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MEDITATION

Great Joy

For, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy. . . . Lu. 2:10b.

A word of great joy?

Can we hear it?

A thing has happened, a word has come to pass that is very really a cause of great joy.

And from heaven appeared an ambassador with the tidings concerning this thing that came to pass, in order that these tidings as a word of great joy might be heard by us and the joy of it might fill our hearts!

Do we hear it? That is the question of chief concern!

Do we so hear it that our hearts do, indeed, leap with this great joy, and that we are quite sure it is "this thing" this "Word" that came to pass in Bethlehem in the fulness of time, more than nineteen hundred years ago, that is the cause, and emphatically the sole cause of this joy that fills our hearts?

O, yes, the shepherds did hear the tidings of great joy, for immediately they responded, regardless of the hour of the night, regardless of their being occupied "keeping watch over their flock", regardless, too, of the somewhat strange message concerning the swaddling clothes and the manger that were to be a sign unto them. For as soon as the angels that had sung their anthems of praise in the still night had departed from them, they said one to another: "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us." And they went, and they saw the "Word", and they believed, and they made known abroad the "Word" they had seen and heard, and they returned with joy manifested in their praise of the living God!

Yes, they heard the Word of joy!

And apparently all the Christian world hears this Word!

For who does not celebrate Christmas? And who does not agree that the Christmas season is a time when it is but proper to rejoice? Even if it be but for a single day, we forget our burdens and our sorrows, we forget all about the sorrows of the world, of wars and bloodshed and misery, and we rejoice and are glad, when Christmas arrives!

On that day we meet one another with a glad "merry Christmas" on our lips!

Great joy!

But is our joy kindled in our hearts by the "Word" which was preached by the angel in the field of Bethlehem, and is its reason that Babe that is wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger?

Or is it, perhaps, true, that somehow we first profaned the Word of God concerning this child, changed it into a word of mere man, in order then to rejoice in a thing of this world? . . .

O, indeed, let us, too, go to Bethlehem, and see this "Word" that is come to pass. . . .

But let us be quite sure that it is the Word of God which we see and hear!

And in that Word let us rejoice!

Tidings of joy I bring you!

But as we go to Bethlehem to see the cause of this joy, let us watch and pray, lest our flesh should tempt us to contradict the word of the angel!

For, there, in Bethlehem, in that night of all nights, there is, for the flesh, nothing why we should rejoice. In fact, if you be only quiet and receptive, if only you do not talk at the manger of the Christchild, so that you may be able to hear the Word of God there, you will hear a humiliating language that can only bring you to your knees in dust and ashes. . . .

Great joy, indeed. . . .

But only in the way of the broken heart!

Such is the joy of the Word of God in Bethlehem, the joy that has its cause in the birth of Jesus, God with us, Immanuel.

Jesus was born. The evening before, perhaps, Joseph and Mary had arrived in the city of David, after a long and wearisome journey. For from Nazareth they had come. Nazarenes they were. And what good thing ever came thence? Arriving too late to find lodging in the already overcrowded little town, and finding that even in the inn there was no room for them, they turn to one of the grotto's on the outskirts of the city, where passing caravans would stable their animals, in order that they may have shelter against the chill of night at that late season. And there, that very night probably, "the days were accomplished that she should be delivered", and the fulness of time had come, "and she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger!"

Great joy?

Indeed, but not for the flesh!

What your eyes can behold in Bethlehem's stable is a scene of great misery! In one of the most forsaken spots, of an almost forgotten little town, a child is born under the most abject conditions! A pale mother, just delivered of a child; and a babe, wrapped in swaddling clothes, with a manger for its cradle, and a stable for its first home,—these are the things you see! A picture of want and misery. And if you do not watch and pray, you will feel urged to speak there in that stable, to express your heartfelt sympathy to that mother, and what is worse, you may feel an impulse to act immediately, to call for help, to remove this mother and child from these abject surroundings and provide a home for them in the city. And thus you would destroy the Word of God that must needs reach your heart, if you would be partaker of the great joy of which the angel spoke!

Or have you forgotten the word of the heavenly messenger: "and this shall be a sign unto you"?

Yes, indeed, here in the stable you see a sign!

You shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling-clothes, and lying in a manger,—that is the sign!

And a sign is a Word of God! A sign, too, of the Word that is come to pass here in Bethlehem! It speaks! It speaks clearly, as always does the Word of God. And the message this God ordained, this divinely willed and designed visible token conveys is, that there is no room for Him in all the world! O, make no mistake. The good people of Bethlehem must not be blamed. This stable and this manger are not of their design. Directly they do not speak through this sign. You and I must be the last to condemn them. No, but this is God's sign. He willed it. He designed it. He considered it but proper, and the only proper thing, that His only begotten Son, coming into the world, should be born in a stable, should be wrapped in swad-

ling clothes of poverty, should have His bed in a manger! And, therefore, this sign is a Word of God! And let us hear it: There is no room for the Son of God in all the world! The world, the flesh, men will not have Him! By nature, you and I hate this babe!

Great joy?

Yes, but first hear this Word of God, to your shame and condemnation! Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger!

No room for Him!

For, consider who He is, this child that is the cause of the great joy of which the angel spoke, this Word that is come to pass. He is God come into our world! God, very God, the Eternal, the Infinite, Who is God indeed; the holy and righteous and true One. He came into the world in the Person of His only begotten Son. He came, not at the periphery of things, but into the very heart of our world, in our flesh and blood, for He is of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Judah, of the house of David, of the virgin Mary: the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us!

O, great joy, indeed!

But joy with fear and trembling, and joy only in the way of shame and repentance and humiliation. Joy, indeed; but only after you have heard the Word of God and received it, that in all the world there is no room for God to come down to us! There is no room in Bethlehem, no room in the inn, no room in Jerusalem, the city of the Great King, no room among the nations of the world. No one can, no one will receive Him. There is no room for Him in your and my heart as we are by nature!

No room; and that, too, just because He is God!

Joy?

Yes, but then only in the fact that God did come down to us, and that He will build His own house, and that He will make room for Himself. Or do you not remember that long ago we cast Him out to make room for the Prince of this world, and that ever since we denied Him room?

But He came!

Not because there is still a little room left for Him, but in spite of the fact that there was nowhere place for Him!

He came by the Wonder of His almighty grace!

Joy indeed!

Great joy!

Yes, but only in the way of shame and humiliation!

For, as you stand here at the manger of this child Jesus, remember the word of the angel, the "good tidings of great joy" which he delivered unto you: "unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour!

And the great joy of His coming is that He is a Saviour indeed! He is One Who *saves*. He has the

mission to save, and the will to save, and the power to save; and He accomplishes all the work of salvation alone, without the will of man, yea, in spite of the terrible fact, that man neither seeks nor desires salvation through Him, that no man will receive Him or give Him room.

Unto you is born a Saviour!

And consider what it means to save. It is not to work for the uplift of the world, for the building up of man's character, for the banishment of crime and misery from the face of the earth; it is not to instruct man as to how he may reform himself or work for the improvement of mankind. It is to deliver man from the greatest misery, and to make him heir of the greatest good. But his misery is his sin! And sin means that we are by nature enemies of God, and that we would have none of Him; that we always say "No" to Him and to His good commandments. It implies that we are guilty, and that we can nevermore satisfy the justice of God, pay our debt with Him; that we, therefore, are by nature children of wrath and objects of the righteous judgment of condemnation to everlasting death and desolation in hell! It means, too, that we are by nature inclined to hate God and one another, darkened in our understanding, loving the lie, corrupt of heart, perverse of will, and that we are wholly incapable of doing that which is good, and always entirely inclined to all evil; so that we will not and cannot will ever to say anything else to God than: No!

Such is sin!

And such are we by nature!

And because we are such, we must, as we stand in the stable of Bethlehem to see the thing that is come to pass, again hear the Word of God coming to us through the sign: "Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger!"

No room for Him!

To Him we say "No"! For Him we have no place! Him we receive not! Him we intend to kill!

Let us confess it, and be ashamed! Here, in the stable there is no place for our self-righteousness; only for self-abasement in dust and ashes!

And be not afraid that with this confession of our total corruption and incapability to receive Him, we will forfeit the joy of which the angel spoke to the shepherds. On the contrary, only in this way of deep humiliation can the great joy be attained.

For He is a Saviour!

He is not dependent upon our "Yes", but He is mighty to turn our "No" into the "Yes" of grace! He saves from the guilt of sin and makes us partakers of an everlasting righteousness. He saves from the dominion of sin, and changes our darkness into light, our death into life, our shame into everlasting, heavenly glory!

Unto you is born this day One that is a Saviour indeed!

Great joy!

Unto you!

Wonderful gospel!

Necessary, indeed, it was that the spoken Word of God should accompany the Word become flesh. Without it, the wonder of the Incarnation would not have been recognized.

For that Child in the manger is the Wonder of all wonders: God is come in the flesh, the Eternal One has come into time, the Infinite One dwells within the limits of the human nature, the Lord has become Servant. But of this wonder nothing is to be seen by the natural eye. It is the flesh, not the Son of God; it is the servant, not the Lord of all; it is the finite, not the Infinite that is visible in the manger.

And, therefore, it was necessary that the spoken Word, the gospel of Christ, should accompany the coming of our Saviour!

Unto you!

Blessed shepherds, we are inclined to say, that might be privileged thus directly and personally to be addressed by God's own ambassador from heaven! Unto you I bring good tidings of great joy! Unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour which is Christ the Lord! How glorious to hear this word of joy addressed directly to them! What a strong ground of assurance they had in this Word of God to them! And, perhaps, we feel that we have reason to envy them, and that we, too, would like to hear this gospel from the mouth of a heavenly ambassador addressed personally to us: "unto you"!

And, truly, blessed they were!

But do not forget that a more glorious gospel that, at least, a far greater realization of the gospel of joy is ours! For the Christ, that once was a babe in the manger, has revealed unto us the Father, has atoned for our sins on the accursed tree, has been raised from the dead, is exalted at the right hand of God, has returned in the Spirit, and is preached among us in all the fulness of the blessings of salvation there are in Him!

Unto you!

O, indeed, even unto you this gospel of joy is proclaimed! Proclaimed it is, not, indeed, by an angel from heaven, but by the Saviour Himself! For, it is He that speaks through His Word; and it is Himself that speaks to us by His Spirit!

Good tidings of great joy! Unto you!

Blessed are they that hear!

H. H.

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EDITORIALS

Een Bemoedigend Begin

De beweging tot het verkrijgen eener eigen Christelijke School, waar onze kinderen kunnen worden onderwezen in overeenstemming met "de voorzeide", dat is, de gereformeerde leer, die enkele jaren geleden reeds in Grand Rapids begonnen werd, maakt voortgang.

In het begin dezer beweging trachtte men te komen tot het oprichten van een eigen "High School". Vooral ondergeteekende was van oordeel, dat hieraan het meest behoefte was om verschillende redenen. Het bleek echter al spoedig, dat genoegzame belangstelling voor dit doel ontbrak. Velen waren van oordeel, dat we van onderen op moesten beginnen. En bovendien was het aantal onzer mensen, dat zelf kinderen op de "high school" hier in Grand Rapids had, en dat dus direkt belang had bij een eigen inrichting van dien aard, niet groot, lang niet zoo groot, zooals wel vanzelf spreekt, als het aantal van hen, die kinderen op de lagere school hebben. Vandaar, dat de beweging langzamerhand begon uit te sterven. Slechts weinigen bezochten ten slotte de vergaderingen die voor dat doel werden belegd.

Toen werd er besloten om de zaak anders aan te pakken.

Dezelfde vereeniging werd omgevormd tot een vereeniging ter bevordering van eigen Christelijk *lager* onderwijs, en tot het bereiken van het concrete doel om te komen tot een eigen gereformeerde school. Dat bleek beter te willen. Er was aanstonds meer belangstelling. De vergaderingen werden door meerderen bezocht. De vereeniging nam toe in ledental. Een reglement werd aangenomen. En eindelijk werd besloten om met kaarten door onze gemeenten te gaan hier in Grand Rapids, om zwart op wit te krijgen hoeveel van onze mensen tot het bereiken van het voorgestelde doel willen medewerken, en op hoeveel kinderen we zouden moeten rekenen bijaldien we een eigen school zouden beginnen.

Dit werd uitgevoerd.

En de uitkomst was nogal verblijdend.

Een officieel rapport werd nog niet geleverd. Maar uit volkomen vertrouwde bron vernam ik, dat alleen op grond van de kaarten, die uit de Eerste Protestantse Gereformeerde Kerk ingeleverd werden, kan worden medegedeeld, dat de vereeniging thans bijkans twee honderd leden telt, en dat we, indien we een eigen school beginnen, we aanstonds moeten rekenen op honderd en vijf en zeventig leerlingen.

Deze getallen duiden natuurlijk lang geen alge-

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meene samenwerking aan. Er zijn sommigen, die weifelen, en anderen, die geen heil zien in eene beweging voor een eigen lagere school.

Maar wel overtreft deze uitkomst mijne verwachting.

En als we in aanmerking nemen, dat alle begin moeilijk is, en dat, zoo er maar eerst een school tot stand komt, vele anderen wel zullen volgen, dan mogen we zeker wel constateeren, dat de beweging goede voortgang heeft, en dat de uitkomst bemoedigend mag heeten.

H. H.

Er is Alles Voor

Behalve nu de zeer praktische overweging, dat het veel gemakkelijker, en ook, wat het begin betreft althans, goedkooper is, om onze kinderen maar naar de bestaande scholen te blijven zenden, is er zeker niets op tegen, dat we onze eigen Christelijke, en dat wel specifiek Gereformeerde scholen trachten op te richten, waar dit mogelijk is.

En er is alles voor.

Ik herinner me levendig, dat onze gereformeerde menschen met soortgelijke beweging begonnen in Nederland.

De destijds bestaande Christelijke scholen waren het produkt van de samenwerking van Hervormden en Gereformeerden.

En men kon, zelfs als kinderen, die het onderwijs ontvingen, het gevolg van die samenwerking tamelijk duidelijk zien en gevoelen. Er waren natuurlijk Hervormde, zoowel als Gereformeerde onderwijzers, en het verschil tusschen beide bleef in het onderwijs niet verborgen. We leerden elke week een psalmvers, maar we leerden ook uit de gezangen, die door de "Afscheiding" waren veroordeeld. Bovendien kregen de Hervormden langzamerhand de overheid in vele scholen. Ik meen me te herinneren, dat destijds in onze stad drie vierde van de leden in het schoolbestuur Hervormd waren.

De toestand werd gaandeweg verergerd, tot men eene beweging begon voor eigen gereformeerde scholen. En tot eigen scholen is het in Nederland gekomen.

In vele opzichten verkeerden wij, als Protestantsche Gereformeerden hier, in dezelfde omstandigheden als destijds de Gereformeerden in Nederland ten opzichte van het onderwijs.

Op het Christelijke-School terrein werken we samen met de Christelijke Gereformeerden.

En waar het niet anders kan, is dit ook zeer zeker eisch. We mogen niet het verschil tusschen onze ker-

ken en de Christelijke Gereformeerde gebruiken als een voorwendsel om onze kinderen naar de publieke school te sturen. Dit zou ten slotte beteekenen, dat het beginsel zelf van de noodzakelijkheid van Christelijk onderwijs er bij inschoot. En dit mag niet. Waar eigen school niet mogelijk is, werke men dus zooveel mogelijk samen.

Maar in de eerste plaats wil dit toch in de meeste gevallen zeggen, dat de invloed van het Christelijke Gereformerd element overwegend is. Ons volk is gewoonlijk met of bijna met vertegenwoordigd in het schoolbestuur, en heeft ook weinig zeggenschap en controle over het onderwijs, dat versterkt wordt. De samenwerking beteekent dikwijls niet veel meer, dan dat ons volk mag meehelpen, als er behoefte is aan geld.

In de tweede plaats beteekent samenwerking op haar best, dat men, wat het onderwijs betreft, van beide zijden ietwat toegeeflijk is, een beetje schikt en plooit, en dat het specifieke van het onderwijs wordt opgeofferd. Van Christelijke Gereformeerde zijde, zoowel als van onze zijde ontwijkt men zooveel mogelijk de kwesties van ons verschil.

Nu is zeker ons verschil met de Christelijke Gereformeerden, ook voorzoover het betrekking heeft op het school-onderwijs, diepgaand genoeg. Eigenlijk is er op het standpunt der Christelijke Gereformeerden, uit het oogpunt van beginsel, geen plaats voor de Christelijke School. Men mag ijveren voor de eigen school uit praktische overwegingen, b.v. omdat men zijne kinderen niet aan de publieke school toevertrouwt, of omdat men de kinderen liever in gezelschap ziet van eigen volk; maar principieel is er op het standpunt der Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken, ingenomen in 1924 voor een eigen, aparte school geen plaats. Als het waar is, dat er eene werking van genade is in de wereld der onwedergeborenen, waardoor dezen het goede kunnen doen in natuurlijke zaken, en de school heeft juist betrekking op de voorbereiding der kinderen ten opzichte van die natuurlijke en burgerlijke dingen dan had destijds de heer Eisen van Holland, Michigan, volkomen gelijk, toen hij Dr. Schilder wilde laten zeggen, dat de school behoorde tot het "terrein" der gemeente gratie. Maar dan ligt het ook in den aard der zaak, dat we op dat "terrein" niet uit het beginsel der "bijzondere", maar uit dat der "gemeene gratie" moeten leven, en volgens dat beginsel met de wereld moeten samenwerken. We moeten ons dan niet in aparte schooltjes afzonderen, maar den invloed der gemeene gratie zooveel mogelijk laten gelden in de publieke school.

Het is dan ook mijne vaste overtuiging, dat de synode van Kalamazoo in 1924 ook den doodsteek gegeven heeft aan de Christelijke School.

En omdat beginselen doorwerken, is het ook mijn overtuiging, dat de belangstelling voor het Christelijk

onderwijs bij de Christelijke Gereformeerden langzamerhand zal verdwijnen, tenzij ze zich bekeeren van hun dwaling.

Evenmin als er op het standpunt van 1924 plaats is voor de handhaving van de antithese op het gebied van den arbeid, zoodat men in de Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken geen steun meer kan vinden voor een beginselstrijd op dat gebied (denk maar, hoe radikaal Prof. Berkhof in dit opzicht is veranderd!), evenmin is er op datzelfde standpunt ruimte voor eene Christelijke School.

Ik aarzel dan ook niet te voorspellen, dat de Christelijke School in ons land zal verdwijnen, tenzij ons volk haar blijft steunen.

Maar daarom is er dan ook alles voor, om, waar dit mogelijk is, eigen scholen te beginnen, waar het onderwijs specifiek gereformeerd kan zijn, scholen, die er niet slechts zijn om praktische overwegingen, maar die een zaak zijn van beginsel!

Die mogelijkheid bestaat hier in Grand Rapids zeker wel.

Wat onze getalsterkte betreft, zouden we hier meer dan ééne school kunnen oprichten.

En ofschoon we op dit moment misschien niet een voldoende aantal onderwijzers zouden kunnen aanwijken uit eigen kring voor zulk een uitgebreide school, moeten we niet vergeten, dat onderscheidene jongelieden in een eigen school een prikkel zouden hebben om zich te laten opleiden voor het onderwijzerswerk.

Er is dus alles voor, om een eigen school te beginnen.

H. H.

De Hand Aan Den Ploeg

Intusschen is het thans de tijd om een woord van waarschuwing te doen hooren.

We spraken hierboven van een verblijdend resultaat.

En dat mag het metterdaad heeten, dat we twee honderd leden mogen tellen als vereeniging, en dat we kunnen rekenen op ten minste honderd en vijf en zeventig kinderen. Maar nu komt het er dan ook op aan, dat we allen de hand aan den ploeg slaan en niet omzien. Als we vergaderingen van onze schoolsvereeniging oproepen, dan moeten allen hunne verantwoordelijkheid gevoelen om tegenwoordig te zijn en deel te nemen aan de besprekingen. We moeten allen medewerken met al onze kracht. Aan leden, die alleen maar hun contributie betalen, hebben we eigenlijk niet veel.

Maar ook die ouders, die beloofden, dat ze hunne

kinderen naar eene eigen school zouden sturen, moeten wel verstaan, dat zulk een school alleen tot stand kan komen, als ze zelf de hand aan den ploeg slaan. Als de belofte van het zenden hunner kinderen alleen maar zou beteekenen, dat ze nu voorts zullen wachten, totdat er een eigen school is, dan kunnen wij ze terstond wel verzekeren, dat er niets van terecht komt. Zij zijn wel in de eerste plaats verantwoordelijk, om te doen wat ze kunnen tot het realizeren van ons doel.

Scholen vallen niet uit den hemel.

We moeten dus niet wachten op eene school; we moeten zelf een school oprichten!

En dat vereischt inspanning van krachten, samenwerking van allen. Het zal ook opoffering eischen. En het zal geld kosten.

Laat ons dus wel de kosten overrekenen, eer we aan den torenbouw beginnen.

En dan niet, om aan het einde van die overrekening ons terug te trekken, want dat is zeker niet noodig. De toren kan wel gebouwd worden.

Maar wel om ons voorbereid te houden, en met Gods hulp en door Zijne genade ons op te maken en te bouwen!

De hand aan den ploeg!

H. H.

The Triple Knowledge

An Exposition Of The Heidelberg Catechism

IV.

LORD'S DAY III

1,

After The Image Of God. (cont.)

It cannot be claimed that the distinction: "image of God in a wider and in a narrower sense", is confessionally Reformed. Our Three Forms of Unity rather leave the impression that they favor the idea of limiting the image of God to man's original integrity, true knowledge of God, righteousness and holiness. This is true of our Catechism in the Lord's Day we are now discussing. In answer to the question: "Did God create man so wicked and perverse?" it states: "No; but God created man good, and after His own image, that is, in righteousness and true holiness."

It certainly leaves out of view the image of God in a wider sense altogether, and confines the scope of that image to "righteousness and true holiness." This does not mean that the authors of the Heidelberg Catechism were not acquainted with the distinction, or even themselves did not favor it. From Ursinus' *Schatboek* it is quite evident that they did. He answers the question: "In how far is it (the image of God) lost; and what is left of it in man?" as follows:

"This image of God, after which God created man in the beginning, and that, before the fall, shone in man as a light; this very beautiful image of God man has lost through sin after the fall, and he is changed after the ugly image of the devil. A few remnants and sparks, however, of this image were left after the fall, which are even now present in unregenerated men.

1. The essence of the soul is still incorporeal, rational, immortal and still has its faculties; also the freedom of the will, so that man freely wills what he wills. 2. Great knowledge of God, of nature, of the difference between good and evil; this knowledge is the principle of all science. 3. A few vestiges and seeds of moral virtues, and a certain possibility of external order. 4. The enjoyment of much temporal good. 5. A certain dominion over the creatures; for also this has not entirely been lost, many creatures are still subject to the power of man and he can rule over them and use them to his advantage. These remnants of the image of God in man, even though through sin they have become terribly dark and unstable, are nevertheless, in one way or another left in the nature of man; and that too: 1. In order that they might serve as witness of God's mercy toward us who are unworthy; 2. in order that God might use them for the restoration of His image in us; 3. in order that the reprobate might have not a single excuse." pp. 39, 40.

Nevertheless, all this additional material, much of which is derived from Scholastic philosophy, and through it from Plato and Aristotle, rather than from Scripture, is not incorporated in the Catechism. And this shows that the authors of the Catechism considered the image of God as consisting chiefly in the original integrity of man. Also the Belgic Confession limits the image of God in the same fashion in Art. 14: "We believe that God created man out of the dust of the earth, and made and formed him after His own image and likeness, good, righteous, and holy, capable in all things to will agreeably to the will of God". And the Canons of Dordrecht, III, IV, 1, have this to say about the subject: "Man was originally formed after the image of God. His understanding was adorned with a true and saving knowledge of his Creator, and of spiritual things; his heart and will were upright, all his affections pure, and the whole man was holy". The distinction between the image of God in a narrower and in a wider sense, therefore,

even though it is embodied in many works on dogmatics, and commonly taught through the media of question books in catechetical classes, as well as from the pulpit, has never received official standing in the Reformed Churches.

Nor is the distinction an innocent one and without danger to true doctrine. It is dangerous, because it prepares room for the further philosophy that there are remnants of the image of God left in fallen man, and that, therefore, the natural man cannot be wholly depraved. The argument is, that man lost the image of God in a narrower sense, but he retained that image in a wider sense. By the latter, then, is usually meant, that man still has an immortal, rational soul, in distinction from the animals. Now, except for this heresy about man's "immortal soul", very little harm results as long as nothing more is said, and as long as it is strictly remembered that nothing of man's original righteousness is contained in this image of God in a wider sense. But the trouble is that words have meaning, and that the real meaning of words will assert itself regardless of false distinctions we may try to maintain. After all, the term "image of God" conveys a meaning that cannot very well be applied to a man that is changed into the image of the devil. It carries a favorable connotation. It denoted goodness, moral, ethical, spiritual integrity. To state that man after the fall is an image bearer of the devil, and at the same time to maintain that he still bears the image of God or a remnant of it, does not harmonize with each other, contains a flat contradiction. And so it happens, that the distinction of image of God in a narrower and wider sense, gradually but irresistibly is used to teach that there is still a remnant of man's original righteousness and integrity in fallen man, and that he is not totally depraved. It is a distinction that lends itself very easily to support the view of those who insist that there is a certain common grace by virtue of which natural man is not so depraved as without that grace he would have been. And if this is not a denial of the doctrine of total depravity, words certainly have lost their plain meaning.

It may not be superfluous to insert a paragraph here about the so-called "immortality of the soul". Above I spoke of "the heresy" that man's soul is immortal. And a heresy it certainly is, for the which there is no item of proof in the Word of God; which, on the contrary is condemned by Scripture throughout. It is one of those doctrines that have been inherited by the Church from Platonic philosophy, that have simply been received without criticism and without being judged in the light of Scripture, and that have been accepted by the Church ever since. It has become a very "gangbare meening", a generally current opinion that man has an immortal soul. So general and so deeply rooted is this philosophical tenet, that I have

often experienced that the statement "the heresy about man's immortal soul" will act like a boomerang, so that many consider the statement itself a heresy! People have been taught to speak of man's immortal soul so persistently; they pray so often that the "immortal soul" may be saved; and they admonish one another so earnestly that they have "an immortal soul" to lose, that it is considered almost sacrilegious to maintain that man's soul is not immortal, and what is more, very really dead, unless he is regenerated by the Spirit of God. The trouble is that immortality is often identified with unending existence. When philosophy speaks about immortality, it does not take eternal death and hell into consideration. According to its view, man is either immortal, that is, the soul continues to live after this life, or physical death ends all. But this is not the view of Scripture. Surely, there is a continued existence after temporal death, but this is not the same as immortality. The latter term in Scripture signifies the state in which man is exempt from death, the state of incorruptibility, of eternal life. And this state can be attained only in Christ. No man is by nature immortal, either as to body or soul. No man outside of Christ has an immortal soul. Even though it is certainly true, that the soul of every man will continue to exist, and that the body of every man will be raised from the dust, neither this continued existence nor this resurrection means that he is or will be immortal. For the wicked shall suffer eternal death both in body and soul; and it is only the righteous that shall be raised incorruptible. And, therefore, we should not follow the language of philosophy, and we should refuse to adopt its terminology. The truth is, that man is mortal. He has a body that can die and so he has a perishable soul. God can destroy both soul and body in hell. And immortality is the word that can be applied only to the state of the glorified saints in Christ.

If a distinction must be made in the image of God, after which man was created, we prefer to make the distinction between the image in a formal and in a material sense. By the former is meant the fact that man's nature is adapted to bear the image of God. Not every nature of the creature is capable of bearing the image of God, showing forth a reflection of God's own ethical perfections, of knowledge, righteousness and holiness. It is evident that it requires a rational, moral nature to bear that image of God. And by the image of God in a material sense is meant that spiritual, ethical soundness of the human nature, according to which he actually shows forth the virtues of knowledge of God, righteousness and holiness. If you will, we may distinguish between man as the *image-bearer*, i.e. as being capable of bearing the image of God, and man as actually bearing God's image.

In Gen. 2:7 we read: "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man becomes a living soul". We learn here that man was created by one, special, very distinct, twofold act of God, which emphasizes from the beginning the two aspects of man's being. Thus, no doubt, we must understand this passage. Often this creative act of God, whereby He gave being to man, is understood as consisting of two separate acts: first God formed a sort of clay image; and when it was finished, He made the image alive by breathing into it. According to this conception, man is really two beings. He is a body with a soul in it. And the soul is really the life of the body. When he dies, his soul leaves the body, and this departure of the soul is the cause of the death of the body. But it is evident that this is not the correct conception of man, and surely not of the text in Gen. 2:7. Do not misunderstand this. God certainly created man by a twofold act: by forming him as to the physical side of his nature out of the dust of the ground, and by bringing into existence the spiritual side of his nature by breathing into him the breath of life. Nor do we agree with those who proceed on the assumption that Scripture uses the word "soul" always in the same sense, and who insist that we cannot properly make the distinction between man's body and his soul. Scripture certainly teaches that man's body can die, while his "soul" or "spirit" continues to lead a conscious existence, either in life or in death. Does not the preacher emphasize that, when the body returns to the dust, the spirit returns to God who gave it? Does not the Lord speak of those that kill the body, but cannot destroy the soul? Does not Christ Himself commend His spirit into the hands of the Father, when He is about to die? And does not the apocalyptic seer of the book of Revelation behold "the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus and for the Word of God. . . . and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years"? Rev. 20:4. But even so man is not two beings but one, with a physical and spiritual side, a living physical organism, formed out of the dust of the ground, and this living organism most intimately united with a rational spirit: one physical and psychical, intellectual and volitional rational and moral being, adapted to be lord of the earth and servant of the living God.

Notice, that in Gen. 2:7 the statement: "and man became a living soul" is predicated of the *whole man*. Man did not *receive* a living soul, but he *became* a living soul. He is not a body with a living soul in it, but he *is* a living soul. And he *became* a living soul, not merely by the inbreathing of God into his nostrils, but by the whole of God's creative act: His forming man out of the dust and His breathing into him the breath of life. Thus, i.e. by this twofold act of God

man became a living soul. *Man* is the subject about which is spoken throughout the text: *man* is formed, into *man's* nostrils is breathed the breath of life, *man* became a living soul. "Living soul" in Gen. 2:7, therefore, does not at all refer to man's spiritual being in distinction from his body. This will be all the more evident if we consider that the same term "living soul" is used also in reference to the animals. In our English translation of Gen. 1 this is not apparent, but the Holland rendering is more faithful to the original, when it speaks of the animals as "levende zielen". Gen. 1:20 should have been translated: "Let the waters swarm with swarms of living souls". And Gen. 1:24 should read: "And God said, Let the earth bring forth living souls after their kind." In both cases identically the same words are used as in Gen. 2:7 with respect to man. Fish and fowl, cattle and beasts of the field and creeping things are living souls. And thus man also was made a living soul. The term as such, therefore, as it is used in Gen. 1 and 2, denotes nothing more than a creature with locomotion, a creature that is free to move about by an act that has its impetus from within the creature. Plants are not living souls. They are fixed in the earth. They do not freely determine their own movement on the earth. But animals and man are living souls.

However, there is a sharp distinction between the animal as a living soul and man. This is indicated by the way in which man is created in distinction from the creation of the animals. Like the animals he is, indeed, taken out of the ground. He is of the earth earthy. He is not the Lord of heaven. I Cor. 15:47, 48. To the earth he is closely related. The chemical composition of his physical organism is earthy. He is created to live on the earth. As he was created he could not possibly live in heaven. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God! Dependent on the earth he is for his very subsistence and life. From the earth his life must constantly be replenished. And if he cannot eat of the tree of life, he must needs return to the dust sooner or later. Gen. 3:22. And he has a psychical body, a body that is wholly adapted to serve as instrument of a "soul", to live an earthly life. He has earthly sensations and earthly perceptions. He has an earthly ear to catch earthly sounds; he has an earthly eye to catch earthly sights; an earthly sense of taste and touch and smell that brings him into contact with earthly things only. There are things which his eye cannot see, and his ear cannot hear, and that cannot even arise in his heart without special revelation. Even his thinking and willing, his ideals and aspirations, his ties of friendship and love,—all assume earthly forms. The first man is of the earth earthy!

But let us note the distinction between man as a living soul and the animals. This distinction is indi-

cated by a twofold difference between the creation of man and that of the animals. First of all, the animals were simply called forth from the ground (the fish and fowls from the waters); man is *formed* as to his physical side by the very fingers of the great Artificer. Man did not simply find his origin in the ground. There is no continuous line of evolution from the animals to man. The line is broken. God formed man out of the dust of the ground. The "missing link" is missing indeed! Closely man is related to the animals. Both are living souls. We may even say that there is a kind of image of man in the animals. This is very evident in the life of the higher animals. Within their limited sphere they reflect an image of the life of man. Also the animal remembers, dreams, rejoices and evinces deep sorrow, loves and hates, shows fear, courage, faithfulness, and even shows a sense of guilt in relation to man. But withal there is a sharp boundary fixed by the very act by which man was created. The animals are called forth by God's Word out of the ground, man is formed by God's creative hand. The very act that forms Adam out of the earth elevates him above it! Being closely related to the earth because he is formed of its substance, he is capable of living and moving on the earth, can enter into communion with its creatures, share his life with them, use their resources as means to labor with them and to support and enrich his own life from them; yet, by being formed by God's own fingers, he is elevated above the earth: his relation to the dust of the earth is one of freedom. For he was made to be lord of the earthly creation, and even his physical organism is adapted to this lordship. His upright position, his noble form bespeak royalty; his finely formed hand was shaped for the sceptre; his face is the face of a king. And by his being *formed* out of the dust of the ground even his physical organism was worthy of a being that was adapted to be the image-bearer of God!

But there is another distinction between the way in which God created the animals and that in which He gave being to man: the breathing into man's nostrils of the breath of life. This act of God is absent in the creation of the animals altogether. It is an act of the Spirit of God. While God took and formed man out of the dust of the ground, He so belabored him by His Spirit that he became a living soul which is also a personal spirit. Of the animals nothing more is said than that they were called forth out of the ground and out of the waters. They are purely material living souls. Their soul is in their blood. Not so with man. He is made a psychical body, a body that is so finely and delicately constructed as to be adapted to be the instrument of a personal soul; and he is made a personal spirit by the very inbreathing of God into his nostrils of the breath of life. By this second aspect

of God's creative act man's whole nature became adapted to be the bearer of God's image. This is not the same as saying that he is God's image. But it means that he is a personal being, with a rational, moral nature, capable of standing in a conscious, personal relation to God, capable of knowledge of God, of righteousness and holiness. And this *capability* of being endowed with God's image, we would prefer to call God's image in a *formal* sense. No matter what becomes of man, whether he actually shows forth the beauty and glory of the image of God, or whether he turns into the very opposite and reveals the image of the devil, always you can distinguish him as a creature *that ought to show forth God's image*, always he remains the living soul that was formed by God's fingers out of the dust of the ground, and into whose nostrils God breathed the breath of life originally; always he remains a personal, rational and moral being, who *ought to* live in covenant fellowship with the living God!

H. H.

The Reformation and the Renaissance

As was said, the Reformation was a movement that exalted the Bible as the sole infallible source of doctrine. According to the literal meaning of the word, the Renaissance was a re-birth. It denoted that new zeal for pagan literature, learning and art, which sprang up in Italy toward the close of the Middle Ages. But in its broadest sense the Renaissance must be regarded as a function of that energy that brought this modern civilization with its new and pagan conception of religion and science, and with its manifold inventions and discoveries. Of this movement the Reformation was neither a phase nor a product. The two movements, it was affirmed, differed. They differed as to the time which each occupied. Each had its forerunners and birth-place. This has been shown. They also differed as to principle, essence, nature, and aim. This last proposition still needs to be proved.

The subjective principle of the Reformation was the life of regeneration, the true faith and love of the men of God by which this movement was represented. The objective principle of the Reformation was the truth as God's believing people possess it in Christ Jesus. But this is expressing the matter in language too general. There were certain definite principles of truth upon the foundation of which the Reformation as a movement proceeded. They are:

1) The Holy Scriptures fully contain the will of God and whatsoever man ought to believe unto sal-

vation is sufficiently taught therein; this being true, these Scriptures are the sole source of man's knowledge of God and salvation.

2) The Scriptures being the very word of God are the sole infallible rule of faith and walk of life.

3) The believers have received the anointing and it abideth in them. Thus they all know and need not that any man teach them.

4) The foundation of God standeth firm, having this seal: The Lord knoweth them that are His; and, He that calleth upon the name of the Lord, let him desist from unrighteousness.

All the theses of Luther—of which there were ninety and five—were the product of the application, by this reformer, of these principles of truth to the false doctrines and the corrupt practices of the Roman Church. It was as acting upon these principles that he placed this word in the hands of the common believers, and bade them read that they might experience in their own souls that through this Word as made to dwell in them by Christ's Spirit, God speaks to His children, that not by any pronouncement of the priest but by this Word alone He justifies them in their hearts so that they have peace toward Him, that by this Word, finally, He does certainly transport them out of the darkness of sin into the light of His presence.

But these certainly were not the principles of the Renaissance and the doings of the men who set this movement on foot and by whom it was represented.

The subjective principle of the Renaissance was unbelief, hatred of God and His Word and positively, the love of the world, of the things in it—the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eyes and the pride of life. Its objective principle was the lie, in particular this lie that the world passeth *not* away but abideth everlastingly, that this life is all and that therefore the thing to do for man is to make the most of this life by improving it to the best of his abilities and by drinking deeply of its pleasures. And this verily was the theory of knowledge of the Renaissance, namely, that the source and criterion of man's knowledge of man, of God and of all things is man himself—his mind, reason, (rationalism); his feeling, experience (mysticism); or his will (moralism), and that therefore the sole rule of life and all conduct is the will of this same man.

As acting upon these principles, the men of the Renaissance seated man in God's throne and God at man's feet, lived by the word that proceedeth out of man's mouth and made their belly their God. Thus the Renaissance was a movement that originated in the flesh, was sustained by sinful flesh, and was expressive of all its aims and strivings. Rightly considered, the Renaissance is so old as the human family. Its very first forerunners are the first parents of this

family—Adam and Eve. It was in their disobedience, —in their acting upon the lie of the devil that eating of the forbidden tree they would be as God—that this movement originated. And it is in the seed of the serpent that through the ages it takes on flesh and blood and can be seen and heard and handled.

Let us show now that this appraisal of the movement under consideration is correct. That learning, culture, imported by Greek scholars into Italy—what was it? The land of its nativity was ancient Greece and Rome. It was thus Pagan. It was man's word. This is equivalent to saying that it was the wisdom of the world—the wisdom of which the apostle James says that it is devilish. Indeed it was culture. But it was the culture not of God but of the Graeco-Roman world, of Athens. Once more, then, what is this culture, learning? Properly, it is not, as some imagine, the earth and its fulness as counted, weighed, and measured by Athens, by the world. It is not such learning as that the frame of a dog and a cat and a human and of whatever creature you may name is formed of so many bones; that the sun is the center of our solar system; that the forces which attract material bodies to each other are so and so great. These things, the cat and dog, the stars and planets, numbers, distances and weights, in a word, the earth and its fulness, are God's things. And these things Athens', her men of science, weighs, measures, and counts. And Athens' computations, in so far as they are correct, together with Athens skill and accuracy as a computer, are also of God. However, having appropriated this learning, one has not Athens' wisdom, culture, but God's things. The things of Athens, Athens' culture, wisdom, is the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, as rationalized by Athens' wisemen, extolled by Athens' poets, and immortalized in stone by Athens' sculptors. Athens' wisdom is the glory of God changed into an image made like unto corruptible man, is thus man deified. Anyone at all acquainted with this wisdom, learning, knows that the Greek poets put a devilish element in their gods, that in the Greek and Roman deities they saw and worshipped the weaknesses and vices of the Grecian character; that the noblest(?) of the Greeks—Plato and Socrates—gave to the most revolting of all vices the sanction of his great authority.

This is the truth about Athens' learning and culture. Now the place that the Holy Scriptures occupied in the lives of Luther and his spiritual kin, this pagan learning held in the lives of the men of the Renaissance. They gloried in it. It formed their food and drink. As steeped in this learning, and under the impulse of the inspiration which they derived from it, the thinkers and the dreamers among these men, reared their thought-structures and produced their poetry. And it is in turn this literary output, that forms the

great wisdom literature upon which the world of this modern era feeds and from which it derives its inspiration.

The Reformation, it ought to be plain, was not a product of the Renaissance. Yet the two movements are being identified the one with the other. It can be expected that the Modernist student of history insists that at bottom the two are one and the same. The Modernists deny that there is a people—God's believing people—in whose essence and energy there operates a new and holy principle of life and that there are movements in history of which the only tennable explanation is that they are the function of this sanctified energy, and that the Reformation in distinction from the Renaissance was such a movement. In opposition to this denial, the believing student of history must certainly affirm that the Reformation was the working of true faith. For such it was. He must not allow himself to be misled by the circumstance that apparently there is something to say in favor of the view that at least in Germany, the Lowlands and England the Reformation was a product of the Renaissance.

What then is there to say in favor for this view? Let us consider the following. As was said, if taken within its narrowest limits, the Reformation is to be regarded as commencing in the year 1517—the year in which Luther, through his publication of his 95 theses, initiated that direct and open renunciation of medieval heretical doctrine of the Roman Church. It was also pointed out that the date to be selected for the beginning of the Renaissance is the year 1453—the year in which Constantinople fell into the hands of the Turks. The fall of this city caused a great migration of Greek scholars to Western Europe and in particular to Italy. The pagan learning of Greece and Rome which these fugitives brought with them was gladly received by secular and spiritual potentates alike; and the revival of that intellectual activity, that was stimulated by this pagan learning and that was known as the Renaissance or Humanism, began.

Thus the Renaissance preceded the Reformation approximately by some 60 years. During these years several of the humanists inveighed with special force against the very heretical doctrines and corrupt practices of the church, the open renunciation of which Luther initiated through his publication of his theses. As Luther later on, so these humanists, uttered severe denunciation against the doctrines of indulgence, veneration of saints, and purgatory. They opposed the existing church-system, and they rejected both popes and councils as the ultimate and supreme authorities in matters of faith. Erasmus, who acquired the title of "Prince of humanists" interested himself deeply in the Scriptures and in the writings of the church fathers. He published an edition of the Greek Testament, wrote several commentaries, and edited the prin-

cial church fathers. These German humanists expressed by the written and spoken word great discontent with the prevailing corruption and misgovernment in the church and with papal interference in civil affairs. They protested against the growing paganizing of the papacy and the superstitious and magical uses of the sacraments. Apparently the humanists in Germany were reformers before the Reformation. Seemingly the Renaissance, too, like the Reformation was a movement in the sphere of religion.

Yet, let us not be deceived. The question of motive and aim enters in here. True, Humanism, the Renaissance, inveighed against both popes and councils as the ultimate authorities in matters of faith. But in doing so it was moved by a hatred of *all* authority, whether as expressed in the decrees of councils, in the pronouncements of the popes, or in the doctrine of the Scriptures. Thus its aim was to emancipate the mind of man from the reign not merely of tradition and dogma of the church but of the scriptures as well. If the priests had subordinated the Bible to tradition and dogma, humanism subordinated it to individual and private judgment. Humanism, therefore, was skeptical, rationalistic. The quarrel of Humanism with Rome was that it had shackled human reason. Erasmus wrote commentaries on the Scriptures. But he did not submit himself to their authority. Were he living today, he would be a rationalist.

On the other hand, the aim of the Reformation was to emancipate the Scriptures from the reign of tradition and dogma and to subject human reason to the reign of the Scriptures. The Reformation loved the Bible. To the Bible it went back in the original languages. The Renaissance, also in Germany, went back to the ancient classics and revived the spirit of Greek and Roman paganism. Assuredly, the two movements differed materially. The Reformation was not a scion of the Renaissance.

It should also be born in mind that in Germany several of those who cultivated the new learning were not humanist at heart but sincere and devout Christians. A case at point is the theologian and scholar John Wessel, who was born at Gronigen in 1421, and who died in 1489 with the confession on his lips, "I know only Jesus, the Crucified." A desire to know more about humanism sent him to Rome, where he was found the intimate friend of Italian scholars.

But if all things work together for good to them that love God, must the stand not be taken that in some ways the Reformation was benefited by the Renaissance? It was benefited, but only negatively, thus in the same sense that Moses was helped by the pleasures of sin which he encountered at the Court of Pharaoh. The sight of these pleasures turned him consciously and intensely against them. No true believer can revel in paganism.

G. M. O.

The Person of the Prophet Isaiah

According to the schedule, it is required of me that I write one article on each of the following persons: Isaiah, Jeremiah and Daniel. Now the task of writing or discoursing on the *person* of Isaiah—to confine ourselves now to this prophet—consist certainly in directing our attention to the *man*. It is a task that is to be performed through our raising and answering questions about *him*, especially the question: what manner of man was he as to his character and natural and spiritual endowments. Now this task is a possible one because the prophet stands revealed before us in and through the discourse that bears his name. But right here we hit upon a difficulty. Isaiah was no ordinary writer. His discourse is not to be classified with ordinary literary productions. Isaiah was a prophet of God. He was an organ of revelation. His writing is prophecy. It was communicated to him by the Lord God and reproduced by him under the impulse of an infallible inspiration. If so, can it be then that in *this* prophecy we have the *man* Isaiah. *his* mind and will, the depth of *his* thought, the breadth of *his* vision, the fire that burned in *his* soul, and the beat of *his* heart?

It is clear that in treating a subject of this nature, it is of utmost importance that we be equipped with right conceptions about the Bible and the use that God made of the human agents through whom He brought the Bible into being. Before taking hold of our subject it may be well to state that principle of truth on the foundation of which we must proceed, if we are to avoid being exposed to the danger of giving expression to doubtful sentiments as we proceed.

The Word of God—quoting the Confession—was not sent, nor delivered by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, as the apostle Peter saith, And afterwards God, from a special care, which He has for us and our salvation, commanded his servants, the prophets and the apostles, to commit His revealed Word to writing; and He Himself wrote with His own finger, the two tables of the law. Therefore we call such writings holy and divine Scriptures.

Let us briefly lay hold on the implication of this proposition, article of faith. It certainly does not imply that there is contained in the Holy Scriptures a twofold factor, divine and human. A factor is a causative agent. It is one of the elements that contribute to produce a result. (Webster). Now the Bible, certainly, is not a result toward the production of which both God and the human—the prophets and the apostles—contributed. Yet, this is the stand that has been taken. The content of the Scriptures, it is said, is of God; the form is of man. Or, the words of Jesus alone are of God, the words of the prophets and the apostles are of man. Prof. Berkhof in his Hermeneutics in-

veighs against these views. It is well that he does so. But in his exposition of the above-cited article of faith, he also should have avoided the terms "human factor" "divine factor"; for they are terms ill-chosen. Their employment is certain to result in the making of wrong and even impossible statements, for example such as the following (from the professor's pen), "De rechte beschouwing over deze verhouding mogen we dan ook in deze woorden aangeven: Heel de Heilige Schrift is ter zelfder tijd beide goddelijk en menscheijk. Dit geld zoowel den vorm als den inhoud." So then, all the Scriptures, both their content and form, are at once a contribution of man and of God. Now this, of course, can't be. It is even a much more impossible view than the one according to which the *content* of Scripture is of God and the *form* of man.

There is but one factor in the Bible, namely, the divine. The whole of the Scriptures, their form and their content, their every word, is God's creation, work and thus solely His contribution. The "Holy men" contributed nothing. For they, too, were the contributions of God, the very work of His hands, prepared by him to receive and to speak and to write as His agents His Word.

But if so, can it be said that we actually have in the prophetic discourse of Isaiah the man himself. This must be said, for so it is. For the fact of the matter is this: God used His entire preparation, the whole man Isaiah, his body and soul, his language, his memory and all that was stored in it, his capacities, his natural gift and spiritual endowments, his character and individuality, his experiences both bitter and sweet, his joys and his sorrows—in a word the whole man as he had been prepared by the Lord. In this work of God—a work that consisted in His bringing into being the Scriptures—Isaiah, *as God had made him*, was active as God's infallible agent.

It must be observed further that Isaiah as God's workmanship differed from the other prophets. The reason is that the discourse that the Lord wanted to bring in through him differed from those of the other prophets. As we shall see, the discourse of Isaiah was one of surpassing profundity and breadth of vision. Therefore the Lord so endowed him that he, in distinction from all the others, was peculiarly adapted to the discourse that was to be brought into being through him. This being true, we have in his discourse not Amos or Micah but the man Isaiah, the reflection of his individuality and endowments. His prophecy bespeaks *his* peculiar gifts. And the character of his prophecy is thus an index to the character of the man Isaiah.

Let it be said once more that the Bible is a creature—the creature of God. The Bible is not the truth. Only God is the truth. The Bible is the revelation of the truth, and as such a creature, and an earthly crea-

ture at that. Our Bible will therefore cease, vanish away at the second coming of Christ as certainly as the Old Testament symbolical-typical institution wax old and vanished away at His first coming. Such is the teaching of Paul in I Cor. 13, "But whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away with." The Bible then is an earthy creature—and solely this—destined to vanish away. To say then, with the professor (Berkhof) that "Heel de Heilige Schrift is ter zelder tijd beide goddelijk en menscheijk," is to give expression to a thoroughly pantheistic sentiment. The Bible is not also divine. The Bible is only a creature. God, and He alone, is divine.

Let us now take hold of our subject.

As to the outward relations of the prophet almost nothing is known. The name of his father was Amos. It is not known who this was. Some erroneously identified him with the prophet Amos. There is no ground for making out of him, as the Rabbins have done, a brother to the king Amaziah. Isaiah lived at Jerusalem and performed his prophetic labors under the kings Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. He was contemporary, therefore, with Hosea and Amos, though he labored in Judah, the southern kingdom. He survived Hezekiah, and lived some years—how long is not known—under the reign of his cruel and wicked son—Manasseh. According to tradition, he was slain by Manasseh, being sawn asunder with a wooden saw. This agrees with the inhuman character of Manasseh as portrayed in the Scriptures; for it is said that "he shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to the other" II Kings 21:6). The epistle to the Hebrews states that some Old Testament believers "were sawn asunder". This may refer to the Jewish tradition that Isaiah came to his end in this way. The charge alleged against Isaiah, for which he was put to death, was, as stated by the Talmud, that he pretended that he had seen God" (Isaiah 6:1); whereas Moses said, "No man shall see God and live". (Ex. 33:20). But this was a mere pretense. The real offence of Isaiah was that in strongest language and without mincing words, he opposed and denounced the existing idolatries. He is said by the early Christians to have lived one hundred and twenty years. He was active in his office almost a hundred years. He had a wife and two sons whose names are given in chapters 7:3 and 8:3.

This is all that there is to be said about the prophet, unless we concentrate on his prophecy as such. This we will now do. Because, as has just been explained, the discourse of the prophet reveals the man; its characteristics are his characteristic and form an index to

his natural and spiritual endowments. Thus, if we find that this discourse is remarkable for its moral courage, we know that the prophet was likewise a man of courage and fortitude. So, the thing for us to do, if we want to know more about the man *Isaiah*, is to examine his prophecy.

Doing so, we observe that this prophecy is characterized by great courage indeed and further by remarkable profundity, farsightedness and breadth of vision. Let us get the substance of this discourse before us.

The book is to be divided into two chief parts: chapters 1 to 39, and 40 to 66. Chapters 1 to 6 form the threefold introduction, that relates to the entire book. The first division of the principal part of the book includes chapters 7 to 12. This section treats of the relations of Israel to Assyria. Syria and Israel shall be subdued by Assyria and likewise Judah for their infidelity. Comfort shall be to them that fear God. Assyria shall fall. The peaceable kingdom of the branch out of the root of Jesse shall come. Israel shall be restored and the outcasts of Israel gathered from the four corners of the earth.

The second division (chapter 13-27) contains the prophecies against foreign nations. The nations whose downfall is predicted are: Babylon, whom the prophet sees as the chief enemy of Israel; Philistia, Moab, Ephraim, Syria, Ethiopia and Egypt. A prophecy against Tyre forms the conclusion of this second subdivision. The third division (chapters 28-33) deals with the relation of Israel to Assyria in the days of king Hezekiah. In this section the word of the prophet is to the effect that Jerusalem will be overtaken by judgment. He censures the people for their confidence in Egypt. He shows the fall of Assyria, the mercies of God toward His church, the salvation of the church, and the blessings of Christ's kingdom. The fourth subdivision comprises chapters 34 and 35. These two chapters form the final part of the first principal part of the whole discourse. They contain a concluding glance at the end-period in respect to the two aspects of it, namely, divine punishments and salvation. The first is presented as including not only the earth but the heavenly bodies as well. The judgment on earth is against one of Israel's most bitter enemies, namely, Edom. Chapter 35 describes the joyful flourishing of Christ's kingdom—the kingdom whose coming spells salvation for the people of God. The fifth subdivision is formed of chapters 36-39. Its content is historical and essentially the same as II Kings 18:13-20:19. These chapters relate the deepest distress into which Hezekiah, shut up in his capitol city—Jerusalem, was brought by the Assyrians, and also the complete deliverance out of this distress by the plague that broke out in the camp of the Assyrians.

Part second is formed of chapters 40-66. They

form a separate total by themselves. Their subject is exclusively salvation and the whole period of it beginning with the deliverance from the exile and extending to and including the second coming of Christ.

Such is the substance of the prophecy with which we now have to do. In it Isaiah appears as a man firstly of great courage, devoted obedience, and implicit trust in God. In a language remarkable for its boldness and strength, he complains of Judah's rebellion. One example of this, "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel does not know, my people doth not consider. . . . Hear the word of the Lord, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah" (1:2, 10). Because the hearts of the people are far from the Lord, their whole service is vain; and the prophet tells them this, "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me, saith the Lord: I am full of the burntofferings of rams. . . . Bring no more oblations, incense is an abomination unto me. . . . your new moons and Sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with it; it is iniquity, even the solemn meetings (1:11-13). There is no prating here on the part of the prophet of the "good that sinners do". He dares to call the best works of the wicked by their right name—iniquity, abomination. He is wholly without fear of man and regard for merely human interests. With the greatest determination he opposes unbelieving king Ahaz (7:sqq.), the chamberlain Shebna (12:15sqq.), people of high estate in Judah—apostate, priests and false prophets, the whole people. He unsparingly criticizes Hezekiah and his noble advisors. He denounces their foreign policy with respect to Egypt. With the same boldness he tells Hezekiah that he must die, when he is sick and afterwards announced to the believing suppliant the deliverance of Jerusalem and the prolonging of his days. When Hezekiah in his vanity has showed his treasures to the messengers from Babylon, the prophet in plain language tells him that all this shall be carried away in exile to Babylon.

As was said, further, the prophecy of Isaiah is characterized by remarkable farsightedness and breadth of vision. In it the time of salvation extends to the end of this world, thus to the regeneration of all things and the appearance of Christ with His Church on the new earth. This period of salvation is set forth by the prophet as having three stages. The first is the deliverance out of Babylonian exile. This salvation, in turn, forms the ground in which a new salvation is typically described. The people of Israel will be delivered from its spiritual bondage to sin. The chains of idolatry will be broken. The central point of the second stage of salvation is the suffering servant of

Jehovah. He becomes the redeemer of His people. He is lifted out of His humility. He becomes the judge of all the world. He destroys all the wicked and the fruit of His redeeming work is a new humanity, serving God in Spirit and in Truth, and a new heaven and a new earth. This is the third stage of salvation.

Isaiah is unique among the prophets for His depth of insight in the mystery of salvation. Of all the prophets of the Old Dispensation, he is the only one who set forth the sufferings of Christ—the servant of Jehovah—as possessing atoning virtue. The first revelation made to man after the fall contains a clear reference to Christ's sufferings, asserting, as it does, that the heel of the woman's seed should be bruised by the serpent. The book of the Psalms are interspersed with lively descriptions of what this seed—Christ and His body, which is the church—shall have to endure at the hands of the antagonist. Isaiah, however, was the only seer to assert, "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we were healed, and the Lord hath laid upon Him the iniquities of us all."

G. M. O.

Een Hoog Vertrek

(Psalm 46)

't Is niet onverschillig welke stem ge verkiest voor 't zingen van een zeker lied. Al naar gelang het lied vrolijk of droevig is, juicht in overwinning of klaagt vanwege den nederlaag, zult ge de juiste stem moeten zoeken die zulke verschillende ervaringen moeten vertolken. De dichter en de componist vullen elkaar aan.

Psalm 46 moet gezongen op de Alamoth.

Het woord beteekent in 't enkelvoud "een jonge maagd". En als we I Kron. 15:19-22 lezen merken we op, dat die term gebezigd wordt voor een muziek-instrument hetwelk de hooge sopraanklanken, voortbrengt, sopraanklanken zooals jonge maagden die zingen.

Zulk hoog, kwinkeleerend zingen past bij den inhoud van dezen psalm. Het is een lied van groote verrukking in de overwinning. Het volk kwam aan in een hoog vertrek. En dat volk bemerkte het, God was in het midden van hen. Daar was Hij hun bekend als een hoog vertrek.

Psalm 46 heeft gediend tot inspiratie voor Luther's zegezing: "Een vaste Burg is onze God!"

Om Psalm 46 te verstaan moet ge eerst kennis nemen van den natuurlijke toestand van 't volk Gods.

Dat volk is in benauwdheden.

De ervaring van Gods volk is, dat het wel schijnt alsof de aarde van plaats verandert en de bergen verzet worden in 't hart der zee. De wateren van de volkenzee bruisen en worden beroerd; de bergen daveren door derzelver verheffing.

Ziet ge, de heidenen razen, de koninkrijken bewegen zich: er zijn vreeselijke oorlogen op aarde. De boog doorpriemt, de speer verscheurt, de wagenen vermorzelen. (Denkt aan de panzer-divisions!)

Dat alles maakt Gods volk benauwd.

Want eigenlijk is alle geweld, van welke natuur en karakter dan ook, gericht tot God en tot Zijn Gezalfde, en, ter laatster instantie, ook tegen de kerk van Christus. Alle oorlogen zijn godsdienst-oorlogen. Dat wil zeggen, als ge slechts dieper blikk dan de oppervlakte.

De vreeselijke vraag van Psalm 2 kan in alle eeuwen gedaan: Waarom woeden de heidenen en bedenken de volken ijdelheid? Ook moet ge altijd weer aan hetzelfde antwoord geven: De Koningen der aarde stellen zich op, en de Vorsten beraadslagen te zamen tegen den Heere en tegen Zijnen Gezalfde: Laat ons hunne banden verscheuren, en hunne touwen van ons werpen!

Het is niet moeilijk om dit aan te toonen. Als ge het vreeselijke beeld van Stalin, als ge den snoevenden Hitler, of den mallen, bluffenden Mussolini voor oogen stelt, waar denkt ge dan aan? Waarom verschiet Uw kleur? De wreede, ruwe, goddelooze regeerders van alle dagen keeren zich ten finale tegen het ware volk Gods. Als Hitler zijn zin krijgt, wat blijft er dan over van de Christelijke School, van alle openbaring des Gereformeerden levens? Als Stalin Amerikaansch wordt, gehuldigd zou worden aan Capitol Hill, wat zou er dan overblijven van den openbaren eeredienst dien naam waard? Dan zullen zich de god-loozen verblijden en de dochters der Filistijnen opspringen van vreugde. Doch dan is er in onze kerken zuchting en diep lijden.

Alle oorlog richt zich ten finale op de Kerk van Christus. Zijn streven is om de touwen en koorden van God in Christus af te schudden en ijdellijk daar heen te bruisen, te verwoesten, te vernielen. Naar het vleesch is er dan verbrijzeling in Sion. Dan ligt Jeremia in een modderigen kuil en wordt Jesaja in stukken gezaagd. Caesar heeft het bij zijn leven misschien nooit geweten, dat hij toch Christus Jezus aan het kruis gehecht heeft. Zoudt gij denken, dat Hitler het ooit gewaar geworden is, dat zijn auto met officieren stilhield voor het huis van arme belijders van den Heere en Zijn Gezalfde?

Hoe komt het toch dat ge U zoo beklemd gevoeld als ge denkt aan Stalin, Hitler, en anderen? O, dat vreeselijke zwaard van de overheid. Als het zich richt tot de goddelooze kwaaddoeners naar 's Heeren Woord, dan is het richtig in een goed land. Doch als het zich keert tegen de belijders van Gods Naam, dan wordt het benauwd.

lijders van Gods Naam, dan wordt het benauwd.

De zanger van Psalm 46 heeft daaraan gedacht.

Zijn landje lag tusschen de wereldrijken in. En alles in die landen braakte van goddeloosheid. Neen, men had daar de radio niet en ook niet die zwarte, groote, dikke letters der "headlines". Doch, al was het ietwat langzamer, men hoorde ook daar van zijn "dictators" die het land veroverden, als geitebokken over de wereld renden. Men smaakte dat bruisen en woelen, dat vernielen en verbrijzelen. En de zangers in Israel hebben die uitingen der goddeloozen gekenmerkt en gekenschetst. Er kwam oorlog, men raasde en de koninkrijken werden bewogen. Darius en Kores volgden immers Nebuchadnezzar op? En heeft Alexander de Groote anders gehandeld? Oorlog, oorlog, het is het hoofdthema van de geschiedenis der volkeren uit dit oogpunt.

En de kleine kerk wordt benauwd.

Toen zijn ze gaan vluchten.

Leest het maar in vers 2.

God is ons een toevlucht en sterkte, Hij is krachtiglijk bevonden een hulp in benauwdheden. Hoe is er gebeden in Nederland en hier! Die ge-arresteerd werden zijn biddende, te midden van harde, meedoogenlooze officieren, weggereden. En die thuis bleven zijn aan 't smeken gegaan. De klank ervan is tot ons doorgedrongen in dit verre land van het Westen. En ook wij hebben meegebeden.

God werd ons tot een toevlucht.

En toen we dan haastiglijk, met hokkende stemme aankwamen, toen heeft God Zich bewezen een hulp in benauwdheden. We waren omklemd, we hebben de vreeselijke limitatie gevoeld, het scheen of we omkneld waren met eeuwige banden. Sommigen onzer stieten den rauwen kreet: Ik lig gekneld in banden van den dood, daar d'angst der hel. . . .

Doch het is stille geworden.

Voor haastige zenuwachtigheid kwam de vrede en de aangename rust. We waren gearriveerd in hogere sferen. Waar we eindelijk aankwamen wordt door den Heiligen Geest genoemd: een hoog vertrek. En dat hoog vertrek is God.

God bewees Zich daar krachtdadiglijk als de Sterke. Hij is sterker dan Hitler, Stalin, de oude slang, Satan. Ik moet wel haast glimlachen als ik dit neerschrijf, want ge moet altijd onthouden, dat alle kracht van Stalin en Hitler en van den duivel van God komt. Hoe zullen we dan vreezen?

Door al dat hijgen en haasten en vreezen zijn we dorstig geworden. We waren zwak van krachten. Zóó zwak, dat de goddeloozen ons proefden en smalend schimten: een hoopje amechtige Joden!

Doch geen nood. Zoo blijven wij niet. Neen, want in dat hoog vertrek is een rivier. Dat is de rivier Gods, vol, berstens toe vol waters. Dat is de rivier van Jezus. Hij zeide: Het water, dat Ik U geven

zal, O Samaritaansche, zal in U worden een fontein van levend water, opspringende tot in het eeuwige leven! Het is de rivier van den Heiligen Geest, want Johannes zeide later: Dit zeide Hij van den Heiligen Geest, denwelke ontvangen zouden die in Hem geloofden.

Water, levend water! Het is eigenlijk het leven van Jezus Zelf, hetwelk door den Heiligen Geest U geschonken wordt. Door dat water wordt ge verfrist, ge'aafd, verkwikt. Door dat water wordt ge kalm, rustig, vredig. Als ge het ervaren mag, wat Jezus van dit water zeide, dan kunt ge branden op den brandstapel en toch nog zingen. Terwijl ge dan brandt en door den walm heen de verwrongen aangezichten van de huilende bende ziet, zult ge stamelen: Ik ben in een hoog vertrek. Als dat water van den Heiligen Geest u vervult, dan ligt ge te bloeden in de gevangenis van Filippi en toch bidt ge en zingt ge psalmen. En de gevangenen hoorden naar U. . . .

Ja, in dat hoog vertrek is een rivier. En de beekjes van die rivier zullen verblijden de stad Gods. Weet ge wat dat beteekent? Dat zit zoo: de rivier vloeit ons toe van uit het hart Gods. Het is het verbondsleven van eeuwige vriendschap en liefde. Die stroom richt zich eerst op Jezus en door den Heiligen Geest, Dien Hij uitstort richt zich die Godsrivier van ongekende verbondszegeningen tot de kerk Gods. Doch er zijn zoo velen van de verbondskinderen! Daarom verdeelt zich die levende stroom in beekjes, één voor elk der gekenden. Er is een beekje van dit zacht kabbelende water voor U, mijn broeder. En de stroomen van Siloam vloeien zachtken naar U henen. Zoo was het ook op den Pinksterdag. Er waren gedeelde tongen als van vuur. En zat op een iegelijk van hen. De oorsprong is één, doch als die stroom zijn doel vindt zijn er vele beekjes.

Een ander woord ervoor is dit: het heiligdom der woningen des Allerhoogsten. Let op dat woningen: elk der kinderen Gods ontvangt zijn eigen woning in het Vaderhuis.

Zoo wordt des Heeren volk gedrenkt uit het Eigen Vaderhart van God door Woord en Geest. Dat is ten slotte het eenigste wat ge behoeft.

Als de beekjes van die stroom U gevonden hebben, geliefden, wordt ge geestelijk bevrucht en kunt ge voortbrengen: dan wordt gevonden den lof des Heeren. Want dat is het einde, het einddoel van Gods werk. Daar is het Uw Vader om te doen. Vindt die stroom Jezus. dan zegt Hij: Ik zal Uw naam Mijne broederen vertellen. Dan zegt Jesaja: Ik zal de goedertierenheden des Heeren vermelden, den veelvoudigen lof des Heeren, naar alles dat de Heere ons heeft bewezen, en de groote goedheid aan het huis Israëls, dat Hij hun bewezen heeft naar Zijne barmhartigheden en naar de veelheid Zijner goedertierenheden!" Jes. 63:7. Dan zingt David: Och, of nu al wat in mij is Hem

prees!

En die in aanbidding luistert zegge: En gij, mijn ziel, loof gij Hem boven al!

Daarom zullen wij niet vreezen, zegt de zanger van Psalm 46.

Wel, dat kunnen we nu wel begrijpen. Al worden dan de fundamenten der aarde omgewroet door Hitler; en al schijnt het alsof het vreeselijk pogen van Stalin succes zal hebben om den godsdienst van de aarde te doen verdwijnen; en ook, al zou Roosevelt ook alle industrie doen vereenigen in één groote Union: we zullen niet vreezen.

Neen, we vreezen niet langer. Het kortzichtige heeft plaats gemaakt voor het gezicht op Sion. We hebben het Vaderhuis gezien en gesmaakt door een beekje van den Godsrivier. We verstaan het nu, dat 70 of 80 jaren niet te waardeeren zijn tegenover een heerlijkheid in de woningen des Allerhoogsten die eeuwig is.

Neen, we zullen niet doen zooals de goddelooze doet. Hij wil vredig en gezellig wonen hier beneden. Soms droomt hij dat zijn huis eeuwig zal staan. Hij wil lotsverbetering voor het tijdelijke alleen. Wij willen lotsverbetering voor alle eeuwigheden. En we krijgen het ook. Is dan Uw lot in liefelijke plaatsen, in snoeren van liefde en vriendschap, dan hoort ge van uit de verten der eeuwigheden een stem van Uw beminnenden Vader: Juicht, vromen, om Uw lot!

We zeggen dan met Luther, die zong van dezen psalm: Neemt goed en bloed ons af. . . . We erven Koninkrijken!

Een vaste Burg is onze God! Ja, dat mocht hij wel zingen. Hij is aangekomen in dien Burg. Luther zingt zijn lied nu in den hemel.

En ook zal het niet zoo blijven als het nu is op de aarde.

De zanger zal het U schilderen zooals het er naar toe zal gaan in de toekomst des Heeren. Hij roept de gemeente van Christus toe: Komt, aanschouwt de daden des Heeren, die verwoestingen op aarde aannicht; die de oorlogen doet ophouden. . . .

Hitler moet straks doodgaan en Stalin zal den adem uitblazen. De panzer-divisions zullen straks niet meer rookende verbrijzelen. De boog wordt verbroken en de speer wordt aan stukken geslagen door God. Gelukkige gedachte.

Er komt straks een branden van een vuur, dat alles vernielen zal hetwelk zich keerde tegen God en Zijn Gezalfde. Het is het vuur des oordeels.

De Heere wordt straks verhoogd op de aarde. Dan bazelt men niet langer van "Heil, Hitler!" Dan zullen alle goddelooze menschen en duivelen de bevende hand opheffen en uit biljoenen van keelen zal het akelig geschreeuw opstijgen: God is God! Heil Jezus Christus, den Vorst Gods! Doch zij zijn tot eeuwig afgrijzen bestemd!

En Gods volk zal dan weer psalm 46 zingen. Zien de op Immanuel, zul'en ze zingen: De Heere der heerscharen is met ons en dat is Jezus, God met ons!

G. V.

Christian Banquets

This subject, and consequently this article, deals with one of the practical things of life. And then with one of those things of life which we usually enjoy, and is often classified with the bright side of life—banquets, feasts, festivals, eating and drinking together to our contentment. Such is often considered as one of the optimistic, cheerful aspects of our life on this earth. Who does not like to attend a banquet occasionally? Due to this it often becomes a means of great sin and abusing the good gifts of our heavenly Father. More about this later.

With a practical subject of this nature we naturally would expect nothing else but a practical essay. By merely reading the title it becomes evident to us that this is not a detailed, objective Theological dissertation. No, something which takes place in our very life, feasts etc. But with a writing on Christian Banquets it is different. Practical, to be sure, but such must proceed and come forth from the objective word of God in us.

Meaning.

The first question to be answered here, to my opinion, is what we include under the word banquets. Do we mean merely formal banquets, such as are often given by Church societies, business men, etc. or do we mean more? Much more. All formal as well as informal banquets, feasts, dinners, Thanksgiving dinners, family get-togethers, etc. All get-togethers with a view to eat and drink and enjoy the bounties of this earth in fellowship with one another. From that viewpoint the word banquet includes much. Now as far as the spiritual-ethical aspect of all these is concerned it is not a question to the conscientious Christian whether these should be held in a Christian way. He knows better. He knows that in all things he must serve His God. Whether he eats or whether he drinks, or whatever he does, he must do it to the glory of God. Consequently he wants christian banquets.

But one more thing. No more than we limit the word banquet to formal banquets, no more is it our purpose with this essay to try to show how we must conduct a christian banquet, what kind of programs we should have, songs we should sing, etc. That is not our purpose. But the purpose is to write a few words on the idea of a *christian* banquet. How a child of God, in the midst of this world, by nature under the wrath of God, worthy of eternal punishment, living in this life which is but a continual death, we say, how

he should feast. How must he feast? How can his banquets be of spiritual benefit? For it is about this question that he is concerned. How can his banquets be to God's glory? What must be the character and aim and purpose of his festivities to reach that end? It is about that that we are writing.

What then constitutes a christian banquet? This is the all-important question. What makes a family get-together with a view to eating and drinking a christian one? What must we have at our banquets and festivities so that they can be christian banquets and of spiritual benefit? That is the heart of the matter. Does a mere outward prayer, a christian program, good christian songs, etc. make our banquets christian? Far from it. So we often think. If we have those, then it can carry away God's blessing. But if we have no more than that we never will have one. We must have these, to be sure. And we can never go without them. But a formal prayer, etc. does not make a banquet christian? The fundamental requisite for a christian banquet lies much deeper. And that all-important requisite is a true and humble heart. A heart in which the life of God is found, that is humble, realizes the realities of things, and now overflows with thanksgiving. And if we don't have that, then we'll never have a christian banquet. A heart that realizes what we are by nature: God is not in our thoughts, we sin continually with our whole being, are under the holy wrath of God. That God can righteously punish us, afflict us even in this life as He pleases, can cause us even to die of starvation, righteously, and then send us to hell. But also a heart that has now tasted the rich unfathomable love of God and the beauty and wonders of His grace in Christ Jesus. God now blesses him in all things. And a token of that blessedness and love he sees before him in the laden table of his banquet. Yea, even if it is not laden as it could be, he can still hold a banquet. And that humble and thankful heart will then want to pray, have a christian program, etc. He will want to do what Deut. 8:10 tells us: "When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the Lord thy God for the good land which He hath given thee". Such a heart does not want to live by bread alone, but by every Word that doth proceed out of the mouth of God.

And so it also becomes very evident that it is only the christian that can have a christian banquet, to be sure, but have any banquet. The world cannot have a true, real banquet. They do not have the love of God, nor do they have His life, but neither can they have a real banquet.

Reality.

But that naturally doesn't mean that the world doesn't have its banquets and festivities. They certainly do. The world is full of them, one finds and hears of them all over. In general one finds even more

of them among the worldly people than the church. They receive the same gifts that we do, rain and sunshine and crops, have good jobs, too, and possibly better than we do because they have no regard for the keeping of the Sabbath or for being members of a worldly union. Their tables are laden, and possibly even more than ours. But does that mean that God loves them more than His own children? We know better. The wrath of God is upon the wicked and the curse of the Lord is in their house. Not out of love, but out of wrath. And God is not in all their thoughts, they despise Him, do not acknowledge Him for His gifts, but view them as *their* bounties, *their* possession to use in the service of sin. And the result of this we see very readily in their banquets: excessive eating and drinking, revelry, gluttony, drunkenness and rioting. We see that all over. They make a God of their belly. Why? Because these gifts are not a means unto an end with them as with the christian, but find the end in themselves. They realize that they finally can take nothing with them, they have nothing to live for but themselves, and consequently make a God of their belly or something else. Soul, thou hast much, eat, drink and be merry. And it is worthy of note that with banquets of worldly people mentioned in Scripture we always find such revelry, be it a feast of Nabal, or of the Amelekites, or of Ahasuerus or of a Herod. Always drunkenness or dancing, or both.

But with the child of God it is different. But also here we find different views. The "extremely narrow-minded" may even shrug their shoulders in respect to any banquet. They may remark that such always inclines us to worldliness, and possibly come with a wrong interpretation of the words: "It is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting". But these are few in number in our day. But large is the number of church members that view it different, exactly opposite. Sure, we must lead a christian life, walk as christians, but once in a while we must be able to "cut-loose" though. After all we are human. Such do not hesitate for one minute to attend a banquet or feast that is not christian, even though it may appear under a cloak of christianity by a formal prayer. I personally remember very well from my boyhood days, that the Young Men's Society or some other society of my church would give a sort of banquet and program in which all would have a "good time". One evening of the year they could go beside the line, and more or less forget about all "narrow-mindedness". But the conscientious christian certainly will not say such. He will attend banquets, but only when they are christian. It is true that with banquets and feasts and big dinners we are apt to forget God, our nature is inclined to make a God of our belly. Job certainly sensed that too, bringing burnt offerings after the feast of his sons, perchance his sons had sinned. But

Job doesn't forbid them to hold a feast. If it is only done right, as we have mentioned. With a humble and thankful heart to our Father.

But even this is often found lacking among God's children, knowing better. Often that faith is lacking. Why do we like to go to banquets? Because we want to see God's love manifested to us, and have an overflowing heart of thankfulness? Often not, but to make a god of our belly. Not nearly always do we view the laden table as a manifestation of God's love to us, but as coming to us. We worked for it, or bought it, didn't we? Often the humility is lacking, the realization what we have deserved; our thankfulness is nowhere to be found; and our prayers are nothing but formality. But we should strive to attain perfection, even with our banquets. Then, in the right way, they certainly can be of spiritual benefit.

Possibility.

But how are we going to do it? The fundamental requisite is a humble and thankful heart, but what can *we* do in respect to this to improve it? Absolutely nothing. Also here man is helpless. Only God's Word and Spirit can do that. It is only by His Word and Spirit that we learn to know our nature, see what we have deserved, God's wrath and not even a morsel of bread or a drop of water. And that we must hear time and again because we forget it so easily. But by means of His Word and Spirit we also learn to know that unfathomable love, the countless treasures and riches of God's grace in Christ Jesus, His Son. The child of God tastes that. And so he can have a christian banquet, with a responding heart. And the purer that Word comes to us in preaching and other means, the more we see the terribleness of God's wrath upon us by nature, but the greater the love in Christ, and the more response and the more christian our banquets become. Faith by means of the Word and Spirit, hope, confidence, sanctification, etc., but also christian banquets. Christian Banquets. A practical subject, of course! But it can be practised only by means of the Word and Spirit.

And the result of that work of God through the Word and Spirit will be and is—living in the faith. Not merely intellectual knowledge, knowing God's wrath and love. Such alone will not give us christian banquets. But the sanctified knowledge. Then we live what we know and hear, my unworthiness and God's love. Then our banquets will be christian. Then the hope and certainty is ours—of being called unto the eternal marriage supper of the Lamb.

J. B.

CLASSIS EAST

will meet in regular session Wednesday, January 7, 1942, at 9:00 A. M., at Fuller Ave.

D. Jonker, S. C.

The Church and Social Questions

Before we set out to treat this subject as such, it is well that we explain the subject we desire to treat. This essay COULD deal with the church, as within her own domain social questions are continually put before us demanding an answer. Questions as to the home and the social functions of the members of the church, are continually asked. The questions as to society life within the domain of the church, I say, COULD be treated under the topic assigned to us. But we do not believe that is the implication of the subject given us for discussion. We are confident that the topic assigned to us, refers more to the social questions with which all men busy themselves today, both the men of the Church as well as men of the world. Questions pertaining to society in general, must therefore be treated. For society refers to the relation of man to man in all the spheres of life. "Social questions" therefore deals with the various questions that arise because of these various relations of men living with men. There are the relations of husband and wife, of parents and children, in the narrow sense of the word. Then there are the relations between teachers and children, in the sphere of education and instruction. Also the relations of the laborer and the employer, and the questions of social security are included under this topic. Finally the relations between the various units of the community and nation, bringing into discussion civic righteousness and related questions. So that the topic of this essay deals with the calling of the Church with regard to these various relationships of our social structure.

From the outset we may say that from a certain point of view we cannot even speak of the calling of the Church with respect to the various social questions confronting people. For the church deals not directly with these various societies of man. For instance, the church does not officially go to the employer with requests to better relations with the employee, nor does the church enter into politics directly, nor does she enter into the privacies of the home and dictate the lives of the various units of that home. The home and the shop and the nation (from a political point of view) exercise sovereign rights in their own domain. That is one reason why we believe in the Free Christian School, and not in the parochial or Church School, for the instruction of our children. Therefore we cannot speak of the Church and social questions if that term would mean that the church must exercise control over these other domains. That would be ecclesiastical Fascism, even as political Fascism means that the political government controls all other domains of life. That is also the principle of the Roman Catholic Church.

However, to say that the Church has no calling as to social questions at all would be wrong also. The

Church is the Body of Christ in the midst of the world. This Church has, strictly speaking, but one calling, namely, to minister the Word of God and to reveal the light that is from above. It may never be a political propaganda bureau for any political party. It must preach the gospel, the whole gospel and nothing but the gospel, revealing thus the full counsel of God. However, this preaching of the gospel may not be confused with a mere exegesis of the words of Scripture, no more than preaching the gospel means a bringing of dogmatics. This is being attempted by certain ministers of the gospel in Europe today, including the Netherlands, thereby attempting to forego the wrath of the ruling powers of Germany. They then seem to remain strictly within their own domain, and do not transgress upon the domain of the State, or of the School, or of the Home, or of the community. Yet this is seriously wrong. Surely the preaching of the gospel means the preaching of the pure and only Word of God. But the **LIGHT OF THAT WORD MUST SHINE OVER ALL THINGS AND UPON ALL THE RELATIONS OF MAN TO MAN.** That Word sheds light upon our path; a guiding light upon our way. And our way, or path, takes us into various places. It takes us into the shop, or the office, or the school, or the nation. In other words our way brings us automatically into the various relations of life. And upon that whole way the Word of God must let its light shine. The church of God therefore in the midst of the world has the calling to let the rays of Light, of Truth, shine into the various relations of man. The weapon of the Church is therefore always the Word as a two-edged sword. Surely the authority of that Word as a sword in the hands of the church, is from above, from the Almighty and Righteous God, but the character of that power and authority is spiritual and lies therefore alone in that Word of truth. And in that Word we have the principles revealed that must guide us in every sphere of our lives, also the social sphere.

Why now can we speak of "social questions"? We answer because of the fact that our social order is polluted and corrupted with sin. This means of course in the first place that society is under sin and the curse of God. Not that God created us and all society thus. God created man a social being. He is made in the image of God and as such is adapted to dwell in communion and fellowship with his neighbor, even as he was created and adapted to fellowship with God. But, whereas man, by willful disobedience and by the seduction of the devil, corrupted himself and made himself an enemy of God and his neighbor, he cannot really dwell in social relation with that neighbor. He may for his own well-being seek the fellowship of his neighbor, but it is not a seeking of his neighbor and his welfare. As an example of this notice the terrible jealousy and competition waged by society people for

highest rank and social standing. This is also the case in the sphere of labor and capital. Labor organizes not because it loves the other laboring man and seeks righteousness, but only because in union there is strength and by unionizing there is for the laborer strength in the seeking of the things below. The very fact that there must be a labor union which stands opposed to the employer or manufacturer is already a proof that true social life does not exist. And this brings the questions to the fore. In all the various relations of life questions arise. Why? Because of sin. Pretty soon, in heaven's glory, when all things are made new, there will be no questions concerning social life. Not because there will be no social life. There certainly will be. There will be fellowship complete and holy. Also there will be in the new heavens and new earth, authority and obedience, as well as powers and government and union. But it will all be governed by righteousness. And the union will be a union of all the believers into a glorious and perfect body of Christ, each unit of which will function in its God ordained place and thus the variety of the eternal social order of that New Jerusalem, shall enhance and beautify that unity. Love to God and love to the neighbor will be automatic and spontaneous. There will be no parties or groups pitted against each other, for everyone will give glory to Him Who sits upon the throne, each according to the capacity and place assigned to him in the kingdom of heaven. **THUS NO QUESTIONS** will arise. No problems will be debated, for there will be no problems or questions, in the great society of heaven.

But while we are in the midst of this world, various questions arise because of sin and darkness that now rule in the hearts of men. Now, the rule applies of father against son, and son against father, employer against employee, servant against his master, nation against nation and people against people. It becomes apparent therefore what the calling of the church is to answer with the Word, the various social questions that may disturb the mind of its members. It must preach the Word, in season and out of season. It must proclaim the righteousness of the Kingdom of heaven, as the only sure answer to all questions that arise. To the socially evil world in the home it must preach the oneness of those whom God has joined together, which no man may put asunder, declaring at the same time that the husband and wife that do not principally reveal the unity of Christ and His Church, is an abomination to the Holy God. To the socially evil world of education, it must boldly proclaim that its own teachings must lead to its own downfall and that it is educating a society wherein foolishness is honored and true wisdom is opposed. See for instance first Corinthians one. To the rich that keep the hire of the wage-earner that reaps his fields, the Church can have but one call-

ing. It is to preach James to him and that therefore his treasures and wealth are corrupt and they are heaping up treasures for him in hell. To the poor, who groan under the oppressors' heel, and who seek their deliverance and social relief in the union of other like-minded men, the Church must proclaim that they are not poor in spirit and that therefore they cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven. The stark truth of Scripture is that the MEEK *alone*, shall inherit the earth, and that all others, even though they be laborer and thus a poor of the land, shall not be called blessed. There is no true social security for the working-man except in the socially perfect world of Christ. This must remain the message of the Church in the midst of this socially evil world. It is not otherwise with respect to the community or the State. Civic righteousness is abominable to God unless it is rooted in the righteousness of the Cross of Christ. Yea, to all men must be brought the truth: "Unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven". So also the nation, or citizens of that nation, refusing to recognize God or His precepts must indeed reap the reward of the curse of the Most High God. Only righteousness exalteth a nation and unrighteousness debases it.

The Church must demand these things of all the units of society. And the members of the Church of Christ are duty bound to let this light shine in the various spheres of their life in relation to other men. You may answer that it is a hopeless demand, because that demand and its obedience, implies the love of God in the hearts of all concerned, and this love of God in their hearts is impossible for that Love of God is His gift of grace through Jesus Christ our Lord. Very well, then we MUST come with the impossible demand to "Love God and your neighbor as yourself". That it is impossible for man is man's own fault. That the situation then is hopeless in an evil-worldly social order, is also man's fault, for man has made himself a hopeless man, and God's curse rests upon him righteously. But regardless of the hopelessness of the world social structure changing itself, it is nevertheless the clear calling of the Church to let the Light shine in the darkness, and itself must walk in that light, and then the corrupt society of sin, seeing your good works and conversation, will glorify God in the day of visitation.

In the meantime that hopelessness must never characterize the Church. For the Church has the hope within her of a better, yea, a new social order wherein righteousness shall forever dominate all our relations with one another. Surely even now, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, the Church must live the life of that now social order. It must center all its social life and activities in the Church and not in

the world. It must seek with all her heart the communion of the saints. It must reflect in all its society life, the life that is from above. Even as the Heidelberg Catechism speaks of the Christian living even now the life of the eternal Sabbath by abstaining from sin and darkness and by walking in newness of life, so also the Church must live the life of the heavenly social order. The Church must dwell in the light. Her members must seek one another, must forgive one another, must support her own poor and edify one another in love. This occasions much self-denial and sacrifice it is true. It often causes grief and sorrow and batt'e. But therefore the Church must not despair. She has the hope of the eternal society of heaven. She must therefore hope to the end for the grace that is brought to her at the revelation of Jesus Christ in glory. Then the new Jerusalem will descend from heaven, wherein there will be no grief, nor sorrow, nor distress, nor battle, nor pain. In that New Jerusalem there will be a new world order. Nay, not as the modern dictators dream of. Not as Hitler or Churchill or Roosevelt desires. But the new social order of God's eternal covenant. In that new social order there will be no questions of social security, for all will be secure for ever and ever. There we will behold no class struggle of one unit of society against the other, but we will enjoy perfect unity of all nations, tribes tongues and classes. They will ALL be clothed with white linen and ALL will have the victor's crown. As Isaiah prophesied: "None shall there destroy in all the Holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord". At present in this world we are social outcasts. The world, if it takes notice at all, laughs and derides the small societies and social functions of the Church of Christ. And essentially we are outcasts from the social life of the world, in all its spheres. But the new social order will exclude all those who are not in Christ. Only God's society of friends will be there, and. . . what a friend we have in Jesus.

L. V.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On Sunday, November 23, our dear parents,

MENKO FLIKKEMA, and
ANNA FLIKKEMA—Vrieling

commemorated their 25th wedding anniversary. We, their children, thank our heavenly Father that He has spared them thus far, and express our gratitude for their loving care and guidance, and pray that His blessings may continue to rest upon them in the years to come.

Their grateful children:—John, George, Olga, Albert, Fenna, Garret, Agnes, Phillip, Jeanette Anna.—Manhattan, Montana.

An Orderly Home

I well remember that when I was a boy we had a rather large family living in our neighborhood to which my mother and several neighbors often referred as "Een huishouding van Jan Steen". When I was a rather small boy I never had heard who Jan Steen was, but I certainly knew what was meant by the expression "A household of Jan Steen".

The particular family I am speaking of at present, was not a well-regulated family. The father was a drunkard, and the mother of the home was slouchy and always gadding with the neighbor ladies; she was a veritable walking news-paper. The children were very unruly and naughty, and it seemed that everybody in the family did what he or she pleased to do. If you saw the members of the family on the street they looked untidy, grimy, and their clothes hung like bags around their bodies. We children avoided those boys and girls. And if you happened to peek into their home you would see at a glance that these people were poor. They had very little furniture, and what they did have was all scratched and marked-up. The shabby looking chairs were creaky, not so much of age as of abuse. You'd get the impression that the beds were never made, clothes were never hung on their proper places. Everything in the house was turned up-side down, disarranged and strewn all over the place as if a cyclone had struck the house. Yes, and the moment you'd put your nose inside the door an offensive odor greeted your nostrils. In the morning when the children came out of bed they all scrambled for their clothes. What a noise and yelling before everybody had found what belonged to him or her. Socks were gone, dresses had disappeared and nobody was ready for school on time. Hastily the children snatched a bite to eat and quite often they were late for School at that. And the teacher had a very hard time to teach them a few manners and a little orderliness. And then you ought to come around when they had dinner or supper. It seldom happened that all the children were home. And the way everybody behaved, father and mother included, you'd think that there was a miniature warfare going on. Sometimes the Bible was read at the table, but there never was any reverence. They were always poor and had plenty of debt besides, although at times they made a lot of money. Well, to make a long story short, after a number of years this "household of Jan Steen" left the Reformed Church. And even unto this day the members of this family do not amount to anything, with the exception of one girl who worked for a good, respectable family for years.

What was the trouble with this "Jan Steen" family? Perhaps you say: "The fear of God did not dwell in

this home". That is, of course, quite correct. But the point I want to emphasize at present is that this particular family was a *disorderly* family. And disorder means: to throw out of order, disarrange, disturb the natural functions. And that was exactly characteristic of the "household of Jan Steen". And, alas, there are in our christian circles, why should we talk about the world, more households of Jan Steen, although in varying degrees. Perhaps the Jan Steen family can teach many of us a little lesson about order in the home.

It seems to me this rather long introduction vividly illustrates, by way of contrast, the idea and meaning of an orderly home. An orderly home is a well regulated home. A home where there is system, harmony, proper arrangement. To be very specific on this point, let us by way of illustration mention a few things which can be found in an orderly home. To begin with, an orderly home is one where the furniture is arranged in the proper way, and the moment you enter such a home it strikes you the manager of the house displays good judgment as far as the arrangement is concerned. Everything stands in its proper place, it looks neat, tidy and immaculately clean and glistening and bright. Such a home has the finishing touch. But also as to the arrangement of the work, a stranger will soon observe that the house he has entered is a well regulated family. Mother works on schedule as much as circumstances permit. The work in the home is done at the proper time. Meals are served on time, dishes are cleaned on time and not left to accumulate and clutter the sink to such an extent that the girls don't know where to start. And whether you look in the closets or in the drawers, everything has its own place. And all of the children know where to find their clothes, playthings, school-books, etc. And even though mother may be busy everything gets its turn, and the house smells clean and fresh. And if you happen to step in during meal time you will notice that all the members of the family are seated around the table. In an atmosphere of quietness they partake of the meal. True, the baby can be quite noisy at times and the smaller boys will transgress the laws of proper table manners. But on the whole there is an atmosphere of quietness, rest, and there is a feeling of security. And when father reads the Bible and leads in prayer the entire family shows the needed reverence. For the children there is a time to eat and a time to rest, a time to play and a time to work. And the entire family seems to have an interest in the things that are going on and everybody has a task assigned to him, and that task is carried out. There is law and order. Of course the family is punctual in Church-going, they never miss a service. The children are in school on time and the teacher is well pleased with their behavior. The family is respected in the neighborhood, father is known as a hard worker and mother as a

diligent house-keeper. The entire regulating of the family, both in the home proper and outside the home, is a matter of team work.

Such a home we can rightfully call "An orderly home".—I am afraid that you find no home where perfection is reached, but I hope that in all our homes we strive for the ideal.

We might ask the question: does Scripture give us instruction as to the orderliness of our home? Does God command that our home should be orderly? Indeed! To mention a few things: God Himself is a God of order. All His works both in nature and grace reveal this. God's work is not one grand confusion, on the contrary it is one harmonious whole. God is a God of order and system. Think in this connection of creation, which is one great harmonious whole. Think of the description of God's majestic work in nature as we find it in Psalm 19 and many other places. Think of the succession of days and months, of seasons and times, etc. The order, symmetry, harmony of God's works reflects the harmony of God's Being and His glorious virtues. But this is also true in the realm of grace. Everything happens at the proper time, and history is one great unfolding of the plan of God's salvation. Nowhere is confusion and disorder but all things in heaven and on earth, in the world and in the church are thus guided by God's providential care that they will reach their climax and culmination in the day of Jesus Christ. Besides this the Bible, particularly in connection with the Old Testament ceremonies often emphasizes the idea of order and arrangement. And, to mention one more example, when you read in Proverbs 13 the beautiful description of a virtuous woman, you will understand at once that her home is an orderly home.

Many more things could be said about this subject, but I must hasten to the end.

I think we all can agree that we live in a world of confusion and disorder, of hatred and war. We also can agree to this that the present confused world reflects the life of the disorderly home. After all, your State, your Nation, your Church, your School, your Society is but a reflection of the home. Where the home, the smallest cell of the human society is disorderly and ruined, you will have a disorderly, ruined, confused world. It is always true, a stream never rises higher than its source.

As to the value of an orderly home, and I am speaking now about our christian homes, we come to the following conclusions and observations:

1. An orderly home reflects the grace of our covenant God. Our life, our conduct, our home must be a reflection of the life of our God. A disorderly home tells you that there is something basically wrong with the fear of the Lord in such a home.

2. In the second place, because God has placed us

in an orderly universe, and because He accomplishes all things in an orderly way, we are bound to God's law and order which are everywhere apparent. Hence, only by being orderly ourselves in every respect, can we fulfill our life's calling in the sphere of God's law and order.

3. With respect to our children it is absolutely necessary that our home be orderly. You can only properly instruct your children, also in the ways of God's covenant, when your home is orderly. Because an orderly home is instruction in itself by example and precept, but also gives you time and opportunity for specific covenant instruction.

4. In the fourth place, our children will reflect in their behaviour, outside of the narrow circle of the family, their home-life. Teachers and preachers can tell you that they can know, to quite an extent, your home life by the behavior, manners and orderliness of your children.

5. And, finally, it is a great blessing for the covenant child to be reared in an orderly home. He will learn to obey, he will know the value of discipline, of work, of duty, of harmony, of system. He will develop into well balanced maturity and grow up to respectable man- and womanhood. And the child will practice in his future life what he was taught at home. Confused, unsystematic, disorderly actions bespeak a confused, disorderly mind. And it is very hard to quit bad habits. Therefore also with respect to orderliness the saying of Scripture can be applied: "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it."

Indeed, our christian homes should be orderly homes.

J. D.

Contribution

BECLOUDING THE ISSUE

The members of the Protestant Chr. Ref. Church of Kalamazoo, Michigan, were very much surprised on Sunday morning, Oct. 19, to be treated to, what evidently was meant to be a "vindication-sermon" by the Rev. H. Danhof. Preaching on Matt. 12:33, he informed the congregation, that according to his fruit-bearing, he is a good tree.

This is a strange affair indeed. Why should a consistory instruct its minister to preach such a sermon?

If anything had been brought against Rev. Danhof this should have been treated by him according to the Scriptural rule of Matt. 18. If this did not bring any result, then it would become a matter for the consistory and, finally, after much admonishing, a matter of church-discipline. If it then had been proven that the Rev. Danhof was blameless, the consistory would make an official announcement of the same; this would be

very necessary if the matter were public.

Certainly, no Reformed consistory would ever leave it up to its minister to make a "personal" announcement concerning this, or would leave it up to the discretion of the Minister, himself being involved, as to how to make this public to the congregation. But is it possible that this thing was done by the Rev. Danhof on his own accord? This, of course, would be entirely out of order and would call for a reprimand of the Rev. Danhof by the consistory. The consistory has evidently neglected to do this, for in the afternoon-sermon there was staged a "repeat performance" in which the "preekstoel" became a "steekstoel". This sermon must have meant to be the "toepassings preek". The whole affair was a very negative thing, far from edifying and entirely out of order.

But what did this all seem to be about? Was this "vindication-sermon" meant to be an attempt on the part of Rev. Danhof to clear himself of the accusation done officially by the Protestant Reformed Denomination, semi-officially by our elders on house-visitation, and by our elders in private conversation, of being a schismatic and the cause of the separation of our congregation from the Prot. Reformed denomination?

But how could a Reformed consistory instruct its Minister to clear himself that way. Again, whereas this is a public affair, the consistory would have to make an official announcement of the Rev. Danhof's innocence, if this had been proven by the historical facts. But could it be that this was done by the Rev. Danhof, on his own accord? Again we say, then the consistory should have severely reprimanded its Minister, and prevented a "repeat performance" not only, but informed the congregation of the fact that the Minister had done wrong in his arbitrary way of doing things. Of course we realize the difficulty, of a consistory in an independent congregation, but this does not alter these things any. The consistory has neglected its duty in this affair.

But there is another element yet in this procedure we dislike and call dishonest. It has become a habit by now, that Rev. Danhof and a certain group, like to present this thing, as if it were a matter for or against the Rev. Danhof, and his person, and that everything hinges on him. This we call "beclouding the issue". What then is the issue? It is this:

According to historical facts, as they are recorded, have we in 1925 been separated from the group that is now called the Protestant Reformed Church. This was done against the will of the elders, who maintained that there was no reason for separation, there was no principal difference. The Rev. Danhof wanted the separation and when the elders maintained the wrong of such a step and did not agree to separation, the Rev. Danhof forced the issue, by threatening to resign from the office of the ministry, if they did not give in. The

elders evidently not as strong in faith as they should have been, yielded and without ever giving the congregation a voice in the matter, separated us. These facts are testified to by our elder C. Vander Roest, P. Dyksterhuis and other elders and ex-elders.

This separation we wish to terminate, because it was sinful, it has proven to be detrimental to our congregation, and it is against reformed principles to remain an independent congregation where there are others of the same confession.

This also was the conviction of the sixty-two people (and many more) who presented a petition not so long ago. This petition read as follows:

TO THE CONSISTORY OF THE FIRST PROTESTING
CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH OF KALAMAZOO,
MICHIGAN.

Dear Brethren:

We, the undersigned, members of the above mentioned church, hereby petition the Consistory to call a special meeting of the congregation to discuss the reunion with the Protestant Reformed Church Denomination. We are one in principle with these brethren and the undersigned are against remaining any longer an independent congregation.

To avoid an other split in our congregation at the demise of our present minister, and above all for the sake of saving our youth for the Protestant Reformed truth, for which we were cast out from the fellowship of the Christian Reformed Church, and for which cause the Lord privileged us to suffer, we petition the Consistory to give the congregation an opportunity to exercise, without any hindrance, its calling of the office of the believer and to discuss this matter in a brotherly spirit at a special congregational meeting.

The petitioners never received an answer from the consistory. The Rev. Danhof personally gave a so-called "answer" and "exhortation" from the pulpit the Sunday following, an "exhortation" and "answer" which indeed would look ridiculous in print. Again there the action of Rev. Danhof was out of order and the consistory neglected its duty. Let us face the issue. Let the Rev. Danhof and the consistory confess their wrong in separating us, and if there is guilt on the part of the Protestant Reformed Church, let it be proven and admitted, and let us dwell together for our mutual benefit, our spiritual wellbeing and to the praise of our covenant God.

B. Hoppenbrouwer.

P. Alphenaar.

(Because of lack of space, this article has been delayed until this number.—H. H.)

IN MEMORIAM

The consistory of the Prot. Ref. Church of Manhattan, Montana, hereby wishes to express its sympathy to our brother, Deacon H. Ungersma, in the loss of his father,

HENRY UNGERSMA

May the Lord of all grace comfort the brother and his family in this bereavement.

Rev. H. De Wolf, President.

P. P. Van Dyken, Clerk.