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Meditatie

De Komst Van Sions Koning

Verheug u zeer, gij, dochter Sions! juich, gij, dochter Jeruzalems! Ziet, uw Koning zal u komen, rechtvaardig, en Hij is een Heiland; arm, en rijdende op een ezel, en op een veulen, een jong der ezelinnen.

Zach. 9:9.

Maar zal dan deze heil aanbrengen?

Is de komst van dezen koning dan waarlijk oorzaak van blijdschap en verheuging voor de dochter Sions en de dochter Jeruzalems, van dezen koning, die komt: "arm en rijdende op een ezel, en op een veulen, een jong der ezelinnen?"

Zullen we het met hem wagen, op hem ons vertrouwen stellen? Zal het mogelijk zijn, dat in verband met en door de komst van dezen koning de wereldmacht ten onder wordt gebracht, en God's Huis veilig wordt bewaard en bevestigd?

Zoo toch moeten we, naar het verband, dezen koning hier zien.

De vertaling hier, vooral van de eerste beide verzen van dit hoofdstuk, munt niet uit door duidelijkheid. Maar de gedachte is, dat de last van het Woord des Heeren, dat is, Zijn oordeels-woord, rust op Chadrach (waarschijnlijk een symbolische aanduiding van het Perzisch-Medische wereldrijk: "Scherp-zacht" beteekenend) en op Damaskus, en op Hamath, en op Tyrus en Sidon, en ook nog op het land der Filistijnen. Tyrus staat hier zelfs aan de spitse en treedt op als vertegenwoordiger der wereldmacht. Ze is zeer wijs, naar de wijsheid, die van beneden is, aardisch en duivelsch is; daarom heeft ze zich sterkten gebouwd, en ook veel schatten vergaderd, zilver als stof en fijn goud als slijk der straten. Doch haar wijsheid, hare sterkten en hare schatten zullen haar niet baten. De Heere zal haar uit het bezit stooten, hare vesting in de zee verslaan, haar met vuur verteren. De last van het Woord

des Heeren drukt zwaar, tot verdervens toe, op de wereldmacht. . . .

En de Filistijnen zullen vreezen bij het aanschouwen van Tyrus' ondergang. Askelon en Gaza en Ekron zullen met groote vreeze worden bevangen. Want op Tyrus zagen ze en vertrouwden ze. En de ondergang van Tyrus is ook hun ondergang: de koning zal uit Gaza vergaan, Askelon zal niet bewoond worden, de bastaard zal te Asdod wonen, de hoogmoed der Filistijnen zal uitgeroeid worden. De wereldmacht gaat ten onder!

Meer nog!

Want ziet, een overblijfsel, ook uit het land van de Filistijnen, behoort den Heere toe!

Het wordt behouden, het blijft onzen God over, het wordt als een vorst in Juda en als de Jebusiet!

En Gods Huis wordt bewaard, in veiligheid gesteld. De doorgaande en de wederkeerende zal niet meer gemolesteerd worden; de drijver zal niet meer door hen doorgaan! Verheug u dan, gij, dochter Sions, want uw koning komt! En met de komst van dien koning staat dit alles in onlosmakelijk verband!

Doch zoekt geen teeken!

Want deze koning is niet gelijk aan de koningen der wereld! Hij is rechtvaardig! Hij is een Heiland!

En Hij komt: arm, en rijdende op eenen ezel, en op een veulen, een jong der ezelinnen!

Zullen we 't met Hem wagen?

Uw koning komt!

Altijd blijde mare!

't Is zoo in en met de wereld ten opzichte van haren koning, de koning der wereldmacht. Als zij de aankondiging verneemt: "uw koning komt!" dan verblijdt ze zich en springt op van vreugde.

Want de mensch zoekt een koning. Dat zit hem in 't bloed!

Van nature is hij geen democraat. Hij ziet uit naar een koning, iemand, die aan de spitse kan treden! De geschiedenis van de jongste dagen bewijst dit wel overvloediglijk. Hij werpt wel eens tronen neer, en doet koningen en keizers het stof bijten; doch met onweerstaanbaren drang zoekt hij toch weer een koning, al noemt hij hem, uit schaamte over zijn

jongste doen, dan ook met een anderen naam. De mare "uw koning komt!" beantwoordt hij met een geestdriftig: "Heil, Führer!". . . .

De mensch verwacht een koning, een "goed" koning!

Want van een "goed" koning verwacht men heil! Neen, hij moet geen tyran zijn, die zichzelf zoekt ten bate van het volk, maar iemand, die voor de natie het goede zoekt, en die ook macht en wijsheid en bekwaamheid bezit om dat goede te bereiken en te realiseren! Van zulk een koning verwacht men heil. Overwinning op, verlossing van, bescherming tegen alle vijanden, vrede en welvaart in het land, straks in heel de wereld, grootheid, eer en aanzien, geluk en zaligheid verwacht ook de wereld van een koning!

Ziet, uw koning komt!

Dat is ook de blijmare des evangelies, heel de geschiedenis door. Het wordt van de vroegste tijden af Gods volk toegeroepen, in het eerste paradijs, aan Israel in Egypte, in Kanaän, in de ballingschap; aan de Kerk in de nieuwe bedeeeling door de eeuwen heen: "Ziet, uw koning komt!"

Let wel: "uw koning"!

Niet slechts in 't algemeen: "er komt een koning"; of: "ge zult een koning hebben"; maar zeer bepaald: "uw koning"!

Daar ligt immers reeds in, dat ook Israel, dat ook de Kerk, dat ook Gods volk uit alle landen en door alle tijden uitziert naar een koning. Neen, ze verwachten een zeer bepaalden koning zelfs. Hij is hun koning! En Hij is er reeds. Hij is ook reeds koning. Hij is zelfs koning van den aanvang, van de oudheden der aarde aan. Doch Hij is nog niet gekomen! En nu zien ze uit naar Hem. Ze verlangen naar Zijn komst! En voor die verwachting is grond. God Zelf had van de dagen van het eerste paradijs, toen de zon was ondergegaan in den morgenstond, en de aarde gekomen was onder de heerschappij van den vorst der duisternis, een koning aangekondigd, die komen zou, die den kop der slang zou vermorzelen, die regeeren zou van geslacht tot geslacht, van de rivier tot aan de einden der aarde; wiens heerschappij een eeuwige heerschappij zou zijn, en wiens koninkrijk zou wezen zonder einde.

Uw koning dus, zeer bepaald.

Van Hem verwachtten ze alle heil, verlossing van alle vijanden, van de macht der duisternis, der zonde, des doods; een eeuwig vredetrijk, waarin gerechtigheid en waarheid de grondslagen zullen zijn van een ongestoorden welvaart en eeuwige gelukzaligheid!

Hij komt, uw koning!

Blijde mare, niet alleen voor Israel van den ouden dag, maar ook nog voor de Kerk der nieuwe bedeeeling!

Want wel kwam Hij reeds, deze Koning, maar Hij is ook nog altijd komende. Nog altijd ziet de Kerk met verlangen uit naar die komst.

Vandaar, dat ook thans nog altijd het evangelie-woord haar wordt verkondigd:

Ziet, uw koning komt!

Verheugt u!

Wonderlijke verschijning!

Hij komt als koning, maar Zijne verschijning is zoo geheel anders dan we het gewoon zijn van koningen, dan we zouden verwachten.

Hij komt naar Jeruzalem, en ook ten behoeve van Jeruzalem; immers de belofte is: "uw Koning zal u komen"!

Naar en ten behoeve van Jeruzalem, 't is waar, zooals het tijdelijk vertegenwoordigd was door, en ook tegenwoordig was in de aardse stad van dien naam; maar toch naar en om dit Jeruzalem, omdat het beeld is van het waarachtige en eeuwige Jeruzalem, dat vergaderd wordt uit alle volken, dat straks uit den hemel nederdaalt van God; omdat het een tijdelijke openbaring is van den eeuwigen troon Davids, die door dezen Koning zal worden opgericht uit het slijk, en waarop Hij zal zitten en regeeren tot in alle eeuwigheid.

Daarom kon Hij dan ook eens letterlijk tot dat Jeruzalem komen als haar Koning, letterlijk vervullend de woorden dezer profetie, arm en rijdend op een ezel, en op een veulen, een jong der ezellen. Maar daarom ook was die letterlijke komst in dien letterlijken vorm door de profetie aangekondigd, niet de eindelijke en volle vervulling der belofte, maar was ze zelf weer profetie van Zijn verdere, Zijn doorgaande komst tot het ware en eeuwige Jeruzalem, door de diepte van het kruis tot in de heerlijkheid der opstanding en der verhooging aan de rechterhand des Vaders, doorgaande, nog altijd, tot Zijn eindelijke komst in macht en heerlijkheid op de wolken des hemels.

Want Zijn komst vindt haar rustpunt in het hemelsch Jeruzalem alleen!

Maar daarom moet die komst dan ook zoo beginnen: arm, rijdende op een ezel!

Immers is Zijn Koninkrijk niet van deze wereld; hoe zoudt ge dan kunnen verwachten, dat Hij zou verschijnen met wereldsche macht, majesteit en praal?

Immers is Hij rechtvaardig en Hij is een Heiland!

Hij is rechtvaardig en daarom is Hij een Heiland!

Zoo geheel anders dan men zou verwachten van de wereldmacht en haar vorst! Van den laatste zou men moeten kunnen zeggen: hij is machtig en daarom is hij een heiland. Maar deze Koning is rechtvaardig, en alleen in den weg der gerechtigheid is Hij een Heiland. Geheel en al in overeenstemming met den wille Gods is deze Koning, want Gods wet is in het binnenste Zijns ingewands en het is Zijne spijze om den wil des Vaders te doen. Volkomen vertrouwt Hij op Zijn God en verwacht Hij, dat God Hem zal rechtvaardigen. Alleen in den weg van Gods recht, en daarom in Zijne gunst, wil Hij Zijn Koninkrijk ontvangen, Heiland zijn, Zijn volk verlossen uit de macht

der vijanden, en eeuwiglijk regeeren in Gods Naam en als Gods Knecht!

Deze Koning is Knecht!

Knecht des Heeren!

Daarom komt Hij dan rijdende op een ezel, en op een veulen, een jong der ezelinnen!

Immers, daarin ligt juist uitgedrukt, dat Hij ten strijde komt zonder wereldsche macht, zonder middelen, zonder het geweld der sterken. Zeker, deze Koning is ook nederig van hart. Hoe zou Hij anders Knecht des Heeren kunnen zijn? Maar de idee van nederigheid is toch niet de hoofdgedachte van dit profetisch beeld des Konings "rijdende op een ezel". Veeleer verkondigt hij daarin heel de wereld, en de vijandige macht, die Hij moet overwinnen, dat Hij Zijn vertrouwen stelt op den Heere der heirscharen, maar dan ook absoluut alleen op Hem. Zoo moest ook Israel doen. Strijdpaaarden mocht Gods volk niet hebben. Het moest den vijand altijd weer verkondigen: "Dezen vermelden van wagens, en die van paarden; maar wij zullen vermelden van den Naam des Heeren, onzes God"! Maar zulk een strijd dorst Israel niet dikwijls aan. Dat de strijd des Heeren is, verstond het niet dikwijls. Doch deze Koning heeft afgezien van alle geweld. Zelfs als zijn goed bedoelende, doch verkeerd verstaande jongeren, Hem in de hitte van den strijd het zwaard aanbieden, en ook zelf het teeken tot den strijd geven door dat zwaard te hanteeren, bestraft Hij hen en heelt den gewonden vijand.

In Zijn strijd, Gods strijd, de worsteling om Gods Verbond, heeft het stalen zwaard geen beteekenis.

Zijn strijd is geestelijk.

In Zijn strijd gaat het louter om Gods recht! En dat recht kan door geen stalen zwaard, door geen legermacht van paarden en wagens, door geen tank en kanon worden verdedigd of gehandhaafd.

Hij komt, rijdende op een ezel!

Daarom komt Hij dan ook "arm" of liever "zachtmoedig". Want immers zachtmoedigheid is bekwaamheid om te lijden! En wie niet met paarden en wagens den vijand tegemoet wil trekken, wie in den strijd om Gods recht alleen, absoluut alleen wil vertrouwen op den levenden God, opdat Die Hem rechtvaardige, zal moeten lijden. . . .

Ten doode toe!

En zoo kwam Hij eens!

Aan de spitse van Zijn volk, daar gesteld voor de grondlegging der wereld, kwam Hij; aan het hoofd van een volk, dat in de macht der vijanden verzonken lag, van satan, zonde, schuld, verderf, dood; aan het hoofd van dat volk voor het aangezicht Gods, om in den weg van Gods recht dat volk te verlossen, en Zijn Koninkrijk te ontvangen.

Hij kwam, rijdende op een ezel, en bond den strijd aan, het wagens met God alleen, zich beroepend op Zijn recht, vertrouwend op Hem van Zijner moeders inge-

wand aan. . . .

En Hij ging onder in den dood. . . . rijdende op een ezel. . . . zachtmoedig. . . . rechtvaardig en een Heiland!

Nooit verwisselde Hij de ezel voor een paard in heel den strijd! En Hij overwon! Zijn vertrouwen werd niet beschaamd. God rechtvaardigde Hem.

Rijdende op een ezel, en op een veulen, een jong der ezelinnen, vreesde Hij niet de hitte van den strijd, ging Hij dood en hel in, verbrak Hij de machten des doods en der hel, verrees Hij uit het graf, en ging Hij de heerlijkheid des Vaders in!

Tot het einde toe rijdende op een ezel, besteeg Hij Davids troon!

Om tot in eeuwigheid te regeeren!

Wonderlijke verschijning!

Verheug u zeer!

Gij dochter Sions, verheug u!

Gij, dochter Jeruzalems, verblijdt u met groote verheuging!

Juich, want uw Koning komt, uw Koning is gekomen! Roept het uit, zoodat de aarde dreune: Hozanna, gezegend is Hij, die komt in den Naam des Heeren! Want als gij thans niet juicht en uw stem verheft met groote blijdschap, dan zullen waarlijk de steenen nog moeten uitbreken in vreugdebedrijf!

Verheug u, Kerk des Heeren in de nieuwe bedeeeling, gij allen, die op Hem uw vertrouwen stelt, die het ook nu met Hem waagt, met Hem, die kwam rijdende op een ezel!

Want zoo moet het ook thans. De wereld heeft aan dezen Koning niets. Zij zoekt niet Gods zaak en Gods recht, maar wereldmacht. Zij zoekt de zaak der wereld, de zaak des satans en der zonde tegenover God te handhaven. Zij zoekt wel een koning, maar een koning met een teeken. En zijn teeken is waarlijk niet, dat hij komt arm en zachtmoedig, en rijdende op een ezel, op een veulen, een jong der ezelinnen. Zij zoekt een koning met macht en geweld. Doch gij, die verstaan hebt, dat de strijd gaat om Gods Verbond en dus Godes is; die Gods recht hebt leeren erkennen en liefhebben; die daarom verstaat, dat de overwinning alleen ligt in het kruis en de opstanding van dezen Koning, die Knecht des Heeren is; gij, die daarom ook hebt leeren afzien van "paarden en wagens", van alle eigen-gerechtigheid, van alle menschelijke poging ter verlossing, om alleen in het kruis van dezen Koning uw heil te zoeken en te vinden,—verheug u!

Want Hij is nog altijd komende! En Hij zal straks verschijnen in al de heerlijkheid, die Hij voor Jeruzalem heeft verworven en van den Vader heeft ontvangen!

Temidden van tegenwoordige verdrukking: verheug u!

Uw koning komt!

H. H.

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Editorials

Appeals To Common Grace

At the last synod of the Christian Reformed Churches a rather miserable case was considered in connection with their mission work among the Indians, more particularly with the work at Rehoboth. On the surface it appeared to be the question whether "white patients" should be admitted to the hospital there, but it was repeatedly stated that there was a "deeper problem at the bottom of the whole matter". It is not our purpose to review the whole case as it was considered by the Christian Reformed Synod. There is chiefly one point of interest to which we would like to call the attention of our readers as well as of the Christian Reformed brethren. This concerns the case of Dr. R. Pousma, medical missionary at Rehoboth at the time, who was rather severely criticised, not only with regard to his work, but also on account of

his walk. We quote from the doctor's own address to synod: "I have been criticised. First in my stand on the movies. Yes, I am a bit out of step with our Church on the movies. I have been criticised for entertaining movie stars at the hospital. Let me tell you the circumstances. I happen to be a Rotarian. We were having a dinner at the Rotary Club in Gallup. Some movie stars were there who were making a picture. They said they would like to see the Indians in their homes in which they live. I did the same thing Dr. Beets would have done. I took them into my home, showed them some of our Indian homes, and gave them a dinner. We ministers should be careful in using arguments against the movies. If you use the same arguments your grandfathers used, you will alienate our people. Are we not encouraging a lot of hypocrisy with our attitude toward the movies? On the mission field our attitude toward the movies is of extreme importance. We are trying to win Indians for Christ, not to make them Christian Reformed. There are ministers in Gallup and Presbyterians on the mission fields who feel different on that subject. One of our ministers used this argument: 'What if you should be found in a theatre on the judgment day; how terrible that would be!' I would not think so; it all depends on the kind of picture you are seeing. Some of our Indians have had training at the Ganado Mission. The superintendent of that school allows no smoking but he does take the children to a good movie occasionally. Then *our* missionaries get up and say: 'No one can be a good Christian and attend movies'. We are doing the hypocritical thing in the Church too, by maintaining the stand we do. Some of our ministers have said to me: 'The stand of our Church is wrong; the decision should be removed, but we don't dare to do it at the present time'. Many pictures are bad, but some are good". . . .

Thus far we quote Dr. Pousma on this matter.

We also present a quotation from the remarks made to Synod by Rev. N. De Vries, a co-worker with Dr. Pousma at Rehoboth for a time: "Then the movie question was thrust upon me. . . . A Navajo girl asked me: 'What about the movies?' I did not say No or Yes, but I asked her a simple question: 'Would you care to be found in a movie on the day the Lord Jesus comes?' The next Sunday evening I mentioned this in my sermon. The next morning Dr. Pousma called me and said: 'Everybody here goes to the movies; there are workers here who go when the coast is clear'. . . . A few days later I saw one of the Rehoboth hospital workers go to the movie house in Gallup. . . . I went to see her. . . . I said: 'We as missionaries are called to live a separate life', and pleaded with her as a pastor to be loyal to her Church and her Lord. She took it to the doctor. The next Sunday before the broadcast the doctor said to her in my presence: 'Are you going

to see *Gone with the Wind?* . . . Here is an incident: On the way East with a party, Dr. Pousma bought tickets to a show. One of the girls would not go. The doctor said: 'Don't be an old fashioned girl; your folks won't find out.' Again: it was Prayer Day. My boy suggested he'd like to go to a ball game while we went to church. The doctor said to the boy: 'You go to the basketball game and pray there; we will pray here'."

Both quotations are from *The Banner* of July 18, 1941.

Now, the point I wish to bring out is that Dr. Pousma in replying to these criticisms and defending himself, appealed to the doctrine of "common grace". According to oral reports of his speech to Synod he made a good deal of this theory as a basis for his defense. *The Banner* briefly reports the following: "I must defend myself now. I am on the spot. The Board has always been exceedingly kind to me; but it has not always been sufficiently careful about the men it put on the field. There is a twofold trend among our leaders: there are those who are orthodox and conservative, and there are also those who are also orthodox and conservative but have more appreciation of common grace. The existence of the latter element exerts an influence on one's outlook and ability to get along with other people."

It seems to me that Synod should have answered this argument.

But it did not. In the discussion of Dr. Pousma's speech there were some that expressed rather strong disagreement with it and disapproval of it, but no one touched the principle of the matter as presented by the doctor: the relation of the theory of common grace to the rest of Dr. Pousma's views.

Here came a man and appeared publicly before the synod of the churches whose servant he is as medical missionary, openly states that he belongs to the Rotary Club and dines with representatives of Hollywood, has a good time with them, instead of rebuking them for their well-known corruption, is friends with them, laughs at their jokes, no doubt, and talks their language (how otherwise can one dine with people of the world? It is always the same). He freely attends shows, advises others to do so, and mocks at those that oppose this. And he advises a boy to say his prayers at a ball game! And he defends this "broad outlook" on life by an appeal to the very doctrine which the Church he serves adopted in 1924, and publicly declares virtually: "the only difference between some of you and me is that I know how to appreciate this doctrine of common grace, you don't."

Surely, for their own peace of mind as well as for Dr. Pousma's sake, the members of Synod should have answered this argument of the doctor!

For their own peace of mind, I say. Did they not get scared for a moment when Dr. Pousma presented

this argument? Did they not ask themselves: how is it that a man that is quite rational can conclude from the doctrine we adopted that such an outlook and mode of life is justified? Did they not wonder for a moment whether, perhaps, he was right? Surely, they owed it to themselves to point out the fallacy in the doctor's reasoning if there were any.

But also to the doctor they owed this. For, after all, it was the doctrine of common grace, which the Christian Reformed Churches officially adopted in 1924, that had become a stumbling block to the doctor. And personally I do believe that it is such a stumbling block. But even if the delegates to Synod do not agree with me on this point, they must admit that the doctrine of 1924 actually became a stumbling block to Dr. Pousma. Should they, then, not have pointed out to him that in what respect he erred in his conception of the doctrine expressed in the "Three Points"?

But they did not even attempt this. Why not? Perhaps, they had an inferiority complex and felt that they could not show the doctor the error of his reasoning. Perhaps, there were some who felt that the doctor's conclusions could not be attacked. Perhaps, there were also those that were of the same views as Dr. Pousma, had the same outlook on life and followed the same mode of life.

However this may be: the Synod failed to answer Dr. Pousma on this most important point.

I cannot refrain from acquainting our readers with the outcome of this matter. I quote from *The Banner* of Aug. 15, 1941:

"Synod's officers advised: 1. To accept the resignation of Dr. R. H. Pousma as a medical missionary and to give him an honorable dismissal. 2. To give to Dr. Pousma the following advice in answer to his request: 'From your statement it is evident that you do not desire to resign as a minister of the gospel, and only did so because you thought the one automatically followed from the other. We advise that you await for a time the leading of God's providence to see if some other field does not open for you where you can labor as medical missionary, and in case no such opening is provided, that you address yourself to your Consistory for an honorable dismissal from the ministry.' This advice was adopted by Synod."

The authors of this advice surely proved themselves masters of ambiguity. Mark, the question is: Is Dr. Pousma still a minister? The masterful ambiguity of the above advice appears in this, that it *seems* to answer this question, but *in reality it does not*. Or, if you please, it gives a double answer: Yes-No. No, for the resignation of Dr. Pousma as *medical-missionary* was accepted. This includes his ministry. He is no longer in the service of the Christian Reformed Church as minister of the gospel in the mission field at Rehoboth.

The relation between him and his Consistory has been severed as far as his ministry is concerned. *Yes*, for Dr. Pousma may still look for a position as missionary in another field, and although he already received an honorable dismissal as medical missionary, he may still ask for one from his Consistory! Is Dr. Pousma still a minister of the gospel? *No*: he received an honorable dismissal. Is Dr. Pousma still minister of the gospel? *Yes*: until he asks for an honorable dismissal!

I expect, however, that this decision will meet with general satisfaction. For by this decision the Christian Reformed Churches get rid of Dr. Pousma, while at the same time they vindicate him in his views. The latter is true, for he received an honorable dismissal, and is committed to the kind providence of God for another field (other, we suppose, than Christian Reformed) of labor as medical missionary.

Dr. Pousma appealed to common grace.

The Synod did the evidently wrong thing with an appeal to "the leading of God's providence".

The two were not very far apart after all!

H. H.

Freedom Of The Seas

In his latest radio address President Roosevelt informed the American public that he had "issued orders to the navy that all necessary steps be taken to insure the safety of communications in the approaches between Iceland and the United States, as well as on other seas between the United States and all other strategic outposts".

Mr. Roosevelt, moreover, in the same speech, was quite insistent on the delivery of American-made war materials to Great Britain and their passage through the American defense zones at all costs. And he warned that all axis warships will be fired upon at sight if they are found within these zones. Where these defense zones are to be found and how far they extend is rather vague at present, but it is evident that they are to be determined by Washington only, and that they will surely be extended as far as is necessary to deliver the goods to great Britain.

The President insisted that this is no act of war, but simply one of self protection and self defense. If this should lead to a "shooting war" (which is the same as simply "war" except that it is not formally declared), the blame rests entirely with the axis powers. The latter now have their choice. If they would avoid trouble with the United States they will have to allow unmolested passage to American ships even though they carry contrabande.

Practically all commentators agree that by this act the President has taken our country another step, perhaps the last, to actual involvement in the present conflict in Europe.

The occasion for this drastic step, the taking of which Mr. Roosevelt assured us he has contemplated for a long time and even prayerfully considered, is the attack upon our ships, some of which, at least, carried contrabande, by the axis powers. The last straw was the attack by a German submarine upon the Greer, a United States cruiser that was carrying mail to Iceland. The President issued further orders that the submarine that launched this torpedo attack is to be hunted down and eliminated.

The chief argument in the President's address justifying this step was that of the "freedom of the seas".

It is true, Mr. Roosevelt incidentally characterized the attack upon our ships as an act of piracy. And it would seem quite reasonable and justifiable to sweep the guilty pirates from the high seas. As early as in the days of President Monroe's administration we are informed a law was passed by congress "to protect the commerce of the United States, and to punish the crime of piracy."

In this act congress authorized and empowered the President to employ as many of the armed vessels as he would consider necessary to protect the merchant ships of the United States against "piratical aggressions and depredations". And congress authorized the President to instruct the commanders of the armed vessels of America "to subdue, seize, take and send into port of the United States any armed vessel or boat, the crew whereof shall be armed, and which shall have attempted or committed any piratical aggression, search, restraint, depredation or seizure, upon any vessel of the United States, or its citizens, which may have been unlawfully captured upon the high seas".

This was in the days when congress was still in power and had not surrendered the power vested in it to the President.

But the torpedoing of the Robin Moor in the South Atlantic, the bombing of the Steel Seafarer in the Red Sea, the sinking of the Sessa, an American owned ship sailing under the flag of Panama, and the attack upon the Greer, were not acts of piracy.

A pirate is a freebooter, a lawless rover, acting without authority or commission, but the submarines operating under the German flag have their commission from a sovereign state. *Their attacks are acts of war, not of piracy.*

It seems to me that Mr. Roosevelt's radio address would have been much more to the point had he clearly and candidly recognized this fact.

President Wilson did so during the first World War. Regardless, now, of the question whether "freedom of the seas" implies that a neutral nation can claim the

right of free passage through war zones even when they are carrying war materials to one of the belligerent nations, it must be said in favor of President Wilson's policy that formally he pursued the right course. After the sinking of the *Lusitania* in May, 1915, and again after the *Sussex* affair, in the summer of 1916, the President sent a series of dispatches to the German Imperial Government, protesting mainly on the ground of the "freedom of the high seas". And when all his efforts failed to persuade the German government to adopt his, President Wilson's, viewpoint, he did not merely issue a shooting order to the navy, as now did President Roosevelt, but he turned to Congress with the advice that it declare the indiscriminate sinking of our ships to be acts of war against us on the part of the German government. I quote from President Wilson's address to Congress on April 2, 1917:

"With a profound sense of the solemn and even tragical character of the step I am taking and of the grave responsibilities which it involves but in unhesitating obedience to what I deem my constitutional duty I advise that the Congress declare the recent course of the Imperial German Government to be in fact nothing less than war against the Government and people of the United States; that it formally accept the status of belligerent which has thus been thrust upon it; and that it take immediate steps not only to put the country in a more thorough state of defense, but also to employ all its resources to bring the Government of the German Empire to terms and end the war". (The War Message and Facts Behind It, pp. 12, 13).

Compare with this course of action the announcement made by Mr. Roosevelt to the nation in his latest radio address: "I have issued orders to the navy that all necessary steps be taken" etc.

No, acts of piracy the sinking of ships by bombing or torpedoing cannot be called. They are certainly acts by the German Government, for which the Government of Germany is responsible. If they are anything at all, they are acts of war.

And if they are acts of war by the German Government against the United States the question certainly should be answered, not by the President alone, but by Congress, whether these acts of war against us are justifiable or not.

And if the Congress concludes that these acts on the part of the German Government against the United States are wholly unjustifiable, so that we have given no occasion for them, the Congress ought to declare that a state of war exists between the German government and the United States, and act accordingly.

Then our Government would, at least, pursue a course which the nation could clearly understand.

As it is now, the President alone decides that at-

tacks upon our ships, even though we openly declare our intention to aid Great Britain, and insist that we will send her all the war materials possible, and though the ships that are sunk carry contrabande, is a violation of the principle of "the freedom of the seas".

But is it true, as the President claimed in his address, that the sinking of our ships when they sail the high seas with the avowed purpose to send aid to Great Britain, is a violation of the "freedom of the seas", an act of war against the United States for which the German Government must assume all the blame?

It is argued that the principle mentioned is applied to American defense zones only.

Very well; but who determines their scope and how far do they extend?

Does not the President's speech give reason to conclude that all of the Atlantic and of the Pacific is, or will be included in the defense areas?

The United States occupied Iceland, allegedly because it was necessary for self defense: the German Government might otherwise establish a base there to invade our country! The result is that the waters between the United States and Iceland belong to our defense zones, and American ships must be permitted free passage, even American warships may freely cruise in these waters.

Actually, the President's plea for "freedom of the seas" means insistence on the right to carry aid to Great Britain, if necessary by armed force, and whatever may be the cost.

But if this is the American interpretation of that principle, can we blame the German Government if it adopts the same interpretation and applies it to its own needs and benefit? If the American interpretation of "freedom of the seas" demands free passage for American ships carrying contrabande, does it not follow that the German interpretation must be that the German Government has the right to sink those ships?

But the American Government repudiated this interpretation of "the freedom of the seas" by its neutrality act.

This act of Congress can, of course, be circumvented and evaded by extending our defense zones.

But it would be a more honest course to pursue if the neutrality act would simply be repealed.

As matters stand now, the issues are constantly being befogged.

It is rather generally admitted by friends and foes of the war policy of the present administration, that there is a conflict between the open and avowed or alleged purpose of Mr. Roosevelt and the actual course in which he is steering our nation.

He pledged himself to keep the country out of war, as far as this was in his power.

But all agree that every step he has taken thus far is calculated to involve the United States in the European conflict on the side of Great Britain.

All are convinced that the last step the President took, the order he issued to the American navy, puts us on the very brink of war, leaving it to the axis powers whether we shall actually be dragged into a "shooting war".

Some claim that we are in the war already.

What may be the reason for the apparent conflict between the President's pledges and his actual policy?

I believe that he, too, realizes very well that the American people as a whole are still strongly opposed to our becoming involved in the war, and that all the pleas of interventionists have not been able to persuade them to believe that to enter this conflict is a matter of self defense.

Personally, I am an enemy of Nazism, and I hope that we may never see the day that its dream of world-dominion is realized.

But I do not believe that Great Britain's slate is very clean, in fact, I am sure that it is rather dirty. Germany aims at world dominion. Great Britain always did the same thing.

Nor can you persuade me to believe that we are justified before God to fight on the side of Russia, godless, atheistic, communistic Russia, and that we can expect God to smile upon us in His favor if we do.

I believe that it is the calling of our Government to see to it that our nation is well prepared to defend itself.

But we should take no deliberate steps to become involved in the present conflict.

And this we surely have done.

H. H.

The Triple Knowledge

EXPOSITION OF THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

II.

LORD'S DAY I.

2.

The Idea Of An Only Comfort.

The first question of the Heidelberg Catechism speaks of an "only comfort in life and death". There are three elements in this question that at once draw our attention and that require explanation. The first is the fact that the Catechism here speaks of "comfort", and the question arises: what is the implication of

this concept? What is true comfort? The second element is expressed in the adjective "only". By this qualification the Christian comfort is characterized as an exclusive and quite sufficient comfort. One who has this comfort needs no other. And the third element is expressed in the words "in life and death", by which phrase the comfort of which the Heidelberg speaks is described as an all-embracing comfort. It covers all. It meets all possible exigencies. And, at the same time, it presupposes that "life" requires comfort as well as "death". We must briefly explain these three closely related conceptions.

The first question, therefore, is: what is the idea of comfort, particularly of Christian comfort?

Zacharias Ursinus, one of the authors of the Heidelberg Catechism, gave an explanation of our Catechism in the form of lectures to his students. These were collated and edited by David Parëus; and they were translated and published, in 1657, in the Holland language under the title "Schatboek der Verklaringen over den Heidelbergschen Catechismus". (Treasure-book of Explanations of the Heidelberg Catechism). The translation is by Festus Hommius. It was edited and published again in 1739, enriched by a rather lengthy preface of approximately one hundred and sixty pages. And more recently it was translated from the edition by Parëus into the Holland language by C. Van Proosdij. Whenever I speak of or quote from the "Schatboek", as the work is generally known, the reference is to the last named translation. In this "Schatboek", then, Ursinus offers the following definition of comfort: "Troost is een zeker besluit van het verstand, waardoor we tegenover iets ongelukkigs, dat we hebben, eenig goed stellen, en door dit goede te beschouwen de smart verzachten en het ongeluk geduldig dragen", p. 21. We may translate this definition as follows: "Comfort is a certain determination of the mind, whereby we posit some good thing over against a certain evil which we experience, by the contemplation of which we alleviate the grief and patiently bear the evil". And Dr. A. Kuyper agrees with the chief notion of this definition. Also according to him comfort is "een overlegging in ons verstand", a consideration in our mind or intellect. E Voto, I, p. 3.

An important truth is expressed here, upon which we should insist, provided we do not give it all the emphasis. I refer now to the statement, that comfort is a determination, or conclusion, or consideration of the mind.

Of course, if we should say no more than this, the definition would not be correct. It would be untrue because of its one-sidedness. And if we, then, in the subsequent exposition of the truth, should follow the lead of this definition, the result would be intellectualism, dead orthodoxy. Man is more than mere intellect, mind or reason. He is also a volitional being. He has

a will, emotions, desires, imagination, feelings. He is a being with "heart and mind and soul and strength". And comfort concerns the whole man. It is not merely a consideration of the mind, a decision of the intellect, a conclusion of reason. Faith is more than knowledge, it is also confidence. Religion is more than doctrine, it is life and joy. And comfort is more than a mere decision of the mind, it is also a determination of the will, affecting all the desires and emotions. And Christian comfort is a matter of the heart, whence are the issues of life.

Yet, it should be maintained that comfort is also a consideration and conclusion of the mind; in the specific case under discussion, that of the Christian comfort, it is also a determination of the believing mind. This must be emphasized over against all forms of emotionalism and false mysticism, in opposition to all who deny or belittle the value and necessity of Christian knowledge and Christian doctrine and, therefore, also of Christian instruction. There are those, especially since the last part of the eighteenth century, that would separate the emotional life of man from his intellect, that would make of "emotion" a separate power or faculty of the soul, and give it a more or less independent place. And it is amazing how much is relegated to the domain of the emotions or "feeling". It is through "feeling" that we distinguish ourselves from the outside world, that we become individuals, personal beings. "Feeling expresses the fact that all is not purely objective and universal, but that it also exists in individual and subjective form". (John Dewey). The same author distinguished between Sensuous, Formal, and Qualitative Feelings, and to the latter category is relegated the "feeling" of sympathy and antipathy, of pride and humility, of good and evil, of guilt and remorse, of dependency and obligation, of peace and rebellion, of love and hate, of faith and hope! Religion and morality become matters of feeling. One can readily understand that this is the deathblow to Christian doctrine. Feelings certainly are no "decisions of the mind", the intellect has nothing directly to do with them, you can hardly construe a dogmatics of your feeling or on the basis of your emotions. All that pertains to religion and morality becomes subjective and vague. And the Word of God cannot serve as the source or criterion of this religion of the feelings. It would, in that case, have no sense to ask the question: "what is thy only comfort in life and death?" For an intelligent account of the "feelings" is quite impossible. And in opposition to this it is significant to maintain the truth, that comfort is a consideration of the intellect, that without this intellectual consideration and conclusion no Christian comfort is possible. Faith is more than knowledge, but it is, nevertheless, also knowledge; and without the knowledge of faith the confidence of faith is impossible. You cannot make

a Christian by instruction, but the Christian can be indoctrinated, and by growing in the knowledge of Jesus Christ may increase in the conscious possession of the true comfort in life and death.

Of course, it should be added that, in the case of Christian comfort, this "consideration of the intellect", this "conclusion of the mind", is not a mere rational process or the result of a syllogism. The "only comfort in life and death" is concerned with a good, which "eye hath not seen and ear hath not heard, and has never arisen in the heart of man". It is, therefore, a good that can be posited over against the evil of life and death only by the mind of faith. And this faith lays hold upon that which the Spirit of God reveals to us, not by inner light, as the mystics would have it, but by the Word of God as we possess it in the Scriptures. It is the believing mind that lays hold upon the promise of God, is certain of that promise, contemplates that promise, so that the believing heart embraces the thing promised and esteems it so great and gracious, that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with it. Thus Abraham by faith, when he was called to sacrifice the child of the promise, posited the good that God was able to raise him from the dead. And Moses esteemed the reproach of the people of God, the reproach of Christ, greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt, for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward. Both actually did some accounting, some figuring. In the case of Abraham this is even literally expressed in the original of Hebrews 11:19. Both performed an act of the mind, both reached a conclusion concerning a good which they placed over against an evil. But it was a consideration of faith, that laid hold on the promise of God, yea, on Himself, who calleth the things that are not as if they were, and who raiseth the dead. Rom. 4:17. And thus this "consideration of the mind" which is implied in Christian comfort, is based on the Word of God, and is an activity of faith in the promise.

What, however, is true comfort? It is, indeed, the positing of a good over against an existing evil. But must not more be said? Is comfort perfect when we are aware of both, an existing evil and, over against it, an existing good? Evidently not, for the fact remains that the evil also exists. It is true, that in that case the contemplation of the good may alleviate the suffering, relatively lighten the burden we bear, but it cannot possibly reconcile us to the evil we experience. As long, therefore, as our experience is dualistic, and we are conscious of a good and of an evil in juxtaposition, our comfort cannot be perfect. We can conceive of a far happier state, that in which the good alone exists. Nor can comfort be said to be perfect, when the good of which we are aware and which we posit over against the evil we suffer, is greater, even much

greater than the existing evil. For the evil still remains, and the possibility is still there of conceiving of a happier lot for ourselves, that in which the evil has no place. Perhaps we are inclined to say, that comfort is complete and perfect, when, over against the prevailing evil, we know of a good that is not only far greater than the evil, but by which the evil will ultimately be removed. We know of a good that overcomes the evil! We are contemplating a good that is victorious over the evil! Yet, although in that case our comfort is far greater because of the prospect of final deliverance from the evil, the dualism still remains. And the question must needs arise: why should there have been an evil at all? Still we can conceive of a more blessed situation: that in which we enjoyed the good from the beginning, the joy of which was never for a moment marred by the suffering of the evil. We must go a step further in order to arrive at the conception of full and perfect comfort. It is the consciousness and contemplation of a good so great and precious that the evil we suffer cannot be compared with it, *and unto the attainment of which the evil we bear for the time being is strictly subservient and necessary!* Only when we may contemplate the evil as a means to the end of the great good do we have full and perfect comfort. Only in that case do we have an answer, the final answer, to the question: why should the evil exist at all, even for a time? Only in that light can we see that the evil is only relatively an evil, while absolutely it is a good. I may have to walk a steep and rugged road, to travel which means toil and suffering; but if it is the only way that leads me to my destination, the almost impassible road is, nevertheless, a good, and I become reconciled to my suffering. A surgical operation may cause much pain and suffering, and I may dread to submit myself to it; but if I have the assurance that it is the only and sure way to recovery, I consider it a good. Perfect comfort, therefore, is the knowledge and contemplation of a great good over against an evil which is subservient to the good and necessary to the attainment of the latter.

Such, indeed, is the comfort of the Christian, the only comfort in life and in death!

Ursinus may not have conceived of the Christian comfort in this light, as his definition would give us reason to surmise, but surely, it is the underlying notion of the first question and answer of the Heidelberg Catechism. How otherwise could it have spoken of an *only* comfort, and that *in life and in death*?

Let us consider the deep seriousness of the realities of life and of death, of life-and-death as moving on the same plane and belonging to the same category, as they are viewed and evaluated in this amazing question of the catechism. It draws the lines sharply. It speaks of an *only* comfort. Consider the implication

of this qualification. It is not a "great" comfort, or a "chief" comfort with which our instructor is concerned. That would make it relative. It would leave us many comforts among which there is one that is easily the greatest. But if that should be our view of life-and-death we cannot possibly agree with the first question of the Heidelberg. The comfort of which it speaks is exclusive. It brooks no competition, no comparison. It will have sole sway, or it will have nothing to do with you. It is like a physician that offers you just one particular treatment of your disease, on condition that you refrain from taking any other medicine. It takes all your other comforts away from you! It wants to be all or nothing!

But even so we probably did not make quite clear the seriousness of the situation as presented by this bold question. To do this we must also consider that this comfort of which we now speak presents itself as all-embracing and fully sufficient in all cases. It is not an only, an exclusive comfort in a given case, let us say in the most serious case: death. Perhaps we could more readily agree with the Heidelberg if it had not spoken of life-and-death but simply of death in connection with the only comfort. Indeed, that would make the question quite intelligible. Even the "flesh" can understand the question quite well in this slightly altered form: what is thy only comfort in death? Death! Death in distinction from life, even from our present life! Yes, indeed, that is the great evil, for which there is no remedy, over against which the mind cannot posit any good derived from this life that is sufficient to serve as comfort, even in the slightest degree. Life is rather good to us. True, there are also many evils, but these are more than counter-balanced by the goods. There is much that is unpleasant, much toil and labor, much pain and suffering, much sorrow and grief, but there are also many comforts that alleviate the suffering. For there is a good deal of "common grace" in this world that causes us to enjoy life. And so, the mind "considers". We do some accounting. We divide our experiences into two classes. We put the things of this present life on two piles. And evaluating the one class, we complain of our lot and way and conclude that there is a good deal of evil and suffering; but we turn to the other pile for our comfort, and say: "we have much to be thankful for". And so we do, indeed, speak of comfort-in-life, meaning that there is a silver lining to every dark cloud, that there is a good deal of sweet mixed with the bitter, that there are many things that make life worth living. But to speak of an *only* comfort in life sounds rather unintelligible, absurd, too absolutistic. If it were not for death, the death that makes an end to this life, we could get along quite well without any other comfort than those we find in this life itself! In fact, is not this exactly the unique terror

of death that it cuts off this present life? Indeed, we admit: over against death we can think of nothing that can comfort us. All our other comforts we can find in life itself, in this world; but for a comfort in death life offers nothing. To obtain this comfort we go to church on Sunday. When we die we call in the minister to pray for us (and, if it seems at all reasonable, to pray that we may recover and stay in this life), or the priest to administer extreme unction. And so all is well. My comfort in life is that it rains and that the sun shines, that I have enough to eat and to drink, that I have a good job, that there is a doctor when I am sick and that I may look forward to recovery, that I have some money in the bank on which to fall back, that I have a pleasant home, a lovely wife, dear children, that there is peace and prosperity in the country or that they will surely return when war rages and depression makes life less pleasant; and if, besides, I may also have comfort in death, an only comfort, I am well off, and have nothing to complain.

Indeed, that would seem a reasonable philosophy, the philosophy of common grace *and* special grace, of *many* comforts in life and an *only* comfort in death! Any normal intelligence can grasp such a world-and-life-and-death view. And who could possibly be offended by it?

But consider, now, the conception of life-and-death that is implied in this first question of the catechism: what is thy *only* comfort in life and death? What does it mean? Clearly, it can express only one thing: *that life and death are both evils when considered apart from this comfort after which our instructor inquires!* It speaks of life-and-death in one breath. It puts them in the same class. You need the same comfort in both, over against both: life and death! It means that life is also death, "nothing but a continual death" as the prayer before baptism in our Form has it, when evaluated by itself, without the light of this only comfort. This life, such as it is, as I live it in this mortal and corruptible body, as it is hemmed in on all sides by death, as it inevitably, inexorably ends in death, is an evil, offers no comfort. Life, the life in which I am born through "the will of the flesh", on whose pathway I move, and move inevitably and from my very first breath in the direction of death and in the domain of death, the limit of which is threescore years and ten or fourscore years at the utmost, is an evil unless you can bring into account the only comfort in life and in death. Life and all it implies, life in which I eat and drink, labor and toil, marry a wife and bring forth children; life and all its activity in labor and industry, business and commerce, science and art; life in all its relationships of natural love and friendship, of parent and child, of brother and sister, of man to man, group to group, nation to nation; life with its sorrows, but also with its joys,

with its moaning but also with its singing, with its sickness and pains but also with its health,—life such as it is in this world, is, in this first question of our catechism, mentioned in one breath with death. It is, together with death, in inseparable connection with death, the evil over against which the believing mind posits a good that overcomes the evil of life and of death, nay more: that presses it into its service!

Such, then, is the idea of this only comfort. It is a decision of the believing mind, that clings to and takes into account the promise of God. It is the knowledge and personal assurance of a great good, without which life-and-death are an evil from which there is no escape; of a good that cannot be found within the scope of life-and-death, that comes from without, that transcends it, that is both exclusive and all-embracing, and unto the attainment of which the present evil of life and of death are necessary and subservient as a means to an end.

H. H.

Melchisedec And Christ

At the time when Abraham, in obedience to the command of the Lord, took up his residence in the land of Canaan, the Canaanites were fast deteriorating morally in all their branches. This is implied in the saying of God to Abraham that the measure of iniquity of the Canaanites was not yet full. That the tribes of Canaan, even at that early date, were steeped in idolatry is also indicated by the doing of the patriarchs that consisted in their building, in agreement with their calling, an altar to the Lord in every place where they would temporarily pitch their tent. They must have done so, surely, with a view to providing the inhabitants of Canaan with the glorious reverse of their idolatry.

Thus did heathenism gather gradually, as a general twilight, through which glimmered the men of God, as individual stars. One of these stars is Melchisedec. In this writing we draw a comparison between him and the patriarch Abraham. The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews does so directly and purposely, in the following scripture found at Hebrews 7:1-5:

"For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him;

To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is king of peace;

Without father, without mother, without descent,

having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually.

Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils.

And verily, they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham:

But he whose descent is not counted from them received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises.

And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better.

And here men that die receive tithes; but there *he receiveth them*, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth.

And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, payed tithes in Abraham.

For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him."

Let us mark the statement, "And without contradiction the less is blessed of the better." Abraham then was *the less*; Melchisedec was the better. The proof of this is that (1) Abraham was blessed by Melchisedec; (2) to Melchisedec Abraham gave the tenths of the spoils. However, we may not rest here with Abraham. The point to the whole argument of the sacred writer is that Levi *as priest* was the less and that Melchisedec as priest-king was the better. The indication of this is that Levi, being in the loins of Abraham, gave the tenths to Melchisedec and was blessed by the latter. So, rightly considered, the comparison here is in the final instance between the Levitical priesthood and that of Melchisedec. Let us then concentrate on the theme:

Melchisedec the better, Levi (Abraham) the less.

Let us see (1) in what sense this was true; (2) the evidence of this.

It is plain that the comparison is not between the persons of Melchisedec and Levi but between the priesthood of these two personages. It was in their capacity of priests that Melchisedec was the better and Levi the less. Melchisedec was the better for two reasons: (1) Besides being priest of the Most High God, he was at once king—king of righteousness and king of Salem, which is, king of peace; (2) Melchisedec, that is, his priesthood, abideth continually. The latter implies certainly, that Melchisedec was made priest after the power of an endless life and also by an oath.

Levi, on the other hand, was no king. He was

priest only. Secondly, his priesthood had beginning and end. In agreement herewith, Levi, that is, Aaron, was made priest, not by the power of an endless life, but after the law of a carnal commandment and without an oath.

Let us now delineate on these differences. Melchisedec was king of Salem and priest of the Most High God. Of him it is related that he was without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life, but made like unto the Son of God. It need not surprise that his appearance had been variously explained. According to one view, Melchisedec is Sem, who still lived in the days of Abraham. Another view has it that he was the son of Kenan, who kept watch on the hill of Golgotha, where Adam lay buried, who died in the days of Kenan. Some, recoiling from the view that this great one among men was an ordinary mortal, maintain that we are to think here, in connection with the name Melchisedec, of an angel, or of an incarnation of the Holy Spirit, or of the Logos, or perhaps of the appearance of a higher God. But all such views must be set aside as being without the slightest support in Scripture. Fact is that in Holy Writ, Melchisedec stands before us a man among men, who, living in the days of Abraham, was king of Salem, the latter Jerusalem, and priest of the Most High God. The scripture at Hebrews 7:1-5 is to be taken as the record of the appearance of a real man of flesh and blood on the stage of sacred history.

But how is this priest of the Most High God, ruling in the midst of an idolatrous land, and standing outside the line of Abraham, to be explained, and wherein must the origin of his priesthood be sought? According to Abraham Kuiper, the priesthood of Melchisedec is to be regarded as a remnant of the original priesthood of creation. Adam was priest. And this priesthood, with which man in the state of integrity was clothed, by virtue of the original ordinance of creation, reappeared in Melchisedec. That this priesthood persisted and could still flower so beautifully in the person of Melchisedec, despite the entrance of sin, is to be ascribed to the operation of common grace, checking sin in the human race and staying the corruption. So he wrote in *De Gemeene Gratie*. "De apostle roept dan ook al de macht van de taal te hulp, juist om die meerderheid, die verhevenheid, die uitnemmenheid van Melchisedec te doen uitkomen. Hij prijst hem als priester des Allerhoogsten, als koning der gerechtigheid; wijst er op, hoe zijns een koningschap en priesterschap was, dat niet hing noch aan zijn vader of moeder, noch aan de geslachtsrekening van zijn afkomst; dat nooit begon en geen einde zou hebben; hoe hij, meer dan Abraham, Aaron en David deswege den Zoon Gods gelijk, en alzoo zijn voorbeeld en afschaduwing was; en dat koningschap en priester-

schap in hem tot een verbonden, derhalve niet uit een particuliere heilsdaad, maar uit de oorspronkelijke ordinantie Gods was opgekomen. Wie dit anders opvat, voor dien zal al deze uitdrukkingen van Paulus eenvoudig onverstaanbaar, en zoo is men er dank ook toe gekomen, om van Melchisedec een onwezenlijk persoon te maken; niet een historisch koning van Jeruzalem, maar een soort vluchtige verschijning van den Christus; iets wat met het duidelijk verhaal van Gen. 14 ten eenemale in strijd, met Psalm 110 onverzoenbaar en met Hebr. 6 en 7 ten eenemale onvereinigbaar is.

“Ge moet, om het verhaal van Den. 14 en Hebr. 6 en 7 te verstaan, onverbiddelijk vasthouden aan de wezenlijkheid van het geschiedkundig verhaal, dat er destijds in Salem, het latere Jeruzalem, een vorst regeerde, die God nog vreesde, die naar het oorspronkelijk bestel nog de koninglijke met de priesterlijke waardigheid in zijn eigen persoon vereenigde, en die deze priesterlijke waardigheid bezat, niet krachtens een bijzondere heilsopenbaring, maar krachtens de oorspronkelijke scheppingsordinantie, die den mensch als mensch opriep, om in den naam des Heeren als koning te regeeren in zijn schepping, Hem als priester het offer van liefde en lof te mengen, en als profeet zijn naam te verkondigen. De zegen, dien Melchisedec over Abraham uitsprak was dan ook de priesterlijke zegen, en door het geven van de tienden heeft Abraham hem als priester geëerd.”

And in his Dictaten Dogmatiek, III, Locus de Christo, Pars Tertia, p. 92, he says, “Nemen wij dit saam, dan krijgen wij dit resultaat: Zooals Melchisedec optreedt, is hij een priester, die zijn priesterschap lijnrecht uit het paradips afleidt uit de algemeene genade; bij wien van verzoening en offerande geen sprake is; wiens priesterlijke bediening volle realiteit bezit; ze is wel onzuiver (want hoe zou de gevallen mensch het priesterschap voortzetten?), van binnen uitgehold, van geestelijk leven ontbloed—maar toch een laatste gloor van het priesterschap door God zelf in het paradips ingesteld. Hier hebben wij voor het laatst in deze aanminnige verschijning een spoor van 't scheppingspriesterschap—dat daarna verdwijnt in 't heidendom om 'Gott widrig' te worden.”

According to Kuiper then, this priesthood is the original priesthood of the ordinance of creation. It has been transmitted to Melchisedec directly from Paradise. Now this conception is not according to Scripture. Certain it is that there was a priesthood according to the original ordinance of creation. Adam in the state of integrity was priest of the most high God. He was the servant of God and stood in covenant fellowship with God, with his whole being and with the whole of the earthy creation. And it was his calling as prophet to know God and to declare and glorify His name in the midst of creation, and as priest to love

God with his whole heart and with all his strength and in that love to offer himself and all things to God. However, through sin this priesthood turned into its very opposite. In the language of the Confession, man corrupted his whole nature. He became wicked, corrupt and perverse in all his ways. He died spiritually. His love became enmity. If he originally consecrated himself to God with all his strength, he now wallows in the mire of sin. Not gradually and eventually but immediately he changed from priest of the most high God to priest of the devil. There appeared immediately the priesthood of men in the person of Cain and in his generations perpetuating itself. After the flood it reappeared, did this false priesthood. It revealed itself in the idolatry of the heathen world and in the modern civilized world in the rejection of the atonement of Christ. In the line of the development of this priesthood there is no room for the priesthood of Melchisedec.

Melchisedec was a historical figure. This certainly must be maintained. But it is also certain that he cannot be explained as an after-glow of the original priesthood of the ordinance of creation.

The explanation of Melchisedec as a historical phenomenon in his priesthood is not the so-called common grace but simply the grace of God, which is in Christ Jesus and which operated in the generations of the true people of God. The narrative of Genesis strongly suggests that in Melchisedec we have to do with a common historical phenomenon. He was king-priest and there was to him a people over which he ruled and whose highpriest he was. The appearance of Melchisedec implies that even at the time of Abraham there was found in the land of Canaan a tribe or group of people, who knew the Lord and worshipped the most high God and who through their priest-king brought Him sacrifices in his sanctuary. Melchisedec was king-priest of Salem and in this place there was still found a people who truly loved and served the Lord. The land was also inhabited by the Canaanites. But in the midst of the Canaanites there also lived a people that knew the Lord and were represented by Melchisedec. If the priesthood of Melchisedec sprang from redeeming grace, it was a remnant not out of Paradise but out of the ark. In the ark was the church of God. And out of the visible church there will again come forth the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent according to the two lines of election and reprobation. The main line of the covenant runs through the generation of Sem and is limited to the seed of Abraham. But this does not mean that with the calling of Abraham all God's people had died with the exception of Abraham. Only gradually was the fear of God limited to the seed of Abraham. In the light of these observations, it is not strange that even at the time of Abraham there was found in the land of

Canaan a people who truly feared God. So much for the historical appearance of Melchisedec.

Now, as compared with the priesthood of Aaron (Levi) the priesthood of Melchisedec was the better. It was this because it was a kingly priesthood. In Melchisedec the priesthood and the kingship were connected. Second, the priesthood of Melchisedec was eternal. Of Melchisedec the sacred narrator, directing attention to his name, says that he is a king of righteousness and king of peace. The first is the meaning of the name Melchisedec, which this king bore, certainly on account of his being righteous. The second is derived from the name of the place, Salem, meaning peace. As to his priesthood, the writer tells us that he was priest of the most high God, without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life. Thus he was made like unto the Son of God. This description must be made to apply solely to Melchisedec as priest and not to him as a historical personage. The key to the correct understanding of this scripture is the word *descent*. Its Greek equivalent signifies a generation not described or recorded, or in the express words of the writer, not counted. Melchisedec then is a priest whose parentage, generation, birth and decease was not recorded, because his priesthood did not depend on such descent. He did not have to point to father and mother to make plain that he had a right to the priesthood. It was different with the sons of Aaron. Their parentage was recorded because only the sons of Aaron might be vested with the priesthood. This priesthood therefore had beginning and end. Not so that of Melchisedec. And that it is said of him that he was king of Salem must imply something more than that he was a civil magistrate ruling in a particular place and over a definite people. For the writer adds, "which is king of peace." He was a righteous and peaceable king, one that ruled righteously and lived peaceably. Absolutely in himself, and as unto his own personal qualifications, he was so and no more, nor could he be more. Really he was a righteous and peaceable king. Typically he, in distinction from Aaron was the "king of righteousness and peace". And his priesthood was eternal. As person, Melchisedec was born and died. But his priesthood had no end.

Could it not be that even more is intended. It is to be considered that his priesthood abided continually. This would seem to suggest that we are to think of this priesthood as springing from the life of regeneration, thus as the priesthood of all believers.

Abraham pays the tenths to Melchisedec. He did so after having gained a signal victory over the invading host, representative of the forces of iniquity, the world-power. Abraham paying the tenths to Melchisedec and the latter providing the former with food and drink and in addition blessing him—forms the

figure of the company of redeemed, blessed and nourished by Christ, in whom they triumph and to whom, therefore, they do homage.

G. M. O.

't Hijgend Hert

(Psalm 42)

Toen onze vadersen geroepen werden om ook dezen psalm op rijm te zetten, zagen ze een hert, dat door honden en jagers achterna gezeten werd. Doch 't arme beest was den jager en de hond te vlug af. Het mocht "der jacht ontkomen". Doch, o wee! De dorst was zóó groot, dat de arme hinde haar stem snikkend verhief en schreeuwde naar de frissche waterstroomen. Het wilde zich in de ruischende waters storten en om dan voorts te drinken, te drinken naar harte-lust.

Dat beeld is niet geheel naar waarheid. Tenminste, de tekst spreekt niet van jagers en honden, noch van de jacht. 't Is best mogelijk, dat David net maar dacht aan een hinde die dorst had, lang dorst gehad had en die geen water kon vinden. Hoe dit dan ook zij, die dorstende hinde vergelijkt David met zijn dorstende ziel.

Uit den aard der zaak is het zeer moeilijk om iets over dezen psalm te schrijven. Dorst naar God! 't Is zoo subjectief, zoo zeer intiem, persoonlijk. Let er slechts op, dat David het persoonlijk voornaamwoord in verschillende vormen 33 malen in dezen korten psalm gebruikt. 't Is alles ik, mij, mijn en mijne.

Zie, we hebben het kerkelijk instituut en de ambten. We hebben goede Gereformeerde dogmatiek met hare discussie door woord en blad. Ook zingen we de psalmen in het Huis Gods en luisteren naar de preek. Komt men dan wat samen zoo spreken we over de dingen die 't eeuwige leven aangaan. Vaak mag het gebeuren, dat we naar Gods Woord grijpen en gretig lezen, lezen, lezen. Het einde was dan, dat de Bijbel wel dichtviel, doch de ziel mijmerde voort, het gelezene overdenkend en mediteerend.

En alle deze dingen zijn goed, met dankzegging genoten zijnde. Ze behooren bij het leven der kerk-menschen.

Ook merken we op, dat David aan deze dingen ook gedacht heeft bij 't componeeren van dezen onverge-lijkelijken zang.

Toch, er is meer, er is zeer veel meer in dezen psalm dan net maar de dingen die we opsomden. En dat veel meerdere noemt David: dorsten naar God!

Probeer het eens om daar wat van te zeggen. Probeer het eens om dat te *verklaren*! Tracht het eens om den stillen omgang met God te *verklaren*! 't Is

mijn ondervinding, dat men zulks wel kan ondervinden, doch moeilijk bepraten.

't Wordt vergeleken bij een schreiend beest, dat om frisch water schreewt. Het is maar geen gewonen dorst, doch een schreeuwen naar de waterstroom. Overgebracht op het kind Gods is het een dorsten naar den levenden God. Het is mogelijk om al Uw kerkplichten na te komen met het lichaam en toch geen vat te hebben aan den levenden God. Men kan lezen en zingen, debatteeren en schrijven, denken en peinzen en toch verre zijn van het dorsten, het dorsten.

Eerst: er zit dit in, dat men het zonder God niet stellen kan. Er spreekt een groote noodruft uit deze taal. Op het beeld lettend, mogen we zeggen, dat wie zóó dorst, alles, alles wel zou willen geven om het object van dien dorst te bezitten. Zulk eenen zingt óók: Wien heb ik nevens U omhoog? Wat zou mijn hart, wat zou mijn oog op aarde nevens U toch lusten?

Dit moet ge diep vatten. Het wil wat zeggen als ge te midden van Uw beminden staat, overladen met gunstbewijzen in spijs en drank en vroolijkheid; ge hebt dan een zekere mate van gezondheid en krachten, gaven en talenten. Ook werd U een weinig tijds en een weinig ruimte geschonken op deze aarde. Waren er lusten en vragen en begeerten, zoo kwamen er onder Uw bereik de dingen die wonder pasten bij Uw lust en vraag en begeerte. Ge waart een betrekkelijk gelukkig mensch. Ontmoette men U zoo werd ge minzaam gegroet.

Welnu, temidden van dat alles en op dat alles starend zegt zulk een mensch: Wien heb ik nevens U omhoog, wat zou mijn hart wat zou mijn oog op aarde nevens U toch lusten? Of ook, om in den trant te blijven van dezen psalm: Ik schreeuw naar God ge ijk een hert schreeuwt naar de waterstroom. Ik dorst naar den levenden God!

Is 't niet moeilijk om daar wat van te zeggen?

Tweedens, ik zie er dit in, dat zulk eenen God kent. Hij heeft God geproefd, als ik het zoo mag zeggen. En God smakende heeft hij ervaren, dat Hij hem goed is. Hij leerde God kennen in al Zijn deugden: goedheid, trouw, recht, wijsheid, macht en oneindige liefde.

Die deugden heeft hij gesmaakt in 't diepe hart. Toen werd in zijn ziele 't verlangen gewekt. Toen is hij gaan dorsten. Want al die deugden wonen in zijn hart slechts in een zeer klein beginsel. Hij heeft ervaren, dat die levende God juist bij hem past. Mag hij die deugden van God ervaren, hebben, genieten, dan is het stil, dan is er rust en vrede en lieflijkheid. Dan popelt zijn hart van stil, vredig genot.

Zulk eenen heeft gemerkt, dat als die levende God in hem woont, hij gaat schitteren, glanzen, schijnen van genade en waarheid, van God-lof en heme'sche blijdschap. Ge moogt het ook zóó zeggen: zulk eenen merkte, dat het deugdenbeeld Gods in zijn diepste hart natrilde, tot God weerkeerde. Langzaam aan

begon hij te zingen en te jubelen van ongekend genot. Hij moest het zoo vaak, o zoo vaak, herhalen: "Dat Zijne goedertierenheid tot in der eeuwigheid is!"

David heeft gemerkt, dat God, de levende God te hebben voor zijn hart de hemel op aarde is.

Dorsten naar God doet men omdat ge geleerd hebt dat Hij het Hoogste Goed is. O, gemeenschap met Hem te mogen hebben, Hem alles te vertellen, wat in 't harte woont, Hem te klagen al de smart, Hem te leven en te wandelen: wat lieflijkers is er toch tot in der eeuwigheid in hemel en op aarde?

Daar komt nog bij, dat die gemeenschap wederzijdsch is. God spreekt, zingt, zucht, schreeuwt in 't hart door Geest en Woord. Mijn leven is immers met Christus verborgen in God. Mag ik gemeenschap met Hem hebben, dan is mijn levenssfeer Zijn leven. Dan mag ik in de liefde wandelen. Dan ademt alles de sprake Gods. Dan beluister ik Zijn lieflijke stem in diepe nacht. In den nacht zal Zijn lied bij mij zijn.

Doch zoo staat het er niet altijd bij.

David (ge gelooft toch wel dat David dezen psalm gedicht heeft?) David had al dat lieflijke genoten in 't verleden, doch nu moest hij het missen. Daarom dorst hij er naar. Daarom hebben we den onvergelykelijken psalm 42.

We weten niet bij welke historische gebeurtenis deze psalm past. Misschien wel bij het vluchten voor zijn zoon.

In elk geval, het is duidelijk, dat David ver van Jeruzalem was toen hij de dingen ervoer die hij in dezen psalm bezingt en klaagt.

Alles scheen tegen hem te zijn.

Hij was niet omringd door zijne liefhebbers. Er waren spotters die durfden vragen: Waar is God Dien gij verwacht? Goddelooze mensen hadden hem gade geslagen. Ze hadden gemerkt, dat het David niet voor de wind ging. De Heere scheen hem tegen te zijn. Daaruit maakte men de conclusie, dat hij zijn God verloren had. David was geplaagd, geslagen, gestraft, gekastijd. Ergo: Waar is uw God?

Bovendien was hij verre van het huis Gods. David placht op te trekken onder de feestvierende menigte en met hen te treden naar Gods huis.

't Verschil is wel groot. Hier zijn de goddeloozen die hem tergende als met een doodsteek hoonen en vragen den ganschen dag: Waar is uw God? Daarom zegt David: Ik gedenk daaraan en begin dan te schreien want het was vroeger zoo geheel anders. Vroeger bevond ik mij onder de schare die opging naar Gods huis, naar de plaats waar ik liever woonde dan onder de schare der kwaaddoeners. Ik heb altijd slecht één ding begeerd: Ik wilde in Gods huis wonen.

Doch nu? Ik ben verre van die schare en van dat Huis. Zij beiden waren mij tot een weg naar 't hart van God. We vierden dan feest. In zekeren zin mocht ik dan voor Gods aangezicht verschijnen.

En toen is David aan 't snikken gegaan.

Totdat het toch wel al te erg werd. Dat schreeuwen en snikken en huilen verzadigde hem ook niet. In't treuren zelf zit geen bevrediging. Vooral niet als men hoort, dat treuren en klagen en schreien zijn spijze was dag en nacht. Dat wil zeggen, dat David zijn ontbijt, middagmaal en avondeten eenvoudig oversloeg. Hij at den ganschen dag niets. Men moest wel denken, dat tranen zijn spijze was. Dat was alles wat hij deed.

Toen heeft David gemerkt, geleerd door Goddelijke aanspraak, dat zulks verkeerd was. Hij mocht zich niet nederbuigen en zijn ziel verontrusten.

Daaruit, uit die overwegingen werd de samenspraak met zichzelf geboren: Wat buigt gij U neder, O mijne ziel?!

Hef het moe-geschreide oog omhoog en blik op naar God naar Wien ge dorst. Herinner U hoe Hij U menigmaal uit Uw druk verlost heeft in 't verleden.

Inplaats van zoo te keer te gaan, mijne ziel, denk aan God, hoop op Hem. Hij is immers de Verlosser Israels? Hij heeft toch immers een woord gesproken: Ik ben Uw God?! Hij is toch Zijn Woord aan Uw kwijt? Hoop op God, ga naar Hem heen, roep Hem aan vanuit 't klein en nietig gebergte. Denk toch aan Hem, ook bij 't gedruisch der watergoten als de afgrond tot den afgrond roept en al Gods baren Uw benauwde ziel vervaren. Denk dan aan God: 't is heilzaam. Denk aan God en bemin Hem: Hij is immers Uw borg en Uw schild?

Ja, nu zal 't gaan: Ik zal tot God mijn Steenrots spreken: waarom, Heer, vergeet Gij mij? O, het schijnt hier alsof ik een dieperen klank opvang. Een klank van Messias die schreeuwt op Golgotha's kruin. O, wat is die klank van David's vraag toen verdiept tot een eeuwige diepte. Ook schreeuwde Hij dien vraag in eenigszins anderen vorm. Hij riep met luider stemme: Mijn God, Mijn God, waarom hebt Gij Mij verlaten?

Zoo riepen David en Jezus een ieder op zijn eigen wijs tot God..

En God heeft beiden verhoord. David uit zijn smart en Jezus uit de hel.

Maar wat is de smart van Jezus en de dorst van Jezus toch veel dieper en grooter, vreeselijker en verhevener dan die van David.

Als David schreeuwt in zijn dorsten naar Gods omgang dan is dat erg, doch als Jezus zegt: Mij dorst, dan spreekt daar een verlangen naar God in, hetwelk niet door ons gemeten kan. Niemand heeft ooit zóó naar God verlangd.

Doch David is getroost.

Zelfs voordat hij weer terug mocht komen om met de feestvierende menigte zich te verblijden in den dienst van Jehova, heeft hij gezien, dat de Heere hem

goed is en dierbaar. Hij zeide immers: Maar de Heer zal uitkomst geven!?

Des daags is daar de goedertierenheid en des nachts zal Gods lied bij David zijn. Hij verheugt zich in de vervulling van Gods beloften.

God gebiedt de goedertierenheid over Zijn kinderen. Dat beteekent dat ge het bemerkt hoe alle dingen die ge wedervaart U medewerken ten goede. Gods goedertierenheid is Gods lust aan Zijn volk. Hij tiert van goedheid over Zijn volk. Hij wil hen altijd goeddoen en doet hen altijd goed.

En des nachts komt het lied van God. Zijn lied zal bij mij zijn. Het gebed tot den God mijns levens.

God heeft een eeuwig lied, het lied des Verbonds. Het is een lied der liefde. God heeft Zichzelf lief van eeuwigheid en zingt Zichzelf een lied. Nooit zult ge de Goddelijke accoorden hooren, zooals God dit lied in Zijn Eigen Wezen zingt. Daar zeggen God de Vader en God de Zoon en God de Heilige Geest het elkander gedurig aan, dat God eeuwiglijk goed en lieflijk is.

Doch dat lied heeft een editie die op het creatuur aangelegd is. De Bijbel noemt het het lied van Mozes en het Lam.

Dat lied geeft Hij. En in den nacht. Soms neemt het de vorm van een gebed, een smeeking, een aanbidding.

In den nacht. Denkt aan Paulus en Silas.

O mijn ziel: waarom zoo onrustig en zoo nedergebogen? Is het lied Gods er niet? Ge dorst naar God, naar den levenden God. Welnu: zing dan het lied Gods in diepen nacht. Al zou het ook moeten met een bebloeden rug en met de handen en voeten in den stok. Zing nu dan maar dat lied. Het zal Uw gevangenis omtooveren in een paleis Gods.

En de woorden van het lied?

Luistert! 't Is wonderlijk, doch de klanken en woorden van dit Lied van God luiden Nieuw Testamentisch: Hij is de menigvuldige verlossing mijns aangezichts en mijn God. Dat is het lied. Ziet ge nu niet, dat ge heel dicht bij 't Kruis moet staan om dit lied te zingen? Menigvuldige verlossing! Mijn God! Kan het schooner? 't Zijn hemelsche klanken.

En nu?

't Is nu nacht. En daar is de afgrond die tot den afgrond roept bij 't gedruisch der watergoten. Ook zijn daar de baren en golven Gods. Er is benauwdheid en droefenis.

Doch in den nacht dorsten we naar God. We verlangen naar Hem in een land, dor en mat, zonder water. Zonder Hem kunnen we niet. Het verraadt de adel van de wedergeboren ziel.

Doch spreekt tot Hem, zegt het Hem dat ge aan Hem gedenkt; zingt tot Hem Zijn Eigen lied in donk're nacht.

Hij beloofde te komen. Eenigszins kwam Hij in de schaduwen en typen. Straks kwam Hij in Zijn Zoon

en door den Geest van den verheerlijkten Christus. Doch Hij gaat nog veel overvloediger komen straks in den dag van Christus.

Dan zal Zijn komen zoo geheel en volkomen zijn, dat men van U zal zeggen: God is alles en in allen.

Dan gaat het dorsten naar God over in 't verzadigd zijn met Zijn Goddelijk Beeld.

Dat volk zal water putten en drinken uit de eeuwige Fontein des heils.

G. V.

Christus Verzocht Om Zijn Koninkrijk

Matth. 4:8-11.

Satan heeft den Christus tot tweemaal verzocht.

Eerst, het was kort nadat de Heiland door Johannes gedoopt was, zocht hij Hem op, nadat Jezus veertig dagen in vasten en bidden de gemeenschap met den Vader had gezocht en genoten.

Daarna hongerde Hem.

Het is dan ook aan het begin van Zijn publiek optreden, dat wij den Satan zien optreden, om mede zijn rol te spelen, dat, indien mogelijk, dezen Ambtsknecht bij uitnemendheid worde verleid, om God den dienst der gehoorzaamheid te weigeren en aldus een bres in de vesting te slaan, die nimmer zou kunnen geheeld worden.

Indien gij de Zoon van God zijt, maak dan van deze steenen brood.

Die eerste aanval, door middel van de verzoeking had zich gericht op de kwestie van het leven. Het leven der aarde, gelijk dit onder den vloek en toorn Gods ligt. De kwestie van macht, niet dien van recht, werd aldus op den voorgrond geschoven. En honger, brood, bestaan, hebben in geen enkel opzicht iets te doen met recht en gerechtigheid, met zonde en oordeel. De gevolgen der zonden weg te nemen, neemt de zonde juist niet weg. Het kan ook niet.

Het eigenlijke leven en levenbestaan hangen af van de gemeenschap met God en deze is alleen mogelijk op den hechten grondslag van gerechtigheid. Van een wegnemen van den eenen grooten oorzaak van alle scheiding: De Zonde. Is die weg, dan is de weg tot de gemeenschap geopend. Er is geen ander middel. En die weg, waardoor alle gerechtigheid zal vervuld worden, was den Christus bekend, uit het Woord Gods. Naar dien weg, den weg Gods, greep de Heiland, met al de kracht van Zijn ziel. Hij hield zich, als Knecht des Heeren, aan het Woord Gods.

De tweede maal, brengt Satan Christus op de tinne des Tempels. Als het dan toch naar het Woord Gods moet, dan kan hier de gelegenheid aangegrepen, om (wederom de kwestie van macht) het hoogere, het hoogste, wat de aarde bezit, ten uwen dienste zijn.

Werp u slechts nederwaarts. Daar is een Woord Gods, dat u veiligheid waarborgt—Engelen staan u ten dienste. Geheel dat machtsvertoon, zoo is des duivels voorstelling, zal den indruk verhoogen. Allereerst, het wonder uwer kracht, dan, en teljkertijd, de schoonheid van uw pracht door der Engelen tegenwoordigheid, zullen het middel zijn waardoor het volk u als Vorst Messias zal uitroepen en erkennen. Ge krijgt den Tempel, met den Tempel het volk en daardoor gansch den dienst van het schepsel.

Indien ge de Zoon van God zijt. Maar daarom juist kan het andermaal niet. De Zoon is hier knecht, niet om bevelen te geven, doch om het groote bevel Gods uit te voeren. Hij zal tot Zijn Tempel komen, doch dat komen tot de gemeenschap, zooals die in den Tempel belichaamd is, loopt door den weg des bloeds van den Zoon van God. Een Tempel zonder God, is geen Tempel waar eenige gemeenschap is. Een Tempeldienst zonder God, is een dienst van den mensch en voor den mensch, waardoor die mensch op God's plaats ten troon zich verheft.

Christus zal haastiglijk tot Zijn Tempel komen, als Hij door Zijn bloed-offerande, de gemeenschap herstelt door te voldoen aan Gods recht. Er staat geschreven.

En tenderde male verzoekt Satan den Middelaar.

Tot tweemaal toe heeft Satan de verzoeking ingeleid met een voorwaardelijke zin. Indien—het is mogelijk—niet waarschijnlijk, dat ge de Zoon van God zijt.

Dat, zoo wil Satan als middel tot verzoeken, geheel loslaten. Hij spreekt niet langer van Christus Zoon-schap. Hij laat dan ook verder af om er een beroep op te doen. In duivelsche haat moet hij tenslotte, wat hij weet waarheid te zijn, ontkennen. En daardoor openbaart hij zijn waar karakter. Kwam hij een en andermaal, vooral in de tweede verzoeking, in de gedaante van een Engel des lichts, nu, in de laatste verzoeking openbaart hij zich zooals hij werkelijk is. De Satan, de groote tegenstander, die God van Zijn plaats wil dringen, die zelf God wil zijn en van den Zoon den Anti-christ wil maken.

Er zijn, in verband met de derde verzoeking, allerlei verklaringen gegeven, die bijna allen op speculatie berusten. De Schrift leert ons, dat de Heiland op een zeer hoogen berg getoond werd de koninkrijken der aarde en hunne heerlijkheid. Men heeft gemeend, dat dit niet letterlijk moet worden opgevat. Aldus heeft Christus van dat alles *letterlijk* niets gezien. Sommigen hebben gemeend, dat dit geschiede door middel van een visioen, gelijk die het openbaringsmiddel waren waarvan de Heere Zich bediende in de Oude en ook in de Nieuwe Bedeeling. Maar ligt het niet in den aard van Zijn goddelijke natuur, dat dit juist niet het geval was? Wel te verstaan, dat dan aan Satan een macht gegeven was, waarover God alleen beschikt en altijd en alleen

tendienst van Gods Zelfopenbaring door hem gebruikt werd. Christus behoefde niet het middel van het visioen om in den "Geest" te worden opgetrokken. Hij leefde, ook als Middelaar, altijd in de innigste gemeenschap met den Vader—tot aan het Kruis toe in de ure der Verlating. Hij leefde niet slechts bij het Woord Gods, doch geheel Zijn levenssfeer was doordrongen van dat Woord. Zelfs als er een speciaal getuigenis komt van den Hemel, dan is het Zijn getuigenis, dat de stem, Die gehoord werd, niet sprak om Zijntwil, doch terwille van de schare. Het was voor Hem, Die altijd in het volmaakte evenwicht leefde, zoodat het leven van het lichaam en dat der ziel in volkomen harmonie stonden met Zijn ambt en taak, niet noodig om door visioen of extase tot het hoogere te worden opgetrokken. Eigenlijk was er bij Hem geen lager en hooger leven, die beiden stonden altijd in rechtstreeksche verbinding met den Hemel. Nooit heeft Hij God losgelaten, neen, niet tot op een enkel oogenblik toe.

Zekere omstandigheden kunnen Hem dan ook nooit bewegen, om eenige begeerte in Hem te wekken, waardoor Hij Zich van Zijn God en Zijn Woord zouden doen afkeeren. En aan dat Woord hing Hij met geheel Zijn Middelaarshart. "Er staat geschreven" is het rustpunt van Zijn geloof in God.

Weer anderen, wel ziende dat de verzoeking van Satan uitging, hebben gemeend, dat deze den Heiland de Rijken der wereld heeft voor getooverd. Dan was het natuurlijker wijze niets anders dan een illusie, dat niet aan de werkelijkheid beantwoordde. Dan werd de Middelaar gebracht onder den invloed, die alleen mogelijk is als de mensch gezondigd heeft. Onware voorstellingen kunnen slechts, waar de zonde is, mogelijk worden geacht. Evenmin is het waar, dat Christus slechts te strijden had met een inwendige vijand. Satan kan juist naar Christus inwendig bestaan geen aanknoopingspunt vinden. Niet van binnen, doch buiten Hem lag de mogelijkheid om verzocht te worden. Trouwens, waartoe zou dat alles dienen kunnen, anders dan om de heiligheid van den mensch Christus Jezus in twijfel te trekken?

Christus kan wel verzocht, maar niet bedrogen worden. Voor Hem kan de schijn niet de plaats der werkelijkheid innemen.

Er was hier een werkelijke verzoeking.

Er waren werkelijke heerlijkheden, die getoond werden.

Er was een werkelijke Middelaar, Die verzocht werd.

Wat dan heeft Satan Christus werkelijk getoond?

Het antwoord op die vraag is, dat op die zeer hoge berg, heeft Satan den Christus gewezen op hetgeen bepaald heerlijk is en van macht spreekt. We zouden het aldus willen uitdrukken, dat hij toonde den Christus datgene, wat het oog streelt en op het begeeren

inwerkt. De mogelijkheid hiervoor zien we dan, doordat wellicht alles waarvan Satan spreekt in één centra werd saamgetrokken. Als ik bijvoorbeeld, wil weten hoe rijk de Staat van Iowa is, dan is het niet noodig om iederen voet gronds te zien, doch dan geeft mij een zekere County voldoende waarborg, hoe de Staat in zijn geheel is. Vergeten we hierbij dan niet, dat Satan niet slechts het oog, maar ook het oor bewerkt en door die beiden tot het hart tracht in te dringen, dan kan bij het gezicht van een enkele heerlijkheid, het woord dienstbaar zijn, zoodat het oog en het oor te zamen van het enkele deel zich richten op het geheel.

Een andere vraag is, heeft Satan werkelijk zeggenschap over de Koninkrijken der wereld? Zoo schijnt het er bij te staan. Is dat nu werkelijk waar of is het een duivelsche leugen? Lezen we Lukas 4 dan krijgen we den indruk, dat het werkelijk er aldus bijstaat, dat God Satan die Rijken Hem gegeven heeft. Letten we er echter op, dat de duivel zelf het absoluut bezit er van zich toch niet toekent. Neen, schoon die koninkrijken wel geestelijk onder zijn invloed staan, in den absoluten zin des woords zijn zij niet zijn eigendom. Hij kan er niet mee doen wat hij wil. Wat invloed hij ook moge uitoefenen, hoe hij dan ook overigens zich op een zekere macht kan beroepen, feit blijft, dat hij met alle schepselen onder God staat. Ook hier weer blijft God Drieëenig de Schepper, de Heerscher en de Alleen Bezitter. Ook Satan bezit geen macht, dan die welke hem van boven gegeven is en waarmede ook hij dienstbaar wordt gesteld aan Gods Raad en Wil.

Die onmacht blijkt dan ook uit zijn eigen woord, dat hij hier in de verzoeking tot den Heiland richt. Stelt Satan de kwestie van recht zuiver, zij is tegelijkertijd een erkenning van eigen onmacht, schoon door hem niet zoo bedoeld. Want, schoon hij de voorstelling van zijn macht over de koninkrijken op den voorgrond plaatst, het geven kan slechts als er een ruil gesloten wordt. Als ge mij uw plaats schenkt, dan doe ik afstand van wat mijn bezit is. Als ge mij zult aanbidden. Mij zult uitroepen en aanroepen, mij erkennend als God. Aldus wil Satan het centrum aller dingen zijn. Op zijn wezen zal dan worden saamgetrokken de Goddelijke vereering, majesteit en deugd. Aldus zal Christus dan Satan worden en zal, naar Satans wensch en begeeren, hij de rechtmatige gebieder zijn.

Zijn vraag in de verzoeking is bewijs van het echt duivelsche, dat hem altijd weer bezielt. Zeker, er moet wel een God zijn, maar die eigenlijk geen God is. Een schepsel Gode gelijk gemaakt, doch nooit de bron van alle goed en vol van volmaakte deugden. De herhaling van de zonde eenmaal in het Paradijs gepleegd. Er staat voor Satan hier alles op het spel. Het is hier een ontkenning in het bestaan en het wezen Gods, om zelf God te zijn.

Ik zal u geven de koninkrijken en hunne heerlijkheid.

Maar deze Koninkrijken zijn juist het bewijs, dat de harmonie in de schepping verbroken is. Het gaat er met den Christus niet om, om die Koninkrijken te bezitten. Van af den torenbouw tot aan de voleinding zullen zij er wel zijn, doch enkel en alleen terwille van Het Koninkrijk. Uit die allen zal Hij, door den weg van Zijn eigen bloed, het Koninkrijk fundeeren en daar Zelf Koning des Vredes in zijn.

Daarom, er staat geschreven, dat gij den Heere uwen God zult aanbidden en Hem alleen zult ge dienen.

Dat is wat er eigenlijk alleen geschreven staat, dat alle dienst en alle aanbidding God rechtmatig toekomen.

Daarom is Hij God alleen.

Daartoe dient ook Gods Zoon als Knecht, Zich houdend aan het Woord.

En daarom wordt Satan weggestuurd van uit de nabijheid van dien Knecht des Heeren. De Heiland noemt Satan bij Zijn naam: Tegenstander, tegenpreker, oproerling.

En door Zich aan het Woord vast te klemmen moet die tegenstander wijken en zal Christus Zich naar het kruis begeven, om het Koninkrijk. Het rijk Gods, waarin de onderdanen zullen brengen den dienst Gods gewijd en waarin zij Hem alleen zullen aanbidden.

W. V.

Hiermede hebben we ons laatste artikel geschreven en hopen, dat het althans voor sommigen, tot leering geweest is. We weten wel, dat niemand zijn eigen werk kan beoordeelen. We laten dit dan ook aan de lezers over. Men bedenke daarbij dan, dat wij niet schrijven en schreven, omdat we meenden over een groote hoeveelheid materiaal te beschikken, dat we in de Standard Bearer kwijt wilden. Integendeel, dat we schreven kwam mede door omstandigheden, den lezer bekend. Doch deze omstandigheden zijn in de laatste tien of twaalf jaren aanmerkelijk veranderd. Er zijn nu niet meer enkele, doch vele predikanten, die, of voor het eerst, of al reeds zoo nu en dan geschreven hebben.

We hopen, dat de Heere verder Zijn zegen gebiede over het werk van de broeders.

W. V.

The above article was written for the September 15 issue, but could not be placed then because it was devoted to the Young People's Convention. Hence, it occurs in this number. I give this explanation because, in the future, I shall not place articles that are not written on the subjects assigned.

H. H.

Is Christian Drama Possible

As I face the task of writing an article of this nature I am keenly aware of my limited qualifications for such work, firstly because it is on material quite foreign to a minister's regular field, and secondly, it is a relatively new subject among us, having been introduced only recently by Rev. Kok in *Our Church News*.

I will however write in the hope that it may provoke a fruitful discussion among us, and in the Standard Bearer, if it does not dislocate the Editor's plan, or interfere with his policy.

In order to see our problem it is necessary first to see what we understand by Christian Drama. And then it will appear that any definition offered will reflect at least something of personal opinion.

However, it is apparent that we are not left wholly to arbitrary definition, but find something that determines it, both in history and in human nature, and taking account of these two, I would define it as follows:

The presentation of Biblical doctrine or the spiritual motives of history in the light of the Christian interpretation, by means of action or speech imitating the situation or thought presented, with the purpose of provoking a spiritual response.

The drama so seen can be distinguished in two of its phases.

And some drama does not really advance any further than the first stage, that is the historical material which is imitated either for the sake of entertainment or historical instruction.

However, the drama only reaches its proper development and inherent tendency when it emphasizes the motives, the passions, the struggles inherent in history. To this point it develops in the ancient Greek plays, in the Teutonic drama, and also in the Medieval church in the morality plays.

The reason for this is apparently, that moral man cannot contemplate history to any considerable extent, without setting his interest upon the deeper motives; or to express it somewhat differently, the most profound, the grandest material for drama is found in these deep underlying motives.

At this stage Drama becomes an art. That is as such, it must express by unity of construction a universal truth. In this sphere, hence, it is not enough to give a faithful presentation of many facts, for that does not represent the truth. Rather must the truth be presented by a few carefully chosen facts.

A very simple and crude illustration will explain: I may very faithfully paint a horse I have seen in the pasture, but having painted it, I have a horse with a lame leg, one eye missing, and big, obtrusive gall-scars.

NOW, irrespective of my accurate painting, I have produced no art. I have not conceived "the horse", as to its idea. I have not chosen a few typical representative lines but have used all a particular specimen presented.

So it is with the drama. As an art it requires that the universal be grasped and presented in a few bold strokes.

Applying this now to the proper theme of drama, that is to the motives, the passions and struggles inherent in history, because of truth and righteousness coming in conflict with evil, it requires a vision that has truly grasped the essence of truth and the essence of evil and their mutual relations, and has not been led astray by incidental manifestations.

How is such drama possible?

Is it ethically possible?

Is it epistemologically possible?

That is, is it possible without sin on the part of the authors, and does the nature of truth and of knowledge allow it?

It is on these two points that objections present themselves.

The first considers the question whether it accords with one's personality and individuality to assume the role of another.

This again has two aspects.

First the objection can be raised, that by assuming the role of another a person thereby warps his own individuality and personality. He uses that which God has given him to take his place in the grim reality of life, in a manner that does not comport with its nature and development. His good gifts of displaying anger, sorrow, fear, despair, he uses under artificial stimulus, in situations that do not call for the exercise of these emotions, and consequently dulls his own sense of these.

A second aspect of this same objection is that the actor leads a make-believe life, he lives in a continued hypocrisy. I can best state this by quoting expressions from a few articles of our Rev. Kok in the Church News (March 28 and June 20, 1940)—every individual has its own unique and distinct character and personality given by God, and—it is positively wrong for one creature to impersonate another—all impersonation is essentially hypocrisy—an abomination to God. Again: "If our position be correct, that all dramatics are abominable to God, because all dramatics is essentially hypocrisy—you cannot speak of Christian drama or play, any more than of Christian hypocrisy."

The second main objection is that it is impossible to present truth by means of drama because of the very nature of truth. Truth is deemed so great, so inexpressible, so beyond the hypothetical situation and the limitations of dramatical device, that the result is necessarily a half-truth or distortion.

Now, it seems to me we must weigh carefully objections of this nature.

In the argument from the word "hypocrisy" we have plainly a hidden equivocation. Acting is silently assumed to be hypocrisy and the conclusion is easy—"abomination to God".

But is acting equivalent to hypocrisy?

Of course not, no acting is trying to deceive, no one is trying to withhold his real character from anyone, and we may drop this argument forthwith. This then leaves the question whether impersonation or the creation of a hypothetical situation or an illusion, when agreed to by all, is accordant with moral honesty.

Against this objection there are many counts.

Hereby also the Novel with its hypothetical situations and fictional characters is condemned, and it should not have escaped, e.g., Rev. Kok that Prin. Janse, the able pedagogue and psychologist, whom he quoted approves of the novel.

Further we should note that in the Bible we have instances of impersonation and hypothetical situations.

Isaiah is to walk "naked and barefoot" as a sign of the captivity of Egypt. Is this in conflict with moral honesty?

Ezekiel is to make a picture of Jerusalem and build engines of siege against it and then lying upon the ground for many days he shall bear the sin of Israel. Is he thereby "abominable before Him, Who seeketh truth within"?

And what of all dramatic speakers and preachers who impersonate by gesture, by grimace, by voice inflection, by quotation.

Surely we do not condemn all this as ill according with sincerity.

For the second main objection I have more respect. That objection holds that truth in its deepest sense, the sense in which drama seeks to portray it, cannot be expressed within the limitations of the drama. It is in this sphere that the word, the abstract word, the flexible, pliable word is our appointed vehicle of thought. In this sphere where we often grope for words and even they fail us, dramatic equipment can only tend to superficiality of thought.

But also with respect to this argument we find that in Scripture where the truth and also the vehicle is shown in its highest perfection, the abstract word is not exclusively used at all, but Scripture abounds in symbolical action, hypothetical situation, illusion, impersonation. To mention a few: The service of the temple where the ministers enacted confessional, cleansing, forgiveness, and blessing. These were all shadows of higher realities. Or again, the prophets and Nazarites who portrayed in their manners and dress, as well as in word, their message.

Surely, these could afford a better living, and yet

their over-simplicity was not hypocrisy, and it was very effective speech.

I feel that in the face of these many arguments which oppose the two main objections against the drama, a blanket condemnation of the drama is not valid. These various arguments may to some appear trifling. But I hold that the objector must face these annoying instances, and since there is no statement in Scripture settling the issue, he must far from brushing them aside, integrate them into his grounds for a condemnatory judgment.

I believe our calling in this respect is much more spiritual and serious. Surely, seeking a solution in one sweeping condemnation will be wholly unsatisfactory, for a stand that goes beyond the truth is just as untrue and dangerous as an understatement. And it is tragic in its results in complacency, selfrighteousness and strife.

I am convinced that, should the drama become popular, then it is our calling to become fortified not by a convenient blanket condemnation, but by the development of spiritual discernment through God's Word so that we are able to discern evil and flee it.

That is the Scriptural way and history teaches the same. Many sects condemn tobacco outright; we smile and say "It's not the use but the misuse that is sin."

Again many would condemn liquor outright. Recall the controversy in the Orthodox Presbyterian Assembly. We say "Oh, no, not so simple as all that. Hands off! It's not in the use but in the misuse".

I may even point to the union question. Many of us have started out with such a sweeping condemnation of the idea of a union that even the business association as such and even the C.L.A. as such fell under that ban. The practical task of treating these things soon reveals a more difficult calling of discerning between good and evil in each given case.

Applying this principle now to the drama, I for one am not, on any ground I have seen, ready for a blanket condemnation, and feel shut up to the more arduous way—the way of spiritual fortification and discernment.

And should any of our youth now say "Goody, now I can attend a drama occasionally!", I would advise them to reserve their elation. For I have advocated the hard way. It will mean namely that you must always persevere in prayer and spiritual discerning, and even then you may possibly never find a drama which you could or would attend.

But the loss would be of no account and the gain would be that you have grown strong in spiritual carefulness, and have proved what is that good and well-pleasing and perfect will of God. That is the reasonable service He requires of us.

To me it is the only solution for the drama problem as I see it.

A. P.

The Christian And Sunday Labor

This heading suggests what may very actually be called a new problem in our circles.

It is new in the sense that until now we virtually took for granted that a Christian would not engage in Sunday labor. Even those who never see the inside of a church building considered six days of labor sufficient for any man and appreciated one day in seven as a day of relaxation to be spent in joy-riding, visiting or frequenting various places of amusement. But today a radical change is evident, brought about especially by the war in Europe and the resultant defense program which demands a twenty-four hour day and a seven day week for defense factories. Many of our men are suddenly effected by this change. The problem may introduce itself gradually, but no less certainly. At first the laboring man may only be asked to work late Saturday evenings or to begin early Sunday evenings, and already Sabbath observance in the real sense of the word is threatened. Other inroads upon the Sabbath follow; he is urged to work from Saturday midnight into the Sunday morning, or even all day on an occasional Sunday. To give in means that the way is gradually paved for a Sunday work-day.

What are we doing about it?

Our churches have already expressed their stand on the matter, particularly by petitioning the government, for the sake of those who keep the Lord's Sabbath, to withdraw their decision as to Sunday labor in the defense plants.

But our own stand? What are they to do about it whose jobs are involved? Some have taken these jobs as a haven of escape from the Unions, whose tenacles are reaching out in every direction to take all industry and labor in their grasp. For these and for others as well, the problem becomes increasingly weighty.

Yet when we speak of a problem, it should be borne in mind that that problem is *not* whether or not a Christian can engage in Sunday labor! There can be no difference of opinion among us on the question whether Scripture demands of the Christian that he rest one day in seven. Nor whether a Christian is always duty bound under all and every circumstance to abide by the Word of God. We are all heartily agreed that Christianity and Sunday labor are incompatible with each other and that no circumstances of any kind can ever change the divine institution of the Sabbath.

One voice of dissent is sometimes heard. The argument is raised, that if it be permitted for our boys in the army to fight and to even go out on maneuvers on the Sabbath because of their present peculiar

relation to the government and their duty to be subject to those in authority, cannot this same argument be raised for those who labor in the defense factories? To which can be answered very briefly that no one is drafted to work in the defense plants, nor is the relation of authority and obedience the same in the defense plant as in the army. The issues should not be confused.

Sunday labor can only be a problem for us from this aspect, *on what basis is it impossible for a Christian to be forced to engage in Sunday labor?*

Many plausible objections to Sunday labor are raised; it is but the question whether they can stand the test as real objections.

One of them is the very materialistic objection that it is not good for any person to work seven days of the week. Man was created, so it is said, to work six days and to rest one day. France, where in the year 1793 the seven-day week was abolished and with it the Sunday, is sometimes cited as an example of the devastating influence both upon the morals and upon the health and manhood of the nation which abolishes the Sunday. Let us grant that God certainly had His own divine and wise purpose in instituting the seventh day as a day of rest, and that man can never ignore the ordinances of God without suffering serious consequences. These consequences are very concretely evident in all of our lives. Be that as it may, the mere need of a "day off" is as yet no argument against Sunday labor. It is very questionable, to say the least, whether a mere seven day routine would necessarily prove to "jeopardize man's physical, mental and nervous system". I am thinking now particularly of the mother in a family of children with meals to prepare and children to care for 365 days of the year. The laboring man, on the other hand, has an eight hour day, which allows for plenty of time for relaxation. But the point is, that even if an individual does have need of one day in seven for relaxation he can take this on any other day as well as on Sunday. The problem of Sunday labor is not yet solved.

Another objection, even more selfish than the first, is the plea that a person has a right to one day in seven to be spent as he himself sees fit. He owes it to himself and to his family to get away from the rush and bustle of business or industry and to find a quiet retreat in the Sunday atmosphere of his home. One would almost begin to hope that the consciousness of parental responsibility was pushing itself to the fore. If only that part of the day that is spent in the home were utilized in Christian fellowship and "training the child in the way he should go". But in many cases the Sunday atmosphere of the home means that some of the family are enwrapped in the hush of sleep, others are lolling about in easy chairs, listening to the radio or digesting some light piece of fiction, while

still others are busily engaged in a pleasant pastime, and all are enjoying themselves to the full. Are these the same individuals who have conscientious objections to Sunday labor? How long will it be, do you suppose, before their consciences will allow them to also work on Sunday, especially if it should become "compulsory"?

There is still a third objection which is very concretely expressed by saying: "I am accustomed to go to church on Sunday, therefore I cannot work". Fact is, that we have been born and reared in the church, have always been taught to go to church on Sunday, and we have become so accustomed to it that Sunday would not be Sunday if we did not go to church. Besides, our whole community, more particularly our friends and immediate relatives would stand aghast if we would take up the dinner bucket instead of donning our Sunday apparel on Sunday morning. Going to church on the specified time seems the only natural and proper thing to do.

But God has a very amazing way of putting those "natural and proper" things to the test, proving us in the fiery trial whether we do those things "by nature" or by faith. Even the heathens are a law unto themselves and do by nature the things contained in the law. (Rom. 2:14). Not motivated by love to God, but purely by selfish motives the wicked world will abstain from stealing, murder and the like. We also may refrain from certain inordinate acts because of decency or training; may even become accustomed to live very properly and to attend church very faithfully. But if these things are done purely "by nature" they are to be condemned as enmity against God, for "we are prone by nature to hate God and our neighbors." (Heid. Cat., Lord's Day 2). Nothing that is done in enmity against God can ever be branded as good. And if we do these things merely to be seen of men we are no better than the Pharisees who were condemned by Jesus as white-washed sepulchres.

Nor is the mere fact that we have always "kept the Sabbath" a guarantee that we shall continue to do so in the future. Christ may also say to us as to the rich young ruler, "yet lackest thou one thing; sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." And unless our hearts are filled with a godly sorrow the demand will be too great for us. Custom may have a very firm grip on us, but when the choice must be made between your position, the bread on your table and your time-tried custom, custom succumbs. Although it may seem ever so difficult to break with a certain practice, and may even cost you a few pangs of conscience, you can become accustomed not to go to church, not to recite your prayers and not to pay the slightest attention to Sabbath observance. He who builds his house on custom builds on sand.

There is but one thing that can stand the fiery trial of temptation, and that is faith. We must once more be impressed with the fact that the Sabbath is an institution of God for His Church. God has entrusted unto us a reflection of His own, divine Covenant life in order that we may enter into His fellowship and experience even in this life a foretaste of the eternal Rest that remaineth in Christ Jesus our Lord. On the Sabbath we are called to desist from all our daily labors and to banish every earthly care in order that we may be exclusively occupied with things heavenly and spiritual. Only then, when the day is spent in congregating with God's people and engaging ourselves in things spiritual can the Sabbath have a sanctifying influence upon our whole lives and give us a foretaste of the blessedness of the life to come.

Come what may we cannot relinquish our Sabbath rest, no, not even for compulsory Sunday labor. Especially as the evil day draws near our need for real Sabbath rest increases rather than decreases. Now more than ever we need the communion of saints and a firm grip on the unfailing promises of God. Now with renewed determination we must hold that which we have.

If our spiritual morale is broken now already, when we have not yet suffered unto blood, how shall we ever be able to stand in the future? It may involve a certain amount of deprivation or even suffering for some of us, but "we glory in tribulation also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."

We, not only as churches, but also as individuals must hold our ground in the confidence that faith is the victory that overcomes the world. Be ye, therefore, "steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not vain in the Lord."

C. H.

IN MEMORIAM

On Tuesday, Sept. 16, 1941, it pleased our heavenly Father to take unto Himself our dear husband, father and grandfather.

JOHN W. PASTOOR

at the age of 67 years.

May we be comforted that he now rejoices in the heavenly mansion above with his Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Mrs. J. W. Pastoor

Mr. and Mrs. Edward Kuiper

Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Pastoor

Mr. and Mrs. Edward Jonker

Mr. and Mrs. William J. Pastoor

Mr. and Mrs. Raymond A. Pastoor

10 grandchildren.

Current Events

Our Part in the Present Chaos.

It has by this time become clear that the United States is almost pledged not only to aid Great Britain materially but also to fight her battle. Before the melodramatic meeting of the President of our country and the Prime Minister of England there were indications of our increasing share. Since that meeting President Roosevelt has delivered a speech declaring that our Navy has been given orders to shoot at any Axis boats which threatened our safety in defense waters. Undoubtedly matters of great importance were discussed by these two leaders at that historical meeting. However the important decisions that were made about specific collaboration between the countries, which was probably the chief part of their discussion, was not made known to the public, which can be readily understood. Yet there did appear a program containing eight points which both Roosevelt and Churchill signed, as their joint declaration.

It may be of interest to examine their eight point program.

"First, their countries seek no aggrandizement, territorial or other;

"Second, they desire to see no territorial changes that do not accord with the freely expressed wishes of the people concerned;

"Third, they respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live; and they wish to see sovereign rights and self government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them;

"Fourth, they will endeavor, with due respect for their existing obligations to further enjoyment by all states, great or small, victor or vanquished, of access, on equal terms, to the trade and raw materials of the world which are needed for their economic prosperity;

"Fifth, they desire to bring about the fullest collaboration between all nations in the economic field with the object of securing for all, improved labor standards, economic advancement and social security;

"Sixth, after the final destruction of Nazi tyranny, they hope to see established a peace which will afford to all nations the means of dwelling in safety within their own boundaries, and which will afford assurance that all men in all lands may live out their lives in freedom from fear and want;

"Seventh, such a peace shall enable all men to traverse the high seas and oceans without hindrance;

"Eighth, they believe that all the nations of the world, for realistic as well as spiritual reasons must come to the abandonment of the use of force.

"Since the future peace cannot be maintained if land, sea or air armaments continue to be employed by nations which threaten, or may threaten, aggression outside of their frontiers, they believe, pending a wider and more permanent system of general security, that the disarmament of such nations is essential.

"They will likewise aid and encourage all other practicable measures which will lighten for peace-loving peoples the crushing burden of armaments."

We all would probably have some criticism of the sentiments expressed in these points. Aside from the

evident "power politics" that certainly has much to say in the present conflict it is probably the best statement of the war aims of the allies. It is idealistic. It reminds one of the eighteen points of President Wilson, at least the ideal of them. For England and the United States it is rather easy to make the first assertion. The sixth point combines the real aim of the war, the destruction of Nazi tyranny with an ideal of mankind in general, namely, that men in all lands may live out their lives in freedom from fear and want. Surely we cannot conclude that Nazi tyranny is preventing the realization of the freedom of mankind. There are the many other tyrannies all related to the one tyranny of sin. Because of the failure to realize that tyranny man goes on to visualize the abandonment of force. In this sinful world it can never be realized. We hardly believe that the nations who once talked of disarmament can really mean to speak of the same illusion. It almost seems as though it is necessary to make the chaos of war logical and justifiable and therefore that final feeble promise is given too, namely, to lighten for peace-loving peoples the crushing burden of armaments.

Although the war aims are expressed in such veiled and idealistic language we still conclude it really means we are entering into greater chaos. In spite of all the attempts of the Isolationists, the program of our country is taking definite shape—entry into war. That policy was shaped immediately when this country was committed to aid Britain. If we said "A" we must continue and say "B" and "C" etc. The Neutrality Act has been discarded. Our policy is now the freedom of the seas. In this sinful world that policy can only mean domination of the world.

To speak of a duty to protect weaker nations is true in itself, but to speak of that as a righteous act on the part of the democracies confuses things. We do not know the motives that are in the minds of the leaders of the nations. But judging from their past history the actions now of entering the war cannot be righteous. There are also acts of aggression in their past history. Their present position is founded upon acts of aggression. Their history is stained. Even now there are glaring injustices against races and people within their own borders. Before they can act as arbiters they must take out the beam in their own eye.

If we would speak of our part as a Christian in the present chaos, it must not be to attempt to untangle the mess, to restore order in the chaos. It is our duty to see that the present chaos is the judgment of God upon all the foolish attempts of mankind to save itself. Let it be a sign to us that even though there arise a semblance of worldly order and peace as is spoken of by the idealists that it cannot be the true order. It also shall perish from the face of the earth. Our part as Christians is to stand and wait in this chaos looking

for our redemption. We may be comforted that when these confusions are taking place our redemption draweth nigh.

The Great Test of the Battle of the War so Far.

The battle now raging between the Nazis and the Russians is the greatest battle that has been fought so far in this war. The results so far have been rather a surprise to the world. The ability of the Russians to hold the Germans was underestimated. However, it is yet premature to say what the outcome will be. Whatever it will be, it will have great and grave implications for future history. We all are waiting to see how it will turn out. I think a statement by Douglas Miller in the *Atlantic Monthly*, September, is interesting. He says:

"The first two months of the present war with their alternations of 'sitz and blitz' are now definitely over. For the first time in this contest the German armies are hotly engaged on a 2,000-mile front against the Red armies. From June 1941 onward the consumption of German war materials leaps upward at a rapid rate. The large movements of men involved, the heavy use of mechanized equipment, the long distance, the wretched roads, all combine to place a strain on any war machine—even Hitler's mechanized battalions. There can be no question that this summer at least, the Nazis are burning up and wearing out vast amounts of material. The wide plains of western Russia must be strewn with abandoned motorized equipment. Germany can afford to lose the steel involved in this destruction, but can she supply the skilled labor, the engineering capacity, the special alloys to replace these losses? Not quickly or easily; and, as far as some of the alloys are concerned, not at all. German soldiers are wearing out boots on the Russian roads that cannot be replaced out of conquered supplies; and uniforms and overcoats were manufactured of imported wool that is far to seek. Never again in this war will the German army have the same wealth of material it now commands, to shoot away or consume. If Germany faces a sustained attack on the west or on the south, she will have to encounter it with inferior equipment and inadequate material resources."

The more it comes to our ears that the Germans are being defeated, I think that so it will also be true that we will hear of many more groups than the American Legion go over to the side of those who shout that we must not stop until Nazism is crushed. The clearer it becomes to the Americans that an English victory will mean prosperity and all the freedom they desire the more will the present administration gain support of its policy.

L. D.

IN MEMORIAM

The consistory of the First Prot. Ref. Church of Grand Rapids hereby wishes to express its sympathy to our brother, Deacon R. Pastoor, in the loss of his father

JOHN W. PASTOOR

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

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