answer to the question, is also evident from the request I received from the League of Protestant Reformed Men's Societies to lecture on this subject in the near future; a request which I had to decline for the simple reason that I have my hands more than full at present. My radio work requires a good deal of my time, so that I have felt myself obliged to decline for all invitations to lecture.

Besides, it also became evident that the proposition I defended in my former editorial had not been clearly grasped by all. That proposition was simply this: *If the Government requires of us that we shall labor on Sunday for the production of defense material, we must obey; the rule that we must obey God more than men is not applicable in this case.*

I understood, of course, perfectly that the explanation and defense of this simple proposition does not solve all the questions connected with this problem. It is perfectly clear to me that there are many related problems, and that in the practical application of the proposition I defended and the stand I took, there are many dangers that must be faced.

There is always the danger that employers abuse the situation and make their employees labor on Sunday in their own interest, under the pretext of the demand of the government, even then, when it is not strictly necessary.

There is, on the other hand, also the danger that employees purposely seek a job in those defense industries in which Sunday labor is required, because they use the demand of the government as a means to increase their wages.

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And there is, besides, the general danger that through this temporary exigency the sanctity of the sabbath in general is lost sight of. Men will become accustomed to Sunday labor, and they will begin to feel that, after all, it is quite proper to continue their earthly tasks on the sabbath.

And so there may be many more related problems.

However, in my editorial I intentionally avoided them, in order not to lose sight of the main issue.

I did not take into account the greedy employer that makes the best of the situation in order to increase his profits. Nor did I have in mind or write about the easy going Christian, that would rather earn a few more dollars if he can find an excuse than give himself wholly to the service of the Lord on Sunday. I felt that, even before all these side issues could be satisfactorily and fruitfully discussed, we must have an answer to the main question. For, if we cannot agree on the chief issue in this matter, it is of absolutely no use to discuss side issues. And that main question is: When the government requires us to work on Sunday in the production of defense material, must we submit and obey, or must we apply the rule: we must obey God more than men?

For this reason my answer dealt with and was meant for the *conscientious* Christian only. I wrote:

"Especially in times of war, there are many questions that arise for the Christian to answer, questions of conscience, to which the Christian, if he takes his life before God seriously, must have an answer, and that, too, an answer according to the Word of God, in order that he may arrange his life and walk accordingly, and have peace of mind."

I wrote further:

"Even apart from the question, whether or not the Christian will have to obey the government in this case, he will not easily and not very readily sacrifice the weekly sabbath to the world. Even if he reaches the conclusion and becomes of the conviction that in this case it is his calling to be in submission to the government, he will do his utmost to keep His Sunday free as much as possible. And even when he cannot escape the necessity of working on Sunday, it will remain for him a cause of sorrow and suffering, that, instead of being allowed to meet with the people of God in His house, he will have to be occupied in the fabrication of instruments of destruction."

Let this be plainly understood.

For the so-called Christian that is lax in his entire walk, and that would rather gladly sacrifice the service of the Lord on Sunday to a few paltry dollars, I did not write. I could not possibly write for him. He has no problem, for the simple reason that he does not take the Christian attitude.

And, therefore, I merely discussed the *principal* question: Is Sunday labor for defense, when required

by the government, proper for the Christian? Or must he apply the rule: I must obey God more than men?

And now I will translate what I wrote in my Dutch editorial on this subject.

"Perhaps, it would not be inexpedient that the churches in common, through the synod, issued a declaration on this question. Then we would, at all events, take a united stand. And thus the brethren, that have to decide for themselves in this matter in a practical sense, could be supported and guided.

"In the meantime, I gladly offer my own views on the subject.

"At bottom the problem is inseparably connected with the question concerning the Sabbath in general. The answer we give to the particular question in discussion depends on our conception of the Sunday. We may put the question in this form: Is working on Sunday as such sinful? Must it be regarded as sin to be occupied with earthly labor on Sunday, in the same sense in which e.g. idolatry, profanity, murder, adultery and the like are sin? If our answer to this question is in the affirmative, we may never work at a" on Sunday; and in that case we must refuse obedience to the government when she demands of us that on Sunday we labor for the production of defense material.

"This is self-evident.

"We may never transgress God's commandment, not even on the authority of the government. Or rather: the government can never have the authority to demand of us, that we sin against God. If she does this nevertheless, she is no longer the government, but simply a group of men. And then we say: we must obey God more than men.

"If, therefore, it is the standpoint of the Word of God, that labor on Sunday as such and in all cases is sin, we refuse to obey.

"But this is not the case.

"This is not the teaching of the Word of God. And this has never been the standpoint of Reformed people.

"The Saviour condemned very sharply the standpoint, that consecration of the sabbath really consists in the keeping of a day, and that, too, by doing nothing. He taught us that man is not for the sabbath, but the sabbath for man. Intentionally he often "worked" on the sabbath, and he did things which could have been done just as well on another day. On the sabbath he purposely healed the man in Bethesda, who had been infirm for thirty eight years, and, besides, he commanded him to walk through the streets of Jerusalem carrying his bed. And whenever the Lord was attacked by the Jews for this, He reminded them that it was proper to do good on the sabbath, and pointed out to them that, if only it concerned their own ox or ass, they would work on the sabbath.

"Ceremonial significance the sabbath has no longer.

The church of the new dispensation does not keep "days and months and seasons", in order thus to do God a service. She does not celebrate the Jewish sabbath. Neither does she rest on the sabbathday of creation, as the adventists would have us do. She celebrates the "day of the Lord", and that, too, as standing in the liberty wherewith Christ has made her free. She refuses to be encumbered with the yoke of bondage again, even on the sabbath.

"No reformed person, therefore, ever took the stand that all labor on Sunday is as such to be condemned as sin.

"Indeed, there always was difference of opinion and attitude toward the sabbath among them. There were those that were rather lenient, while others insisted more strictly on the hallowing of the day and the refraining from all daily work on Sunday.

"But they certainly agreed on the following principles:

"1. That the positive consecration or hallowing of the sabbath must always have the emphasis, consisting in this, that one on the sabbath would be diligent in the service of the Lord, and in the things of the kingdom of God.

"2. That this principle is applicable not only to the sabbath, but just as well to all the days of our life, so that all our days we ought to rest from our evil works, yield ourselves to the Lord, to work by His Holy Spirit in us, and thus begin in this life the eternal sabbath. Heid. Cat. Lord's Day 38.

"3. That exactly in order to realize this and to be able to occupy ourselves with heavenly and spiritual things in a particular sense of the word, it is necessary that we refrain from our earthly labors as much as possible.

"4. That even so there are things that cannot be put to a stop on Sunday. There are "necessary things", as well as works of mercy that must be performed on Sunday just as well as during the week. A farmer cares for his cattle on Sunday; a doctor calls on his patients on the sabbath if necessary. And the idea was, of course, that work as such is not sinful even on Sunday. (I may add here, that we all do many things on Sunday that involve earthly labor, without any pangs of conscience. The Church cleans its walks on Sunday after a snowstorm, fires its furnace to keep the congregation comfortable, uses its electricity for lighting and for the organ, or even for the "fan" that people may not suffocate on a hot and sultry day. I speak over the radio on Sunday, use my car to get to the station, employ a young man to run the elevator for me, and many others in the station itself. And the people turn on their radio to listen. Surely, the government cannot abdicate on Sunday; we have our police force; and if necessary we surely make use of the fire department on Sunday. Just imagine how much Sun-

day labor all this involves!).

"On the basis, therefore, of this Scriptural conception of the sabbath in the new dispensation, I come to the conclusion, that, when the government in certain concrete cases demands of us, because it considers it necessary, that we shall work on Sunday, there is no conflict between this demand and the Word of God or the will of the Lord.

"It certainly belongs to the proper domain of the government to handle the sword, even in waging war. But then it must also be her calling to whet that sword, to put the country in a state of defense, or even to prepare herself for the attack upon the enemy if this should prove to be necessary. And if the situation is such, that she cannot possibly become prepared for war in time unless she demands Sunday labor, this certainly may be classified with "necessary works". Also the soldier is compelled to work on Sunday and to fight, whenever the enemy makes his attack.

"We do not judge about the way in which the government handles this sword, nor about the righteousness of a given war. We must leave this to the responsibility of the government.

"And whether it is absolutely necessary in concrete cases to work on Sunday, we may also leave to the judgment of the government, as long as it concerns work that is performed in her domain and, therefore, on her authority.

"Then, too, we may petition the government not to demand or allow any more work on the sabbath than is strictly necessary.

"And, finally, if we must work on Sunday, we can make local arrangements, so that we have sufficient free time on the sabbath to attend the service of the Lord.

"But if you ask me: is the rule applicable, in this case, that we must obey God more than men? I answer: No, this rule does not apply in this case.

"In my opinion, obedience is here the demand of the Word of God."

H. H.

NOTICE — to all Prot. Ref. Ministers

The Board of the R.F.P.A. asks for your cooperation in sending us the names and addresses of all our boys in camp, so that free copies of the Standard Bearer may be sent to them.

Also the names and addresses of all those recently united in matrimony so that sample copies may be sent to them, in order that every Protestant Reformed family will read the Standard Bearer.

The Triple Knowledge

An Exposition Of The Heidelberg Catechism

IV.

LORD'S DAY III

3.

The Fall Of Man

"Whence then proceeds this depravity of human nature?" This is the next question that arises after the negative answer given to the sixth question. The instructor reached the conclusion that the human nature is contrary to the law of God. The law demands love and the human nature is inclined to hate. Sin, therefore, is not a matter of a wrong deed only; it is corruption of the human nature. And this corruption of the human nature is the subject of discussion in this third Lord's Day. Whence does this corruption arise? Did God, perhaps, create us so wicked and perverse? This question was answered in the negative. No, God cannot create anything wicked. On the contrary, He created man good and after his own image, in true righteousness and holiness. He was able to know God rightly, and to live with Him in eternal happiness in the covenant of friendship, that he might glorify and praise his Creator. But now the question returns in its direct form: "Whence then proceeds this depravity of human nature?" And the answer directs our attention to the fall and disobedience of our first parents. To that fall must somehow be traced the corruption of the whole nature. There are several questions here that must be answered. First of all, our attention must be directed to that fall of Adam and Eve as such. Of what did their fall and disobedience consist? Secondly, the question arises: how could that one act of disobedience on the part of our first parents corrupt their nature? And, finally, there is the important problem concerning our connection with that fall of Adam and Eve, and concerning the corruption of the whole human nature through them.

The life and calling of our first parents were concentrated in and limited for the time being to the garden of Eden. Dominion was given them over all the earthly creation, and their broader calling was to multiply and fill the earth and subdue it. But it is quite evident that this calling embraced the entire human race and that the realization of it could hardly be begun as long as all things were still in their primi-

tive state and our first parents were the only representatives of the race on earth. But God had limited their personal sphere of life and labor. He had prepared for them a special place in the garden of Eden. This garden was for them a house of God. There God dwelled and there they dwelled with God in the covenant of friendship. There God spoke to them as a friend with his friends, and Adam and Eve heard the Word of God. And there God gave them the special mandate to dress or cultivate the garden and to keep it, which probably means that man had to guard and defend it against the inroads of the devil and corruption.

Attention is called to two special trees that were to have a peculiar significance in the life of our first parents. There was first of all the tree of life in the midst of the garden; and near it was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Whether these names indicate merely two individual trees or rather a species or group of trees cannot be determined and is rather irrelevant. In the heavenly paradise of God in the new earth the tree of life is, evidently, not one single tree but a group, for it is presented in Rev. 22:2 as standing on either side of the river of life. Of more importance, however, it is to determine the significance of the two special trees in the garden of Eden. It appears that the tree of life, in distinction from all other trees, produced fruit that had the power to perpetuate Adams earthly existence as a living soul. As long as he might eat of the tree of life he would not die the physical death. This seems to be the implication of Gen. 3:22: "And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever." But its significance was not limited to this. It was to man also a token of God's favor, for only in the way of obedience might he eat of that tree. A sign, a kind of sacrament, therefore, it was to him of the covenant of God's friendship. Man was not only a living soul like the animal; he was created in the image of God. He lived a higher life, the life of God's covenant in the fellowship of His friendship. He, therefore, could not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. And of that Word of favor and blessing the tree of life was a visible and tangible token. As he ate of the tree of life he tasted the lovingkindness of his God over him.

Of this tree of life the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was the antithesis. Also with it the Word of God was connected, but it was a word of prohibition. It introduced the "No", God's "No" into Adams life, and therefore the calling to respond to that "No" of God by his own "No". This is evident from the fact that Adam received command from God that he might not eat of this tree. But it is also indi-

cated by the name: "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." This name does not, of course, express that the tree was a means to bring Adam to a consciousness of and discernment between good and evil, to make him a moral being. Adam was not created a neutral being, without moral discernment. His moral consciousness was not a blank. He was created in positive knowledge of God, righteousness and holiness. Yet, that tree of the knowledge of good and evil introduced into man's life the possibility of evil in a very concrete way. Sin was thereby placed concretely before the consciousness of Adam as something that was to be condemned and rejected by him as the friend of God. Apart from this tree there was no "Thou shalt not" in Adam's life. Nothing in paradise reminded him of sin. But the tree of knowledge of good and evil and the prohibitive command of God connected with it introduced the antithesis into Adam's existence. And his attitude toward that tree certainly would determine the character of his knowledge of good and evil. For if he obeyed the commandment of God, he would know both good and evil in the love of God, so that he delighted in the good and hated evil; while, if he disobeyed he also would know both good and evil, but now in enmity against God, so that he would hate the good and love evil. In the latter case he would live from the motive of the lie that he could for himself, apart from the revelation of God, determine what should be good and what should be evil.

And this antithesis was accentuated by the temptation of the devil, who also connected his word with the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and that in direct opposition to the Word of God. Sin did not have its first origin in the world of man, but in that of the heavenly spirits. Of these heavenly spirits nothing is told us in the creation narrative. Nor do we read of them, or of one of them in Gen. 3, in connection with the temptation of our first parents. Throughout this chapter we read only of the serpent. But it is evident from the promise in Gen. 3:15, and from all subsequent history and revelation, that this serpent was but the instrument of Satan, although the animal played a more important part in the temptation than is usually thought. And in Rev. 12:9 there is a very plain reference to the serpent of the temptation: "And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him." It is very evident, therefore, that there was a fall of the angels, that part of the angels under the leadership of Satan rebelled against God, even before the fall of man and the introduction of sin into our world. And it is also beyond doubt that the serpent of Gen. 3 was the instrument of the devil.

From the very beginning, therefore, the Scriptures point to the connection between sin in our world and

the powers of darkness in heavenly places, and thus teach us that the battle of the Church is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the spiritual forces of evil in high places. Gathering the data we find in the Bible concerning the Evil One, our attention is called, first of all, to his names. He is called the Devil, which means mud-slinger, calumniator, slanderer, liar; and Satan, the opponent or adversary. These are his principal names. They represent him both in his spiritual character as the one that always speaks the lie, in whom there is no truth; and in his attitude against God, for he is principally the adversary of God, the one that opposes Him and slanders Him. All his plans and schemes and efforts have for their principal object opposition against God. God he hates above all that is to be hated, and all other things are the object of his wrath and fury only as they are related to God. But he is called by other names, that express certain aspects of his diabolical, God-opposing character, such as Destroyer, Deceiver, Evil One, Murderer from the beginning, Tempter, Father of the lie and of liars. Still other names are indicative of his great power and influence both in the realm of spirits and in the world of men. He is the Prince of demons, the Prince of the powers of the air, the Prince of this world, the god of this world. Considering the import of these appellations in the light of all that Scripture reveals to us concerning this Evil One and his work, we may conclude, first of all, that Satan formerly was one of the most wonderful angels, a prince among and over the heavenly spirits, that had great authority. It is not even improbable that he was the chief of all the angels. He was endowed with beautiful gifts and talents and had a position of great authority and power among his fellow angels. This may be gathered from the manifestation of his great power in his present state; from the fact that he is still prince over the angels that fell with him; and from the fact that, according to Scripture, it is such a princely and mighty angel as Michael, to whom is assigned the special task of combatting the devil. Dan. 10:13; Jude 9; Rev. 12:7. In the second place, it is at least suggested that the devil's first sin was pride, dissatisfaction with the position assigned to him and the glory that was given him by his Creator, and aspiration to the very throne of God. He stumbled over his own glory. This is evident from the temptation in paradise, for he holds before the imagination of the woman the possibility of being like God. And in I Tim. 3:6 the apostle Paul suggests that pride is the very characteristic sin of the devil. And Jude speaks of angels that kept not their own estate. And because of his rebellion he and his angels were accursed of God, although they have not yet been consigned to their final place of damnation.

In paradise he came in the form of a serpent. We

can imagine a twofold reason for the devil's need of a visible instrument in the temptation of man. First of all, we must remember that man stood in his original integrity, and the devil, therefore, cannot have had direct access to his mind and heart. He had to approach him from without. And secondly, the temptation was connected with and concentrated in the visible and tangible tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and Satan needed a visible instrument to direct the attention of man to this tree. That he assumed the specific form of a serpent, must, no doubt, be ascribed to the fact that the serpent was the most suitable instrument for his purpose. It is evident from Scripture that the serpent was quite different from the reptile we know today. We receive the impression that it was the highest and noblest among animals. For "the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field." Gen. 3:1. He was the most intelligent of animals. That he is a reptile now, and eats the dust of the ground, is evidently due to the curse that was pronounced upon him. Gen. 3:14. It is certainly true that in the curse upon the serpent also the devil himself is accursed. But the fact remains that also the animal that served as instrument of Satan in the temptation is cursed more than all the rest of the animals. And this certainly implies that the serpent was more than a mere passive instrument of the devil. Somehow it had an active part in the temptation, for that it is cursed definitely implies a measure of guilt. And that he approached the woman rather than Adam cannot be due to her being more susceptible to sin, for both, Adam and Eve, stood in righteousness before God. It may be that the devil considered the womanly nature more receptive for the appeal to the senses which he made in connection with the tree of knowledge. It certainly is true, that Eve was not the responsible party, that not she but Adam had received the commandment concerning the tree directly from God, and that Adam was more accessible through Eve than by a direct temptation from the devil. All these considerations may have induced Satan to approach the woman rather than the man.

As to the temptation itself, the Scriptural narrative describes it rather in detail, so that its various stages can readily be distinguished. The first stage is expressed in the question of the serpent: "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" and the answer by the woman: "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die." Gen. 3:1-3. Usually the intent of this first question of the devil is explained as being the confusion of the woman in regard to the real meaning and contents of the commandment of God. But it seems to me, that this explanation gives but little credit to the subtlety

of the serpent. Besides, had the woman fallen by this blunt attack, her sin would have been a natural mistake, a fallacy of the memory, not a spiritual-ethical error. I am, therefore, of the opinion that there is a subtle argument in this first question, an argument concerning the sense of the commandment of God. He shrewdly suggests by this question that there is really no sense to the Word of God, that anyone can readily see that the Word of God cannot possibly be true. The argument in full would run thus: "God did not forbid you to eat of every tree in the garden, did He? There is no harm, therefore, in eating of all these trees. How, then, could there possibly be harm in eating of the one tree?" We must remember that the essence of the lie is always that there is no harm, that there is a good in violating God's Word. That is the reason why the devil is the master deceiver that deceiveth the whole world. And for the reception and embracing of this fundamental lie he prepares the heart and mind of the woman by his introductory question. If this introductory, this preliminary attempt is successful, he can come out in the open and directly contradict God. And successful this first attempt was. Notice, that the woman enters into the argument. And this was the beginning of her fall for two reasons. First of all, because she was not the head of the race, and, therefore, not the chief responsible party. Hence, she should have called her husband to decide this matter. Instead, she takes it upon herself to debate the question with the serpent. There is an element of pride and rebellion in this. In the second place, notice that she is actually tempted to discuss the question proposed by the devil. And this question was not debatable. God's Word is only and always true and good, and must be unconditionally accepted on the simple ground that it is the Word of God. There can never be a good in violating the Word of God. But the woman enters into the discussion. Nor does she quote the Word of God correctly. From the version she gives of the commandment of the Lord it is evident that she had quite well understood the purpose of the devil's question: she was already deliberating upon the question, whether or not any harm could possibly result from eating of that one tree. This must be the reason why she answers: "But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither touch it, *lest ye die*". Now, God had not said: "*lest ye die*", as if eating of the tree would have the natural result of death; but He had very definitely threatened death as a punishment: "in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Nor must it escape our attention that God had given the commandment to Adam, even before the creation of the woman, and had, therefore, definitely spoken in the singular: "*thou shalt surely die*". But the woman, taking it upon herself to settle this important matter

alone, for that very reason quotes the commandment in the plural: "lest ye die". Notice, finally, that she is very emphatic, in fact, much too emphatic in her asseveration that the Lord had really spoken of an evil result being connected with the eating of the fruit of that one tree. She adds: "neither shall ye touch it". Now, the Lord had never said such a thing. But the woman has before her mind the question whether it would really be such a dangerous thing to eat of that one tree; and in her exaggeration of the commandment of God she is really already emphasizing in her own mind the absurdity of such a commandment. How could harm come from eating of one tree, while all the other trees were good for food? But, what is more, how could anyone die by touching the tree! Surely, the seed sown by the devil had already struck root!

Thus the way is prepared for the second stage of the temptation, consisting in this that the Word of God is bluntly contradicted, and God Himself is slandered as one who is not seeking the good for His creatures. The lie is impressed upon the now receptive heart of the woman in a twofold way. Negatively, the devil assures the woman boldly that no harm could possibly come to her from transgressing the commandment of God: "Ye shall not surely die." And positively, he presents the matter as if there would be a great good in disobedience to God's Word: "For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods (better: as God) knowing good and evil." Gen. 3:4, 5. It is always thus. The moment you begin to discuss the question whether or not the Word of God is true, you are already prepared to call it a lie. And you will find many a reason to support this judgment. God's Word is not debatable. To debate it is already to deny it. And again, the moment you begin to deliberate upon the advisability of keeping the commandments of God, the moment you consider the Word of God from a utility standpoint, i.e. from the viewpoint of the question, whether it is good *for you* to obey or to disobey, you have already determined for yourselves to disobey and cast God's Word to the wind. You have already wistfully directed your eye to the forbidden object and in your heart desired to obtain it. It was thus with our first mother. And the same is still a matter of every day experience with sinful men. If we cannot believe the Word unconditionally because it is the Word of God, we do not believe it at all: we call it the lie. And if we will not obey the Word of God unconditionally, and that for God's sake, regardless of the consequences (which, however, are always good), we cannot possibly keep the precepts of our God!

H. H.

Melanchton And The Reformation

Melanchton's acceptance of an appointment as professor of Greek in the University of Wittenberg—an appointment tendered him by the elector of Saxony—may be regarded as that act of his through which he joined himself to the movement of the Reformation. It took place in 1518, the year following Luther's writing and publication of his 95 theses. Melanchton, feeling the spell of Luther's large personality and spiritual depth, seems to have been prepared on his first arrival at Wittenberg to accept the new theology—new to the church of that day—which as yet existed mainly as a living spiritual force in the heart and mind of Luther. As to the university of Wittenberg, already at that time it had become the school of the German nation and was destined to become the cradle of the Reformation.

In this writing, there are three questions that I raise and answer, to wit:

- 1) What is the place to be ascribed to Melanchton in the aforesaid movement in Germany?
- 2) How did he function in this place?
- 3) What was his influence on the Reformation?

1. The effect of Luther's theses throughout Christianity had been profound. Those who felt themselves aggrieved by the papal corruptions hailed the Saxon monk as the deliverer of the Church. Those who sensed the thrust of his theses and were opposed to any change in the existing order of things, proclaimed him a heretic, schismatic, babbler, blasphemer. Luther's danger and courage drew Melanchton close to him, and helped to identify Melanchton with the new movement. How well the action that Luther had taken pleased him, is evident from his letter to Spalatin—a letter the writing and sending of which was occasioned by Luther's publication of his Appeal to the Pope for a general council. "I send you Martin's Apology. There is no reason why you should dread the rage of the Romanists. That is what such men are wont to do. Unless they play the tyrant they do not think they rule; though in the name of God what a difference there ought to be between ruling and being stewards! But ambition and avarice are seen in everything. Martin defends himself so well that they are not able to invent a new accusation against him."

Dr. John Eck was one of the most learned men and eminent theologians of his age; but he was as vain as he was learned, and proud of his reputation as a disputant. He saw in the ninety-five theses a subject for new debate and a chance for an additional triumph. He published thirteen theses, directed against Luther. Luther met the challenge in public debate, held at Leipzig in June 1519. Melanchton was first drawn into

the arena of the Reformation controversy through this discussion, of which he describes himself as "an idle spectator". But he was more than this. Though he took no public part in the debate, he furnished his fellow-professor with arguments in its pauses and even while the debate was in actual progress he openly made suggestions, which so displeased Eck, that he cried out, "Keep silence, Philip; mind your own studies and don't disturb me". The Liepzig disputation gave a new turn to Melancthon's thought; and from now on he took an active part in the work of the Reformation. The debate bore for him this fruit, that it shook his faith in the rightness of the existing order of things, with the result that this humanist—such he originally was, a humanist, steeped in the learning of the Classics—gave himself more and more to the study and exposition of the Scriptures. Soon after he wrote to a friend: "I am wholly engaged in the Scriptures. . . . There is a wonderful charm in them; yea, a heavenly ambrosia nourishes the soul which is engaged in them." His study of the Bible brings him to a sharper conflict with the false doctrines and practices of the church. Doubts arise in his soul about Transubstantiation and the teachings of the Scholastics. He finds himself unwilling to say any longer that anything can be an article of faith which cannot be proved from the Scriptures and that the authority of the councils is equal to that of the Bible. He advances to clearer insight of the scriptural doctrine of faith; of the sacraments, of the keys; and of eternal life.

About this time he wrote eighteen theses for academic discussion. They are as follows:

"Justification takes place through faith; love is the work of faith; there is no difference between *fides formata* and *fides informis*; *fides informis*, as it is called, is not faith, but a vain opinion; love necessarily follows faith; faith and love are works of God, not of nature; Christianity is a Sabbath and perfect freedom; satisfaction is not a part of penance; there is no external sacrifice in Christianity; the Mass is not a work the benefit of which avails for another; Baptism benefits him only who is baptized, and the Mass only him who partakes. Baptism and the Mass are sacramental signs by which the Lord witnesses that He will pardon sins; inasmuch as the sum of our justification is faith, no work can be called meritorious; hence, all human works are only sins; the keys are given to all Christians alike, nor can the Primacy be allowed to Peter by divine right; Aristotle's notion of blessedness agrees neither with Christian teaching nor with the common sense of man; it is better to derive our notion of blessedness and like things from the Holy Scriptures than from the nonsense of the vain sophists."

These theses set forth the cardinal and central doctrines of the Reformation more fully and pointedly than the ninety-five theses of Luther. In the year 1519

and 1520 he worked with untiring industry. During this time he published two treatises on the doctrine of Paul, wrote a commentary on Matthew, published for the students the Greek text of Paul's Epistle to the Romans, a new edition of his Greek Grammar, besides other treatises. At two o'clock on the morning he began his work and continued it until evening.

In the year 1520, affairs at Wittenberg reached a crisis. On the morning of November 1st, Luther burned the Pope's Bull with which Eck had returned from Rome and which he sought to have executed against Luther at once. The burning of the Bull was an act of amazing daring and the excitement which it created was indeed great. Luther was branded by the henchmen of the Pope as the pest of theology, the disgrace of the Augustinian family, the destroyer of Germany, the bane of the Christian state, the tainted wether which has infected the entire flock. There were several other charges equally terrible. Melancthon took up his pen in defense of Luther in an oration of seventy-one pages of the *Corpus Reformatum*.

While Luther was contending with the Pope's Bull at Wittenberg, and confessing Christ at Worms, Melancthon composed and published his Theological Commonplaces—a work that set forth in condensed form the leading doctrines of the Christian religion in opposition to the Aristotelian subtleties. This work was the Wittenberg Confession of faith for the time being, and was the forerunner of the Augsburg Confession.

Up to 1527 the work of the Reformation had consisted largely of attacks on the popery and its institutions. The result was that a general dissolution of the old ecclesiastical systems had set in, with the lapse of discipline and the neglect of public worship. The condition of the churches was deplorable. The ministers many of whom had been priests and monks, were grossly ignorant. Some knew little more than the Decalogue, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer. There was no understanding among the most of them of the true doctrine. Disorder and confusion reigned everywhere. If the Reformation was to be a blessing, it had to re-organize the churches on a scriptural basis. In this work Melancthon took the lead. Under commission from the Elector, he prepared the *Visitation Articles*, which were to serve as a guide in the visitation of the churches and were to be used by the ministers as a standard of faith and a directory of worship.

January 21, 1530, the emperor ordered a diet at Augsburg "to consult and decide about the disturbances and dissensions in the Holy Faith and Christian religion. And in order that all dissensions, differences, and errors may be abolished in a salutary manner, all sentiments and opinions (of both the Lutherans and the Papists) are to be heard, understood and considered between us in love and kindness." At this diet,

which Luther was prohibited to attend by the papal ban, Melancton was the leading representative of the Reformation. He was the one to draw up for the deit the seventeen articles of the evangelical faith, which are known as the Augsburg Confession.

Thus far Melancton's main striving had been to collaborate with the Romanists for the restoration of peace and concord in the church. In this useless striving—useless it indeed was—he continued up until the day of his death in 1560.

The above data shows that the place which Melancton occupied in the movement of the Reformation was large, perhaps as large as that held by Luther. Melancton was the one to reduce the theology of the Reformation to an objective system and to exhibit it dialectically.

2. It was then a large and important place in the movement of the Reformation to which Melancton was elevated by Providence. The question is whether he always functioned in this place with real credit to himself and with actual benefit to the movement which he represented. Answering this question really consists in directing attention to Melancton's one great striving, objective. It was to restore peace and harmony between the Lutherans, that is, the protestant party in Germany, and the Papists. Now this striving could have been a noble one. *Christ* pronounces the *true* peace-makers blessed. It is the calling of God's believing people to seek and promote the peace of the church. But in Melancton the striving was not noble. His was the attempt to settle the Reformation controversy by compromising with the Papist, and thus by sacrificing the truth. The Augsburg Confession, especially in its later drafts, partakes of the character of a compromise. It was actually meant to be this. The doctrine of Predestination Melancton purposely omitted, because of the inextricable mazes into which it leads. He also tells us that he would have made greater changes in the Confession, that is, would have made it milder, had he not been restrained by "the counsellors".

Melancton's readiness to secure peace at the cost of truth and right principle is glaringly in evidence in his acceptance of the leipzig Interim, December 22, 1548. In this document the chief articles of faith are equivocally worded, so as to admit of an evangelical interpretation, and the Roman ceremonies are retained as *Adiaphora*, *things indifferent*. But these ceremonies negate the Lutheran principle, that "God does not justify man by merit of his own works which man does, but out of mercy, freely, without our merit, that the glory may not be ours, but Christ's, through whose merit alone we are redeemed and justified. The Lutheran non-conformists, as lead by Mathias Flacius, resisted the *Interim*, and were put under the ban of the empire. Flavius denounced the Interim in the strong-

est terms. On the title page of one of his pamphlets he placed the following advertisement:

"From this pamphlet you will learn the innocence of the author and the origin and the progress of the *Adiaphora*, and all the causes of those delusions, and that, too, from the mouths of the authors themselves. You will learn that the occasion was in part the desire of the wicked to betray and to crucify Christ, and to set the Roman Barabbas free; in part it was the false faith, the fear and carnal wisdom of weak Christians. The matter is the union of Christ and Belial, of light and darkness, of the sheep and the wolves, the service of two masters, who are mortal foes, Christ and Belial. The form is the false paint and deceitful colouring of order, discipline, and uniformity. The end is the restoration of the papacy, the setting up of Antichrist in the temple of Christ, the confirmation of the wicked, that they may triumph over the church and Christ, the distress of the pious, weakness, the leading into doubt, unnumbered offences." The language here employed, however strong, is true to fact.

Calvin, too, was thoroughly dissatisfied with Melancton, as appears from the following excerpt from his letter to him:

"This is the sum of your defence: that, provided purity of doctrine be retained, externals should not be pertinaciously contended for. . . . But you extend the distinction of non-essentials too far. You are aware that the Papists have corrupted the Word of God in a thousand ways. Several of these things which you consider indifferent are obviously repugnant to the Word of God. You ought not to have made such large concessions to the Papists. . . . I remind you of what I once said to you, that we consider our ink too precious if we hesitate to bear testimony in writing to those things which so many of the flock are daily sealing with their blood. . . . The trepidation of a general is more dishonourable than the flight of a whole herd of private soldiers. . . . You alone by giving way a little, will cause more complaints and sighs than would a hundred ordinary individuals by open desertion."

How is Melancton's doing to be explained? His failure to be deeply impressed by the wrongness of the Roman ritual and polity, and his one great grief and dread explains it at least in part. Melancton, though fully aware and convinced of the corruption in the church, at no time intended to separate from Rome or to change the institution of the church or her order of worship. He hoped until his dying day that the ecclesiastical authorities would see the errors and abuses which prevailed everywhere, and could be prevailed upon to correct them. As far as Melancton was concerned, the old institutions and orders might remain. This is evident from his letters to the Papists.

"Reverend Lordship", he wrote to Cardinal Campeggius, "the princes will accept such conditions for the retention, confirmation, and establishment of peace, concord, and the authority of the ecclesiastical order, as the Right Reverend Lordship shall judge to be proper." From another letter to this same dignitary the following: "In my opinion it would contribute very much to the quiet of the church and *to the dignity of the Roman See*, to make peace on the conditions which I have mentioned. *For also our priests should in turn render obedience to the bishops*. Thus the church would unite again in one body, *and the Roman See would have its own honour*, so that, if anything wrong remains in the churches, it can gradually be corrected by the care of the Bishops."

Melanchton's great grief was the commotion, discord, and contentions in the church and in the empire that resulted from the attack on the corrupt practices and doctrine of the papists initiated by Luther's publication of his 95 theses. In his reply to Camerius the statement occurs, "When I think of the new distractions of the churches, I am deeply grieved." During the sessions of the diet of Augsburg 1530, he wrote to his brother: "I could almost believe that I was born under an unlucky star. For what distresses me most has come upon me. Poverty, hunger, contempt, and other misfortunes I could easily bear. But what utterly prostrates me is strife and controversy (in the church)." Now this grief as such is not to be denounced certainly. It was shared by Luther himself and by everyone who truly loved God's church. The spectacle of God's spiritual army torn by strife and discord is sorry. But the fault lies with those who abide not in the truth, and who therefore must be resisted and exposed.

The emperor was ordering one diet after the other to decide about the dissensions in order that, in the way of a peaceful removal of all errors, the breach between the Lutherans and the Papists might be mended. It was foreseen that, if the two parties could not be brought together by such means, the emperor, losing his patience, would by force and arms compel the party, judged by him to be in the wrong, to renounce its errors and to embrace the true religion. In a word, it was foreseen that the failure of the diets to restore peace would be certain to result in war, and, should the emperor array himself on the side of the papist, which he could be counted on to do, in the dissolution of Protestantism in Germany. This was Melanchton's great dread, at least so he said. His letter to his brother contains also this statement: "I had to compose the Confession (the Augsburg Confession) which was to be given to the Emperor and the Estates. In spirit I foresaw insults, wars, devastation, battles. And now does it depend upon me to divert such great calamity? Oh God in

whom I trust, help thou me. Thou judgest us as we purpose in our heart. Dear brother, I dare not drop the matter so long as I live. But not by my fault shall peace be destroyed."

This is a pious-sounding prayer. It is actually not pious at all. It is hard to see that Melanchton was sincere in giving utterance to it. Take the sentence, "Thou judgest us as we purpose in our heart". It clearly reveals that he was aware of the sinfulness of his yielding to the Papist. What he therefore was praying when he gave expression to this statement is: "I am aware of the sinfulness of my yielding to darkness. Yet my motive, which is to avert war, is pure, as Thou knowest. Thou wilt therefore hold me guiltless." Now a wrong action, of which one is aware that it is wrong, cannot possibly spring from good motive. It did not in Melanchton's case. He might not try to avert war through denying Christ. His sole calling was to confess the unadulterated and full truth as the mouthpiece of the flock of God whom he represented, come what might. Besides, when he accepted the Leipzig Interim in 1548, war had already come, despite all his compromising.

Melanchton's readiness to yield to the Papist is usually taken as bespeaking a conciliatory temperament, natural timidity and even weakness. It may be questioned whether this is correct. In his letters to his friends, in his public utterances to the papist and in all the record of his doing, he really stands before us as a man capable of singleness of purpose, firm and abiding resolution, and sustained effort. His one great resolve was to settle the controversy by compromise. And in the attempt to carry out this resolve he was inflexible. Unlike Luther, he was a frail, mild and soft-spoken man but just as resolute as Luther so far as this one ambition of his was concerned. He allowed himself to be swayed from his purpose—this one purpose of his—by no one. Luther, who was adverse to all compromise, could warn and scold, Flavius and the other theologians minded as was he, could rave—as they did—but to no avail. Melanchton persisted to the end in his endeavour to pacify the Papists. It is said that Luther, in whom courage and energy were too much akin to violence, and Melanchton, whose conciliatory temperament was too much allied to timidity, were each the fit complement of the other. This, too, may be questioned. Judging from statements contained in Melanchton's letters, the two did not get along together too well. In his reply to Carlowitz, this statement occurs. (The letter was written after Luther had died) "Formerly I bore an almost unseemly servitude, since Luther often gave way to his temperament, in which there was not a little contentiousness, and did not sufficiently consider his own dignity and the public welfare."

One cannot help inquiring whether Melanchton

like Erasmus was not after all a humanist at heart, who had taken a more than common interest in theology. This view is not altogether without support. His theology pleads for it. Also the extreme conciliatory tone of his letters to the Papist. Then his secretly encouraging Erasmus to attack Luther on his doctrine of the will of man, leaves a strange impression. Yet in his *testament* which he made when he thought his end was near, he stands before us as a sincere and devout Christian man.

It cannot be said that his influence on the Reformation in Germany was for good. As was said, the Augsburg Confession is a compromise. His doctrine of the three concurrent causes in conversion, viz. the Holy Spirit, the Word, and the human will, is semi-Pelagian. Had he gotten his way, the churches of the Reformation in Germany would not have separated from Rome.

Then why did God give him so large a place in the movement? Why did He give him to Luther? These questions can be intelligently answered.

The Augsburg Confession—the one work of Melancton, representative of his persistent attempt to pacify the Papists—is extremely mild. As was said, it was meant to be a compromise, and such it is. In his fear that the object for which he had delivered it would be defeated, he wrote to Luther inquiring “how much was to be conceded to the adversaries”. The latter replied that “too much had been conceded in the Confession,” and exhorted Melancton to greater firmness. The Confession does not call for the abolishing of the ecclesiastical order and the authority of the bishops; for, as Melancton said, his intention was not that these should be abolished. All that he really asks of the Romanists is that they consent to the removal of certain abuses. The Confession strikes at the misuse made of the Masses. “Masses,” it states, “are basely profaned, being used for gain. And it is not unknown how far this abuse has spread itself in all churches; of what manner of men Masses are used, only for reward, or for wages; . . .” It then inveighs against the notion that the “Mass is a work that taketh away the sins of the quick and the dead, and that for the doing of the work”. Monastic vows receive treatment and their abuse is exposed. The article on Ecclesiastical Power merely denounces the appropriation by the bishops of the power of the sword.” There have been great controversies touching the power of bishops; in which they have incommodiously mingled together the Ecclesiastical power and the power of the sword. And out of this confusion there have sprung very great wars and tumults, while that the pontiffs, trusting in the power of the keys, have not only appointed new kinds of service, and burdened men’s consciences by reserving of cases, and by violent excommunications; but have also endeavored

to transfer worldly kingdoms from one to another, and to despoil emperors of their power and authority.”

Then follows a paragraph in which it is shown that, according to Scripture, the bishops have this power, nor the power to institute ceremonies in the church, and to make laws concerning meats, and holidays, and degrees, or orders of ministers etc. The positive part of the Confession sets forth the fundamental tenets of the Christian religion.

Certainly the Confession is very mild. It tacitly accepts the existing order and assails such abuses and errors as the Papists at once should have been ready to remove. But what was their reaction? The Catholic theologians presented a *Confutation* to the *Confession*, so violent in manner, that the emperor refused it. Assuredly, the Romanists were sworn enemies of the truth, veritable children of darkness. The church of Rome had degenerated into a false church. The Reformation was thus in truth the working of true faith. And the peculiar function of Melancton was to make this glaringly evident, which he did through his confronting the Romanists with his conciliatory Confession. How deeply they had fallen, if concord on the basis of such a treatise remained impossible for them.

G. M. O.

God Of Mammon

(Psalm 49)

Dit is het lied der wijsheid.

Het zal U zeggen hoe gij moet wandelen en aankomen in den morgenstond om tot in alle eeuwigheid te wandelen in het licht van Gods aangezicht.

Het verwondert ons daarom niets wanneer de dichter een tamelijk lange inleiding neerpende. Met nadruk zal hij spreken van een goeden en van een kwaden wandel.

Het lied houdt een boodschap in voor al Gods volk en ook voor de goddeloozen. Dat laatste blijkt uit den aanhef.

Hoort dit, alle gij volken; neemt ter oore, alle inwoners der wereld: zoowel geringen als aanzienlijken, tezamen rijk en arm!

Hier is een woord voor allen.

Eigenaardig is de kenschetsing van de inwoners der wereld. Er staat: zoowel geringen als aanzienlijken. Letterlijk staat er: zoowel de zonen der menschen als de zonen der menschen. Doch er worden twee woorden gebruikt voor mensch. Het eene, het eerste woord is de naam Adam, hetwelk roode klei beteekent. Het ander woord is Isch en beteekent den mensch in aanzienlijkheid, de mensch die boven de

aarde uitsteekt, die in zijn eigen oog en in het oog der menschen met schoonheid beladen is.

Dit woord is echter voor allen, armen en rijken; ellendigen en gelukkigen(?).

Nu dan, alle gij menschenkinderen! Mijn mond zal enkel wijsheid spreken. En de overdenking mijns harten zal vol verstand zijn.

En de vorm van dit wijze vertoog zal tot ons komen als een spreuke, terwijl hij de harp zal gebruiken om van al die wijsheid te zingen. Het geheel zal lieflijk zijn. We zullen wél doen om aandachtelijk te luisteren.

Men hoort zulke wijsheid niet alle dagen. Het wezen van die wijsheid is een "verborgene rede". De wijsheid Gods is verborgen geweest van den aanvang der wereld aan. Doch in deze laatste dagen is het glorieus geopenbaard door den Heere Jezus Christus. In Hem wordt al die verborgen wijsheid zóó geconcentreerd, dat de Heilige Geest Hem de Wijsheid Gods noemt. Te luisteren naar dezen psalm is hetzelfde als te luisteren naar Jezus.

Het hoofdthema van dezen psalm, de wijsheid die ons zal uitgestald worden, heb ik trachten uit te drukken in het kopstuk: God of Mammon!

De dichter heeft rondom zich gezien en nam waar, dat er een volk is, dat zeer dwaselijk wandelt. Hij noemt ze de ongerechten, die hem op de hielen zitten. Dat op zichzelf is al dwaas. Als men nu met alle geweld iemand wil vervolgen, moet men er voor zorgen om nooit den zanger Gods op de hielen te zitten. Dat is de dwaasheid gekroond. Dat doende stapelt men een berg van toorn op voor het aangezicht Gods.

Doch dwaas zijn ze uit een ander oogpunt tevens.

Zij vertrouwen op hun goed en zij roemen op hun rijkdom. Ziedaar de dwaas!

Goed en rijkdom zijn de dingen van het stof. Het zijn land en geld en huizen en kleeding en alle genietingen der aarde.

Die dingen worden ons door God geschonken en zijn op zichzelf wel goed. Zij zijn zelfs nuttig, met dankzegging genomen en bezeten. Het is goed om een stukje grond te hebben. Men wil toch staan, zitten of liggen. Men heeft wat ruimte nodig, mitsgaders een huis of huisje. Ietwat van het geld der aarde te hebben heeft zijn nut. Er is geen zonde in om geld te hebben. Het is zelfs aangenaam als men van week tot week of van maand tot maand zijn gemaakte schulden kan betalen. Bovendien is het goed om, als men gegeten heeft, wat te glimlachen en te zeggen: Ik ben verzadigd geworden en ziet, het smaakte mij zeer goed! Gaf God geen spijs en vroolijkheid des harten? Al die dingen van het stof hebben hun nut, naar de ordinantiën des Heeren. Hij Zelf woont in den hemel, doch de aarde heeft Hij aan de menschenkinderen gegeven. Verder heeft Hij elke seconde gezorgd. Ik zag steeds weer dat zomer en winter, zaaiing en

oogsten niet ophielden. De Heere wil het wel zien, dat ge warm en verzadigd zijt geworden.

Maar, o geliefden, de Heere mag het niet zien, dat ge er Uw hart op zet. Dat ge in die dingen vertrouwt, dat ge er in roemt. Soms nog met minachting neerziende op den arme. Dat is kwaad in 's Heeren oog. En dan zijt gij een dwaas.

Er is een voorbeeld geschonken sindsdien de dichter zich tot zingen gezet had in dit lied. Later, veel later, kwam Jezus op de aarde. En die heeft het óók gezien, dat vele menschen een god maken van de aardsche dingen. Toen heeft Hij ons verteld van een rijken dwaas. Die man vertrouwde op zijn rijkdom. Hij telde en woog alles. Hij heeft zelfs de "bulk" gemeten en vergeleken met zijn schuren. Alles was te klein. Er moeten grooter schuren komen voor al dit mijn gewas en al deze mijne rijkdom! En als dan al die getelde, gewogen en gemeten rijkdom veilig opgeborgen is, kan ik op mijn lauweren gaan rusten. O mijn ziel! ge behoeft U niet neder te buigen in het binnenste van mij! Gij hebt vele goederen opgelègd voor vele jaren. Anderen mogen armoede en honger lijden, doch gij? Gij moogt rusten en eten en drinken en vroolijk zijn voor vele jaren.

Die man vertrouwde op zijn goed en roemde in zijn rijkdom.

De rijke, arme dwaas!

En waarom is dat zoo dwaas?

Het komt omdat men die aardsche dingen overschat.

Het heeft wel waarde, doch niet die waarde welke de dwaas er aan geeft.

Dat wordt duidelijk als ge let op de volgende spreuk. "Niemand van hen zal zijn broeder immermeer kunnen verlossen; hij zal Gode zijn rantsoen niet kunnen geven!" Leest ook de volgende 4 verzen. Ze zijn een verdere verklaring van dezelfde gedachte. De dwaze menschen kennen een te groote waarde toe aan de vergankelijke dingen. Ze denken, dat er een verlossende waarde in de dingen zit. Voor het oogeblik vervult hun de rijkdom en dan denken zij, dat zulks zal voortduren zelfs tot in der eeuwigheid toe. De zon staat aan den hemeltrans en de hemel schijnt hem toe te lachen. Alles gaat wel. En dan denken zij, dat het rantsoen aan God gegeven wordt. Tot in der eeuwigheid zullen zij vet en groen zijn. Ze willen het zelfs vereeuwigen en daarom noemen zij hunne landerijen naar hunne namen.

Nu moet ge wel verstaan, dat zij beter konden weten. Vers 11 zegt ons, dat zij wel zien, dat de menschen op den duur toch gaan sterven. Dat zien ze, doch zij leeren geen wijsheid. Die dingen blijven aan de oppervlakte van hun bewustzijn. Hun leven is anders. En leven doen we in ons diepste hart. Zooals ge dáár zijt, zóó zijt gij. Nu zegt vers 12 wat hun leven is, want daar staat: "Hun binnenste gedachte is, dat

hunne huizen zullen zijn tot in eeuwigheid hunne woningen van geslacht tot geslacht." Ziet, dat is dwaas. Want feit is, dat de mensch, hetzij arm of rijk, omkomt, vergaat, in het graf valt en tot verderving komt. Stof was hij en tot stof keert hij weder. Alle milioenen gelds kunnen Gode het rantsoen niet betalen. Niemand verlost zichzelf, noch zijnen broeder door de dingen des tijds. Petrus zou het veel later mooi zeggen: Wij zijn niet gekocht met verderfelijke dingen zooals goud en zilver, doch door het dierbare bloed van Christus Jezus den Heere.

Zoo zult ge het kunnen billijken, dat de zanger Israels nu zegt: "Deze hunne weg is een dwaasheid van hen." Dwaasheid is dat ge de dingen die waarde hebben, eeuwige waarde hebben, verliest, mist, voorbij gaat en aankomt in de hel, zijnde in de pijn.

En nu is dit het vreeselijke er van. Als dan die dwazen als de beesten vergaan en terwijl hun lichaam in de aarde verrot, terwijl de ziel in de aanvankelijke pijn is, "hebben nochtans hunne nakomelingen een welbehagen in hunne woorden". Dat staat er. Leest het laatste gedeelte van vers 14.

Zoon en kleinzoon zitten er met elkaar gezelliglijk over te praten. "Ja, jongen, houdt het maar goed vast, hoor! We zitten er warmpjes in, hé? Jonge, jonge, ik zal niet vergeten hoe je grootvader het mij keer op keer leerde: hebben is hebben, maar krijgen is de kunst! En we hebben gezwoegd en gezweten om toch maar al deze rijkdom te vergaren. Ook is het ons gelukt. Jammer, dat grootvader zoo vroeg stierf. Juist toen we de schaapjes op 't droge hadden moest hij schielijk heen. Maar, afijn, het is aan de goeden besteed. Wij hebben het mooi geërfd. Het is wél belegd. Laat nu maar komen wat wil. Wij zijn er, mijn jongen. Wij zijn er!"

Ja, hunne nakomelingen hebben een welbehagen in hunne woorden. En zoo wordt de dwaasheid van geslacht tot geslacht bestendig.

En dit is de werkelijkheid: alle goed en geld, alle aardsche schatten kunnen ons niet van den dood redden. Dáár dachten die arme stakkerds niet aan. Het goed dat nimmermeer vergaat zagen zij niet en begeerden zij niet. Hunne wandel was in den nacht en ze hebben nooit naar den morgenstond gesmacht. Het levenslicht hebben ze nooit genoten.

Wat dan?

Het antwoord is vreeselijk. De volgende tekst heeft het in beeldspraak geschilderd.

"Met zet ze als schapen in het graf, de dood zal ze afweiden; en de oprechten zullen over hen heerschen in dien morgenstond; en het graf zal hunne gedaante verslijten, elk uit zijne woning." Is het niet vreeselijk?!

Beeldspraak, want hier wordt de goddelooze vergeleken bij een schaap. En zijn herder is de dood. Daarom wordt de ellendige afgeweid. Inplaats van

geweid en gevoed en gelaafd te worden, wordt het all vleeselijker met hem. Op aarde was er ten minste nog een gedaante. Doch na den dood wordt die gedaante afgeweid, versleten door het proces der verderving.

En hebt ge er al eens aan gedacht, dat dit versluiten van hun gedaante zóó afschuwelijk is, dat wij maar gauw zes voet aarde op hun arme lichaam stapelen? En den terug naar huis, gauw, weg van dit afgrijselijke graf!

En wat moeten we dan wel zeggen van de ziel die terug ging tot God die haar schiep? Hoe zal het gesteld zijn met Kaïn in dit uur? Hij is al versleten voor zestig eeuwen. Ook zal het voortgaan tot in der eeuwigheid.

Is dan het zorgen voor het lichaam en het verwaarloozen van de ziel geen dwaasheid?

Hoe geheel anders gaat het er naar toe met den oprechte!

Luistert naar zijn beschrijving: "Maar God zal mijne ziel van het geweld des grafs verlossen, want Hij zal mij opnemen. Sela."

In Gen. 5:24 lezen we van Henoch: "en hij was niet, want God nam hem weg". Kort en bondig. Welnu, hetzelfde woord wordt hier gebruikt voor dezen zanger: "want Hij zal mij wegnemen." Zóó moogt ge het lezen.

Hoe is dit alles zoo gekomen?

Dat zit zóó, geliefden. Deze zanger heeft een verborgene rede van den Heere opgevangen. Hij heeft geraadpleegd met den Godsspraak. Die Godsspraak is de wijsheid Gods, en dat is Jezus. Hij heeft het Licht der wereld gezien. En nu was die Godsspraak, die wijsheid, die verborgenheid, die Jezus zóó onbeschrijfelijk lieflijk en schoon en heerlijk, dat deze zanger in den morgenstond jubelde van al haar schoonheid. Ook trok hij zijn opgeheven hand des avonds niet terug. Kwam er dan al ellende en armoede en verdriet, zoo dacht hij toch aan zijn God in Christus. "k Denk aan U, o God, in 't klagen!" Als God zeide Gedenk aan Uwen Schepper! o mensch! dan deed hij dat door de menigvuldige kracht der genade over hem.

Dan was hij wel dankbaar in voorspoed, doch de Heere bewaarde hem er voor om in de aarde en haar schatten te rusten. Waar zijn schat in den hemel was, zoo zette hij zijn hart op dien schat in den hemel en zóó wandelde hij.

Die Jezus, dat Licht van Gods Aangezicht, beminde hij in dier mate, dat men zijn stem in den nacht kon hooren snikken: "Zend, Heer, Uw licht en waarheid neder! En breng mij door dien glans geleid, tot Uw gewijde tente weder! Doet Gij dat, Heere, dan zal mijn bange, bevreesde ziele gereeder opklimmen ten berge van Uw heiligheid! En als ik dan mag aankomen in dien morgenstond, daar boven op dien heiligen berg, dan zal ik op 't altaar het Bloed vinden, het-

welk mij toe spreekt van Uw gunst, Uw genade, Uw eeuwige liefde!"

Weest daarom maar niet bang voor de rijken, geliefden. Vreest niet wanneer de eer van zijn huis groot wordt. Straks moet hij immers sterven en dan zal hij naakt uit zijn huis gedragen worden. Er gaat geen dubbeltje mee.

Eigenaardig is de laatste omschrijving van den dwaas.

Er staat, dat hij zijn ziel in 't leven zegent en dan nog dit: zij loven U omdat gij uzelf goed doet. O ja, soort zoekt soort. Al die snoevers op aardse schatten spreken ééne spraak. En daarom deelen zij één lot. En dat lot is dit: ter eener zijde staat er, dat zij als de beesten vergaan zullen; en ter anderzijde, dat zij tot in der eeuwigheid het Licht niet zullen zien. 'k Moet er niet inkomen. Zijn oordeel kan niet dan vrees'lijk wezen.

Hongert dan en smacht dan naar de ware wijsheid, geliefden!!

Die mensch zal zalig zijn in dit zijn doen. Want die gehongerd hebben naar het Koninkrijk Gods en Zijne gerechtigheid zullen tot in der eeuwigheid verzadigd worden. De weenende Job kende een lieflijke spreuke: Mijne nieren verlangen zeer in mijnen schoot!

G. V.

Saul En Endor

I Sam. 28.

Zoo is dan Koning Saul gekomen, door zich te wenden tot de vrouw te Endor, tot een volkomen loslaten van God en van de Godsopenbaring. Het was langzaam maar zeker met Saul gegaan van kwaad tot erger.

Teekenend is het woord der Schrift. "En de Heere antwoorde niet, noch door droomen, doch door de Urim, noch door de profeten". Het verlangen, om maar vast vooruit te weten, niet wat de wille Gods was om naar dien wil te handelen, doch om puur eigen belang en eigen behoud (kenmerk van alle eigen-willige godsdienst), deed hem den weg inslaan naar Endor. Dit is in het leven van Saul geen vreemd verschijnsel. Wie zich van God afkeert, moet bij den afgod uitkomen.

Endor is wel het eindpunt van den verkeerden weg, doch op dien weg had Saul alreeds lang gewandeld. Denk slechts aan het zich vergripen aan het offer, dat in ongehoorzaamheid aan het Woord Gods, gelijk het door Samuel gesproken was tot Saul, toch door hem gebracht werd. We kennen de geschiedenis zooals deze ons staat opgeteekend in 1 Sam. 15.

De hoofdzonde van Saul, en deze kunt ge door geheel zijn leven weer zien, is, dat hij leefde en handelde, niet uit onkunde, omdat hij den wil des Heeren niet kende, doch juist anders om, als 's Heeren weg hem duidelijk wordt aangewezen, dan gaat Saul wilend en wetend daar dwars tegen in. En dan komt er pas "berouw", wanneer hij den ouden Samuel niet langer om den tuin kan leiden. En nog eens weer, dit is niet een kwestie van onwetenheid, doch een zondigen tegen beter in.

Zijn zonde wordt ons door Samuel omschreven als de zonde der wederspanningheid, of die der tooverij, en die van het wederstreven, of die der afgoderij en beeldendienst.

Het zijn dan ook de zonden tegen de eerste twee geboden der Wet, waardoor men zich vergriipt aan God en aan Zijn openbaring. Een ijdele godsdienst, die, naar de beteekenis van het woord, een leugenachtige is. En het is juist in den kring des Verbonds, dat men zich eerst afwende van God en van Zijn Woord, uitkomt dáár, waar Saul zich nu bevindt. En op dat pad der leugen eenmaal zijn voet gezet hebbende, gaat het met hem van kwaad tot erger. Daar is allereerst, het vreezen en beven van den koning als de Filistijnen tegen hem ten strijde trekken en zich op Gilboa legeren. Beven en vreezen, zoodat er geen levenskracht en levensmoed meer over zijn, om te handelen naar roeping en plicht. En deze laatsten waren den Koning immers niet onbekend? Saul wist wat zijn roeping was, namelijk, om de vijanden aan te vallen en in de mogenschap des Heeren hen uit te roeien. Ook al moet hij dan zelf het leven er bij in boeten.

Maar de ze vreezende en bevende Koning durft het niet aan, zonder eerst eens te informeren of het voor hem niet te gewaagd is. Saul was weer bang om Saul. En daarom zich gewend tot Jehova, in die geestesstemming van het zelfbehoud, doch de Heere antwoorde niet.

Het is in het ooglopend, hoe spoedig Saul verandert. Van de door God geoorloofde middelen, wendt hij zich tot hetgeen hij in vorige dagen op straffe des doods verboden had. Het is hier niet noodig er op te wijzen, dat, wat het motief betreft, de uitvaardiging van dit bevel niet geschied was, uit liefde tot God en tot Zijn Woord. Saul kan het over alle kanten, het een is voor hem al even gemakkelijk als het andere. Als het niet helpt om God te vragen, dan maar zijn knechten geboden een vrouw te zoeken, die een waarzeggenden geest heeft, opdat hij tot haar ga en *door haar* onderzoekte, *wat de Heere geweigerd had hem te openbaren*. Die vrouw moet dan maar Gods plaats innemen en haar woord, het Woord des Heeren vervangen. Aldus is de geschiedenis in haar eindbedrijf en valt aanstonds het scherm van dit eindbedrijf over Sauls verzondigd leven.

Daar is dan te Endor een vrouw met een waarzeggenden geest.

De vraag is, wat is dat, een waarzeggenden geest te bezitten?

Geheel in het algemeen genomen, is iemand met een waarzeggenden geest in zijn werk bezig, in de overtuiging, dat hij of zij niet alleen in staat zijn iets aangaande de toekomst vooruit te weten, maar zij hechten daar zelf geloof aan. In nauw verband hiermede, dit is ook het geval te Endor, staat dit duister gedoe op de lijn van het Spiritisme, dat geloof hecht aan de theorie "van gestorven geesten, die nog steeds op sommige plaatsen rondwandelen". In de derde plaats, daar komt dan nog bij, dat deze helderzienden, die aan het rondwaren der geesten geloof hechten, ook in staat zijn met de afgestorvenen gemeenschap te oefenen en ook wel door deze gemeenschap een boodschap ontvangen, met het oog op de toekomst.

Wel verstaan dus, gaat de actie uit van den helderzienden of waarzeggenden mensch, die de macht bezit, de gestorvene geesten op te roepen, te doen verschijnen in een zekeren vorm, met of zonder jas of mantel, om vervolgens het groote nieuws, dat men wil weten, te doen hooren, of, gelijk wel gebeurd, het te doen schrijven op een stuk papier. Daartoe is dan noodig, dat het "medium" zich begeeft in een slaaptoestand en verzinkt in een "trance", waardoor het in staat is, om zelfs (wellicht uit kracht van opvoeding) over godsdienstige onderwerpen te spreken.

Hier nu, te Endor, hebben we hoogstwaarschijnlijk met zoo iets te doen. Deze vrouw toch stond er voor bekend, dat zij de geesten der afgestorvenen, kon doen verschijnen. (Dat dit griezelig gedoe des nachts plaatsgreep laat zich verstaan, niet slechts om dat het Saul beter paste om ongemerkt en ongezien het huis dezer vrouw binnen te gaan, doch ook omdat dit bizar gedoe zich bij den nacht beter aansluit—zelfs als men overdag die plaatsen opzoekt is toch het huis of de kamer, in den donker gehuld).

Zij doet Samuel opkomen. Let er nu op, dat Saul van dien opgekomen (?) Samuel niets ziet. Hij vraagt immers de vrouw wat zij en wien zij ziet? En zijn vallen met het aangezicht ter aarde is dan ook niet, gelijk sommigen het willen, uitdrukking van eerbied voor Samuel, doch vrucht van zijn alreeds overspannen toestand, die hem neer doet vallen.

Het lijdt dan ook geen twijfel, althans het gelijkt er veel op, dat deze vrouw is beide, het object en het subject van alles wat hier gezien en gesproken wordt. Zij ziet door haar "helderzien" den ouden Samuel, wiens verschijning niet onbekend was in Israel. Lees slechts Hoofdstuk 15 waar Samuel, nadat hij Saul het oordeel Gods had aangezegd, een stuk van den mantel laat in de handen van Saul—profetie van de komende wegscheuring van het Koninkrijk uit zijne hand, dat

dan ook aan een ander zal gegeven worden. En daarom is het, volgens sommigen, wel mogelijk, dat niet de vrouw, doch Saul, nadat hij van deze vrouw een beschrijving ontvangt van Samuel, dezen herkent. Zoo echter wordt het moeilijk om te blijven lezen wat er staat, namelijk en de vrouw zag Samuel.

Er bestaat een andere mogelijkheid, die onzes inziens zeer goed kan verdedigd worden. De mogelijkheid, dat deze vrouw beiden kende, Samuel zoowel als Saul. Aldus bezien, dan (bij wijze van associatie) verbindt de vrouw in haar gedachten (ook al uit vrees opkomende) deze beiden aan elkander. Zij was alreeds bang om met de "seance" te beginnen en het is pas, nadat Saul met een duren eed zweert, dat haar geen kwaad zal overkomen, dat zij met haar "waarzeggend werk" voortgaat. En dan nog, zij "ziet" Samuel en herkent Saul. Ook hierin ligt niets buitengewoons. Het mag wel voor zeker worden aangenomen, dat de verhouding tusschen Samuel en Saul bekend was voor een ieder, die tot het volk van Israel behoorde. Welnu, voeg hierbij, dat deze vrouw, die de komst van dezen man toch al niet vertrouwde, dat zij de Koning herkende? Allereerst, het is haar direkt opgevallen, dat deze man vreesde en beefde. Geheel zijn optreden gaf tekenen, dat hij zich in een hope-looze toestand bevond. Ten tweede, had de vrouw alreeds wellicht niet een vermoeden, dat zij hier met een persoon te doen had, die, ondanks zijn vermommings, toch niet tot het gewone volk behoorde? Ten derde, we stellen de mogelijkheid, dat deze vermommings van Saul toch op een zeker punt zóó onvolmaakt was, dat die (met al het hierboven nu in aanmerking genomen) door de vrouw werd opgemerkt en zij aldus Saul herkende. En tenslotte, dat door de vraag om Samuel te doen opkomen, haar vermoeden geheel bevestigd wordt, en zij, al de hier genoemde omstandigheden in aanmerking nemende, tot de haar verschrikkelijke ontdekking komt, *dit is niemand anders dan Koning Saul*. Daar is dus geen moeilijkheid.

Er zijn nog al vele vertakkingen van dit zoogenaamde Spiritisme. De voorstelling blijft in de meest gevallen echter, wat betreft de hoofdzaak, hetzelfde.

Gewoonlijk wordt dit genoemd bij den naam van Necromantie, de kunst om, door het te voorschijn roepen van dooden, toekomstige dingen te voorspellen. Aan de echtheid van zulke dingen gelooven wij niet. Nergens wordt ons in de Schrift iets van dien aard geleerd, alsof zoude eenig schepsel de macht daartoe bezitten.

Het komt in ons eigen tijd wel voor onder den naam van Clairvoyante en ziet dan op "een helderziende vrouw, die in magnetischen slaap verborgen dingen ziet". In overeenstemming dan, is mede de vraag van Saul te verstaan, "maar wat ziet gij"? En dan verzinkt de vrouw in haar "slaap" en ziet zij

“goden” opkomen. Het is niet recht duidelijk voor haar, wat zij zelf ziet, doch langzaam aan, wordt dat gedwarrel voor haar oogen een zekere eenheid en ziet zij den vorm van een oud man, die omhuld is met een mantel. Vraagt Saul dan naar de toekomst, dan gelooven wij is het de vrouw, die blijft spreken en die ook de vragen beantwoorde.

Hiermede zijn natuurlijk niet al de vragen beantwoord, die wij ook zelf gemakkelijk zouden kunnen stellen. De vraag doet zich op, maar die vrouw heeft dan toch, tot in bijzonderheden, de te komen feiten van den volgenden dag, voorspeld. Het is precies uitgekomen, zooals het daar te Endor aan Saul werd medegedeeld? Daarover bestaat dan ook geen verschil. Noch ook, dat Saul het aldus heeft gehoord.

De vraag is echter, heeft de Heere, Zijn knecht uit de dooden gezonden en den goddeloozen Koning, op deze bijzondere wijze geopenbaard, wat Hij Hem langs den gewonen openbaringsweg niet wilde zeggen? Er zijn er geweest, die meenden, dat de verschijning van Samuel een ander doel had, namelijk, om de echtheid van zijn profeet-zijn aldus te bevestigen. Hoe men daar nu de noodzakelijkheid van kan inzien is ons niet duidelijk. Allereerst, dat was te Endor en ook in Israel niet de vraag geweest. Trouwens, Saul, zijn twee knechten, de waarzegster, zijn al in geheel niet het gezelschap, waartoe dit noodig zou zijn. Allen daar tegenwoordig behooren niet tot de kinderen Gods, doch tot de ongelooovigen.

De moeilijkheid erkennende, gelooven we, dat, schoon we de begrenzing niet kennen, van de vrouw en haar gelijken, dat er wellicht verborgen krachten zijn, die werken naar we het vinden in het verhaal van de vrouw te Endor. Dan, we gelooven niet, dat Samuel hier opkwam, noch sprak, doch dat de Heere, door Zijn Voorzienigheid, de vrouw dingen liet zeggen, die paste bij den in de zonde ten volle ontwikkelde Koning.

En tenslotte erkennen we een andere moeilijkheid. Zij is deze, dat het geval te Endor, niet te verklaren is uit het oogpunt van eenige vergelijking. We vinden in de Schrift geen tweede geval, waarmede we dit kunnen vergelijken. Dit heeft men wel getracht en gewezen op de vrouw, die Paulus nariet. Ook wel op de verschijning van Engelen in menschengedaanten, terwijl er zijn, die zelfs het verschijnen van Mozes en Elia aanhalen om daaruit de verschijning, gelijk zij meenen, van Samuel te kunnen volhouden.

Wie die verschijningen echter nauwkeurig naleest en eenigszins indenkt, die komt dan tot de conclusie, dat die allen, juist niet kunnen dienen, om ook maar in een enkel opzicht ons de geschiedenis van Endor te doen verstaan.

W. V.

Memory, It's Significance And Training

In discussing the idea of memory it is necessary to see that memory is one of the several related aspects of mental life, or life of the soul and therefore it is profitable to have a somewhat clear conception of the soul.

This can best be done by comparing several theories of the nature and origin of mental life.

A grossly materialistic conception is that called the “mind-stuff” theory. This theory will have it that mind as we think of it, or mental life, is the evolutionary product of the combinations of matter crude and simple. The selfsame atoms which originally formed the nebula, the earth-mass, and the lowest forms of life, have been moving and combining until they became brain and brain again produced mind.

However, other psychologists are quick to point out that somewhere in that process there is a chasm, a gap that cannot be spanned. The process of crude matter producing brain matter can be watched, but how can brain matter produce a mind. Here there is a gap between two different worlds. That of matter and spirit. Slime and water can produce a lily and the chemist can watch the process; but how can mud produce thoughts and affections?

To help out of this difficulty somewhat, the idea of a master-cell amid the many brain-cells was suggested. The other cells were thought of as primitive life-forms which affected the arch-cell so that it combined their activities into a higher stage.

Prof. James, after commenting somewhat favorably on the possibility of such an arch-unit, says: “Many readers will say ‘Why on earth doesn’t the poor man say *The Soul* and have done with it?’” And he confesses that a soul inter-related with brain-states is the line of least logical resistance. But he maintains finally that the thing we can observe is not a soul related to the brain-process, but only a state of consciousness.

Therefore, since James cannot find the soul by experimental investigation, and thinks he does not need it to explain the facts, he dismisses it and so we have his theory, expressed by a phrase that has almost become a word: “a stream of consciousness.”

In this theory of the brilliant Prof. James, which of course has a host of followers, there is no soul as we understand it. No, the most fundamental factor in mental life is that stream of thought. That which corresponds somewhat to our soul or self is the point in that stream in which we are “now”. I think therefore I am. The fact that I am thinking now is the deepest, most undeniable fact I know of. That thought is the only Thinker that the experimental facts require.

The personal identity, that is, the fact that there seems to be a self amid all the changes in the stream of thought is due to the connections and relations of those thoughts whereby they are connected to "me".

However this "I" is not something definite but in the broadest sense every thing I possess—family, friends, property, etc., and in the narrow sense a kind of center in the head and throat where thought seems to occur.

With this theory psychology plainly flies in the face not only of the traditional doctrine of the Christian church, but even of the views of the broad stream of the speculative thought of the ages.

Over against all of this experimental materialism, stands the Word of God, which is to us the revelation upon which the church has built her conception of the soul.

From that Word we learn that the soul is something very substantial, specific, immaterial and superior to matter, a wholly constant entity amid all the changes of its acts and affections. To it is ascribed immortality (it does not decompose as the body) personal responsibility, and numerical identity (it cannot become more or less than one).

Now this conception of the soul is of prime importance for our study of memory. It implies and teaches that the soul is the agent and author of thought and memorial activity.

Looking now specifically at memory, there are two main theories for the occurrence of memorial activity.

The first, the materialistic theory, teaches that memory is begun by the force of matter. It is initiated by a series of impressions in the nerve matter. To use a very simple illustration: Memories are printed in the nerve material of our bodies, like words are imprinted in a phonograph record. When the steel and wax of the phonograph move, the words inevitably come.

In contrast to this the spiritualist believes, on the basis of Scripture that it is the soul that believes.

This is true of all thought or consciousness. For although it may be true that the most elemental consciousness, namely sensation, is passive, and comes to the soul, as it were, before she can react, yet immediately sensation becomes perception, a taking notice of, and perceptions can be combined into conceptions even after the material stimulation has passed.

If you will for experiment, look at a fly on a distant wall, you will notice that you can look at first one wing and then the other. This shifting is plainly not due to a refocusing of the eye for the field of

vision amply embraces both. No, the looking at one and then the other is a mental act, not physical focusing, but mental attention.

The soul is the active agent of attention and memory.

Now the reader may immediately reflect that however true it is that the soul is superior to the body of matter, the soul as active agent of thought and memory is very closely connected to the material body and is in many ways conditioned by it. Physical exhaustion, sickness, intoxication, the structure of the body, even, influences the soul.

And this is true. We can, as Christians, never emphasize too strongly the biblical doctrine that man is a physical-spiritual being, so finely interwoven, that he seems not to do or experience anything except as a bodily-spiritual being. This is—precisely, the unique glory of this particular handiwork of God, but it is also man's peculiar responsibility. It is the battle-field of his unique battle. And although man has a hard battle for victory of the spirit over the cosmos-related body and because of sin suffers defeat, it may never be presented as an impossible battle. His spiritual soul is the superior part of him and rules over the body and the kosmos. To present it otherwise robs him of his moral freedom. It makes him (by his very constitution through God's original creative disposal) a victim of ethical determination.

"I keep my body under", says the Apostle. "Crucify the flesh and affection thereof". Applying this now to the process of memory the theory of nerve-material predisposition due to residual impressions in the nerve-matter would inevitably push a man deterministically into sin. He cannot help the driftings of his mind to forbidden paths.

He should go to church on Sunday morning but the sparks in his nerve-mass leap from one memory to another and sending his reflection along a path where the imprints are better lined up, he is led by a process of memory to the fishing-pier instead—and he cannot help it. His neural mass was predisposed thereto by the lineup of residual imprints.

Having now seen the agent of memory, we can look more at the activity of memory as such.

Psychologically we can see three phases of memory. First the power to retain an image of a thing after the material stimulus or the mental act producing it have passed away; secondly, the power to let it sink into subconsciousness as it were for storage; thirdly, the power to recall at will the images so stored away, to combine them with others and so to reconstruct the past and compare it with the present.

Evidently, this gives the possibility of learning of enriching our lives and of adjusting ourselves to the world of reality.

If, now we ask, what is the deepest meaning and purpose of memory, I would answer that it is to increase our knowledge, which for the Christian means, always to increase in the knowledge of God. For to know Him is the highest good and blessedness of the creature, and this knowledge of the Infinite by the finite, time-conditioned creature is only possible by the long, time-spanning process of learning. Of gathering sensations, perceptions, conceptions, until we attain the great all-embracing Concept of God.

Hence it is that Scripture always speaks of remembering Jehovah, remembering His words, remembering His mighty acts. So also of the unrighteous that they forget Him, forget His words and acts. And from the address and censure in these passages it is plain that remembering is an act of the will and as such an ethical (good or evil) act.

According to this man will be judged and that which God has testified of Himself in nature and in Scripture will have passed into consciousness, but not remembered if the mind is evil, or falsely reconstructed into a false god. Conversely the evil of sin and seduction and temptation will have entered into sensation and consciousness, and retained in memory by the evil mind, but banned by the righteous into forgetfulness.

Since therefore memory is not a matter of residual imprints in the nerve-mass, which can be erased and made vague and, of course, yes, of course, perish when the body decays in the dust, but memory is a matter of the soul's power, the possibility of remembering when we stand in the judgment day is almost unlimited. And it is possible that everything we have sinfully foregotten will be recalled then. This need on the one hand, perhaps not imply that man will remember everything, yet on the other hand the basis for a revelation of God's just judgment, would seem to require that all the essential fact is recalled before the mind of the sinner. How great this possibility is may be known by the unusual memory power of some people in abnormal states. Books of Psychology furnish almost unbelievable cases of memory power in hypnotic state or delirium or in the hour of death.

If then it is so important to remember that which is important, the question arises how to develop a good memory.

And first of all we must dispose of the idea that memory can be developed somewhat like muscles can by exercise. Experiments would seem to prove conclusively that the given natural ability of the soul to remember cannot be increased.

But there are laws and rules by which memory can be made more efficient and effective and then we

must not think of some mechanical exercises, nor in the first place some tricks or schemes for memory, but under the guidance of the purpose and will which wills for God's sake, wills to fulfill his calling, and to know Him.

1. Sound physical health is a help to memory, just as intoxication hinders memory, so lack of exercise, careless eating, with resultant drowsiness, and lack of sleep impede efficient memory.

2. Interest is a great factor. This causes other impressions to be avoided and also causes us to cling to and cherish the initial impression.

3. Deliberate exclusion of the irrelevant whether consisting of entire fields or of details. One cannot, e.g., be interested in the last word in war-news, politics, stamp collections, local gossip and then be a successful student of Scripture, or parent or teacher.

Repetition helps to fasten impressions. Not so much more repetition as repetition under different circumstances and in other connections. I may learn a piece by once reading, then repeating to myself, as carefully as possible, then hearing another read it.

5. Association is a help. You remember a man's name because you know his brother; a house-number because you visualize the block and place in the block; a Latin word because it is related to a familiar English one.

6. Finally, memory devices aiding memory for certain limited uses are handy. The Bible-books or months of the year in rhyme; A sentence made from the initials of the apostles, etc.

Of these one type of mind will naturally find some more effective than others, and each person will always be limited by his natural capacity wherewith God has created him.

A. P.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On the 5th of February, 1942, our beloved parents,

Mr. and Mrs. FRANK OORDT—Van Eerden

celebrate their 40th wedding anniversary at Lynden, Washington. We pray that God's blessing may follow them through many additional years of wedded life.

Mr. and Mrs. Peter Sjoelker
Mr. William Oordt
Mr. Andrew Oordt
Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Wagter
10 grandchildren.

The Government And Social Questions

The social structure is an exceedingly complex one,—complex as life itself. In fact, the question of society is that of human life itself with all its numerous relationships. For man, by virtue of his creation, is a social being, like unto Him Who formed him from the dust of the ground. God, three Persons in unity of divine essence, is a social God and His life is a social life. That is precisely what is meant when we think of God as a “covenant” God. In the image of that God and after His likeness man was created. Thus man was made a social, covenant being, adapted to dwell in eternal covenant fellowship with the ever blessed Jehovah and with his fellowmen as well. As, therefore, man began to multiply on the face of the earth and human life began to develop and unfold itself according to the divine plan, it did so as an ever-growing, most complex social structure, comprising all of human life with all its relationships. Society, then, comprises the family, the church, the state, societies and organizations of every description. And the social question, in general, deals with every possible human relationship, such as that of husband and wife, parent and child, teacher and pupil, master and servant, employer and employee, producer and consumer, merchant and customer and many others.

Out of this maze of human relationships many social “questions” arise. “Question” in this connection has the connotation of “problem”. When we speak of “question” in this sense of the word we have in mind a certain irregular, undesirable condition, which we are determined to remedy. There are matters which cry for rectification or solution. Thus, when things in the school are not as we feel they should be, we have a school-question on our hands. Likewise there are numerous social “questions”, undesirable conditions, positive evils, which cry for rectification if not radical reformation.

That we must speak of “questions” at all has its sole reason in sin. In the state of rectitude there were no “questions”, for there all was perfect. By the same token there will be no “questions” in the hereafter. In the sphere of perfection all is love, and love knows no dissention. Where love prevails all problems are solved. But sin *creates* “questions”, for sin is iniquity, unrighteousness, spiritual darkness, hatred and ethical disruption. Into that sin man has fallen in Paradise. Consequently, from that principle all life has developed, and in that sin the whole social structure is rooted. Inevitably, therefore, every phase of social life has become a “question”.

Yes, social questions, also in our day, are legion. There is in this world of sin the family-question, the marriage-question, the divorce-question, the question

of birth-control, the question of home training and education in general. In this world, void of the love of God, there is that exceedingly complex and vicious labor-question, which in turn presents a veritable swarm of related questions, such as the wage-question, the questions concerning reasonable hours and proper working conditions, the child labor question, the question of Sunday labor, and sundry problems. In the same general sphere you come face to face with the union-question, the strike-question, the questions of boycott and closed shop, the question of associations and business men’s organizations. In a broader sense still there is the liquor-question, the vice-question, the question of pauperism in the midst of abundance, and many, many more. Love, mind you, would solve all these “questions” instantly. In a world void of all love and consideration for others, however, there can be no solution.

In the midst of, yes, at the head of such a social structure, weighed down with countless “questions”, the Lord has placed the government. “Government” here refers to all “the higher powers” from the federal government to the town council of the smallest hamlet. That government God has placed there. “The powers that be are ordained of God”. Rom. 13:1. That government God has vested with authority, that is, the juridical power to command and prohibit with the corresponding right to mete out punishment to them who decline obedience. This latter element is referred to when Scripture speaks of the sword, which the magistrate is called to wield in the name of the Lord. “For he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.” Rom. 13:4.

The question is: What is the duty of these God-ordained powers with respect to the social “questions” at issue?

Mind you, we are not asking: How must the government *solve* these social questions? A solution we must not expect. That, again, is due to sin; the sin that marks and mars all government in this world; and the sin that lies at the root of the entire social structure. Were it so, that these social evils had their deepest cause in something external, were it merely a matter of social or political system, a remedy might conceivably be found in a change of such a system. However, that is not the case. The cause lies deeper. We have forsaken the living God and yielded ourselves servants of sin. And sin disrupts. How, then, shall a sinful government solve the “questions” of a sinful society? Only where the Spirit of Christ supplants the spirit of Satan and love supersedes hatred are social questions solved. Therefore the new Jerusalem will present no “questions”. Therefore this present sinful world will find no solution. The magistrates may force certain issues by means of legislation and

suppression of certain external manifestations of a corrupt society. Neither, however, offers an actual solution.

Our question asks: What is the *calling* of the government with respect to the social question?

The answer to this question will have to avoid two extremes. It cannot be the duty of the government to control every phase of human society. Such fascistic all-control would smother all private initiative and stifle all free enterprise. A society, held in a strait-jacket by a government that would dominate everything, cannot develop normally. The sphere of the family and the church, art and science, labor and education are as sovereign in their own right as the state, and shall social life remain vigorous this sovereignty will have to be respected and maintained. Neither, however, can it be the duty of the government to maintain an absolute "hands off" policy. This would conflict with the very existence of the government. According to the will of God all the social units which together constitute the nation are subject to the "powers that be". We speak of the sovereignty of the home and other social units, yes, but that sovereignty can never be regarded as absolute. The sovereignty of any given unit is limited by that of every other unit as well as by the authority and task of the magistrate.

In general it is the purpose and task of the government to seek the common interest of those over which it is placed by God. Always in subjection to the will of God it must seek to establish and maintain a general condition, wherein all members of society, all its subjects, are able to work out their own temporal prosperity in every sphere. Every man has the right and calling to seek his own material and spiritual welfare, unhindered by others, in the way of personal, private initiative. The magistrate must maintain the general condition, wherein this is possible.

This general purpose of the government implies two things. There must be a general condition of order, peace, equity and security for all who do the right. Justice for all must be guaranteed and regulated. Then, various means must be provided, which cannot be procured by private initiative. In the sphere of agriculture, industry and science, e.g., means and institutions must be provided, which the citizens involved can utilize according to circumstances. Whence follows a two-fold calling on the part of the government.

The primary calling of the magistrate must be to maintain the right within its own domain; to wield the sword. This cannot be his sole task for the obvious reason, that the sword was given the magistrate because of sin, while he himself was before man fell. The government itself was not instituted because of sin. The authority of the magistrate is

simply an extension of that of the father in the home. From this it is plain, that the existence of the government as such has nothing to do with sin. This being the case, the government being an institution given in creation, it must be so, that it has of God a power over and above that of the sword. However, since sin came into the world the power of the sword was added to the authority of the magistrate, and sin playing the role it does in all of life the wielding of the sword must be considered the primary task of the magistrate. With that sword he must punish the evil-doer, protect the good and maintain the right, *God's* right. God's right he must maintain in all the things which belong to his work and domain directly. He may not grant divorces, e.g., where God forbids this. He must maintain the right among those under him. The government must protect, protect both the material and spiritual interests of its citizens. It must maintain liberty of speech and press, of worship and conscience. And it must preserve justice. In the way of legislation and prosecuting of evil-doers it must protect the citizens in the exercise of all their natural rights. It must insure external and internal peace and rest. The weak it must protect against the strong, the good it must defend against the wicked. This is the primary function of the government, a function which lies exclusively within the domain of the magistrate.

That the government has always trampled this calling under foot does not alter things. After all, a sinful government and magistrates, who have their eye on filthy lucre and continuance in lucrative positions, who feel that they must please men rather than execute a divine mandate, will not maintain justice. They will support the powerful organizations even when these, contrary to all justice, prevent the individual from working and providing for his family according to his perfect right before God and man. They will condone the association and the union, the strike and the boycott and the closed shop, even though the injustice of it all cries to heaven. There is no justice for them who are cast out everywhere, because they, for conscience's sake cannot affiliate with certain worldly organizations, yes, for the sake of that conscience which must be kept free and which must be honored according to the very constitution of our land. And always they will turn their sword against the church of God, killing the good and upholding the wicked, only for the reason that the church condemns the darkness and walks in the light. However, all this does not alter the *calling* of the magistrate.

But, there is more. Instituted, not because of sin, but in creation itself, the government has a task besides that of wielding the sword. No, we must not have state-socialism, wherein all society is simply

swallowed up in the state. Nevertheless, there is also the task of accomplishing what simply lies beyond the reach of individual initiative and yet is essential to the common interest of the nation. The building of roads and dams may very well be government projects. Certain general catastrophies must be guarded against, such as floods, epidemics, etc. In short, that which is essential to the general interest of the nation, but which is beyond the control of private enterprise, must be considered as lying within the sphere of government control.

More time and space could well be used to apply these general principles to individual, social "questions". However, space forbids, and this must be the end.

R. V.

Contribution

This is not to run ahead of our Mission Board, dear reader, this is to discuss what we should do, now that our missionary, Rev. B. Kok, has accepted the call to Hudsonville, Michigan.

God has blessed the labors of our missionary. Wherever he worked he was faithful in proclaiming the Word of God. Two flourishing congregations have been added to our churches.

Must we call another missionary? Must we have a stronger radio station? Must we have a nation-wide hook-up? Must we spread more literature?

God has given us a high calling in this good land which He has given us. We are living in dark days, not so much that we are at war, but that in this great country of ours, there are so few or no denominations left who preach the Word pure and whose discipline is kept. You can travel through large cities where there is not a church left that you can call a church.

We have a great calling everywhere in the American church-world. Also in the church which has thrown us out we have fields in which we have never worked. We have not sent any one into the East where there are many congregations.

We had the privilege of being present at a session of our school. What a glorious truth we have! Six young men are receiving instruction. They will be ready for the ministry soon. Have we place for them? When we look with our natural eye we say, "It looks dark". Jesus said, "The fields are white with harvest, but the laborers are few." We almost have to say, "The laborers are to many."

We have to get busy. "We must sacrifice," says Roosevelt.

We as Protestant Reformed people must also do this for our Mission cause.

Although it looks dark we must not lose courage. It always looks dark for our natural eye. Rev. Hoeksema once said in a lecture, "All things on this earth is a catastrophe." Because our God's ways are higher than our ways, it goes from death to life here, also with His church. Our God gives us the privilege that we as churches may maintain the truth. If this is true, then, dear reader, Oh, let us look around us through this land of ours. It is up to us then that this church which is bought with Christ's blood shall not perish from the earth. We need more mission zeal, more prayer, more gifts and more sacrifice.

Do we remember yet that our first Mission Report talks about the use of tents for meetings, etc? No, brethren, this is put down here for your prayerful consideration.

Our Fuller Ave. congregation which has sacrificed much, but is always especially blest by our God, must sacrifice again. We must ask this congregation and also our school, to give Rev. Hoeksema leave of absence for one year, and let him go out where God leads him, and at the end of that year call a missionary again to continue the work.

God said to Paul, "I have much people in this city". So it is here.

Radio programs and all the effort we have put forth is fine. But we must not stop having a preacher in the field. God works through His Word and Spirit. But how shall they hear without a preacher? It means sacrifice for that congregation. It means sacrifice for the school and it means a sacrifice for the preacher, but,

There is no gain but by a loss,
You can not save but by a cross,
The corn of wheat to multiply,
Must fall into the ground and die.
Wherever you ripe fields behold,
Waving to God their sheaves of gold,
Be sure some corn of wheat has died,
Some soul has there been crucified,
Someone has wrestled, wept and prayed,
And fought hell's legions undismayed.

D. K.

ATTENTION

There will be a public lecture at the Fuller Ave. Prot. Ref. Church on Feb. 26 at 7:45 P. M. The Rev. P. De Boer of Holland Michigan will address us on the topic: "*Can We As Christians Perform Sunday Labor In Our Defense Industries During The Present National Emergency?*" Come and bring your friends! Proceeds for the Standard Bearer. This lecture is being sponsored by our League of Men's Societies.

Geo. Ten Elshof—Sec'y.