

THE STANDARD *Bearer* A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

VOLUME XVIII.

NOVEMBER 1, 1941

NUMBER 3

MEDITATIE

Bevrijding Van Sions Gevangenen

*U ook aangaande, o Sion! door het bloed
uws verbonds heb Ik uwe gebondenen uit den
kuil, daar geen water in is, uitgelaten. Keert
gijlieden weder tot de sterkte, gij gebonde-
nen, die daar hoopt! ook heden verkondig Ik,
dat Ik uw dubbel zal wedergeven.*

Zach. 9:11, 12,

Verheug u zeer, gij dochter Sions!

Want immers, uw Koning komt tot u, Hij, Dien ge lang verwacht hebt, naar Wiens komst ge met verlangen hebt uitgezien de eeuwen door!

Hij is arm en nederig van gedaante, zachtmoedig, rijdende op een ezel, en op een veulen, een jong der ezelinnen. Maar alleen zoo zal Hij tot u kunnen komen en den strijd aanbinden tegen Sions vijanden, en alleen zoo zal hij kunnen overwinnen!

Want Hij is rechtvaardig; daarom is Hij een Heiland!

Alleen in den weg van Gods recht zal Hij willen strijden. Gods recht zal Hij handhaven ten einde toe, zelfs tot in den bitteren dood des kruises. En in den weg van dat recht Gods zal Hij de overwinning behalen en van den Heere, Zijnen God, het koninkrijk ontvangen. Een "nieuwe orde", een nieuwe wereldorde zal Hij tot stand brengen, een orde des vredes, want "Hij zal de wagens uit Efraïm uitroeien, en de paarden uit Jeruzalem; ook zal de strijdboog uitgeroeid worden". vs. 10. Waar Hij Zelf kwam zonder wereldsche macht, arm en rijdende op een ezel, en waar Hij Zijn rijk stichtte op de grondslagen van Gods recht alleen, daar zal er in dat rijk geen behoefte zijn aan wagens en paarden en strijdbogen. Een rijk des vredes zal het zijn.

En heel de wereld zal in dien vrede deelen!

Want ook den Heidenen zal Hij vrede spreken.

En alom zal Hij regeeren!

Van zee tot zee, en van de rivier tot aan de einden der aarde zal Zijn heerschappij zijn.

Laat Sion zich dan verheugen!

Want in dien dag zullen ook al de gevangenen Sions door Hem worden bevrijd!

Bevrijd uit een hopeloozen kuil, om van Hem dubbel te ontvangen!

Groote blijdschap!

Uwe gebondenen!

Sions gebondenen in een kuil, waarin geen water is!

Letterlijk, en naar den vorm der profetie, wordt hier bedoeld op krijgsgevangenen. Het zijn hier geen gevangenen, die om de een of andere misdaad in boeien geklonken en in de gevangenis geworpen waren. Neen, evangelijk weggevoerden van Sion worden bedoeld, die verder als slaven waren verkocht en nu in slaven-dienst moesten zuchten.

En het zijn niet de ballingen in Babel alleen, of zelfs in de eerste plaats, die hier worden bedoeld. Zoo verstaat men den tekst wel, doch zonder veel reden. Weliswaar waren er ook na de terugkeer nog een hoop Joden in Babylonië. 't Was immers slechts een amechtig hoopsken, dat gehoor had gegeven aan den oproep van Cyrus en teruggekeerd was naar het land der vaders en de stad Gods. En de achtergeblevenen hadden wel de vrijheid om terug te keeren. Maar ze hadden geen begeerte en gevoelden geen behoefte om Babel te verlaten. Ze hadden het in Babel goed naar den zin. Ze deden goede zaken. En in Kanaän moest het wel armoede en lijden worden. Jeruzalem lag in puin!

Doch vele andere gevangenen Sions zuchtten nog in den kuil!

En deze worden hier bedoeld. Immers waren daar altijd nog de gevangenen van Israel, de tien stammen, weggevoerd door de Asyrische wereldmacht lang vóór de Babylonische wegvoering. En ook Efraïm wordt hier toegesproken, zooals duidelijk is uit het verband. Zelfs wordt het "o Sion" in den oorspronkelijken tekst niet gevonden. Het is dus niet onmogelijk om bij het

“ook u” zelfs uitsluitend te denken aan de tien stammen. Ook zij waren immers besprengd met het bloed des verbonds! Maar afgedacht van deze wegvoering der tien stammen waren er nog vele anderen, die door invallende vijanden waren weggevoerd uit het land der belofte en onder een vreemd juk in slavernij moesten zuchten. Ach, had men Israel niet benauwd van zijn jeugd aan? Hadden de ploegers niet op zijn rug geploegd, en hunne voren lang gemaakt? Had niet Syrië reeds Gilead met ijzeren dorschwagens gedorscht? Am. 1:3. En hadden niet de Filistijnen, die aartsvijanden van Gods volk, reeds de schande begaan, niet alleen om van Israel gevankelijk weg te voeren, maar erger nog, om ze als slaven aan Edom te verkoopen? Am. 1:6. En had niet het rijke en wulpsche Tyrus handel gedreven met de kinderen des verbonds? Met eene volkomene wegvoering hadden ze Gods volk overgeleverd aan Edom, Am. 1:9; om hen maar verre van hunne landpale te brengen, hadden Tyrus en Sion ze zelfs aan de Grieken verkocht. Men had om Gods volk gedobbeld, het lot over hen geworpen, een knechtje gegeven voor een hoer, en een maagdje verkocht voor wijn! Joël 3:3, 6.

Ach, letterlijk over heel de wereld waren deze gebonden van Juda en Efraïm:

En ellendig, ja, hopeloos was hun toestand!

Er scheen geen uitweg. Uit menschelijk oogpunt was verlossing en terugkeer onmogelijk. Ze waren gebonden als in een kuil zonder water, waar niemand meer eenige aandacht aan wijdt, dien ieder voorbijgaat zonder een blik er in te slaan, waar ze dus niets anders konden verwachten dan dat ze van honger en dorst zouden omkomen!

Hopeloze toestand!

Zoo zijn deze gebonden naar den letterlijken vorm der profetie, die zich altijd aansluit bij den werkelijken toestand van Gods volk op het moment, waarop de openbaring werd gegeven en de profetie werd uitgesproken.

Toch moogt ge hier niet bij blijven. Deedt ge het wel, ge zoudt immers de schaduw verkiezen boven de werkelijkheid, en bij de schaduw blijven zitten nu de werkelijkheid reeds gekomen is. Vergeten we het toch niet, dat deze belofte van bevrijding der gebonden in onmiddelijk verband staat met de komst van Sions Koning, arm en rijdende op een ezel, en op een veulen, een jong der ezelinnen. Door Hem immers zal deze bevrijding tot stand komen. In Zijne dagen zal ze werkelijkheid worden. Maar dan zal Hij den Heidenen ook van vrede spreken. Dan zal er geen onderscheid meer zijn tusschen Jood en Griek. Dan hebben de schaduwen uitgediend, dan is de werkelijkheid gekomen. Dan is Sion boven en Jeruzalem in den hemel. En dan zal God door dezen Koning alle Zijne gevangenen wederbrengen, ja, ook uit Efraïm en Juda, maar ook uit alle volken der wereld!

Gebonden zijn ze van nature: ze liggen midden in den dood. Maar burgers van het hemelsch en eeuwig Kanaän zijn ze naar de verkiezing en door de genade Gods over hen. Ballingen zijn ze, ver van hun eigen vaderland, ver van Gods Huis, van tempel en altaar, in zichzelf verbannen van Gods verbond en gemeenschap der vriendschap. Gebonden zijn ze in een kuil, waarin geen water is; beladen met een schuld, waaraan geen betalen is; onder de heerschappij van eene zondemacht, waaraan geen ontkomen is; zittende in de duisternis der schaduw des dood, waaruit geen uitweg is; behoorende tot eene wereld, die onder den toorn Gods ligt, die niet af te weren is. . . .

Geestelijk gebonden. . . .

Maar behoorende tot het volk, dat God Zich ten erve verkoren heeft, geliefde kinderen!

Daarom worden ze dan ook, in de profetie, vertegenwoordigd, niet door de Joden alszoodanig, niet door alle gebonden zelfs, zeker niet door die ballingen, die het rijke Babel verkozen boven het in puin liggend Jeruzalem!

Maar door de gebonden, die daar hoopten!

Die zagen op de belofte, en die in het midden van een uit menschelijk oogpunt hopelooze ellende uitzagen naar de vervulling!

Wier oogen verlangden om des Heeren zaligheid te zien!

Gebonden, die voorwerpelijk in Sions Koning een vaste hope hadden.

Die straks ook, door de genade Gods, op Hem zouden leeren hopen!

Hopen op de volkomene bevrijding!

Sions gebonden!

Heerlijke vrijheid!

Des te heerlijker, omdat het eene dubbele verlossing is!

Uit den diepen kuil naar den hoogen hemel! Uit eene hopelooze gevangenis tot in een staat van hoogste, eeuwige vrijheid!

O zeker, alweer rekenend met den letterlijken vorm dezer profetie, en ons plaatsend op het standpunt van het historisch moment dezer openbaring, kunnen we slechts zeggen, dat hier aan de Joodsche slaven, die onder de heerschappij van vreemden zuchtten, beloofd wordt, dat ze uit hun slavernij zullen worden verlost, en dat hun nu wordt toegeroepen, dat ze zullen wederkeeren naar het land Kanaän, naar de sterkte, Jeruzalem, de stad Gods.

Doch bij dien profetischen vorm mogen we niet blijven staan, eenvoudig omdat de Schrift ons noopt om verder te zien.

Is het niet de vrijheid, die bewerkstelligd wordt door Sions Koning, waarvan hier sprake is? Is Hij het niet, Die als Knecht des Heeren de opdracht had om deze gebonden uit den kuil te laten, en Die Zelf

van deze opdracht spreekt in Jes. 61:1: "De Geest des Heeren HEEREN is op Mij, omdat de Heere Mij gezalfd heeft, om eene blijde boodschap te brengen den zachtmoedigen; Hij heeft Mij gezonden om te verbinden de gebrokenen van harte, om den gevangenen vrijheid uit te roepen, en den gebondenen opening der gevangenis"?

Of zeide dan de Koning Sions, toen Hij nog pas was gekomen, het Zelf niet te Nazareth: "De Geest des Heeren is op Mij, daarom heeft Hij Mij gezalfd; Hij heeft Mij gezonden, om den armen het evangelie te verkondigen, om te genezen, die gebroken zijn van harte; om den gevangenen te prediken loslating, en den blinden het gezicht, om den verslagenen heen te zenden in vrijheid". . . . en, let wel: "Heden is deze Schrift in uwe ooren vervuld"?

Neen, neen, niet bij eene aardsche verlossing van lichamen gebonden en mogen we blijven staan!

Van waarachtige, geestelijke, eeuwige vrijmaking spreekt dit woord!

Van eene vrijmaking, die eene dubbele weergave inhoudt, eene dubbele vertroosting over de gebondenheid in den kuil, getuigt deze belofte. Het is de verlossing uit diepten van ellende tot in hoogten van hemelsche blijdschap en heerlijkheid; uit eenen staat van nimmer te delgen schuld tot dien van eene nooit meer te verliezen gerechtigheid; uit de slavernij van de machten der zonde en ongerechtigheid tot de allerhoogste vrijheid der heerlijkheid der kinderen Gods; uit den druk des toorns Gods en der verdoemelijkheid tot de genieting der eeuwige gunst en gemeenschap der vriendschap; uit bange duisternis tot het "licht dat van Zijn aanzicht straalt" en, dat de blijdschap ten hoogsten toppunt doet stijgen; uit banden des doods tot het eeuwig zalig leven in Gods tabernakel; uit de verdrukking dezer wereld tot de eeuwige gelukzaligheid en heerlijkheid van het Nieuwe Jeruzalem, de nieuwe hemelen en de nieuwe aarde!

Ook heden verkondig ik het u, o, Sion!

Dubbel zal Ik u wedergeven!

Hij, de Koning Israels, zal het doen!

Hij zal het doen, u uit den diepen kuil, waarin geen water is, optrekken tot in de allerhoogst denkbare heerlijkheid, door Zijne almogende genade. Want Hij zal Zelf van de aarde worden verhoogd, door de diepten van het kruis tot in de hoogste hemelen, en dan zal Hij allen tot Zich trekken, trekkend u door Zijn Geest, wederbarend, verlichtend, heiligend, bewarend, altijd trekkend de hoogte in, tot Hij u uit den kuil des grafs trekt in de eeuwige heerlijkheid der opstanding.

En Hij doet dat door Zijn Woord.

Want Hij roept den gebondenen gevangenen toe: Keert gijlieden weder tot de sterkte, gij gebondenen, die daar hoopt!

Komt tot de sterkte, tot Jeruzalem, de stad Gods, de Kerk, die sterke vesting, die zelfs door de poorten

der hel niet kan worden overweldigd!

En let wel: Hij is het, Die roept!

En, o wonder! als Hij roept, dan vallen de banden van de geboeide polsen, dan worden de enkelen verlost uit de omknelling der ketenen, dan komen de voeten uit den stok. . . .

Dan klimmen de gebondenen uit den kuil. . . .

En dan keeren ze weder tot de sterkte!

Wonderlijke verlossing!

Souvereine genade!

Heel deze vrijmaking wordt immers bewerkstelligd door het bloed des verbonds!

En het bloed des verbonds spreekt van niets anders dan eeuwige, ongehoudene, soevereine Goddelijke genade!

Want het is alles Godes!

Het verbond is Godes. O, zeker, de tekst spreekt van het bloed *uws* verbonds. Het verbond is ook onzer. Maar dan toch altijd zoo, dat het ons verbond wordt, doordat God Zijn verbond aan ons schenkt, en met ons opricht, aan ons bevestigt, met ons houdt. Anders zou het niet kunnen. Want het verbond is Gods eeuwige vriendschap met ons in Christus. Hij maakt het. Hij richt het op. Hij vervult alle "voorwaarden". Hij geeft het ons met alle geestelijke zegeningen in den hemel in Christus. Hij schenkt ons ook alles, wat noodig is, om in dat verbond te staan en te volharden ten einde toe!

Vrije genade!

Rustend alleen in eeuwige, soevereine verkiezing!

Want ook het bloed des verbonds is Godes!

O, zeker, ook hier is het bloed des verbonds, als we gaan staan op het standpunt van den tijd dezer profetie, nog altijd niets anders dan het bloed, dat voortdurend en altijd weer opnieuw onder en voor Israel gestort werd, het bloed van stieren en bokken. Met bloed storting ontvingen ze op den achtsten dag allen het teeken des verbonds. En door bloed alleen konden ze altijd opnieuw in Gods verbond ingaan, en ging de Hoogepriester op den grooten verzoendag het heiligdom binnen.

Doch ook dit was slechts schaduw.

En de werkelijkheid kwam door Sions Koning, arm, zachtmoedig, rijdende op een ezel, rechtvaardig en een Heiland! Hij kwam met het waarachtige bloed des verbonds, en stortte het, gehoorzaam, in liefde, Gods recht betrachtend, aan het hout des kruises; het bloed des verbonds, omdat in dat bloed Gods recht voldoening kreeg. . . .

Gods bloed!

En door dat bloed des verbonds alleen worden de gevangenen bevrijd!

En staan ze in eeuwige vrijheid!

Om 't eeuwig welbehagen!

H. H.

The Standard Bearer

A PROTESTANT REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY

Published by

The Reformed Free Publishing Association
1101 Hazen Street, S. E.

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Communications relative to subscription should be addressed to MR. R. SCHAAFSMA, 1101 Hazen St., S. E., Grand Rapids, Mich. All Announcements and Obituaries must be sent to the above address and will not be placed unless the regular fee of \$1.00 accompanies the notice.

Subscription \$2.50 per year

Entered as second class mail at Grand Rapids, Michigan

EDITORIALS

The Biblical Viewpoint

In this world, especially the modern world, with its flood of literature in the form of magazines and newspapers, and its incessant radio broadcasts, it is very easy indeed to become acquainted with the world's viewpoint with respect to anything at all. Predominantly that viewpoint, the viewpoint of Man, is being presented of any topic that is being discussed. And it is not easy for the Church and for the individual believer to escape the danger of adopting this viewpoint and to maintain his own, or rather Scripture's viewpoint with respect to the same realities and events that are evaluated by the world. Before we know it, we are under the spell of the world's presentation of matters, fall in line with it, adopt its standards as our own, and speak the same language as mere Man, whose wisdom is always from below, earthly, devilish, because he refuses to live by the higher light of the Word of God.

An example of this we have in our discussion of the present European conflict.

It is but natural that it is the topic of the day and even of the hour. It is uppermost in men's minds, for they all realize that it deeply effects their earthly destinies. And it occupies the chief place in the news that reaches us over the radio and through the daily paper and the various magazines that are offered for sale on the newsstands. And it is made the subject of discussion by many a news analyst and commentator. Opinions on the subject are offered several times a day by war experts and economists, by university professors as well as by lesser lights.

And overwhelmingly, if not almost exclusively, the viewpoint taken in all these opinions, evaluations and discussions is that of the world, of mere Man. The matter is presented as if there are mere earthly and human interests at stake, such as the question of a new world-order, or new European order, or whether we shall be able to do business with Hitler, or that of democracy vs. Nazism and Fascism, or of "the four liberties", or the important question of interventionism and isolationism, the question whether our country shall be kept out of the war, and whether our boys are going to be sent into the conflict, the question of our own self defense, of taxes, production, training, equipment, sending supplies to Hitler's opponents, etc. etc. Important questions these are, no doubt, but always they concern mere earthly, human, temporal aspects of the present war. Besides, the question as to the pos-

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sibility of Hitler's becoming ultimately victorious and dominant in Europe, if not in the world, is considered from the same human and worldly standpoint. The powers (number of men, equipment, efficiency, etc.) on both sides are compared, the possibility of America's being able ultimately to equal and to surpass Germany in producing implements of war and in training an army, the problem that faces the German dictator of keeping the conquered nations in the occupied territory of Europe under his thumb,—all these factors are taken into account and discussed pro and con. And again, they are, indeed, essential and very important questions, but always it is the human factor, and that factor alone, that is being considered. And even the important question whether or not we shall enter the war on the side of England is being weighed only, or almost exclusively, from the utilitarian point of view, the viewpoint of our own national benefit. We are made to feel that this is Man's war, and that, although it may be a question whether it is Hitler or Churchill, Great Britain or Germany, that will ultimately hold the reins, Man is in control of this conflict.

Such is the predominant note in all the news we hear, in all the discussions that reach us through radio or through the printed page.

It is the spirit of the world that is explaining things to us. And it is exceedingly difficult to escape the spell of this spirit.

Yet, there is certainly a higher viewpoint. And it is equally certain that it is the calling of the Church and of the individual believer to maintain this higher viewpoint and to give expression to it in the midst of the world. It is the viewpoint of Scripture. And this viewpoint is that God is the Lord, that Christ is exalted at the right hand of God, and that this is God's war. It is the viewpoint that things do proceed "according to plan", indeed, but not according to Hitler's plan, but according to the counsel of the only Potentate of potentates, the Lord of lords, the King of kings. It is the viewpoint that the present conflagration was kindled, indeed, by the fire of Man's ambition, lust, pride, covetousness, malice, hatred and desire to dominate; but that it is, nevertheless, a catastrophe, a judgment sent into the world by Him that sitteth upon the throne of the universe, and Who laughs in the heaven at all the vain raging of puny man against Him and against His Anointed.

That is the viewpoint of Scripture throughout. According to this viewpoint Hitler is nothing but the rod of God's anger to chastise the nations, the axe wherewith He heweth, the saw which He draweth. The red horse of Revelation 6 takes its course through the world only when Christ opens the second seal. The two hundred million of triple monsters appear only upon the command of the Voice from the four horns of the altar. Rev. 9. The way of the kings of the east

is prepared only when the sixth angel pours out his vial upon the river Euphrates to dry it up. Rev. 16. The nations that live on the four corners of the earth arise for war only when Christ releases the devil. Rev. 20. God is the Lord also of war. Things proceed according to His plan!

And this viewpoint is more important than the philosophy of mere Man. In the light of this higher viewpoint, even Hitler is only an instrument in the hand of the Most High, "the rod of His anger", and we may well talk about other than mere utilitarian interests before we reach the conclusion that we dare to stop or have the right to stop this "rod" in the hand of God. And, as believers, we know, as we stand in the light of this Scriptural viewpoint of the present catastrophe, that all things must work together unto the coming of the day of the Lord. We have Christ's communique: "things proceed according to plan." And we know that all is well.

H. H.

An Apparent Conflict

The "America First Committee", in a brief pamphlet recently distributed by them, reminds the President of the United States, and the American people, of some "solemn and sacred pledges" Mr. Roosevelt made during his 1940 election campaign. He said:

"We are arming ourselves not for any purpose of conflict or *intervention in foreign disputes*. I repeat again that I stand on the platform of our party; we will not participate in foreign wars and will *not* send our *Army, Naval or Air Forces* to fight in foreign lands outside of the Americas except in case of attack.

"It is for peace that I have labored; and it is for peace that I shall labor all the days of my life".

This was declared in a speech held in Philadelphia on Oct. 23, 1940.

And again he said:

"We look at the old world of Europe today. It is an ugly world, poisoned by hatred, and greed and fear. We can see what has been the inevitable consequence of that poison—it has been war.

"And we look at this country, built by generations of peaceable, friendly men and women who had in their hearts faith—faith that the good life can be obtained by those who work for it.

"We know that we are determined to defend our country and with our neighbors to defend this hemisphere. We are strong in our defense.

"*The first purpose of our foreign policy is to keep our country out of war.*"

This was in Boston on Oct. 30, 1940. And in the same speech Mr. Roosevelt committed himself to a very definite pledge:

"And while I am talking to you, *fathers*, and *mothers*, I give you one more assurance. I have said this before, but I shall say it *again*, and *again*, and *again*, *your boys are not going to be sent into any foreign wars*."

"They are going into training to form a force so strong that, by its very existence, it will keep the threat of war far away from our shores. Yes, the purpose of our defense is defense."

In New York, on Oct. 28, 1940, the President expressed himself as follows:

"In 1935 in the face of growing dangers throughout the world, your government undertook to eliminate the hazards which in the past had led to war. *We made it clear that ships flying the American flag could not carry munitions to a belligerent; and that they must stay out of war zones*."

And in Brooklyn, on Nov. 1, 1940, Mr. Roosevelt declared:

"I am fighting to keep this nation prosperous and at peace. I am fighting to keep our people out of foreign wars and keep foreign conceptions of government out of our United States."

These are strong statements.

And we like to believe that our President was sincere when he made them, and that they were not mere campaign pledges, which are too frequently made and violated for the people to believe. It is also true that our boys have not yet been sent into foreign wars, nor has war been declared by our Government against the axis powers. Perhaps, the President is convinced that his foreign policy is the only, or at least the surest and safest way to keep war away from our own shores. It is even possible that he can judge of the situation better than anyone else in the country. Or, perhaps, for our President is also a mere human, it is possible that under the force of circumstances, Mr. Roosevelt is compelled to change his policy and to eat his own words of 1940.

Yes, we do like to believe that Mr. Roosevelt is sincere.

But the fact remains that his actual policy makes it very difficult for many Americans to believe that he is pursuing the right course to remain true to his pledges.

We are thinking now of our marines in Iceland.

We are having in mind our President's order to "shoot first".

We are thinking of the arming of our merchant ships.

And we are thinking of the steps taken to repeal the Neutrality Act.

Does Mr. Roosevelt really believe that he is pursuing the surest way to keep our country out of war?

It cannot be denied that there is an apparent conflict between the President's campaign pledges of 1940 and almost every step he has taken since that time.

But also Mr. Roosevelt's heart is in the Lord's hand "as rivers of water".

That is our comfort.

H. H.

The Triple Knowledge

Exposition Of The Heidelberg Catechism

III.

LORD'S DAY II.

1.

The Law As Norm.

Q. 3. Whence knowest thou thy misery? Out of the law of God.

Q. 4. What doth the law require of us? Christ teaches us that briefly Matt. 23:37-40, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first and great commandment; and the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Q. 5. Canst thou keep all these things perfectly? In no wise; for I am prone by nature to hate God and my neighbor.

Proceeding now from the standpoint that true comfort, also true Christian comfort, is not a mere matter of the emotions, nor of inexplicable mystic experience, but is also a consideration of the mind, of which one is able to give an intelligent account and in which one may be instructed, the Catechism asks the question: "Whence knowest thou thy misery?" Three things, we recall, one must know in order to live and die happily in this true comfort. And the first of these was: "how great my sins and miseries are". Upon a

discussion of this part of the Christian comfort our instructor now enters.

We must clearly understand the meaning and purpose of the question. The question does not mean the same as: "how knowest thou that thou art miserable?" This would have no sense. That man is miserable is simply a matter of universal experience. The misery of "life and death" is too real to be in need of verification. Every individual man can testify for himself that he is aware of a good deal of evil, of suffering and sorrow, of "misfortune" and adversity in life; and he knows that he is encompassed by death on all sides, so that there is no way out. Man may attempt to drown the consciousness of his misery by drunken revelry, like a man that enjoys his last feast in a death-cell; or he may try to find the golden mean of moderation in sinful pleasure and indulgence in order to elicit from life the greatest possible amount of enjoyment; or he may proudly steel himself to endure suffering without complaint or show of emotion, like the Stoic,—the fact remains that the consciousness of misery is universal. To ask a man in this world how he knows that he is miserable would be quite superfluous. That there is something wrong, something very seriously defective with the world, yea, even that man is sinful, morally corrupt to an extent, everybody knows from his individual experience, and the report of it reaches him every day through his newspaper and over the radio. Or what note is more dominant in the tumult of the world that reaches your home through the air or by the printed sheet, than that of human corruption and human sorrow and death? But it is not the purpose of the Heidelberg Catechism to inquire as to whether and how we are aware that we are miserable. But it would instruct us with regard to the true nature and seriousness of our misery, and to realize this purpose it inquires after the source of our knowledge: "whence knowest thou thy misery?"

It must be admitted that the Catechism here applies the correct method to arrive at true knowledge of our misery. It applies a standard, a criterion, whereby to determine the real nature and cause, as well as the greatness and extent of our misery. It proceeds from the assumption that misery is something abnormal and that in order to discover just what is the character of the abnormality a *norm* must be applied. Abnormal is that which departs from the standard, the norm. A man may, in a general way, realize that his condition is abnormal, that there is something wrong with him, but only when he applies the proper criterion and gauges his condition with it can he know the character and seriousness of the abnormality. It is this truth that is implied in the question that introduces the discussion of our misery in this second Lord's Day of the Heidelberg Catechism. The question means: what norm do you apply to find out what is the nature

of your trouble?

And the question is very important. For it stands to reason that the kind of remedy you seek depends upon the knowledge you have of your misery, and the latter again is certainly determined by the norm you apply. And, in the case under consideration: the misery of man in "life and death", there are only two possibilities in this respect: either you find the norm to be applied in man himself, or you apply a norm from without. Whence knowest thou thy misery? What norm did you and do you apply to determine its nature? In the world man is always measured by himself. Various standards are put up and applied, and accordingly, different remedies are tried to deliver humanity from its misery of "life and death". Sometimes the standard of the philosophy of evolution is applied, according to which man constantly ascended the steep and difficult slope of progress from a very low state. And when this criterion is applied as the "norm", the result is rather satisfactory and flattering to man. After all, the misery of life and death is quite normal. Already the progress man has made is really amazing. And there is a well founded hope that in course of time he will advance to perfection! Or, perhaps, a certain standard of living is applied and we speak of "the abundant life" (rather profanely!) as the normal state for which to strive. In that case, it is conditions, environment that are to blame for the misery of life, at least, not to speak now of death. Or the standard is found in man's conscience, or in intellectual attainment, and we set ourselves to "build character" or to improve education to overcome the misery of man and to eliminate evil from the world.

Whence knowest thou thy misery? the instructor asks of the Christian. What is your criterion? What determines for you what is normal? And the answer is placed upon the lips of the pupil: "Out of the law of God". The law is "normal". Whatever is in agreement with the law is "normal". And whatever departs or is in conflict with the law of God is "abnormal", and therefore, miserable!

What, then, is that law of God?

In general, law is the will of God concerning the nature, position and relationship, operation and movement and life of any creature. We must not think of law as a code, as a rather arbitrary set of precepts, which one may obey or disregard without any necessary evil result. Thus it is with laws of man. You may violate them with impunity as long as there is no representative of the law to arrest you. But the law of God is the living will of God, of the immanent God, Who is present in all creation and Who always maintains and executes His will, and deals with the creature accordingly. You cannot escape it. It besets you from every side. It is a power that blesses you as long as you are and act in harmony with it, but that

crushes and curses you, the moment you transgress. Nor is the law of God an arbitrary expression of the will of God concerning the creature, something that bears no relation to the creature's nature. On the contrary, God's law for each creature is in harmony with the nature of that creature, the one is adapted to the other. And to be and operate in agreement with the law is "normal" for every creature. Disagreement with the law of God is abnormal and results in instant misery.

Thus there is a law for the fish that it shall be and move in the water; the nature of the fish is formed so as to be in harmony with this sphere of its law. To transgress this sphere of the law of God means death. There is a law for the bird in the air for the tree in the soil, for the course of the sun and moon and stars in the firmament, for the temperature of your blood, the count of your pulse, the digestion of your food, the breathing of your lungs. And always that law of God is "normal", and the transgression of that law means misery, destruction, death. For the law of God is the living and mighty will of God, within the sphere of which He created, and within whose bounds it pleases Him to bless the creature.

And so there is a law of God for man as a volitional and intellectual being, as a rational, moral creature, as a personal nature, a free agent, who thinks and wills and speaks and acts as he is motivated from within, from the heart, by the determination and choice of his mind and will. For thus man was created. He was formed from the dust of the ground, and God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and thus man became a living soul. Indeed, he is a living soul and as such he is related to the animals. But in distinction from the animals God *formed* him as to his physical organism, and by His Spirit breathed into him, so that he became a personal being, standing in a definite relation to God and to all creation. The issues of his life are from his heart. He is capable of moral self-determination. And it is of the law of God for this personal, rational and moral nature of man, the law that is in harmony with this free agent and that is "normal" for him, that the Catechism speaks in this second Lord's Day, and which it designates as the source of the knowledge of our misery. Remember that also this law is not a mere code of precepts. Its essence is not the two stone tables which Moses brought with him from the mount. It is not the "ten words" of the Decalogue. These are merely the expression, the revelation of the contents of the law of God. No, also this law is rather to be conceived as the living will of God, which is quite in harmony with the being and nature of man, God's will concerning man's will and life in relation to Himself and to all things; the law which God always maintains and according to which He always blesses man if he moves within the

sphere of that law, and curses him when he transgresses.

What is that law of God?

The Catechism answers this question by quoting the Lord Jesus Himself: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first and great commandment; and the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets". The quotation is from Matt. 22:37-40. The context of the passage in Matthew is interesting. We read: "But when the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together. Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law?" The Sadducees, the rationalistic sect among the Jews, who did not believe that there is a resurrection of the dead, had first tempted the Lord and tried to entrap Him by their sophistry. They had concocted a subtle story about a woman that had been the wife successively of seven brothers; and they were wondering how the Lord could possibly solve the problem as to whose wife this woman was supposed to be in the resurrection. The only possible solution would seem to be that of polyandry. And the Lord had put them to shame by pointing out their fundamental error which concerned their conception of the resurrection itself. "For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God." vs. 30. And at the same time the Lord had attacked them in the very purpose for asking the question and concocting the story: to refute the whole idea that there is a resurrection: "But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." The Sadducees had been put to silence.

Well, the Pharisees had a double interest in this incident, although their interest did not concern the truth at all. On the one hand, they could only rejoice that their enemies, the Sadducees, had been overcome in argument and had been put to shame in public. But on the other hand, they must surely regret the fact that it was Jesus of Nazareth that had scored this victory over the Sadducees, for Him they hated. They have a conference about the matter. And they decide that now they ought to make an attempt to ensnare the Lord in His own arguments. And they delegate one of them, a theologian of first rank, to make the attempt. Hence, he approaches the Lord with the question: "which is the great commandment of the law?"

The learned theologians of that time had developed "the law" into minutest detail. When they spoke of

the law, they referred to a body of hundreds of precepts. But they made a distinction between more or less important commandments. They were even divided among themselves on the question which of the precepts were to be regarded as essential and important, and which might be relegated to the category of non-essential commandments. And when they come to Jesus with the question concerning the "great commandment", they see a possibility to entrap Him, to compel Him to select one of all the commandments as of sole importance, and thereby to characterize the rest of the law as of minor significance. And in the eyes of the public he would be branded as a liberal, a modern! But in His answer the Lord again proves that the question is based upon a very fundamental error. They do not understand the law. They have no proper conception of the essence and true nature of the law. They think it is a code of many precepts, and that they can distinguish mechanically between "the great" commandment, as one of many, and less important precepts. In this they err. If you want to discover the "great commandment", you cannot apply the method of selection from a code; you must rather search for the root of the whole law, for the essence of every precept, for that which touches not the external forms of life but the inner motives of the heart. If you do this, then there is, indeed, a "great commandment", but then it is one that governs all other commandments of God, and from which all are derived. It is the commandment of the love of God!

Love the Lord thy God! Yes, indeed, that is the one great commandment, beside which and apart from which there is none other! For the love of God is emphatically the love of GOD! To love Him means perfection. For God is good. He is the implication of all infinite perfections. He is righteous and holy and true, merciful and just, gracious and faithful. He Himself is love, the bond of perfectness. And you must love *Him*! You must not make or conceive a God of your own imagination, that is like yourself, in order to love that idol. No, you must love the living God, Who is GOD indeed. You must learn humbly from Him Who He is and what He is, and love Him for His own sake, just because He is God and because He is good. And you must *love* Him. Your whole life must be motivated by an intense desire to be in harmony with Him, your mind with His mind, your will with His will, your desires with His desires, your word with His Word, your deed with His deeds; to be pleasing to Him, so that He looks upon you in divine favor and you taste His goodness; to seek and to find Him, and to live in perfect fellowship of friendship with Him.

Yes, that is the great commandment. From this all possible precepts must be derived. It is their root. It expresses the living will of God that besets man on

every side, from which there is no escape, according to which the living God deals with man. And it concerns the whole man. It is not satisfied with any outward performance or show of goodness in the spoken word or the visible act: it lays hold on the heart of man. It does not merely prescribe what man shall *do* or even what he shall think or what he shall contemplate, purpose or desire: it expresses what he shall *be*, that is, what he shall be from a spiritual, ethical viewpoint. For love is a matter of the heart, and the heart concerns the spiritual, ethical status of man's whole nature. His own heart he does not control: the heart controls him. From the heart are the issues of life. As the heart is, so are man's inner desires, thoughts, purposes, motives, aspirations, words and deeds: as the heart is, so is man! And, therefore, this great commandment involves the whole man: all his heart and mind and soul and strength. "Love God" means that you love Him for His own sake with your whole being, with all your thinking and willing, with all your strength, every moment of your existence, in every relationship of your life, with all that you possess. Love of God is all-inclusive. It is either that or nothing, or rather: it is either love God or hate Him! Here you cannot divide or compromise. You cannot serve two masters. The great commandment is inexorable in its absoluteness. It brooks no competition. God is a jealous God!

And, mark you well, it is *the great* commandment. The Lord, in His reply to the tempting lawyer, does not evade the issue. The question was not concerning the greatest commandment, as if there were, indeed, a comparison possible, as if starting from the greatest there is a descending scale of precepts down to the very least of them all. No, the Pharisee had inquired definitely after the one great commandment. And the Lord takes him up. He is not speaking of the greatest commandment. Nor does He reply that there are really two great commandments, a great and a greater, the latter requiring the love of God, the former the love of the neighbor. On the contrary, there is only one first and great (not greatest or greater) commandment, and that is: "thou shalt love the Lord thy God". And if you remark that the Lord, nevertheless, speaks of two commandments, we must call your attention to the fact, that Christ also declares that the second is "like unto the first". And this cannot mean that there are after all two separate commandments of equal value and force, or that you could just as well say that the first commandment is like unto the second. It can only mean, that the second is rooted in the first, or, if you please, that the second, requiring love of the neighbor, is also principally love of God! You must love the neighbor with the same love wherewith you love God! You must love the neighbor *as yourself*, because also yourself you may not love otherwise than

with the love of God and for God's sake! You cannot love yourself unless you love God. You cannot love the neighbor as yourself unless the love of God is the motive power of your life! Yes, indeed, the love of God is the one great commandment!

Take it away and everything falls into ruins! For "on these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets"! And "the law and the prophets" denote the entire Scriptures of the Old Testament. So that we may safely say: the whole Bible depends on these two commandments. For the law is norm. If you distort the norm, you distort everything. If the plumb-line is not normal, your whole house in every line of it is abnormal, and the whole city in which you live stands awry. The love of God is norm. Take it away or distort it, and everything tumbles down: the law and the prophets, the sacrifices and the shadows, repentance and redemption, sin and grace, Christ and the cross and the resurrection, yea, God Himself!

O, indeed, the law of God is norm, and if you want to know the real nature, and the extent of our misery, the very love of God must give us the amazing audacity to apply that norm to ourselves! H. H.

John Huss And The Reformation

John Huss was one of God's faithful witnesses—a man who, on account of his protest against the wickedness in the church and his exaltation of the Bible as the one infallible authority and the sole criterion of life and doctrine, died a martyr's death.

It is said that the Reformation had two forerunners and that one of these was John Huss. The statement is true in the sense that through his witnessing he contributed to the sum and total of those agitation that resulted in the Reformation. If the truth of this contention is to appear, regard must be had first to the state of the church at the time in which Huss lived, second to his career as priest, and thirdly to the abuses in the church which he denounced.

The state of the church.

It had ceased to be true that the free gift of grace is obtainable only through Christ Jesus, the sole mediator of God and man. Superstition, fear, and alarmed imagination had devised numerous other means,—saints and mediators who had gone to their reward and whose duty it was said to be to make intercession in heaven for men on earth. And the earth was filled with pious works—such as sacrifices, observances, and ceremonies of divers kinds—on the grounds of which salvation had to be obtained. Such was the religion of this period.

"The sufferings and merits of Christ were looked upon as an idle tale, or as the fictions of Homer. There was no thought of faith by which we become partakers of the Saviour's righteousness and of the heritage of eternal life. Christ was looked upon as a severe judge, prepared to condemn all who should not have resource to the intercession of the saints, or to the papal indulgences. Other intercessors appeared in his place: first the virgin Mary, like the Diana of paganism, and then the saints, whose numbers were continually augmented by the popes. These mediators granted their intercession only to such applicants as had deserved well of the orders founded by them. For this it was necessary to do, not what God had commanded in His Word, but a number of works invented by monks and priests, and which brought money to the treasury." These works were the chanting of prayers and the making of pilgrimages (for which there were as many resorts as there were mountains, forests, and valleys) and giving money to the convents and priests.

Such were the penitential works that had to be done in order to obtain salvation. This penance—the doing of these works—was regarded as punishment to which one had to submit in order to be forgiven. It was thought by this worship, man rendered himself deserving of grace and life. These penitential works continued to be multiplied in the church down to the thirteenth century. "Men were required to fast, to go barefoot, to wear no linen, etc.; to quit their homes and their native land for distant countries, or to renounce the world and to embrace a monastic life." In the eleventh century there were added to these practices voluntary whippings. Nobles and peasants, old and young, even children of five years of age, went in pairs, by hundreds, thousands, and tens of thousands, through towns and villages, visiting churches even in the depth of winter. Armed with whips, they flogged each other mercilessly.

Such was the burden that men had to bear in order to be saved, and for the deliverance of which they were sighing. It was therefore to ease this burden yet without losing their usurped power over the people, that the priests invented that system of barter that was given the name of Indulgences. An Indulgence was (and still is) a written remission of the temporal (usually purgatorial) punishment due to God for sins whose eternal punishment had been remitted on the ground of the sacrifice of Christ; it was a remission granted to the penitents from the treasury of the superabundant merits of our Lord Jesus Christ, of Mary most holy, and of the saints. As this temporal punishment consisted especially in penance, that is, in the doing of the works specified above, the Indulgence freed the recipient from the obligation of performing these works. It soon became customary to grant an

Indulgence—a written remission of sins—could thus such as the giving of lands or of a sum of money. An Indulgence—a written remission of sins—could thus be bought. As the Indulgence also freed from the fire of purgatory, the priests, to encourage the sale of the written remissions, would depict in horrible colors the torments inflicted by this fire on all who became its prey.

Somewhat later there was invented the renowned and scandalous traffic of Indulgences. It remitted from the punishment of the sin of incest for five groats. There was a stated price for murder, infanticide, adultery, perjury, burglary, etc. In 1300 Pope Boniface VIII promised to all who made a pilgrimage to Rome a plenary Indulgence. From all parts of Europe people flocked in crowds. In one month two hundred thousand pilgrims visited Rome, bringing rich offerings. The coffers of the pope were replenished.

It can be expected that such corruption of the doctrine of the church should result in the decline of morality. The doctrine and sale of indulgences were powerful stimulants to sin among an ignorant people. Though the indulgence, according to the church, could benefit only those who truly repented, all that was seen in them is that they licensed men to sin with impunity. The priests were the first to show the ill effect of this corrupting influence. In many places the people were at ease because the priest kept a mistress, that the married woman might be safe from his seductions. The houses of the clergy were often dens of corruption. Priests, in company with disreputable characters, frequented taverns, played at dice and climaxed their drunken revelries with quarrels and blasphemy. Both the lower and the higher clergy was sunk in ignorance. They had no need of studying the sacred scriptures. It was not a question of explaining the scriptures but of granting indulgences. The foundation truths of the Bible were entirely disappearing and with them the life that forms the essence of true religion. In the defence of the tenets of Rome, the appeal was made not to the scriptures but to the pronouncements of the councils and of the Pope and to the teachings of the doctors.

Yet there was the true church. And this church was not the Pope and the corrupt clergy, but the faithful servants of Jesus Christ, the true protestants of the truth. Their joint witness was the light shining in the darkness. They were found everywhere, in the humblest convent, and in the remotest parish.

Such a witness was John Huss. Huss was born on the sixth of July, 1369. He thus appeared upon the stage of history one hundred and fourteen years before Martin Luther. His birthplace was Hussinet, a Bohemian village, lying toward the border of Bavaria. Descended from a poor family, he was early acquainted

with labor and privation. He studied philosophy and theology at the university of Prague. He received his master's degree in the year 1386, and began himself to lecture at the university. In 1401 he was ordained to the priesthood, still maintaining a teaching connection with the university. The following year he was appointed preacher at the Bethlehem chapel, to hold forth the Word of God on every Sunday and festival day in the Bohemian tongue. As his sermons were aglow with the fervor of love from which they sprang and were backed by an exemplary life, they made a powerful impression. People gladly heard him, and soon he was surrounded by a community of warm and devoted friends. A new Christian life started forth among the people. In his sermons he dwelt with growing earnestness upon the subject of holy living and with unflinching severity attacked the prevailing vices of his time. So long as he rebuked corruption among the laity, he had the support of the archbishop, Zbynek; but on account of his criticism of the clergy, this favor gradually turned into opposition.

In the meantime Huss had read many of Wycliff's writings. What attracted him to these writings was the "realism" that they set forth, the spirit of reform that animated from them, and the inclination to adhere to the Scriptures as the only source of doctrine, and the striving after a renewal of the Christian life in the sense of apostolic Christianity that they revealed. Let us hear the words of Huss himself on this matter: "I am drawn to him (Wycliff)—he says—by the reputation he enjoys with the good, not the bad priests of the university of Oxford, and generally with the people, though not with the bad, covetous, pomp-loving, dissipated prelates and priests. I am attracted by his writings, in which he expends every effort to conduct all men back to the law of Christ, and especially the clergy, inviting them to let go the pomp and dominion of the world and live with the apostles according to the life of Christ. I am attracted by the love which he had for the law of Christ, maintaining its truth and holding that not one jot or tittle of it could fail." Theologically Huss is held to be a disciple of Wycliff. True it is, that in common with Wycliff, he taught, and correctly so, that the *true* church consists of the elect only, of whom the true head is not the pope but Christ, and of which the sole law is the will of Christ as revealed in the New Testament Scriptures. He divides the entire body of the clergy into two classes: the *clerus Christi* and the *clerus antichristi*. "We must regard—says he—the clerical body as made up of two sects: the clergy of Christ and those of antichrist. The Christian clergy lean on Christ as their leader, and on his laws. The clergy of antichrist lean for the most part or wholly so on human laws and the laws of antichrist; and yet pretend to be the clergy of Christ and of the church, so as to seduce the people

by a mere cunning hypocrisy. And two sects which are so directly opposed, must necessarily be governed by two opposite heads with their corresponding laws. The priests of Christ preach against the vices of a corrupt clergy. How can there be anything more senseless than a clergy giving themselves up to the dross of the world, and making mockery of the life and the teaching of Christ? For so exceedingly corrupt are the clergy already, that they hate those who frequently preach, and frequently mention the Lord Jesus Christ; and, if a man ventures to quote Christ for himself, they say with scorn and bitterness, Art thou Christ? And, after the manner of the Pharisees, they trouble and excommunicate those who acknowledge Christ."

It can be expected that these sentiments, set forth in his *De Ecclesia* (on the church) and freely aired in his sermons, aroused against him the bitter hatred of the worldly clergy. He was accused of being in essential agreement with Wycliff, which, of course, was true. This was a serious indictment, as the writings of Wycliff were held in disrepute by the secular clergy in Germany and Bohemia. Already in 1402, thus the year following Huss's ordination to the priesthood, the Wycliffite views were condemned by the majority of the university of Prague. And in 1409 Pope Alexander V issued a bull against what he held to be the Wycliff heresies and preaching in private chapels. Huss now openly defended several doctrines of Wycliff and on this account was excommunicated by his archbishop Zbynek. But even already now he was resolved to defend the truth to the death. Says he, "In order that I may not make my self guilty, then, by my silence, forsaking the truth for a piece of bread, or through fear of man, I avow it to be my purpose to defend the truth which God has enabled me to know, and especially the truth of the Holy Scriptures, even to death; since I know that the truth stands and is forever mighty, and abides eternally; and with her there is no respect of persons. And, if the fear of death should terrify me, still I hope in my God and in the assistance of the Holy Spirit, that the Lord Himself will give me firmness. And if I have found favor in His sight, He will crown me with martyrdom. But what more glorious triumph is there than this? Inciting his faithful to this victory our Lord says, Fear not them that kill the body."

New causes of dissent arose. In 1412 Pope John XXIII issued a bull of crusade and indulgence against King Ladislaus of Naples. The bull proclaimed a crusade of destruction against this king and his party and a full forgiveness of sins to all who took part in the crusade. The bull offered a like indulgence to those also who would give as much money as they would have expended by actually engaging in the crusade for the space of one month.

Huss opposed. He contended that the secular sword belongs not to the priests, but to the worldly profession of arms. The pope must contend spiritually, not with the secular sword, but with prayer to almighty God. He insists that it is not permitted to the pope and the clergy to contend for secular things. The laity therefore must not comply with the requisitions of the bull. As to the indulgence, he argues that every one who receives it will actually enjoy it just as far as he is fitted to do so by his relation to God.

The pope's bull was burned by the people. Huss was once more excommunicated and Prague was placed under the papal interdict. Time drew near for holding the council of Constance. It could be expected that the disturbance in Bohemia was certain to demand its consideration. Huss was asked to attend with the assurance of a safe conduct from the emperor, Sigismund. Huss needed no such invitation. An opportunity to defend himself from the charge of heresy, to give account of his faith in the presence of the representatives of all western Christendom and to testify against the corruption of the church, was what he desired. The emperor did not keep his promise of a safe conduct. Shortly after his arrival in Constance Huss was imprisoned. Many were now the bitter charges brought against him by his enemies in Bohemia, formerly his friends. He was accused of denying the doctrine of transsubstantiation, of holding Wycliff's doctrine, of promoting insurrection among the people, of creating a schism between the spiritual and the secular power. Huss was given three hearings before the council. The propositions, taken from his *De Ecclesia*, and which his opponents found especially heretical are the following:

"Dignity, choice of man, visible signs, make no one a member of the church but predestination alone. Thus a reprobate is no member of the church.

"If he who is called the vicar of Christ copies after his life, he is his vicar; but if he takes the opposite course, he is a messenger of Antichrist, stands in contradiction with Peter and Christ, and is a vicar of Judas Iscariot.

"The ground tone of life is either love or selfishness. If the former, a man does everything to God's glory; if the latter, he does everything in alienation of God.

"The church needs no visible head (meaning the pope). Christ guides His church better without such monsters of supreme heads, by means of His true disciples scattered through all the world.

"The hierarchy rules not by immutable and divine right. The true church is the community of the elect only."

Especially the proposition that no reprobate was

a true pope, bishop, king, was an error, the maintenance of which was considered madness. It was regarded insurrectionary, leading to the overthrow of every civil constitution; because no one knows whether he belongs to the number of elect or reprobate, and because we all offend in many parts of our duty. Several other charges connected with the Hussite movement in Bohemia—charges, many of which were false—were laid before Huss. No means was left untried to procure his condemnation. When all the charges had been brought forward, he was addressed by the council as follows, "Thou hast heard that two ways are proposed to thee,—first that thou shouldest publicly renounce those doctrines which have now been publicly condemned, and submit thyself to the judgment of the council; which, if thou doest, thou wilt experience the mercy of the council. But if thou dost persist in defending thy opinions, the council will no doubt understand how to deal with thee according to law." To this Huss replied, "Reverend fathers! I have already often said that I came here voluntarily, not for the purpose of defending anything obstinately, but of cheerfully submitting to be taught better if in anything I have erred. I beg therefore that opportunity may be allowed me to explain my opinions further. And if I do not adduce good and true reasons for them, then I will gladly, as you require, submit to be instructed by you". Several attempts were now made to induce Huss to recant, but to no avail. He was resolved not to recant till convinced of his errors from the Scriptures. After what he had heard expressed at the council, he had nothing else in prospect but the stake, and nothing to wait for but the decision of his lot. He wrote to his people in Prague to whom he had preached the Word of God, "I write this letter in prison and in chains, expecting on the morrow to receive my sentence of death, full of hope in God, that I shall not swerve from the truth, nor abjure errors imputed to me by false witnesses. What a gracious God has wrought in me, and how he stands by me in wonderful trials, all this you will first understand when we shall again meet together, with our Lord God, through his grace in eternal joy."

On the 6th of July, Huss again appeared before the assembled council. He was officially charged with being a follower of Wycliff and of having disseminated Wycliffite doctrines. Various errors were ascribed to him, and he was pronounced an obstinate, incorrigible heretic. Hearing, he said, "I never was obstinate; but as I have always demanded, up to this hour, so now I ask only to be informed of what is better from holy scriptures; and I confess that so earnestly do I strive after truth, that if with a word I could destroy the errors of all heretics, there is no peril I would not willingly incur for that end." Now followed his degradation from the priestly order. The cup of the

eucharist was taken from his hands with these words: "We take from thee, condemned Judas, the cup of salvation." Huss said, "I trust in God, my Father, the almighty, and my Lord Jesus Christ, for whose name I bear this, that he will not take from me the cup of salvation; and I have a firm hope that I shall yet drink of it today in his kingdom." He thereupon was turned over to the executioners of justice to be burned. The ashes of his burned body were cast into the Rhine, in order that nothing of them might remain to pollute the earth.

From the above materials, it is plain that Huss and Luther were kindred spirits. As translated into action, the doctrine of both would spell the overthrow of the Roman hierarchy. Both insisted that the sole source of doctrine is the scriptures, that in any and all disputes about truth and morals the question is not what sayeth the pontiff of Rome or the councils or the doctors in the church, but what sayeth the Scriptures. The striving of both was to lead God's people back to the Scriptures and to give the Scriptures back to God's people. Both said that the pope cannot forgive sin but can only preach forgiveness to the penitent. Both opposed and attacked what every regenerated and spirit filled man opposed and attacked. The movement of Huss in Bohemia and that of Luther in Germany was, as to kind one and the same. This being true, Huss, in what measure it is impossible to say, prepared the way for Luther.

G. M. O.

The Nazarite

The Nazarite, as the name that he bore denotes, was the *separate one*. The name is explained at Numbers 6:1, "When either man or woman shall separate themselves to vow a vow of a Nazarite, *to separate themselves unto the Lord*." Let us see what is implied in this separation.

First, "He shall separate himself from wine and strong drink, and shall drink no vinegar of wine, or vinegar of strong drink, neither shall he drink any liquor or grapes, nor eat moist grapes or dried. All the days of his separation shall he eat nothing that is made of the vine tree, from the kernels even to the husks." It was a prohibition, we notice, not only of wine and of all spirituous, strong drink, not only of flat wine, wine or other vinegar, but even of grape juice. The prohibition is intensified by forbidding the enjoyment of fresh and even dried grapes.

Second, "All the days of the vow of his separation there shall no razor come upon his head: until the days be fulfilled, in the which he separateth himself unto

the Lord, he shall be holy, and shall let the locks of the hair of his head grow."

Finally, "All the days that he separateth himself unto the Lord he shall come at no dead body. He shall not make himself unclean for his father, or for his mother, for his brother or for his sister, when they die: because the consecration of God is upon his head."

On the prohibition that the Nazarite drink no wine, Fairbairn delineates as follows: "A like abstinence was imposed upon the priests when engaged in sacred ministrations. Like the ministering priest, the Nazarite was peculiarly separated to the Lord; and in his drink, not less than other things, he was to be an embodied lesson regarding the manner in which the divine service was to be performed. This service—such was the import of that part of the Nazarite institution—requires a withdrawal and separation from whatever unfits for active spiritual employment—from everything which stupefies and benumbs the powers of divine life, and disposes the heart to carnal ease and pleasureable excitement rather than to sacred duty. Such withdrawal certainly involved a careful and becoming reserve in regard to the means and occasions of a literal intoxication. . . ."

The substance of this language is that because wine is the means of intoxication and thus, if not used with moderation, renders unfit for spiritual service, the Nazarite had to separate himself from it. In this delineation, wine and literal intoxication appear not as symbolical but as representative of all that is injurious to spiritual life such as "the love of money, the eager pursuit of worldly aggrandizement, or the delights of a soft, luxurious ease," so that the prohibition that the Nazarite abstain from wine was, rightly considered, an admonition to the effect that he separate himself from the vice of indulging in intoxicating drink and from all these other unholy strivings.

Though this reasoning need not be set aside as incorrect, it nevertheless raises questions. It seems to proceed on the foundation that the reason the Lord had in placing the Nazarite under the obligation of separating himself from wine is not that He actually objected to a moderate use of this drink on the part of His servant, but to his disqualifying himself for the performance of his vow through excessive use of it. To make it easier for the Nazarite to escape this vice, the Lord commanded him to abstain from all strong drink. What the Lord really struck at is the sin of drunkenness and not the moderate use of wine as such.

What may be the truth about the prohibition in question. If this is to be seen, we should know that wine, according to Scripture is a creature of God with two symbolical meaning. Wine, in its power to stimulate the soul of man, or in the language of Scripture, to make glad the heart, is, on the one hand, the symbol

of Christ and His Spirit, thus of the grace that He merited for His people and that He imparts unto them by His Spirit. To be more definite, wine is the symbol particularly of the heavenly gladness that floods the soul of the man in whose heart the Lord works the assurance that He is Christ's. The foundation of the view here expressed is the very word of Christ, "For this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day I drink it new with you in my father's kingdom (Matt. 26:28, 29).

But now on the other hand, it is plain from other passages in Holy Writ, that wine, in its power to stupefy, dull and denumb man's senses, and even to paralyze all his faculties, which it does if indulged in to excess, is also the symbol of the principle of sin, as it operates in the essence of man's being, vitiating all his members, and stupefying his spirit so completely that he is wholly incapable of discerning spiritually, not rationally, the things which are of the Spirit of God. There is this scripture at I Thess. 5:6-8: "Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet the hope of salvation." In this passage literal drunkenness is a plain symbol of the *spiritual* insensibility of the natural man. Like a person whose mind is dulled by strong drink, the natural man, in a spiritual sense, is dead to God and to the heavenly. He therefore appears in the surroundings of the above-cited scripture as one for whom the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, that is, unexpectedly.

As a forbidden drink for the Nazarite, wine had this latter symbolical significance. In its power to intoxicate, it was the symbol of the principle of sin in man, thus of the belly of this death, of the members which are upon the earth, of the flesh and all its works, such as, fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, covetousness, which is idolatry, anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, "filthy communication out of the mouth". Because wine had also this symbolical significance, the Nazarite was commanded to separate himself from it and at all strong drink during the period of the performance of his vow. This is at least one of the two reasons of his being placed under this obligation. As faithful to his vow, he brought himself forward among his people, as the symbol, the living emblem of the true child of grace, pitted, by the mercy of God, against sin, as it riots in his flesh, crucifying, by this same mercy all the works of the flesh, laying off the old man and his deed, and positively, putting on the new man which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that

created him." The Nazarite, to be sure, had also to bring himself forward as the reality signified by his symbolic doing (his separating himself from wine.) And this reality was the Nazarite, so walking among his brethren as to be to them an example of true godliness.

However, there is more to say on this point. The Nazarite had to abstain even from the moderate use of wine. And he did so. He was and had to be wholly free from the slightest influence of strong drink. As such he was at once and firstly the type of Him who "is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners and made higher than the heavens,—Christ Jesus.

The next thing demanded of the Nazarite was that he sees to it that no razor come upon his head all the days of his separation. If he defiled himself by accidentally contacting an unclean thing, his vow was broken. In this case all the days that already had been given to the pursuance of the course of service were lost and he had to consecrate himself anew. This he did by again shaving his head on the seventh day after his having defiled himself and further by his bringing one turtle dove for a sin-offering. Then, when the days of his separation were fulfilled, he shaved his head at the door of the tabernacle and burnt his hair as a sacred thing upon the altar.

This element in the Nazarite institution has been variously explained. According to one view, the lone hair was the symbol of the power of God under which the Nazarite stood, and thus a sign of his subjugation to the authority of God. There is seemingly some ground for this explanation at I Cor. 11:10. Here the apostle says of the woman that her long hair was given her by nature for a covering and as a sign of subjugation to her husband. But the man, having no earthly superior, should have his hair cropped. Hence, it was counted a shame for the man to grow long hair. But, it is said, "The Nazarite, who gave himself up by a solemn vow of consecration to God, and who should therefore ever feel the authority and the power of God upon him, most fitly wore his hair long, as the badge of his entire and willing subjection to the law of his God. By the wearing of this badge he taught the church then—and the church indeed of all times—that the natural power and authority of man, which in nature is so apt to run out into self-will, stubbornness and pride, must in grace yield itself up to the direction and supremacy of Jehovah". (Fairbairn). There are still other explanations, such as that, according to which the long hair was the symbol of strength and abundant vitality. It will be shown in a following article that these explanations are not the right ones.

(To be continued)

G. M. O.

De Kerk In Smart

(Psalm 44)

Dit is een van de vreemdste psalmen in den geheelen psalmbundel. En dat uit meer dan één oogpunt.

Hier wordt geklaagd en gekermd vanwege de ellende en den smaad zonder dat er ook maar éénmaal gerept wordt van de zonde en de ongerechtigheid.

Integendeel, in dezen psalm wordt het met nadruk gezegd, dat alle smaad en schaamte om Godswil hen overkomt. En ter andere zijde, wordt het keer op keer betoogd, dat er niet dan bloote oprechtheid gevonden werd in de kerke Gods.

En vlak aan het begin zouden we willen zeggen, dat er hier sprake is van een zeer bijzondere smart en ook sprake van de kerk uit een heel bijzonder oogpunt. Dat lost ook de moeilijkheden op.

De psalm kan verdeeld in zes deelen.

Eerst vinden we een getuigenis van de herkomst der kerk in de verzen een tot vier. God heeft haar geplant en geen mensch.

Ten tweede, eenige verzen van roem en prijs vanwege zulk een planten der kerk, van vers vijf tot negen.

Ten derde, een beschrijving van het feit, dat God haar in den smeltkroes der ellende stortte, in de verzen tien tot zeventien.

Ten vierde, een wondere beschrijving van de trouw der kerk, niettegenstaande het feit, dat God haar in de ellende bracht, in de verzen achttien tot twee-entwintig.

Ten vijfde, het ééne vers, waarin de kerk de diepe oorzaak der ellende weergeeft, vers drie-entwintig. Dit vers is het hoogtepunt van den geheelen psalm.

Ten zesde, een hartstochtelijk gebed om verlossing. Hartstochtelijk, want er wordt zelfs gewaagd van het onmogelijke: God wordt voorgesteld als Die slaapt of als Die Zich verbergt; van vers vier-entwintig tot het einde.

Wie de dichter geweest is en welke periode van Israel er beschreven wordt weten we niet. Het is ons niet geopenbaard. Er zijn verschillende gissingen bij hen die dezen psalm verklaarden, doch we zullen U er niet bij ophouden. Het is onze overtuiging, dat de Heere met opzet zulks voor ons verborg. Deze psalm slaat op het leven der kerk van alle eeuwen en daarom moest elke beschrijving van den historischen achtergrond verborgen blijven.

Dat is dan ook de reden, dat Paulus, zoovele eeuwen later, den sleuteltekst van psalm 44 aanhaalt om de smart af te malen van Gods kerke aller eeuwen. Die uitspraak in het drie-entwintigste vers mocht niet door Gods volk teruggebracht worden op een enge historische gebeurtenis, doch zij moest leeren, dat die schreeuw de hare is van eeuw tot eeuw.

Later, veel later, neemt Jezus die schreeuw over en vervult hem. Ik weet wel; het is een vrije editie van dien tekst, doch feit is, dat Jezus het dieper dan eenig mensch beseft heeft, dat Hij leed om Gods wil. Beide in Gethsemane en op Golgotha moet ge psalm 44 vinden, want ik verzeker U dat hij er is.

Later meer hierover.

De psalm beschrijft in het eerste deel de planting der kerk. (1-4)

Die planting was een Goddelijk wonder. De dichter heeft er van gehoord. Er was een rijke traditie geweest: de vaders hadden het aan de navolgende geslachten verteld.

En dat wonder kwam hierop neer, dat, eerstens, de verkiezende liefde Gods geopenbaard was. Verkiezende liefde, want de heidenen waren verdreven uit Kanaän, terwijl Israel geplant werd. De goddeloozen werden geplaagd, doch het volk Gods mocht voortschieten.

Met nadruk wordt er van gezongen, dat zulk planten en nat maken geschiedde alléén door God. Israel had er part noch deel aan. Zij waren geheel lijdelijk geweest. Er kwam geen zwaard aan te pas. Het middel was de sterke rechterhand en arm van God en het licht Zijns aanschijns.

En de grond was het eeuwig welbehagen Gods. Er was niets in of aan Israel hetwelk God noopte om hen te planten. Hij werd gedreven door Zijn Eigen verkiezende liefde.

Dus er is hier sprake van de kerk zooals zij door God geplant wordt. Gij moogt zeggen, dat het de wedergeboorte der kerk is. Gij kunt die verzen zelfs persoonlijk toepassen op elk kind van God. Hij komt en wordt geplant en schiet voort, omdat God een welbehagen aan hem heeft. Hij doet de goddeloozen doolen en zuchten, doch Zijn volk zegent Hij omdat Hij eenvoudig een lust aan hen heeft. Dat wordt hier als een feit gekonstateerd.

Nu komt het tweede gedeelte. En kan ook niet uitblijven. Dit is het gedeelte van roem en prijs.

Ik zeide zooeven, dat men het ook persoonlijk mag toepassen. Nu, dat blijkt hier ook wel. De psalmist die de kerk moet beschrijven valt tweemaal uit den meervoudsvorm in het enkelvoudige persoonlijke *ik*.

Hij heeft beseft dat God moet geloofd en geprezen om zoo groote goedertierenheid, dat zij kinderen des Allerhoogsten mogen geheeten. Gij, O God, zijt Zelf mijn Koning! Zal er overwinning komen tegenover hen die ons haten, moet God Zelf verlossen, dan moet Hij de haters der kerk beschaamd maken. Zoo is er een eeuwig roem. In God roemen wij den ganschen dag. En des Heeren Naam zal tot in eeuwigheid geloofd worden. Dat wordt hier eenvoudig als een feit gekonstateerd. Wondere psalm!

Doch, o wee! Nu volgt het vreeselijke, derde gedeelte!

Hier wordt de smart en de ellende, de schande en

de schaamte der kerk beschreven. God verstoot de kerk en maakt haar tot schande; Hij doet hen vlieden voor het aangezicht van de God-haters. God wordt voorgesteld als Die Zijn volk als schapen overgeeft tot spijze. Hij geeft ons over aan 't geweld! God is het Die Zijn volk verkoopt in de handen der goddeloozen; ook schijnt de prijs te goedkoop. Er komt een bende rondom de arme kerk, spotters en smaders die hen omringen. Men lacht en spot, men schimpt en hoont; het hoofd wordt geschud in groote verheuging over dat arme, malle, bespottelijke volk, dat zich noemt naar den naam Gods.

Die smart wordt diep beseft. En weer valt de psalmist in het persoonlijke terug. Hij proeft als 't ware al die smart als zijn eigene: "Mijn schande is den ganschen dag vóór mij!" Let vooral op dat "den ganschen dag". Later hooren we daar meer over.

En nu komt het vreemde vierde gedeelte. Vreemd, want nu komt er een getuigenis dat wonderlijk aan doet.

De psalmist vertolkt het leven van de kerk temidden van al die smart en al die ellende. En in 't kort zegt hij: dit alles geschiedt ons en toch hebben we U niet vergeten! Wij hebben niet valschelijk gehandeld tegen Uw verbond! De psalmist spreekt hier stoute taal. Hij beseft dat ook en daarom voegt hij er aan toe: Ja, en Gij weet dat het zoo is, o mijn God! Gij zijt toch alwetend? Zouden wij een vreemden god aan kunnen roepen, onze handen uitbreidende, en zoudt Gij het dan niet zien?

Hij gaat zelfs zóó ver, dat hij getuigenis geeft van de trouw des harten. De kerk is zóó trouw geweest, dat zelfs hun hart niet achterwaarts gekeerd is. De vijand heeft gelachen en gespot; de vijand heeft gemoord en geplunderd; de vijand heeft ons geslacht en gegeten; doch ons hart bleef U achterna kleven, Heere! En Gij weet, dat het zoo is!

Machtig, wonderlijk, vreemd getuigenis!

En dan komt die schreeuw tot God, dewelke het antwoord, de oplossing is van de moeilijkheid. De psalmist lost hier zijn eigen moeilijkheid op: Wij lijden smarten om Gods wil. Dat is het antwoord.

Maar om Uwentwil worden wij den ganschen dag gedood, wij worden geacht als slachtschapen!

Machtig getuigenis!

De phrase *den ganschen dag* heeft diepe beteekenis. De slachting van Gods volk geschiedt van eeuw tot eeuw en onophoudelijk. Daarom kan Paulus hetzelfde zeggen als deze psalmist, zoovele eeuwen later. En heden is 't nog zoo.

De slachting van Gods volk geschiedt om Godswil. Hoe zit dat?

Dat zit zóó: de kerk is een openbaring van God Zelf. Doch dan moeten we de kerk bezien uit een zeer bijzonder oogpunt. Uit het oogpunt, namelijk,

van de wedergeboorte, als vrucht van Zijn rechterhand, Zijn arm en het licht Zijns aangezichts. Ga maar terug naar de verzen 1-4. Zoo is het ook duidelijk, dat de kerk haar onschuld durft belijden in de verzen 10-17. De kerk uit het oogpunt der wedergeboorte is onschuldig en doet de zonde niet. Uit datzelfde oogpunt beschijft Johannes de kerk als hij zegt: "Die uit God geboren is die doet de zonde niet". I Joh. 3:9a. Van de kerk uit dat oogpunt zegt God: "Zij zijn immers Mijn volk, kinderen die niet liegen zullen?" Jes. 63:8. En Jezus zegt van de kerk: Zalig zijn *de reinen van hart*. . . .

Zóó is de kerk een openbaring van God. Al Gods deugdenbeeld wordt de kerk in 't diepste hart geschonken. En dat diepste hart is de nieuwe mensch.

En overal waar die nieuwe mensch zich openbaart wordt hij geworgd, geslacht, beschimpt, gehoond, bespot, vertreden. Ja, zoo wordt de kerk van alle eeuwen den ganschen dag gedood. En terwijl dat geschiedt wijkt ze geen duimbreed van de wegen des Heeren. Zij is de openbaring van Gods eigen verbondsleven. En God staat in voor Zijn Eigen werk in haar.

Nu is dat nooit schooner tot openbaring gekomen dan in Jezus Christus den Heere. Waar er slechts een zeer klein beginsel van dat onzondige, schoone, niet ligende en reine leven in de kerk is van alle eeuwen, woont de Godheid in Jezus volkomen.

Daarom wordt Hij dan ook den ganschen dag gedood. En dan met een dooding zooals nooit door de kerk geleden werd. Zij hebben Hem gehoord en gehaat zooals er nooit een heilige voor Hem of na Hem gehaat werd. Rondom dat kruis brak de hel los. Duivelen en menschen wetijverden om te spotten, te hoonen, te smaden en te schimpen.

Om Godswil werd Hij den ganschen dag gedood, en geacht als een slachtschaap. Denk aan Jesaja 53.

Hoeveel te heerlijker het deugdenbeeld van God in U woont, hoeveel te meer gij geworgd, geslacht, gedood zult worden.

Dan komen de duivelen, de wereld en Uw eigen vleesch op dat reine hart af om U te tergen en te smaden, om U te benauwen en U te doen zuchten. Vreemde strijd van Romeinen 7. Ge ziet dan temidden van wereld en duivelen een andere wet in Uwe leden, welke strijdt tegen de Wet Uws gemoeds en U gevangen neemt. . . . En de macht hoort Uw smartelijke klacht: Wie zal mij verlossen uit het lichaam dezès doods? Ik haat dat lichaam en bemin de deugden Gods in 't diepe, reine hart!

Dezelfde klank hoort ge in II Cor. 4:11 en 12. De dooding van den Heere Jezus dragen we in het lichaam om. Wij worden altijd, let op dat altijd, in den dood overgegeven om Jezus wil.

En waarom die gruwelijke haat, waarom dat spotten en hoonen van de reine liefde Gods?

Dat komt omdat duivel, wereld en vleesch God

haten. Indien ge van de wereld waart, zoo zou de wereld het hare liefhebben. Doch ge zijt niet van de wereld en daarom haat zij U. Doch weet dit, geliefden, ze hebben Jezus vóór U gehaat.

Ge begrijpt nu den sleuteltekst van dezen schoonen, wonderschoonen psalm, niet waar? Het zit alles in dat drie-en-twintigste vers. Om Gods wil wordt ge gehaat. Men haat God en daarom haat men U. Daarin ligt ook Uw zaligheid. Zalig zijt ge als ge vervo'gd wordt om Jezus' wil. Zalig zijt ge als ge lijden moet om der gerechtigheid wil. Zalig is Abel als Kain hem doodslaat. En waarom sloeg Kain Abel dood? Omdat Abel's werken rechtvaardig waren en de zijne onrechtvaardig.

Zalig in het lijden om Godswil? Hoe zit dat?

Dat zit zóó: gij wordt altijd overgegeven in den dood om Jezus' wil, opdat ook het leven van Jezus in Uw sterfelijk lichaam zoude geopenbaard worden. Zoo staat het in II Cor. 4:11. En als ik er aan denk en die diepte tracht te peilen, dan duizelt mijn verstand en kan ik er niet bij.

Feit is, dat God den diepen weg van het vreeselijke kruis gewild heeft om door ontzaglijk lijden van Jezus de heerlijkste hallel's te hooren als Jezus Zijn Eigen lied zingt, het lied van Mozes en het Lam. Feit is, dat ons vreeselijk lijden om Jezus wil ons een gansch zeer uitnemend gewicht der heerlijkheid werkt. Let er op, het lijden werkt heerlijkheid. O, de diepte! Hoe onnaspeurlijk Zijn Gods wegen!

O, ik weet het, als die verdrukking van wereld, duivel en vleesch aanwezig is dan zingen we psalm 44. Dan zingen we: Waarom, daar wij Uw bijstand vergen, zoudt Gij Uw aangezicht verbergen? Als we gedood worden is er een zuchten hetwelk de Geest alléén vertolken kan in zuchtingen die onuitsprekelijk zijn. Doch weet, dat Jezus oneindig veel meer geleden heeft. Een lijden dat ook Hem psalm 44 deed zingen, al is het dan ook een eenigzins andere editie. Een andere editie doch het waarom bleef hetzelfde: Waarom, o Mijn God hebt ge Mij verlaten? Ik heb niet valsche-lijk gehandeld tegen Uw verbond, o Mijn God!

En ja, dan schijnt het alsof God slaapt. We kunnen het den psalmist wel vergeven, dat hij zulke taal bezigt. Jezus zegt toch ook: Waarom hebt Gij Mij verlaten? Zóó wordt het beleefd in 't aangstig hart.

En dan is dit Uw troost, geliefden: God komt ter Uwe hulpe zoo spoedig als 't kan. 't Is wel waar, dat ge den ganschen dag gedood moet, doch er komt een einde aan dien dag en dat dooden. Jezus werd omhoog gebracht naar de zalen van 't eeuwig paleis en is nu zalig, zaliger dan allen.

En straks breekt het duister van Uw tegenwoordigen nacht om plaats te maken voor 't zonnegloren van Zijn lieflijk aangezicht.

Het is of ik in de verte een ander lied hoor: Ik zal, nu ik mag ademen, na zooveel bangen tegenspoed,

al mijn geloften U betalen, U die in nood mij hebt behoeft!

Het bange, het vreeselijke kruis, de dooding van den Heere Jezus, werkt een heerlijkheid waarvan we slechts stamelen kunnen.

Het is de hemel, daarboven bij God!

G. V.

Gij Weet Alle Dingen

I Joh. 2:20, 27a.

Alles of niets.

Wanneer we deze woorden der Schrift lezen, dan bekruipt ons het gevoel, om met alles wat in ons is, dit Schriftwoord tegen te spreken.

Het staat er dan toch maar, *alle* dingen weet ge. Waar nog bijkomt, dat er onmiddellijk aan toegevoegd wordt, "en ge hebt niet van noode dat iemand u leere". Het is alles in duidelijke en voor geen tweeërlei uitlegging vatbare taal geschreven. Ge kunt er met geen mogelijkheid om heen redeneeren.

We vinden dan ook in deze woorden juist het omgekeerde van wat we in het dagelijksch leven hooren en ervaren. Het algemeen getuigenis des levens is, dat we zoo weinig weten, dat het schier onmogelijk is, om zelfs een flauw begrip te vormen van vele dingen. Er is zoo ontzettend veel, dat buiten den gezichts kring ligt van een "average" mensch.

Het eenparig getuigenis is, dat een mensch zijn geheele leven door leert of leeren moet, dat hij iederen dag met nieuwe problemen moet worstelen, terwijl de oude nog niet opgelost zijn.

Alle dingen weten?

Vraag dat eens aan den student, die aan de voeten van zijn leermeester zit.

Weet u zoo ongeveer alles? Als hij een "goed" student is, dan zal zijn antwoord zijn: Ja, ziet u, ik meende al heel wat te weten toen ik pas begon te studeeren en nu ben ik al enkele jaren op School en men heeft mij allereerst geleerd, dat ik eigenlijk zoo goed als niets wist. Met mij werd dan ook niet het orakel geboren toen ik ter wereld verscheen. Met hard ploeteren heb ik nu aan de eerste beginselen wat houvast gekregen van sommige dingen. Ik houd er mij van overtuigd, dat ik lang alles niet weten zal, wanneer men mij het leven instuurt.

En de man die onderwijs verstrekt zal u weten te vertellen, dat de meeste zijner studenten het nooit verder zullen brengen dan de "average", tenzij men zich op den arbeid met allen ernst zal werpen. Hij heeft zelf niets geleerd, dan door den weg van harden arbeid.

Zoo zouden we nog wel wat voort kunnen gaan en

bijvoorbeeld de vraag van nabij bezien, of de gemeente dan ook niet buiten een voorganger het redden kan, iets waar vooral Calvijn zich in zijn verklaring tegen keert en daarom opmerkt, dat de Apostel dit niet bedoelt in den breedten, doch in den engeren zin des woords. Hij beperkt het daarom (dit weten van alle dingen) tot het verband en den inhoud van dit hoofdstuk. Juist het tegenovergestelde van wat Meyer wil, die meent, dat de Apostel hier het geheel der waarheid op het oog heeft, waardoor de gemeente in staat is het onderscheid te zien tusschen de waarheid en de leugen, terwijl hij dan met oog op vers 27 spreekt van een verder onderwijs van wat de geloovigen alreeds bezitten, waardoor hetgeen zij alreeds bezitten, helderder in het bewustzijn wordt geprent.

Zóó nu bezien, valt er wel wat critiek uit te brengen op dit woord van den Apostel. Oogenschijnlijk althans, bewijst de praktijk des levens juist het tegenovergestelde.

Maar zóó staat het er toch?

"Doch gij hebt de zalving van den Heilige, en gij weet alle dingen. En de zalving, die gijlieden van Hem ontvangen hebt, blijft in u, en gij hebt niet van noode dat iemand u leere".

Johannes, zoo is wel eens gezegd, ziet meestal de dingen bij intuïtie. Hij ziet ze en zegt ze. Daarom vindt ge dan ook in zijn brieven weinig betoog over een stuk der Waarheid, gelijk dit het geval is bij den Apostel Paulus, die soms geheele hoofdstukken wijdt aan een enkel deel der Waarheid. Denk slechts aan zijn brief aan de Romeinen, in verband met de Rechtvaardigmaking des geloofs.

Vervolgens wordt dan daarbij zijn schrijven gekenmerkt door een innige en teedere wijze van spreken, wanneer hij zich tot de gemeente van Christus richt. Telkens weer spreekt hij haar aan als de "kinderkens", de geliefden, mijne geliefde kinderkens. En hij verbindt schier iedere gedachte met den Christus. Soms, met den Christus als de Messias, Die de Zoon van God is. Dan weer met Jezus de Christus, Die in het vleesch gekomen is. Van den Christus, den lijdende Borg, zoowel als de Christus, Die nu de Heere der Heerlijkheid is, gaat hij uit in geheel den brief.

Daarom beziet hij dan ook de belijdenis aangaande den Christus uit verschillende oogpunten. Hij behandelt zijn onderwerp uit het oogpunt der tegenstellingen. Tegenstellingen waarvan hij eerst geheel in het algemeen spreekt wanneer hij zegt, "Die daar zegt: Ik ken Hem en Zijne geboden niet bewaart, die is een leugenaar, en in dien is de waarheid niet." Omgekeerd: "Wie Zijn Woord bewaart, in dien is de liefde Gods volmaakt geworden. Hieraan kennen wij dat wij in Hem zijn". Diep en toch duidelijk-verstaanbaar. En van het algemeen-breedere keert de Apostel zich tot de gemeente en wijst haar op het feit, dat het de laatste ure is en de Antichrist komt en voegt er

dan, als in één adem, aan toe, dat zijn komst alreeds zichtbaar wordt, doordat vele antichristen zijn geworden, waaruit wij kennen, dat het de laatste ure is.

Hij herinnert er haar vervolgens aan, door er op te wijzen, dat deze antichristen ook in het midden der gemeente aanwezig waren. Er gingen er immers van ons uit? Zij hebben zich afgescheiden, om de eenvoudige reden, dat zij van ons niet waren, anders waren zij bij ons gebleven. Wel te verstaan, dat deze afscheiding niet direkt plaats greep, doch pas nadat deze menschen getracht hadden de overige leden achter zich te trekken. De antichristen loopen zóó maar niet weg. Neen, maar het was en is hun doel en toelag anderen te verleiden door hun valsche leer aangaande God en Christus, het werk des Geestes en dat van den Middelaar. Daarom moet dan ook de Kerk de geesten beproeven, vooral als die geesten met de pretentie optreden, dat zij den Christus belijden. Toen als nu, komt men van zulke dwaalleeraars niet gemakkelijk en in een oogenblik af. Was dat het geval, dan ware deze reeks van vermaningen niet telkens weer herhaald door den Apostel. Neen, maar tot het uiterste toe hangen zij als klitten den geloovige aan. Met allerlei voorwendsels trachten zij ingang te verkrijgen in de gemeente des Heeren. Het zaad van den Booze heeft geen rust, totdat ook anderen worden afgetrokken en meegevoerd door allerlei leugenleer en bedekselen der ongerechtigheid, die een *schijn* van waarheid hebben. In dat opzicht gelijken zij sprekend op hun vader, de leugenaar van den beginne. O, indien het mogelijke ware, zij zouden niets liever dan de gemeente verwoesten. Wie kent niet het zoet gefluit van die vogelaars? Wat is er ellendiger voor de gemeente dan juist dit, dat de leugen, onder den schijn van waarheid, ingang vindt of tracht te vinden, in 's Heeren Kerk! Pas dan, wanneer het hun duidelijk wordt, dat men Christus Bruid niet kan verleiden, gaat men heen en worden zulke menschen als leugenaars openbaar. Zoodat zelfs onvaste zielen het kunnen zien.

Daarna pas, als dat alles hun duidelijk wordt, scheiden zij zelf af.

Heel eenvoudig en de gemeente geruststellende zegt Johannes, zij zijn het bewijs, dat niet allen uit ons zijn. Tob er maar niet over kinderkens, het is een gezond verschijnsel als ge zulke menschen ziet heengaan.

En aldus komt de Apostel tot de positieve verklaring, doch gij hebt de zalving van den Heilige en weet alle dingen. Die zalving blijft ook in u en daarom hebt gij niet van noode dat iemand u leere. Het allerminst deze pseudo-profeten. Hoe zou het ook kunnen? Wie zou buiten den Heilige de heiligen kunnen zalven? Hij wijst dan in deze tekstwoorden, wat de hoofdzaak betreft, op datgene wat de gemeente bezit. Zij bezit die zalving van den Heilige als een

ontvangen en blijvend goed. In verband hiermede moet de vraag gesteld worden, wie is hier de Heilige? Is het God, Christus, of de Heilige Geest? Vervolgens, zullen we ook moeten weten wat het wezen is van de zalving waarover de Apostel spreekt. En het volgt als dan vanzelf wat de werking is van den Heilige door de zalving, die van Hem uitgaat. Wat is haar karakter? En eindelijk, want de tekst zegt "En de zalving, die gijlieden van Hem ontvangen hebt, blijft in u", wat is haar duur of duurzaamheid, zoowel als haar vrucht, namelijk, dat zij een bezit is, dat u vrijmaakt, waarom "gij niet van noode hebt dat iemand u leere". Ge hebt door die zalving geen behoefte aan iemand, om u te onderwijzen. (Alleen aan den Heilige, Die daartoe Zijn eigen middelen wil gebruiken).

Het is opmerkelijk, dat de Apostel telkens weer spreekt van gij, ons, wij. Dit staat in nauw verband met den Heilige wiens zalving de gemeente deelachtig is. Weliswaar, de Heilige wordt hier niet verder omschreven, maar het is niet moeilijk te zien waarom Johannes dit niet doet. De Apostel heeft hier niet het oog op een enkele geloovige, doch hij richt zich tot de gemeente van Christus. Van die gedachte gaat hij in geheel zijn brief uit. En Christus lichaam is een heilig lichaam. Heilig allereerst, omdat de leden des lichaams in het Hoofd begrepen zijn. Alszoodanig werkt en woont de Heilige alleen in dat lichaam, in tegenstelling met de wereld. En omdat zij in Christus zijn, van God den Vader van alle eeuwigheid daartoe verkoren, zalft de Heilige, de door God verordineerd heiligen. Niet zooals zij in zichzelf zijn, want dan zou de Apostel geen tegenstelling kunnen maken tusschen hen en die van hen uitgingen, doch zooals zij in Christus hun Hoofd zijn. Dezelfde gedachte bespreekt ook de Apostel Paulus wanneer hij tot de Corinthiers spreekt. "Want de Zone Gods, Jezus Christus, die onder u door ons is gepredikt, door mij en Silvanus en Timotheus, was niet ja en neen, maar is geweest ja in Hem. Want zoovele beloften Gods als er zijn, die zijn in Hem ja, en zijn in Hem amen, Gode tot heerlijkheid door ons. Maar die ons met u bevestigt in Christus, en die ons gezalfd heeft, is God; die ons ook heeft verzegeld, en het onderpand des Geestes in onze harten gegeven".

Dus als heiligen of geheiligden bezitten zij deze zalving. Aldus is zij het bezit der gemeente. Van de gemeente onder haar Hoofd, Christus. Dan mogen sommigen vervolgens er over verschillen of de Heilige Geest God is, of dat de Apostel hier Christus bedoelt, of het bepaaldelijk de Heilige Geest is zonder meer—hierover bestaat echter geen verschil, wanneer gevraagd wordt, hoe krijgt het lichaam van Christus deel aan de weldaden van haar Hoofd? Daarop is slechts één antwoord mogelijk: Door Christus. Het leven van het Hoofd is het leven van en voor het Lichaam. Als Hoofd van Zijn Lichaam heeft Hij dan

ook den Geest, als Zijn Geest ontvangen. Het allereuidelijkste bewijs vinden we in de Handelingen der Apostelen, hoofdstuk twee, de verzen twee-en-dertig en drie-en-dertig: "Dezen Jezus heeft God opgewekt, waarvan wij allen getuigen zijn. Hij dan door de rechterhand Gods verhoogd zijnde, *en de belofte des Heiligen Geestes ontvangen hebbende van den Vader*, heeft dit uitgestort dat gij nu ziet en hoort".

Het lijdt dan ook geen twijfel, dat hier bedoeld wordt de Geest, die als Geest van den Verhoogden Middelaar, haar (de gemeente) de zalving waarvan gesproken wordt, deelachtig maakt. Het is de Geest, die de door Christus verworvene weldaden toepast aan Zijn lichaam. Hij is haar Levensverwekker, Levensbezieler en Levensonderhouder, die bij haar zal blijven tot in eeuwigheid.

In dezelfde taal spreekt ook de belijdenis, wanneer op de vraag, waarom Christus Gezalfde wordt genaamd en Gods kind een Christen, geantwoord wordt: "Omdat Christus van God den Vader verordineerd is en met den Heiligen Geest gezalfd tot onzen grooten Profeet en Leeraar, tot onzen eenigen Hoogepriester en tot onzen eeuwigen Koning, die ons met Zijn Woord en Geest regeert", en, "ik wordt een Christen genaamd, omdat ik door het geloof een lidmaat van Christus en alzoo Zijner zalving deelachtig ben."

(Wordt vervolgd)

W.V.

Home Instruction - Basic

"My father and mother were none too religious, and you know what that means for the children." Thus, not many weeks ago, spoke an aged brother of more than fourscore years in explaining the comparative indifference of his teens and early twenties.

Yes, we know both from Scripture and experience what it means for the child when the home fails in its God-given calling and the parent is negligent with respect to the instruction of the covenant seed. Here especially it is true: what men sow men must expect to reap.

Always the home instructs. It is not a matter of parental choice whether or not they shall instruct their children. It is inevitable that they do. As long as the child has eyes to see, ears to hear, the faculties of touch and taste and smell, it will be instructed. Likewise, as long as the child is at home with you, *you* do the instructing, whether you will it so or not, whether your instruction be direct or indirect, intentional or unintentional, oral or by way of example, positive or negative, good or bad. The question is not: *do* your children receive instruction at home? Invariably they

do. We must ask: *What* do they receive?

And always home instruction is basic, not only for all the instruction the child receives, also in church and school, but for its entire life and conduct until the day it closes its eyes in death.

If, as one well-known educator remarked recently, the end in the field of education is the beginning, we do well to ask at once: wherein must the child be instructed? How extensive must that home instruction be?

Our baptism form speaks of the "aforesaid doctrine". That doctrine it continues to define as "the doctrine contained in the Old and New Testament and in the articles of the Christian faith and taught here in this Christian church". Hence, the entire doctrine of salvation is meant.

Scripture, too, is very broad on this subject. Solomon says, "train up a child *in the way he should go*." This refers to his entire life with all its complexities, which should be the way of righteousness, of sanctification, of God. It is the way that is pleasing to God in every respect. Moses, in Deut. 6, speaks of "these words". What words? "The commandments, the statutes and the judgments, which the Lord your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do them in the land whither you go to possess it". vs. 1. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thine soul, and with all thy might". vs. 5.

In general, therefore, the home curriculum includes all the child must know to take its place in life as a true child of God's covenant.

The child must be instructed in the Bible itself. According to its age and mental capacity, of course, but early in life, nevertheless, it must be taught the history of God's Covenant in the world. It must be acquainted with the Bible as such. For this phase of home instruction we consider a trustworthy Bible Story Book, such as that of Catherine Vos, exceedingly helpful. No home with children should be without one.

Home education must include "the aforesaid doctrine". Doctrine, in a reasonable form, can be inculcated even before the history of the people of God is taught the child. Of course, the diet should be light at first and should be increased according to the mental capacity of the student. Our children should be taught about God, His names, His essence, His persons, His works and attributes. They can and must be told about the goodness, grace, love, justice, knowledge, wisdom, eternity, omniscience, omnipotence and omnipresence of their God. All these must be held before our children as a source of comfort and joy. You say: these things are too profound for a child! They mean nothing to him! You are mistaken. That would be

true if you were to lecture to a child as a professor of Dogmatics in a seminary. In a home these things must be discussed in an appropriate manner, as parents with their children. Then even little children will understand and these same doctrines, made to fit them, will impress them profoundly. Remember, the child is vividly conscious of the reality of the unseen. He is highly receptive and deeply aware of his helplessness and dependence. Consequently, he is pleased to hear about God. He finds comfort in the fact that God is omnipresent, that his God has power to do all things and care for all his needs, that His heavenly Father sees all things (even though it be pitch-dark in his bedroom at night), and that all wisdom belongs to the Lord, Who therefore always does what is best for His people. Also, the justice and holiness of God can and must be appealed to when admonishing our children from ways of sin. This, too, they soon understand.

In like manner our children must be instructed in the doctrine of man, creation, providence, the fall, sin and its results; the doctrine of Christ, the need of Him, His names and natures and offices and states, His birth, suffering, rejection by men, death, burial, resurrection, ascension, return to judgment; the doctrine of salvation, its author, regeneration, conversion, calling, etc.; the doctrine of the soul, the resurrection of the dead, heaven and hell. A fatal error here would be to say: these things are not for the child. He cannot understand. If only you present them in his language.

Then, there are attitudes to be assumed. It is vital to the child's spiritual welfare that these be right. He must be trained in the proper attitude toward catechism, the Christian school, church attendance, the preaching of the Word, the world and the things of the world. A love of that which is of God and a loathing of that which is evil must be cultivated in the child. Negligence on the part of the home in these things is fatal. In the cultivation of attitudes no church or school can begin to take the place of the Christian home.

To all this must be added that great sphere of practical Christianity. Our children must be taught to take their proper place in life socially and morally. They must know how to live right with all men in all things, as employers or employees, as magistrates or subjects, in business and culture. In the language they speak, which should always be to the glory of God; in their conduct, which must ever be determined by the will of God; in prayer and the reading of the Word of God, in obedience and reverence, in honesty and sobriety, in Sabbath observance and spiritual isolation from the world, in dress and reading material, in choice of friends and entertainments, in these and many more things our covenant children must be

instructed "in the way they should go". All these could be discussed more in detail, but the space allotted me makes this impossible. You will observe that in many of these things church and school simply cannot begin to properly train the child.

With respect to all these matters the child must be *instructed*. Instruction is not a mere, formal impartation of bare facts and judgments. It is more than mere assimilation of cold data and the ability to reproduce it upon examination. Instruction implies more than that. The word itself means: *to build in*. Hence, the contents of the instruction must be *built into* the child. It must become part of the child's mental and spiritual makeup.

In this colossal work the home, as you must have felt by now, is of primary significance. Thus it was from the beginning. At one time the home was the only educational institution in existence. Even now, though school and catechism have augmented home instruction, the latter is first, that is, basic.

Scripture is clear on this point. To whom is it said, "Train the child in the way he should go?" Parents, to *you*. To whom does Moses say, "And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children?" To *you*.

That home and parents should be primary and basic in the matter of child education represents a beautiful arrangement on the part of our covenant God. The children belong to us, do they not? We love them more than Miss or the Rev. could possibly love them. We are most interested in their spiritual welfare. We know them best, and are in the best position to give them individual attention. We are with them and they with us from the moment they are born. We have their confidence and love. If not there is something radically wrong in the relation between parents and children. That the home, therefore, should be of primary significance throughout the life of the child is wholly in accord with the divine ordinances of creation and providence.

You, then, parents, are the first and main teachers of your children. The most determinative aspect of their training you must, and do give.

What a tragedy, then, that the home has been and is disintegrating to such a grievous extent! Once it was the social, economic, educational and religious center of the Christian's life. This it is no more. Too many extraneous interests have made their inroads. Many of the fathers and older children are home so little that the latter has become only a place to lodge. Many mothers have so many foreign interests to keep them busy, that their children, for the greater part, must be cared for by non-interested strangers.

In this gigantic task of home training especially our indirect instruction is basic. Remember, deeds, also here, speak louder than words. A good example is

worth more than vain, pious conversation. We must live ourselves as we teach our children to live. Poor conduct on the part of parents, conduct inconsistent with our direct instruction, invariably nullifies the latter and stamps us as hypocrites in the minds of our children. Bear in mind, the child learns first and best by imitation. As we live, they live; as we speak, they speak; as we dress, they dress; what we read, they read; what we love, they love; our interests are their interests, our delights are theirs. How essential then, that our daily manifestation of life be as we would have our children to live. In all basic home instruction, therefore, this in turn is most basic: that we ourselves know and study the Scriptures, that we ourselves love and live sound doctrine, that we ourselves assume the proper attitude toward church and school and catechism and world, that in language and prayer and reverence and honesty and Sabbath observance and choice of friends and entertainments we ourselves live circumspectly and exemplary. Our direct instruction may be ever so vital to our children, home atmosphere is even more so. Never expect to do one thing and teach your children another.

Home instruction is basic. Indeed, it is!

It is basic, because we always do instruct our children and they always learn from us. If the home is not busy training "in the way they should go", it is doing so in the way they should *not* go. It is impossible for home and parents *not* to instruct.

It is basic because home instruction lies at the root of all instruction. The latter can accomplish nothing for the welfare of the child without the former. Wherefore it is always the home that is judged by the child. When children are recalcitrant, incorrigible, vulgar and disobedient and worldly, who receives the blame? The church? Not usually. The school? No. The home! You!

Let us, then, be faithful in our calling as covenant parents.

And our child? "When he is old, he will not depart from it."

R. V.

News From Our Churches

Under this heading, it was assigned to me by our Editor-in-chief to write a few articles in the Standard Bearer. Now, to write news from our churches for our paper is not an easy task; as the readers can easily understand. In the first place it is not easy for the simple reason that all the news from our churches is written in *Our Church News*, the small, weekly paper which is well liked by old and young, and whose Editor is a capable man. In the second place

it is hard for this reason, church news in the Standard Bearer is necessarily old news.

The reader must also keep in mind the incapability of a common layman, to write in a paper like the Standard Bearer. And last, but not least, the Rev. H. Hoeksema made the statement in his outline remarks: (S. B., Aug. 1) "the success of the present scheme will depend entirely on the acceptance by each of us of the task assigned to him and on faithful and thorough work."

Now, to be faithful in this respect is not so difficult, but to do thorough work is a different story.

Is it not also true that some men are born preachers; some born singers, or artists; and some are born writers? But I have none of these qualifications, and above all, my inferiority complex also stands in the way to make these church news articles a success. However, it is also an honor to be in company with learned men, and I thank the Editor-in-chief that he has deemed me worthy to write a few articles in this our paper in this coming year.

The Third Annual Convention of the Protestant Reformed Young Peoples' Federation was again held, and, as I read about it, it was with much success. The committee selected a beautiful and proper theme, (in the words of our Editor-in-chief) in the subject, "Thoroughly Equipped".

The different speakers made it very plain that in the midst of this world our covenant youth must be thoroughly equipped indeed, for we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, and the rulers of darkness of this world. And II Tim. 3:16, 17 speaks of the man of God, that he must be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work, in order, that he may be a good soldier to fight Jehovah's battles. This soldier must maintain the truth, and this means for a Protestant Reformed soldier that he must maintain the absolute sovereignty of God, over against the tendencies that deny the divinity of Christ. This youthful soldier must live an isolated Christian soldier life, and must never follow the blind leaders of the blind. He should not be seen in places of the world, in theaters or dancehalls, but must live an isolated Christian life. He must also be watchful in our peculiar times, and he must have knowledge to be a thoroughly equipped Christian. He must know that in the midst of the battle he has the victory.

Our R. F. P. A. again held their annual meeting, and judging by the attendance we are hopelessly lost, and should stop all our activities in connection with the publication of our S. B. The first meeting of this kind was attended by approximately 350, and at this meeting there were only 29. Where are the 300? They had various reasons for not being there, I suppose?

The Rev. M. Schipper spoke a good, well-chosen word. His theme was: Jehovah our Banner. In Exodus we read, as you know, that Moses, Aaron and Hur were upon a high mountain and Israel was in the valley fighting the battle of Jehovah against the Amalekites. Moses was instructed by the Lord to lift up His staff on high in order that Israel might win. With the help of Aaron and Hur he succeeded and Jehovah gave the victory. Under that Banner of Jehovah-nissi the battle was fought. We also, so the speaker goes on, must fight that battle of Jehovah our Banner, and our Standard Bearer as a banner of the truth must and does fight the warfare of our King.

I suppose all the readers of our S. B. know by this time that the consistory of the First Church decided to make a little change in our English services. Instead of the present doxology ("Praise God from Whom all blessings flow") we sing Psalter No. 197, both stanzas. The last doxology we now sing first, as soon as the minister rises and stands on the pulpit. Something new, you say, yes, but what of it? It is all to the glory of our Covenant God, and as I see it, for the betterment of our church services. Some say: We fall in line with the American churches round about us, and this is (so they say) the first step in a wrong direction. Now, we shall take notice in the future.

By the grace of God we are sound in doctrine however and have not deviated from the truth since 1924, the never-to-be-forgotten year, when we were expelled from the Christian Reformed Church; and are now named Protestant Reformed, and of that name we are proud, we like it, and love it, and fight for it, and if necessary die for it. The Christian Reformed Church does not fight anymore. You say, give proof? Here it is! In 1924 these churches deposed a minister (to mention only one) of whom they witnessed that he was Reformed. In 1941 these same churches gave an honorable discharge to a minister because of worldly-mindedness. The former was in a holy mood, and warned these churches not to depart from the Reformed truth. The latter felt at home in the movies of Hollywood. The former pleaded with them to abide by the truth and reconsider their actions. The latter ignored the assembly of the wise. The former did not want to leave. The latter boastfully sneers, "I resign!"

The Synod of 1924 at least made a sinful attempt to abide by the truth. In 1941 there is silence in the court.

Are there no more watchmen upon the walls of Christian Reformed Zion? You were warned brethren for the dogma of Common Grace! You never find a Holy God in sinful, ungodly Hollywood, operating with His Spirit, and an actor is not pleasing in His sight.

Why did not your Synod tell Dr. Pousma that his

walk of life was a sinful walk? Because common grace stood in the way. Yes, that good-for-nothing grace is no good. With it you depose good reformed ministers of the gospel, and you have to keep worldly-minded doctors in your churches. In the dogma of common grace the fundamental principles of Reformed truth are done away with. Then God is no more God. Salvation is for everybody, which means nobody. O yes, it is very easy for the flesh, but God is dethroned, and man is king. God forbid that we as Protestant Reformed Churches should ever adhere to such a man-made dogma.

I am sure that you agree with me when I make the statement that it is good news for every Reformed thinker that the Rev. H. Hoeksema now speaks over the radio, and promised to do so, D. V. for a period of 39 weeks. Remember, the time—every Sunday afternoon from 4:15 until 5:00, over station W L A V, 1340 on your dial. This radio hour is sponsored by the Young Men's Society of the First Protestant Reformed Church.

It is in place here to thank the Rev. Hoeksema for his willingness to cooperate with the Young Men's Society in this worthy cause, and also to thank the Young Men's Society for their many labors connected with this work. Also those who contributed have done well. But above all, our Covenant God must receive the honor and the glory that, as Protestant Reformed Churches, we may be co-workers with Him in the spreading of the gospel of Jesus Christ as it is found in the Scriptures which speak of a sovereign God and of totally depraved men.

Our second Pastor, the Rev. R. Veldman was willing to give up his evening services, and he did this in full accord with the consistory. The Rev. Hoeksema preaches every Sunday evening and Rev. Veldman every Sunday afternoon.

If I may do so, I would advise the Rev. Hoeksema to be clear in his speech, explain the truth thoroughly; for, remember, your audience is not used to Protestant Reformed speaking, outside of our churches.

I would also, and first of all, advise the Christian Reformed people, with their leaders, to tune in and listen attentively. After all, for this truth, this speaker was expelled from your churches, and it left a scar which is painful and sorely felt even today.

We also consider this to be Mission work. Your churches do not like our Missionary, and consequently not this kind of work, although we are glad that at last the day and the hour arrived for the Prot. Ref. Radio Hour, and according to my opinion, it will be of great importance for those who love the Reformed truth.

At the appointed time, in a clear voice, the announcer, Mr. W. Hoffman, introduced the Rev. H. Hoeksema, after the Choir in harmonious unison had

sung No. 308 of the Psalter: "Not unto us, o Lord of heaven, but unto Thee be glory given". . . .

As the last tones of the singers faded away: a convincing voice was heard in the words, "God is God!"

What a difference! Usually we hear of man, and of his mighty deeds. The speaker made it very plain in his entire speech, that God is God indeed. And that He is God and God alone means salvation for His people. Much is heard in our days about man, about his goodness, about man's salvation, a salvation after his own heart. They speak of God who is good and gracious, but they forget that He is also the God of wrath, according to Scripture.

The Church must speak God's Word, and that Word speaks: I am God. God is not the God of our imagination.

It was made very plain: that the Church is God's witness, and she does not speak of herself. She hears the Word of God, wonderful in power, and proclaims that God cannot be likened unto us, for we are mere man. He is the Creator and we are creatures. He is light, and we are darkness, and no one can show us the way out of that darkness and death. The Church speaks a testimony. She has no choice in the matter, and she always must and does say: God is God. It becomes a fire in her bones. She witnesses of the Word she hears. The Church speaks through revelation. The word that diminishes that God is God, is dangerous.

The speaker closed his speech by saying, that the people who know that God is God indeed; and knowing Him as their God, that people is blessed. Then they talk with Him, and walk with Him, and in that sweet communion taste that He is good and so have life eternal.

As it always is, some liked the speech, and others did not. There were also some who did not understand it, others complained that prayer was lacking.

Now, what shall we say about this. As a Protestant people we are very distinctive, and that holds also in this matter. I would like to ask this question: Does the audience as a whole bow their heads in prayer? You know better. The one laughs, some talk, and others pay no attention whatsoever. So you see, it is not so unwise after all to omit it.

Well, the Word was spoken, and we leave it to our Covenant God, and we feel at ease, knowing that He will do His work through us, in order that His Name may receive the honor and the glory for ever and ever.

One more item in connection with "News of our Churches", and then I will close. It is about the League of our Men's Societies which was held in Fuller Ave. Church. That evening the Rev. H. Veldman of Kalamazoo spoke for us on the subject: "Society Life." Now if we must judge according to the small group

present, then we come to the conclusion, that there is not much life in our Societies. However, there was much life in the speech of the speaker. He treated his subject in distinction from the Church.

Society life is different from church life. The church is a living body with living members, and she must preach the living Word by ordained preachers, chosen of God, and by the Church. That minister must know the truth as it is revealed and given to the church, in order that His people may grow in grace and knowledge of Him.

A Society is a group of members out of that living body, and they come together from week to week, in order to have mutual fellowship with each other, and study the Word of God; and that Word must be studied prayerfully. We must also take time to study, and never forget to read it in the context, and in its entirety.

Scripture explains itself. However, this does not mean that we may not use commentaries; for God also gave us men in the past who were mighty in the Scriptures. And also in books and in magazines we find much what is beneficial for our Society life, and our Standard Bearer cannot be missed.

The Reverend believes in a literal inspiration. This was made very clear in the after recess discussion. God inspired the writers of Holy Writ that they wrote exactly word for word what He spoke and thus the Bible became a harmonious whole.

It was made very plain: that God had the beginning and the end of His plan in His eternal mind and He made known that plan unto men who were moved by the Holy Spirit.

Now, God created these men at the appointed time, and made them ready for the task to the which they were appointed. A Jeremiah was chosen to be the weeping preacher of Israel, and had no choice in the matter, but also so that he was a willing instrument. A Peter could not take the place of the Apostle Paul, and David was given the God-ordained place to become Israel's battling King.

I thought by myself: so it is. Looking at it in this light, we see that little David leading the sheep to the green pastures and thus he was made ready to lead Israel in due time, and fought their battles in Jehovah's Name. He fell in sin, and became a penitent confessor, in order that he could write the Psalms, so comforting for the people of God in all circumstances of life.

Also a Moses was prepared to lead God's people out of the house of bondage to the Canaan of rest. He was their intercessor. It became evident that he was only a type of that true Mediator Jesus Christ.

Well, I have tried my best to write a few lines, and I leave it to the readers to judge if the writing was according to the plan assigned to me by our Editor.

D. S. V.