

# THE STANDARD *Bearer* A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

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## MEDITATIE

### Een Uitnemend Volk

*Maar gij zijt een uitverkoren geslacht, een koninklijk priesterdom, een heilig volk, een verkregen volk; opdat gij zoudt verkondigen de deugden Desgenen, Die u uit de duisternis geroepen heeft tot Zijn wonderbaar licht.*  
I Petr. 2:9.

Maar gij! . . . .

Ontzettende, verbazingwekkende tegenstelling!

Tegenstelling, die dan alleen door u kan worden verstaan en aanvaard, als ge verstaat, dat ze door den hoogen God, en dan met volstrekte souvereiniteit, in het leven wordt geroepen.

Tegenstelling, die slechts dan door u kan worden overgenomen, en waarvan ge slechts dan moogt gewagen, als ge eerst u voor den hoogen God, voor de alleen hooge Majesteit in de hemelen in het stof hebt geworpen, om te belijden, dat hier niets wordt gezegd, waarop gij ook maar in het minst zoudt kunnen bogen, dat alle roem volstrekt is uitgesloten.

Opdat geen vleesch zou roemen voor Hem!

Daar zijn er eenerzijds, die den Steen, door God ten hoofd hoeks gelegd, verachten en verwerpen, en voor wie deze Steen wordt tot een steen des aanstoots, en eene rots der ergernis. Het zijn zij, die zich aan het Woord stooten. En ook zelfs bij hen mag er geen roem overblijven. Ook in hun ongeloof, ook in hun verderf mogen ze zich ten slotte nog niet beroemen voor het aangezicht des levenden Gods. Ook als ze zouden willen roemen in hunne verachting van, in hun snoeven tegen den Steen, wordt hun ook nog dezen euvelen roem ontnomen. Want immers ze moeten het Woord van den hoogen en alleen souverainen God hooren, dat ze ook tot dit zich stooten aan het Woord gezet zijn!

Farao kan wel zijn hoogmoedig "Neen!" stellen tegenover het "Ja!" van den oppersten Potentaat der Potentaten; en hij kan zich voor een oogenblik wel beroemen op dat "Neen!" en wanen, dat hij als partij tegen den Almachtige optreedt. Doch allen roem wordt hem ras ontnomen. Want niet alleen gaat zijn "Neen!" er onder, en blijft Gods "Ja!" eeuwiglijk, maar ook zegt de Schrift nog tot hem: hiertoe heb Ik u gezet!

Dengenen namelijk, die zich aan het Woord stooten, ongehoorzaam zijnde, waartoe zij ook gezet zijn!

Maar gij! . . . .

Gij, ja, gij zijt een uitnemend volk! Gij komt tot den levenden Steen, bij God uitverkoren en dierbaar, en gij wordt als levende steenen gebouwd tot een geestelijk huis, tot een heilig priesterdom, om geestelijke offeranden op te offeren, Gode aangenaam door Jezus Christus. Gij gelooft. U is deze Steen kostelijk en dierbaar. En gij zult nooit beschaamd worden. En gij moet het ook hooren, gij moet het weten, dat ge een uitnemend volk zijt, opdat ge uwe dure roeping moogt verstaan, om te verkondigen de deugden Desgenen, Die u uit de duisternis geroepen heeft tot Zijn wonderbaar licht.

En ge zijt dit alles in schrille tegenstelling met degenen, die zich aan het Woord stooten, ongehoorzaam zijnde.

Maar ziet ge dan niet, dat ge dit nimmer kunt of moogt zeggen, dat ge van uwe uitnemendheid nimmer moogt roemen, tenzij uw roem is in den hoogen God, en alle zelfroem is uitgesloten?

Verstaat ge dan niet, dat uw gewagen van deze uitnemendheid niets is dan ijdele eigenwaan en gruwelijke zelfverheffing, tenzij dan, dat ge haar laat opkomen uit de eeuwige, souvereine verkiezing, en hare verwerkelijking louter aan Goddelijke genade toeschrijft?

Alle roem is uitgesloten!

Ge zijt een koninklijk priesterdom, ja, maar alleen omdat ge een *uitverkoren* geslacht zijt.

Ge zijt een heilig volk, 't is waar, en ge moogt, ge moet het weten; maar vergeet het dan niet, dat dit

alleen waar is, omdat God u Zelf tot eene bezitting verkreeg!

Ge verkondigt de deugden des allerhoogsten Gods, goed; maar het *mogen* en het *kunnen* en het *willen* van deze verkondiging hebt ge alleen van God!

Hij riep u uit de duisternis tot Zijn wonderbaar licht!

Er is in uwe uitnemendheid niets van uzelf!

Gode zij alleen de eer!

Wonderwerk van Goddelijke genade!

Gods volk is eene eenheid: een *geslacht*, een *priesterdom*, een *volk*.

Ze zijn niet maar een zeker aantal van geredde menschen, zonder verband, zonder idee, zonder harmonie. Integendeel, ze vormen tezamen één geheel. Ze hebben denzelfden geestelijken oorsprong, ze hebben dezelfde zeden en gewoonten, ze spreken allen dezelfde taal, ze behooren bij elkander, en zijn aan elkander verbonden. Eén Geest woont in allen, één Christus is hun Hoofd, ze zijn door éenen doop gewasschen, afgezonderd van de wereld; ze hebben één geloof, ééne hoop, en éenen God en Vader, Die over allen en in allen is. Ze vormen eene eenheid, die door ééne idee wordt beheerscht: de openbaring van den rijkdom der Goddelijke heerlijkheid in den Geliefde. Ze dienen allen één doel: de verkondiging van de deugden des Allerhoogsten, en ze dienen dat doel op duizendvoudige wijze, ieder op eigen wijs, op zijn eigene plaats, naar eigene mate van genade! . . . .

Een geslacht, een volk, een priesterdom!

En welk een volk!

Waar vindt ge onder alle volkeren der wereld nu zulk een volk? Waar zoudt ge geslacht of natie kunnen aanwijzen, dat in uitnemendheid ook maar een oogenblik te vergelijken is bij dit wonderwerk Gods?

't Is een priesterdom!

En dat wil immers zeggen, dat dit volk bestaat uit knechten des Allerhoogsten, geroepen om dag en nacht in Gods huis te wonen, en te staan als dienstknechten voor het aangezicht van de hooge Majesteit in de hemelen! Het wil zeggen, dat dit volk bestaat uit menschen, die van den kleinste tot den grootste toe, van den geringste tot den voornaamste, gezalfden des Heeren zijn, ambtsdragers, bij wie en in wie het *moeten* en het *mogen*, het *willen* en het *kunnen* dienen van God in de meest volkomene harmonie zijn. 't Is een volk, dat Gode gewijd is; dat hier in beginsel en straks in eeuwige volmaaktheid zingt:

“Wat vree heeft elk, die Uwe wet bemint!

Zij zullen aan geen hinderpaal zich stooten.

Ik, Heer, die al mijn blijdschap in U vind,

Hoop op Uw heil met al Uw gunstgenooten;

'k doe Uw geboon oprecht en welgezind;

Uw liefdedienst heeft mij nog nooit verdrotten.”

Daarom is het ook een koninklijk volk, een *koninklijk* priesterdom!

Immers, de knecht des Heeren is koning. Hij alleen mag koning zijn. Zoo was reeds naar 't bestek Gods over Adam in het eerste Paradijs. Zich buigend voor den hoogen God mocht hij heerschappij voeren over alle aardsche werken van Gods handen. Zoo wordt het, maar nu in veel hooger zin, door de diepte der zonde en des doods heen, centraal weer in Christus Jezus, den Knecht des Heeren bij uitnemendheid. Hij is de Koning-priester in der eeuwigheid, naar de ordening van Melchizedek. En Zijner zalving worden allen, die van Hem en in Hem zijn, deelachtig.

Gods volk is een *koninklijk* priesterdom.

Als zoodanig mogen ze met eene goede conscientie den strijd des Heeren strijden in deze wereld, den strijd tegen zonde en vleesch en Satan. Als zoodanig zijn ze in dien strijd altijd meer dan overwinnaars door Hem, Die hen liefgehad heeft. En als zoodanig mogen ze straks, als dienstknechten Gods eeuwiglijk regeeren met Christus over alle de werken van Gods handen!

Daartoe zijn ze ook een *heilig* volk!

Een priesterdom toch moet heilig zijn, zooals God heilig is. Zooals God heilig is, d.w.z. Zichzelven gewijd is, Zichzelven zoekt en vindt, Zijn eigen eer zoekt als de eenig Goede, zoo zijn ook zij heilig, d.w.z. afgescheiden van de zonde en van de wereld, en Gode gewijd. Met hart en ziel, met al hunne zinnen en genegenheden gaan ze naar God uit, zoeken en vinden ze Hem, verhoogen ze Zijn eer.

Ze zijn Gode eene bezitting, eene erve.

Het doel van hun bestaan is in God alleen.

Uitnemend volk van God!

Gods werk alleen!

Zijn Naam moet eeuwig eer ontvangen!

Want dit volk heeft Hij Zich geformeerd! Zij zullen lof vertellen!

Immers, het is een *uitverkoren* volk, het is een *verkregen* volk, het is een volk, dat Hij *geroepen* heeft uit de duisternis tot Zijn wonderbaar licht!

Verkoren, verkregen, geroepen!

Daar hebt ge het eenige, maar ook het geheele antwoord op de vraag naar de oorsprong en de wording van dit uitnemend volk. En in dit antwoord is niets van den mensch. God alleen, en dat in souvereine vrijmacht, is de auteur van alles, wat tot de uitnemendheid van dit volk behoort.

't Is uitverkoren.

Daarin ligt de oorsprong van dit koninklijk priesterdom. En de verkiezing is een eeuwige daad van Godes vrijmacht. Hij verkoor dit volk, niet omdat het een koninklijk priesterdom was, maar opdat het dat zou

worden. Hij verordineerde juist het, en dat in Goddelijke onderscheiding van anderen, niet omdat het in zichzelf meer geschiktheid had als materiaal voor de formeeing van een koninklijk priesterdom, maar opdat hetgeen in zichzelf niets is door het wonder der genade geschikt zou worden. De verkiezing is volstrekt eerst, eeuwige oorzaak, bron en oorsprong van dit volk en al zijne uitnemendheid. Door niets werd God in Zijne verkiezing beperkt of bepaald, door niets buiten Zichzelfen werd Hij bewogen. Goddelijk welbehagen alleen is de uiteindelijke oorzaak van de uitnemendheid van dit volk.

Opdat geen vleesch zou roemen voor Hem.

En zooals God dit volk van eeuwigheid heeft uitverkoren om een koninklijk priesterdom, een heilig volk, eene bijzondere bezitting Gods te worden, zoo is Hij het ook, en Hij alleen, Die met even vrije soevereiniteit Zijne verkiezing, Zijn eeuwig welbehagen openbaart en uitvoert in den tijd.

Uit Hem, maar ook door Hem zijn alle dingen.

Geen menschelijk element mag in de formeeing van dit uitnemend volk medewerken met Goddelijke almacht. Integendeel, juist omdat het Goddelijk wonder genade op het hoogst en heerlijkst tot openbaring moet komen, juist omdat het hier alles gaat om de heerlijkheid Gods en de eere van Zijn Naam, daarom moet de realizeering van dit koninklijk priesterdom eene menschelijke onmogelijkheid blijken te zijn.

Hij heeft dit volk *verkregen*.

Het woord, dat hier in het oorspronkelijke wordt gebezigd, is eenigszins moeilijk weer te geven in onze taal. Het Engelsch vertaalt "a peculiar people," of volgens eene betere vertaling "a people for God's own possession." En dat is metterdaad de gedachte. Gods volk is eene bijzondere bezitting Gods, een volk, dat God Zich in geheel bijzonderen zin tot eene bezitting heeft verkregen. Het is Zijne erve, Zijn bijzonder deel. Hemel en aard zijn Zijne, en Hij doet er mee naar het welbehagen van Zijnen wil. Ook de goddeloozen en alle machten der duisternis zijne Zijne. Maar dit volk is Zijne bijzondere bezitting, Zijn deel. In hen openbaart Hij de heerlijkheden van Zijne deugden. Zij zijn het voorwerp van Zijne eeuwige liefde. In hen heeft Hij Zijn lust. Op dit volk heeft Hij Zijn hart gezet. Hen heeft Hij verordineerd om eeuwiglijk aan de spitse van al Zijne werken te staan.

Maar toch is de gedachte niet uitgesloten, dat Hij deze bijzondere erve op eene geheel bijzondere wijze *verkregen* heeft.

Hij heeft haar Zich gekocht door het bloed Zijns Zoons!

Want zooals zij van nature zijn, worden ze niet alleen gekenmerkt door volkomene ongeschiktheid om een bijzonder volk Gods te worden, maar ze hebben ook geen recht om als een koninklijk priesterdom in Gods huis te staan en te dienen. Ze zijn vijanden Gods,

schuldig en doemwaardig. En wat hun betreft is het gansch onmogelijk, dat ze ooit in Godes gunst zouden worden hersteld. Maar ook hier geldt het: wat onmogelijk is bij de menschen, is mogelijk bij God. Hij verordineerde Zijnen Zoon om aan de spitse van dit volk te staan. En aan het hoofd van Zijn volk gaat deze Zoon den dood in, betaalt Hij de schuld, verdient Hij voor hen eeuwige gerechtigheid. God verzoende ons met Zichzelfen door den dood Zijns Zoons, opdat Hij Zich deze bijzondere erve uit den dood zou verkrijgen!

Goddelijk wonder der verzoening!

En zooals Hij hun, die in zichzelf doemwaardig zijn, het recht verwierf om Zijne bijzondere bezitting te worden, zoo formeert Hij hen ook tot Zijne erve door Goddelijke genade.

Hij roept hen!

Roep hen uit de duisternis tot Zijn licht!

En zooals de duisternis, waarin ze van nature wandelen, vreeselijk is, eene duisternis van dwaasheid en leugen, van onreinigheid en verderf, van ongerechtigheid en vijandschap tegen God, van toorn en afgrijzen en eeuwigen dood; zoo is dit licht wonderbaar, een licht van Goddelijke wijsheid en waarheid, van kennis en gemeenschap, van gerechtigheid en heiligheid, van een ingaan in Gods tabernakel, van eeuwig, hemelsch leven: het licht van de opstanding uit de dooden!

Uit de duisternis tot Zijn wonderbaar licht zijn ze geroepen!

Geroepen door het Evangelie!

Geroepen door het Goddelijke Woord!

Verkoren, verkregen, geroepen!

Goddelijk wonder!

Uit Hem!

Door Hem!

Maar dan ook *tot* Hem, en tot Hem alleen!

Dit koninklijk priesterdom is ook profeet Gods!

En ze zijn geroepen, opdat ze zouden verkondigen de deugden Gods, Die hen alzo geroepen heeft uit de duisternis tot Zijn wonderbaar licht!

Gods deugden zijn Zijne Goddelijke heerlijkheden, de aanbiddelijke eigenschappen van Zijn eeuwig en oneindig Goddelijk wezen. En die deugden Gods worden onvermengd, en op het allerhoogst geopenbaard in de verkiezing, verkrijging, en roeping van dit koninklijk priesterdom in Christus Jezus Zijnen Zoon, onzen Heer. Die deugden aanschouwen ze. De macht, de wijsheid, de ondoorgrondelijke genade en liefde van den God hunner zaligheid hebben ze ervaren, gesmaakt.

Dat ze dan die deugden verkondigen!

Verkondigen, roemen en prijzen, voor het aangezicht Gods, voor elkander, voor de wereld!

Hier en tot in eeuwigheid!

H. H.

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## EDITORIALS

### The Evangelical and The Reformed Church

In connection with our article under the above heading in *The Standard Bearer* of Dec. 15th, we received the following communication from some of our brethren in South Dakota:

Hosmer, S. D.  
Dec. 30, 1944.

Rev. H. Hoeksema, Editor  
"The Standard Bearer"  
Grand Rapids, Mich.

Dear Rev. Hoeksema:

Last evening Rev. Krieger, Rev. Bosma, Rev. Pfeiffer and I were together and decided to send you the following communication.

With surprise and consternation we read your article in the "Standard Bearer" dated December 15th concerning the Evangelical and Reformed Church. In this article you committed a grievous error, as we shall make plain.

In this article you stated that you examined the official documents relating to this matter and that you found no mention of any Classis protesting against or rejecting the Plan of Union. In our estimation such an examination should have included the official minutes of the Classes of the former Reformed Church in the U. S. We do not know what documents you examined.

However we find that in the minutes of General Synod of the Evangelical and Reformed Church for 1934 on pages 13 and 14 that certain Classis are listed and named as having rejected the Plan of Union proposed at that time and then declared accepted. The Classes named on page 14 are: Minnesota, North Dakota and Eureka Classes. These Classes did not only protest, but did not accept this plan. In addition there were others who were willing to accept the Plan with reservations. In other words they protested against the Plan as it was then proposed. However the four named went further than mere protestation in that they definitely and fully rejected the Plan. Somehow or other you must have overlooked this information in the Minutes or General Synod.

Furthermore, a statement that all Classes accepted the Plan must be based on the examination of all the minutes of all the Classes. We are certain that you did not do that. In all the minutes of Eureka Classis for the years 1933 and 1934 the same resolution appears, that of 1934 being a reiteration of that of 1933. This resolution in German reads: "Wir sind entschieden gegen eine Vereinigung der Reformierten Kirche in den Vereinigten Staaten mit der Evangelischen Synode von Nordamerika,

und bleiben bei unserem Bekenntnis". We have many other resolutions of Eureka Classis regarding this matter until the final break was accomplished at the time of the acceptance of the Constitution for the merged Church. At no time did the Eureka Classis acknowledge itself a part of the Evangelical and Reformed Church.

These then briefly are the reasons for our contention that you seriously and grievously erred in your article in the mentioned issue of "The Standard Bearer". It is our opinion that your article has harmful effect. Therefore we kindly request you to make some correcting and explanatory statement including the last three paragraphs of the preceding page in another issue of your periodical as soon as possible.

Truly yours,

Rev. W. Grossmann.

### Reply:

I wish to thank the brethren for this communication, which, rather than publishing a few paragraphs of it, I placed in its entirety. The brethren understand, of course, that it is not my purpose to misrepresent the matter concerning the history of the merger of 1934, and their part in it. Still less is it my intention to injure their cause. What we want is the truth. And the purpose of my articles on this subject is only to help the brethren with advice to get back on the right track. And the privilege of giving this advice I base on the fact that we might confer about these matters in our meeting of last September. And I want to assure the brethren that they are welcome to write in *The Standard Bearer* about this matter any time they feel the need of it, and especially when they are of the opinion, as they are in the present instance, that I misrepresented their case. In this way the truth must surely be served, and how that can have any harmful effect is difficult to see.

As to the contents of the above communication, the brethren must excuse me when I say that in spite of the strong language employed, it failed to convince me of my having "seriously and grievously erred" in respect to the exact point of my argument. Hence, for the sake of more clarity, I will make a few comments on the correction the brethren wish to make in their communication, in the hope that they will favor us with a further reply and more light on the subject.

The brethren write that they do not know what documents I examined. However, I plainly stated my source of information. I quoted from the "Acts and Proceedings of the Evangelical and Reformed Church, 1934," as they are quoted in "An Examination and Criticism," p. 90. I do not have in my possession a complete copy of those "Acts and Proceedings." I suppose that it is to these that the brethren refer when they speak of "the minutes of General Synod of the Evangelical and Reformed Church for 1934." I would

be very much obliged to the brethren if they could send me a copy of those "minutes."

The brethren write that "a statement that all Classes accepted the Plan must be based on the examination of all the minutes of all the Classes." They are "certain that I (you) did not do that." Yes, of course, they may be quite sure of this. But I do not agree that this is necessary. All I need is the *Acta* of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in the United States, 1934, and the "Acts and Proceedings of the General Synod of the Evangelical and Reformed Church," 1934, to ascertain whether or not any person, consistory, or classis officially and openly rejected the Plan of Union that was unanimously adopted by the General Synod of the Reformed Church in the United States of 1932. For any protest or rejection of the Plan of Union by any individual or minor gathering must needs appear before the General Synod of the Reformed Church in the United States held in 1934, and should appear in their *Acta*. If there are any decisions or declarations by any Classis that were not officially brought to the attention of that Synod, they are of no value. Even the resolution which the brethren quote as being made by the Eureka Classis in 1934, to the effect that they are definitely opposed to a union of the Reformed Church in the United States with the Evangelical Synod of North America, has no further significance than that it expressed their attitude toward the merger, unless it was sent as an official overture to the General Synod.

Permit me, therefore, to ask the following question:

Was there at the General Synod of the Reformed Church in the United States of 1934, assembled just before the joint session with the Evangelical Synod of North America, an overture from Classes Eureka, or from any other Classis:

1. Protesting against the action of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in the United States of 1932 whereby they unanimously adopted the Plan of Union.

2. Definitely stating that they rejected that Plan of Union, on the ground that the statement in the Preamble is false, and that they could not accept Article II of that Plan.

3. Officially informing Synod that, in case the merger should be formed, they would not go along, but would remain a separate Reformed Church on the basis of their own Confession?

If there were some such overture by Classis Eureka, will the brethren furnish *The Standard Bearer* with an exact copy and date of same? And will they inform us as to the action that was taken by the General Synod with regard to such overture?

And further: the brethren write that "at no time did the Eureka Classis acknowledge itself a part of the Evangelical and Reformed Church." But if this be so, will the brethren explain how there could be, at the

General Synod of the Evangelical and Reformed Church, an overture from Classis Eureka, "asking certain permissions with reference to ministers, missionaries, the Mission House, and the Presbyterian form of government"? Does not a Classis acknowledge itself part of the Church to whose Synod it sends official overtures, and from which it asks "certain permissions"?

And, finally, what is the present official status of "Classis Eureka"? Have they reorganized on their own basis? Surely, they cannot be the old "Classis Eureka" anymore, for the simple reason that the denomination in whose communion they were constituted as a Classis does not exist since 1934. Are they entirely separated from the Evangelical and Reformed Church? Do they receive no aid from the latter, and do their vacant churches not permit the ministers of the Evangelical and Reformed Church to preach in their pulpits?

I hope the brethren do not get the impression that I am writing in a spirit of contention. I am sincerely interested in their cause. And I want light. And I hope that they send a clear and unambiguous reply to my questions, together with the official documents as proof. Thus they may convince me of having "seriously and grievously erred."

H. H.

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## "The Text of a Complaint"

The above is the title of a lengthy printed protest by some members of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church "against actions of the Presbytery of Philadelphia in the Matter of the Licensure and Ordination of Dr. Gordon H. Clark."

I had read about the controversy involved in the Presbyterian Guardian, but I had not seen the complete text of this protest. A friend was kind enough to send it to me, for the which I hereby offer him my sincere thanks.

It appears that on July 7, 1944, a special meeting of the Presbytery of Philadelphia was held, for the purpose of examining a certain Dr. Gordon H. Clark with a view to his licensure and ordination to the ministry. Against the fact that this meeting was called, as well as against its proceedings and decisions, the protest or "complaint" is directed. It is signed by a dozen signatures among which are the names of some well known to us, R. B. Kuiper, C. Van Til, and N. B. Stonehouse.

The first part of the complaint concerns the calling of the special meeting. The protestants maintain that

the meeting was illegally called, and conclude this part of their protest with the "request that the meeting of the Presbytery of Philadelphia held on July 7, 1944, be found to have been illegally convened and that its acts and decisions and the acts and decisions issuing therefrom be declared null and void." p. 2.

The rest of the protest, its main body, is divided into four parts, according as it discovers four serious errors in the theological conceptions of Dr. Clark, errors that became manifest, according to the complainants, in Dr. Clark's examination by the Presbytery, and in spite of which fact said Presbytery decided to license him and proceed to his ordination.

The first part deals with Dr. Clark's alleged erroneous views concerning the incomprehensibility and knowability of God. pp. 2-6.

The second part concerns Dr. Clark's "view of the relation of the faculty of knowledge, the intellectual faculty, to other faculties of the soul." pp. 6-10.

The third part accuses Dr. Clark of maintaining "that the relationship of divine sovereignty and human responsibility to each other presents no difficulty for his thinking and that the two are easily reconcilable before the bar of human reason." pp. 10-13.

And the fourth part is an elaboration upon the statement that "in the course of Dr. Clark's it became abundantly clear that his rationalism keeps him from doing justice to the precious teaching of Scripture that in the gospel God sincerely offers salvation in Christ to all who hear, reprobate as well as elect, and that he has no pleasure in any one's rejecting this offer but, contrariwise, would have all who hear accept it and be saved." pp. 13-15.

Especially in view of the last alleged error of Dr. Clark, the reader can readily understand that we are rather interested in this controversy, and that we cannot refrain from making a few remarks about this complaint.

H. H.

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## Eureka Classis Incorporated

We found the following articles in *The Witness*, a paper published by some of the brethren that do not agree with the stand of the Evangelical and Reformed Church:

### EUREKA CLASSIS AND REFORMED CHURCH

#### IN THE U. S.

The "Plan of Union" 1932, Art. 1, states that "Congregations and institutions may retain their names, but they shall



designate their membership in the Evangelical and Reformed Church."

Numerous congregations have not designated their membership. They have not by regular procedure officially changed doctrinal stand and church adherence. And neither have such congregations transferred property rights. Wherefore also we take the position that these do not really and legally belong to the Union Church.

Plan of Union, Art. V, item 7, furthermore states: "The General Synod shall not have power to unite subordinate judicatories of the consolidated Churches except at their request." Which means, that no Classis can be united with any Union Synod except at its own request.

The Eureka Classis joined no Synod of the Union Church. Its decision was unanimous to continue functioning as Classis. As incorporated body it functioned under the name: "Eureka Classis of the Synod of the N. W. of the Reformed Church in the U. S."

A Synod consists of three or more Classes. But since all other Classis dissolved and joined Union Synods, the Synod of the N. W. thereby automatically ceased functioning, not having a sufficient number of Classes to function as Synod.

A Classis, however, continues to function with three or more ministers and charges. And it functions as Church by virtue of the congregations which it represents and which constitute its organization. In this case, Reformed Church in the U. S.

The congregation alone is the Church unit. Congregations may unite organizationally for necessary closer co-operation into a Classis unit. Classes and Synods are Church only by virtue of congregations which constitute these by representation of elders and ministers of the Word.

A congregation is Church only upon the basis of true faith, confession, doctrine. That is, upon the basis of the teachings of the Word of God—members believe and confess that they belong, body and soul, in life and death, to their faithful Saviour Jesus Christ. Heid. 1. And so "Where two or three are gathered together in MY NAME, there am I in the midst of them." There is Christ and the members constituting his body, the Church.

In such congregation all the members have one and the same faith, they have an identical confession, which constitutes them one body in the faith. They do not and cannot have various and deviating confessions and faiths, for then they could not constitute one congregation, one in faith and confession. They would then not constitute oneness, unity, one faith and body in Christ.

The Holy Spirit works faith in our hearts by the proclamation of the holy Gospel, and confirms it by the use of the holy Sacraments. Heid. 65.

That is what the Reformed Church stands for. That is what it instills, teaches and proclaims. Nothing added to.

Those who seek their salvation and welfare of saints, that is of church dignitaries, the outward form and organization of the Church, its pomp and glories and honors; or of themselves, that is, in works instead of grace, in a pious life, in self-

conversions and regenerations instead of all in Christ Jesus as complete and full-sufficient Saviour; such deny the only Saviour Jesus, notwithstanding that they make their boast of him. Heid. 30.

Such a congregation and organization, however great, grand and glorious outwardly, is not a Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, but a church of the anti-christ. It is not the body of true believers in Christ Jesus.

Reformed Churches indicates a body of believers who confess Jesus Christ, only, complete, and all-sufficient Saviour, who has bought them not with silver or gold, that is, the reward of our labors, but with his precious blood, to be his own. Nothing added to: nothing subtracted. Heid. 34. All other man-planned sacrifices are accursed idolatry. Heid. 80.

The Eureka Classis has not been willing to sell its precious heritage for a mess of pottage. And neither have some lone-standing Reformed congregations. Within the bounds of these the Reformed heritage and Church has continued to function. Neither synodical decrees of the Union Church, nor council and church dignitaries can change these facts. We acknowledge ONE HEAD of the Church, Jesus Christ, his word of instruction, admonition and command as revealed in the Scriptures and summarized in our Heidelberg confession.

That all doubts as to our status may vanish, Classis has deleted other appellations from its corporate name, so that as incorporated body it functions as 'The Reformed Church in the U. S.'

D. E. Bosma, Eureka, S.D.

## REFORMED CHURCH IN THE U. S.

**Re-formed according to the Word of God.** That is what the name implies. The **Reformed Church** is the Church of the Reformation. Its sole and great responsibility is to carry on the heritage of the Reformation. That is, the true, pure Gospel of salvation as revealed in the Scriptures.

The **Lutherans** perpetuate the name of a man. A truly worthy man. And so they attach infallibility to his pronouncements. These have become fixed norms of doctrine, which give that Church its stability.

The **Presbyterians**, by their name, emphasize the presbyterial form of government. In doctrine and government this Church is Reformed. Originally strongly calvinistic, there has been a continuing trend to move away from fundamental Reformed concepts. Because of this a number of schisms have occurred. The most recent reorganization upon doctrinal principles is the **Orthodox Presbyterian**.

The **Congregational Church** in its name emphasizes the congregation as the church unit. Its doctrinal stand is very liberal and uncontrolled.

The **Methodists**, also much divided, — Episcopal, Protestant, Wesleyan — are fully Arminian in doctrine, man-centered conversion and morals.

The **Baptists** would open the doors of heaven through adult baptism.

The Evangelical Church is a German branch of Methodism.

The Evangelical Synod, with which the Reformed in the U. S. united, is the Union-church or State-church of Germany, transplanted to this country a century ago. In Germany the Church is a state institution, state supported and governed. By government edict in 1817 the Lutheran and the Reformed were united into one body as the Evangelical Church. And so in its very nature the Evangelical Church is the Union Church, organized in this country as the Evangelical Synod of N. A.

By union with the Evangelical Synod of N.A. the Reformed Church in the U. S. departed from its traditional Reformed stand, accepting and adopting the Lutheran confession and also the mediatory Evangelical. It adopted also a new constitution and by-laws based almost entirely upon the polity of the Evangelical Synod. This Church has thereby gone into the Evangelical fold and become Evangelical.

Only one Classis and a few scattered congregations and ministers withheld approval and refused to comply or to co-operate. They could not and would not sell their precious Reformed heritage for a mess of pottage. They continued Reformed Church in the U. S. The Eureka Classis, a corporate body, and having the name, Reformed Church in the U. S., in its corporate title, has already finished regular and legal procedures to be known henceforth as: THE REFORMED CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES. Incorporated. Classis continues to function as an organized unit of this Church, which, for the present at least, and until other Classis units are formed, constitutes it legally.

This is to inform ministers and congregations of the fact that the Reformed Church in the U. S. exists as incorporated body.

A special meeting, including all who are seriously interested in our Reformed Church, will be called in the near future.

D. E. Bosma, Eureka, S.D.

Time and space compel me to refrain from comment.

But since the above articles are related to my own editorials and throw some light upon the question asked therein, I hastened to clip them out, to have them published in the present number of our S. B.

H. H.

Hark! the glad sound! the Saviour's come!

The Saviour promised long!

Let every heart prepare a throne,

And every voice a song.

Our glad Hosannas, Prince of Peace,

Thy welcome shall proclaim;

And heav'n's eternal arches ring

With thy beloved name.

# The Triple Knowledge

## An Exposition Of The Heidelberg Catechism

Part Two.

Of Man's Redemption

Lord's Day XIII.

Q. 33. Why is Christ called the only begotten Son of God, since we are also the children of God?

A. Because Christ alone is the eternal and natural Son of God; but we are children adopted of God, by grace, for his sake.

Q. 34. Wherefore callest thou him our Lord?

A. Because he hath redeemed us, both soul and body, from all our sins, not with gold or silver, but with his precious blood, and hath delivered us from all the power of the devil; and thus hath made us his own property.

1.

This Jesus Is Very God.

The thirty-fourth answer is a somewhat free translation of the original German, which reads as follows: "Weil er uns mit Leib und Seele von der Sünde und aus aller Gewalt des Teufels nicht mit Gold oder Silber, sondern mit seinen theuren Blut ihm zum Eigenthum erlöset und erkaufet hat." And this may be translated: "Because he redeemed and purchased us, with body and soul, not with gold or silver, but with his own precious blood, from sin and out of all the power of the devil, to be his own property." The sense remains essentially the same, except that in the original our salvation, both from sin and from the power of the devil, is presented as having been accomplished through both, the redemption and purchasing by Christ through His precious blood.

We must clearly understand just what truth is the subject of the thirty-third question and answer, lest we repeat what was already explained in connection with the eighth and ninth Lord's Day of our Instructor. There we discussed the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, and paid more particular attention to the eternal Fatherhood of God in relation to the Son, and to the Sonship of the second Person of the Godhead. In question thirty-three the subject is also "the only begotten Son," and it is explained that Christ is "the eternal and natural Son of God." We might, therefore, easily be tempted to treat once more of the Son of God as He appears in the trinity, and of the doctrine of



eternal generation.\* Yet, that would be a mistake. The subject in question and answer thirty-three is not the second Person of the Godhead as such, but Jesus Christ. The catechism, following the *Apostolicum*, is explaining the words: "And in Jesus Christ, *his only begotten Son, our Lord*." The main point of our discussion in this connection, therefore, is expressed in the proposition: *Jesus Christ is very God*. That the Son of man, the historical Jesus, Who was born in Bethlehem in the fulness of time, Who grew up in the home of Joseph and Mary in Nazareth as an ordinary child, Who sojourned among us, taught the people and performed His mighty works during the three years of His public ministry, and Who finally was crucified and slain by His enemies, nailed to the accursed tree, but Who, according to the Scriptures, was raised on the third day and exalted on the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens,—that this Jesus is very God, not born but eternally begotten, God of God, and Light of Light, is the subject of discussion in the thirty-third question and answer of our Heidelberg.

The truth of the Godhead of Jesus Christ is clearly defined and strongly maintained in the confessions of the Church from earliest times, and to the present day, and that, too, in opposition to every form of heresy that arose to undermine it. The Nicaeno-Constantinopolitan Creed, 381, states this truth in the following words: "And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all the worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made." The Symbol of Chalcedon, 451, declares: "We, then, following the holy Fathers, all with one consent, teach men to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood; truly God and truly man, of a rational soul and body; consubstantial with the Father according to the Godhead, and consubstantial with us according to the Manhood; in all things like unto us, without sin; begotten before all ages of the Father according to the Godhead, and in these latter days, for us and for our salvation, born of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, according to the Manhood; one and the same Christ, Lord, Only-begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures, inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the distinction of natures by no means being taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person and one Subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, and only begotten, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ; as the prophets from the beginning have declared concerning him, and the Lord Jesus Christ himself has taught us, and the Creed of the holy Fathers has handed down

to us." And the so-called Athanasian Creed has the following: "Furthermore it is necessary to everlasting salvation: that he also believe rightly the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. For the right Faith is, that we believe and confess: that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and Man; God of the substance of the Father; begotten before the worlds: and Man, of the substance of his Mother, born in the world. Perfect God: and perfect Man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting. Equal to the Father as touching his Godhead: and inferior to the Father as touching his Manhood. Who although he is God and Man; yet he is not two, but one Christ. One; not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh: but by taking of the Manhood into God. One altogether; not by confusion of the Substance: but by unity of Person. For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man: so God and Man is one Christ."

The same teaching is found in the later Creeds.

The Augsburg Confession declares in Article III: "Also they teach that the Word, that is, the Son of God, took unto him man's nature in the womb of the blessed Virgin Mary, so that there are two natures, the divine and the human, inseparably joined together in unity of person; one Christ, true God and man." The Formula of Concord, Article VIII teaches: "That the divine and the human nature in Christ are personally united, and so completely that there are not two Christs—one the Son of God, the other the Son of Man—but that one and the same is Son of God and Son of man." And the attributes of the divine nature of Christ are said to be omnipotence, eternity, omnipresence, etc.

The Second Helvetic Confession, Article XI has this to say: "Moreover, we believe and teach that the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, was from all eternity predestined and foreordained of the Father to be the Saviour of the world. And we believe that he was begotten, not only then, when he took flesh of the Virgin Mary, nor yet a little before the foundations of the world were laid; but before all eternity, and that of the Father after an unspeakable manner. . . . Therefore the Son is coequal and consubstantial with the Father, as touching his divinity: true God, not by name only, or by adoption, or by special favor, but in substance and nature. . . . We acknowledge, therefore, that there be in one and the same Jesus Christ our Lord two natures, the divine and the human nature."

The French Confession of Faith states in Article XV: "We believe that in one person, that is Jesus Christ, the two natures are actually and inseparably joined and united, and yet each remains in its proper character: so that in this union the divine nature, retaining its attributes, remained uncreated, infinite, and all-pervading."

Likewise our own Netherland or Belgic Confession

\*Cf. Vol. II, *God's Way Out*, pp. 127-164.

declares: "We confess, therefore, that God did fulfill the promise which he made to the fathers by the mouth of his holy prophets when he sent into the world, at the time appointed by him, his only-begotten and eternal Son, who took upon him the form of a servant, and became like unto men . . . so that he is in truth our Immanuel, that is to say, God with us." Article XVIII. And again: "We believe that by this conception the person of the Son is inseparably united and connected with the human nature; so that there are not two Sons of God, nor two persons, but two natures united in one single person; yet each nature retains its own distinct properties. As then the divine nature has always remained uncreated, without beginning of days or end of life, filling heaven and earth, so also hath the human nature not lost its properties, but remained a creature. . . . But these two natures are so closely united in one person, that they were not separated even by his death. Therefore, that which he, when dying, commended into the hands of the Father, was a real human spirit, departing from his body. But in the meantime the divine nature always remained united with the human nature, even when he lay in the grave; and the Godhead did not cease to be in him, and more than it did when he was an infant, though it did not so clearly manifest itself for a while." Art. XIX.

Article II of the Thirty Nine Articles of the Church of England expresses this truth as follows: "The Son, which is the Word of the Father, begotten from everlasting of the Father, the very and eternal God, and of one substance with the Father, took man's nature in the womb of the blessed Virgin, of her substance: so that the whole and perfect natures, that is to say, the Godhead and Manhood, were joined together in one Person, never to be divided, whereof is one Christ, very God, and very Man."

Likewise the Westminster Confession, VIII, 2: "The Son of God, the second person in the Trinity, being very and eternal God, of one substance, and equal with the Father did, when the fulness of time was come, take upon him man's nature, with all the essential properties and common infirmities thereof, yet without sin: being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost in the womb of the Virgin Mary, of her substance. So that two whole perfect, and distinct natures, the Godhead and the manhood, were inseparably joined together in one person without conversion, composition, or confusion. Which person is very God and very man, yet one Christ, the only mediator between God and man."

The Church throughout the centuries, therefore, confesses that the man Jesus Christ is the eternal, essential, only begotten Son of God.

And this is the clear teaching of Scripture.

Before the Church made this confession, even dur-

ing Christ's sojourn in the flesh of His humiliation, the apostles confessed that He is the Son of God. Thus Nathanael, the Israelite in whom there was no guile, exclaimed at the very beginning of Jesus' public ministry: "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel." John 1:49. When Jesus was with His disciples in the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, after having inquired of them as to men's opinions about Him, He placed them before the personal question: "But whom do ye say that I am?" And Peter replied with the well-known confession: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." And the Saviour sealed this confession, both as to its truth and with respect to its fundamental importance, when He said: "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Matt. 16:15-18. And Thomas, who would not believe, unless he put his finger in the print of the nails, overcome by the glory of the risen Lord cried out in adoration: "My Lord, and my God!"

And this is the teaching of Holy Writ throughout.

For "in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. . . . And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. . . . No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." John 1:1-3; 14, 18. "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." And "who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" I John 5:5. And again, "we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life." I John 5:20. The apostle Paul writes: "Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever." Rom. 9:5. Moreover, attributes that are only divine, such as eternity, omniscience, omnipotence, are ascribed to this Jesus, Micah 5:1, John 21:17, Rev. 1:8; 22:13. And he performs divine works. He creates, sustains all things, forgives men's sins, raises the dead, etc. John 1:3; Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3; Luke 5:20, 24; John 5:21. And he and the Father are one, i.e. one in essence. John 10:30.

And so, the Heidelberg Catechism stands on the basis of Holy Writ, and its teaching is in harmony

with that of the Church of all ages, when it maintains in the thirty-third question and answer the true, essential, and distinct divinity of Jesus Christ.

We say: the *distinct* divinity of our Lord.

For this it is, indeed, that the Catechism emphasizes. Both in Scripture, and in the Apostolic Confession, Christ is called "the only begotten Son of God." And the Catechism calls special attention to this exclusive and distinctive term *only begotten*. Why should Christ be called thus? What is the meaning of the term? What does it teach us? Scripture calls angels also the sons of God. Moreover, believers are called by that name. And even Adam is so called. If there are more sons of God, then, if Christ is not the only Son of God, how can He be called the *only begotten*? What does this exclusive term express? And in the answer the Heidelberg distinguishes between the Sonship of Christ, and that of believers. It is true, that believers are also called the children of God, yet Christ is the Son in an altogether special and unique sense of the word. Christ's sonship belongs not to time, but in eternity, ours has a beginning, belongs to time: we are adopted. And the Sonship of Christ is *natural*, He is *by nature*, essentially, the Son of God, we become children of God only through grace.

And it is well, that this distinction is made, and that thus the unique Sonship of Christ, and His true divinity is maintained.

For, first of all, this is necessary in opposition to all kinds of heresies that have arisen, and always do arise against this doctrine of the true and essential Godhead of Christ.

And the Church must instruct her children clearly and definitely in this doctrine, in order that they may not be tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine, but stand in the faith once delivered unto the saints.

The matter would not be so serious, if those that deny this fundamental truth would only speak in plain language, and unambiguously declare that Jesus is not the Son of God. But this they do not. Those who desire to instill the poison of their false doctrine into the minds and hearts of believers, and thus to destroy the Church of Christ, never proclaim their heresies boldly and openly. On the contrary, they try to hide the real meaning of their views by preserving and speaking in the same terms as the Church. And so, they try to deceive the people of God, and make them believe that their heresies are harmless, that they are, in fact, fundamentally in harmony with the faith of the Church, and with the teaching of Holy Writ.

This is also true with regard to heresies concerning the doctrine of the divinity of Christ. Old Arius did not deny that Jesus is the Son of God, but he pointed out that the name *Son of God* is a *title* that is given to Christ, that is applicable to Him especially after the resurrection, and that denotes Him as a very exalted

human being. He is not essentially and eternally God, but God bestowed upon Him the unique honor of being called His only begotten Son. The Nominal Trinitarians did not teach that Jesus is not the Son of God, but they insisted that the name *Son of God* denotes an affluence or power of the Father, not a distinct person in the trinity, and that this power or affluence of the Father was especially strong in Christ. Hence, it is in virtue of this strong presence and power of God in Him, and not because He is essentially God, that He is called the only begotten of the Father. The Socinians and the Moderns of today have no objection to the doctrine that Jesus is the Son of God; He may even be called the only begotten; but to them this does not mean that He is very God, the second person in the trinity. Rather does it mean that He was so truly divine because He was so truly and really human. We are all children of God, for we all are made in God's image. The distinction of Christ is that He was so deeply and clearly conscious of His Sonship, and that He lived so perfectly as a child of God. The God-consciousness was strong in Him!

It is, then, quite necessary that believers are instructed in the truth of Christ's unique, distinctive, essential Sonship.

For, secondly, with this fundamental truth stands or falls the whole truth concerning our salvation. If Christ is not very God, there is no Immanuel, no Incarnation, no union of God and man, no tabernacle of God with men, no covenant of friendship, no revelation of the Father. If He, Who died on Calvary, was a mere man, was not the Son of God in the flesh, there was no perfect sacrifice for sin on that accursed tree, there is no atonement, God did not reconcile us unto Himself in the blood of His Son. If Christ is not very God His own resurrection is but a beautiful legend, and He cannot be the resurrection and the life for us. In one word, if Christ is not essentially and eternally God, our faith is vain, we are still in our sins, and we are still without God in the world.

And no beautiful philosophy of the Man of Galilee can take the place of the Christ of the Scriptures.

But, thanks be to God, God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that He might represent His own, lay down His life for His sheep, bring to light life and immortality, reconcile us unto Himself, and unite us with Him for ever in the blessed fellowship of His eternal tabernacle!

For this Jesus is very God!

H. H.

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Have I the wedding garment on,  
Or do I naked stand alone?  
O! quicken, clothe, and feed my soul,  
Forgive my sins, and make me whole.

## The Lord Does Wondrously

As was said, we learn from the reactions of Manoah to what his wife told him, that he, too, was of that number in Israel who feared God. Had he been an unbeliever he would have made light of her words. But he was deeply interested and concerned, believing and hopeful, for he turned to the Lord in prayer. If only the messenger would appear unto them once more and teach them what they shall do unto the child that is to be born. As was said, the prayer was superfluous for the instruction for which Manoah prays had already been given. It shows that the prayer rises not from the need of more instruction as to how the child is to be treated but from the need of the confirmation of his faith through the appearance of the messenger. The man of God—Manoah knew not that the man of God who had appeared unto his wife was the angel of the Lord—came again and worked a sign that was plainly inductive of his true identity. He did so because, as was remarked, the Lord always stands ready to bring to full fruition the faith of such who by His mercy want to believe.

The messenger, who appeared unto Manoah as his wife, was not an ordinary man. He was not an ordinary angel but the Angel of the Lord, the second person in the blessed trinity, in His office of Mediator, thus He whom we now worship as our God and Saviour Christ Jesus. There can be no doubt that the Angel of the Lord is Christ, the Son of God. The Old Testament Scriptures over and over identify Him with the triune Jehovah. On the other hand, they clearly distinguish between this angel and Jehovah. This is conclusive proof that this angel is Christ. For Christ, being as He is of one and the same essence with God, is the only one who can be identified with God. On the other hand, being as he is the Christ, the Mediator of God and man, the incarnate Word, He in this capacity, is also distinct from God. The distinction here is not between the Son on the one hand and the Father and the Holy Spirit on the other, but between the Son in His office of Mediator and the triune Jehovah. Thus long before His incarnation in the fulness of time the Son of God in His office of Mediator was manifesting Himself to the church—to Hagar and Abraham and now again to the parents of Samson in a real human form; to Moses in the burning bush; to the people of Israel in the snake and fire that enveloped the summit of the mount of God; and to this same people in the pillar of cloud. Thus the angel whom Abraham called Jehovah and for whom he fetched bread, was verily Christ. It was Christ who called to Moses out of the burning bush and sent him to deliver Israel. It was Christ who met him by the way in the inn and threatened to kill him on account of his negligence in the

matter of the circumcision of his son. It was Christ who communicated to him the law and spake to him out of the tabernacle of the congregation. When the people of Israel took their journey from Egypt it was none other than Christ who went before them by day in a pillar of fire to give them light. The word of the Lord that came to all the prophets, was a word that was communicated to them by Christ. Through all the centuries of the Old Dispensation, Christ functioned personally.

There can be no doubt that the angel who appeared to the parents of Samson was the Angel of the Lord. Manoah asked him to divulge his name. "What is thy name," he said to him, "that when thy sayings come to pass we may do thee honor." And he answers, "Why asketh thou thus my name, seeing it is wonderful." In Isa. 9:5 it is said, "Unto us a child is born and his name is wonderful, wonder-worker. Isa. 29:14 explains our present passage. It says, "I will continue to show myself doing wonders to this people, wonder upon wonder." A wonder is a new work of God. Ex. 33:10, "And he said, Behold I make a covenant: before all the people I will do wonders, such as have not been done in all the earth, nor in any nation: and all the people among whom thou art shall see the work of the Lord." Isa. 43:9, "Behold I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth." The wonder is a working of God according to which He redeems His people from their sins and leads them to their everlasting destination. Thus the wonder is the divine working of grace; and it demonstrates that with God all things are possible. Hence, in the Old Testament Dispensation, God performed His miracles at those junctures in the history of the church when from the point of view of man and of nature His people and with them His cause was doomed to extinction. Only Jehovah performs wonders. Thus the messenger who appeared unto Manoah is Christ. For He said that His name was wonder, wonderworker. Christ Himself is *the* wonder.

The narrative contains still other evidence that the messenger is Christ the Lord. Manoah petitioned his visitor to tarry until he should have made ready for him a kid, prepared for him some food. He wanted to make certain who his visitor was. If he partook of food, he would know that he was a real man of flesh and blood and not an angel. But the visitor told him that he would not eat of his bread and that, if he would offer him a burnt offering he must offer it unto the Lord. Manoah was puzzled. Regarding his visitor he now asked him his name that he might do him honor when his saying came to pass. The reply of the visitor was mysterious, thought-provoking. He says to Manoah, "Why asketh thou after my name, seeing it is wonderful." He means to say that he can not reveal his name because it is wonderful. Manoah now offered his offering upon a rock unto the Lord, as the

visitor, whose identity was still hidden from him, had instructed. And the visitor, who had just said that his name was wonderful, did wondrously and thus made plain that it was proper that he should be called by such a name. With Manoah and his wife looking on, he ascended in the flame of the altar. Then Manoah knew that he was the Angel of the Lord and they both fell on their faces to the ground. Manoah thought that they must die, because they had seen God. But his wife, who at that moment was more capable than he of clear thinking, reassured him. If the Lord were pleased to kill them, he would not have received a burn-toffering and a meat-offering at their hands, neither would He have showed them all these things, nor would at this time have told them such things as these. This was what she said to her husband. It is plain even beyond the shadow of a doubt that the visitor was the Angel of the Lord, Christ Jesus, the Son of God. His name was wonderful. (The Hebrew text has *wonderful* and not *secret*). And he did wondrously. He spake with the authority of God. The woman and her husband knew that He was God, knew by divine revelation which was given them in connection with the wondrous doing of their visitor.

The things here reported call for closer inspection and fuller explanation. Manoah inquired after the name of his visitor, unaware whom he was addressing. Had the request been granted the Lord would have given Manoah a full revelation of the glories of God, such as the church now possesses in the face of the incarnate son of God. The request, unbeknown to Manoah, was identical to that once voiced by Moses when he said to the Lord, "Show me thy glory." God's glory is the radiance of His goodness; and the latter is comprehensive of the totality of His glories. And this is His name. Its unobscured radiance would have destroyed Moses. It would have destroyed Manoah. For, like Moses, he was a sinful man; and, besides, he moved among the shadows of the Dispensation of the promise. In his vision John saw one like unto the Son of man with hair white like wool, as white as snow, and with eyes as a flame of fire. It was the glorified Christ. And John fell as dead at His feet. Paul knew a man in Christ, whether in the body he could not tell, or whether out of the body he could not tell, caught up in the third heaven in paradise, where for an instant he stood face to face with the heavenly. And he heard words not lawful for a man to utter and that no man can utter who still bears the image of the earthy and is occupied in his mind with earthy images of the heavenly, who now sees through a glass darkly. Thus the Lord's reply to Manoah, "Why dost thou inquire after my name," is understandable. But He does nevertheless give the man a revelation, one that he could receive and that met the requirement of his need and the need of all his spiritual kin of that day. He tells him that

His name is wonderful and that, such being His name, He is the Lord of wonderworking power, with whom all things are possible. Manoah, the people of God of his day whom he represented, and to whom he would certainly communicate the good news, had need of hearing this. For, as was said, at this juncture in sacred history all things again united to proclaim that if the cause of God depended on man, it was doomed to failure, that thus Israel's hope was solely the God of wonderworking power. All things at this time combined to proclaim this—the spiritual barrenness of Israel, its impenitence, as also the unfruitfulness of the woman from whom the promised deliverer was to be born.

The Lord also did wondrously. He received the burnt-offering and the meat-offering that Manoah offered unto the Lord and thus received the person of Manoah and the person of his wife. It means that he was merciful unto them and in His mercy sanctified unto their hearts the truth symbolized by their offering—the truth and fact that their sins were covered and that in their penitence and contrition of heart, their praise and thanksgiving and consecration to their God they were pleasing in His sight. The Lord continued to do wondrously. Before their eyes He ascended in the flame of the altar. That was a mysterious doing. It pre-indicated the wholehearted and perfect consecration of Christ unto God in His suffering and dying on the cross in behalf of His people. But it also pre-indicated the consecration unto God of the Christ resurrected and exalted. This then was the word of God to Manoah: "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that by no means will clear the guilty; visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and fourth generation." This was the word of God to Moses. But it was a word that rose from every sacrifice by blood that was offered. Thus it was the word of God also to Manoah and to the true church in those fearful times. The woman was right. They had seen God and would live even because they had seen Him.

Why did the Lord go to all this work in the preparation of this particular deliverer called Samson. This may be a strange question and it also may be strangely put. But of several of these deliverers we read only that they were raised up and that they delivered and judged Israel. But Samson must be a Nazarite. He must be born of one who was barren. The mother had to observe the Nazarite rules in her own person all during the time of her pregnancy. She hears all this from the very mouth of God and not from God through one of His servants. The Lord appears first to the woman, then to her husband in answer to



the latter's prayer. He does wondrously in both their présence. And all this is reported to us in the Scriptures in minutest detail. There can be but one reason. The matter was of great importance. The Lord had somethinb especially great to say to His people through the sign that He now brought into being. And that sign was Samson. Through this sign the Lord speaks with great emphasis and with clarity. Samson as a sign, was unique. His Nazariteship was unique and never repeated itself. As was said, the significance of Samson is that he so strikingly exhibits the connection between holiness expressing itself in covenant fidelity and power to war God's warfare. What was demonstrated through him in a striking way is that God is the strength of His people in the way of their obedience to Him.

G. M. O.

## Een Smeekbede Om Godswil

(Psalm 79)

De schrijver van dezen psalm schijnt dezelfde Asaf te zijn die door den Heiligen Geest gebruikt was om Psalm 74 te schrijven. Taal en stijl en inhoud zijn gelijkkluidend. Toen we eenige regelen schreven over Psalm 74, hebben we de gedachte geopperd, dat dit niet dezelfde Asaf kan zijn die in David's dagen zong. Omdat er van de verwoesting des tempels en van Jeruzalem gewaagd werd. We dachten, dat het een godvruchtige jood was die geleefd heeft ten dage van Antiochus Epiphanes. Nu zouden we er aan toe willen voegen, dat het ook niet onwaarschijnlijk kan geheeten als we deze Asaf plaatsen in de dagen van Nebuchadnezer. Ook ten tijde van dat monster is Jeruzalem verbrand en de tempel ontheiligd. We weten het niet voor zeker.

De psalm laat zich gemakkelijk verdeelen in drie deelen. Van vers 1 tot 4 beluisteren wij een klagende beschrijving van den hachelijken toestand van Israel. Van vers 5 tot vers 12 hooren wij de bede om verlossing; en in het slotvers zien wij het heilig voornemen van Asaf en het ware volk Gods om, als de Heere verlossing mocht schenken, Zijn naam tot in eeuwigheid te prijzen.

Bezien we nu deze deelen in het bijzonder.

Het loopt direkt in het oog bij het lezen van de eerste vier verzen, hoe Asaf een diep ingeleid kind van God is. Let er op hoe hij al de smart van Israel en Jeruzalem aan God verbindt. De heidenen zijn gekomen in *Uwe* erfenis; zij hebben den Tempel *Uwer* heiligheid verontreinigd; zij hebben de doode lichamen *Uwer* knechten aan het gevogelte des hemels tot spijs

gegeven; het vleesch *Uwer* gunstgenooten aan het gedierde des lands. Asaf leeft uit het beginsel, dat God de God des Verbonds is. Zijn gebed is van meet aan *theologisch* en niet *anthropologisch*. Ik wil daar het volgende mee zeggen. Als men anthropologisch bidt, dan gaat het om den mensch; als men theologisch bidt, dan gaat het alles om God! Hebt ge er opgelet, dat het Asaf aan het hart gaat, dat Gods volk vertrapt wordt? Hij heeft groote smart omdat Gods tempel verontreinigd is, enz. Dat toont, dat hij een diep in geleid kind van God is. Want zulk bidden gaat dwars tegen den ouden mensch in. Er is veel bidden naar den ouden mensch en dat is geen bidden en God hoort het niet. Ge kunt nog verder gaan: God wordt er door ontstemd; het wekt Zijn grimmigheid op.

Deze overweging brengt ons tot het diepste beginsel van den Godsdienst, den naam waardig, en het is dit: alles is, bestaat, beweegt, roept en schreeuwt, wordt zalig en wordt verdoemd enkel en alleen om Godswil.

Daarom willen we de eerste onderwijzing van dezen psalm accentueeren: Wilt ge door God verhoord worden in den gebede? Welnu, zorgt er dan voor dat ge *theologisch* bidt!

Met eenige woorden willen we U de billijkheid er van verklaren.

Eerst, God is God! Hij is de zeer Lieflijke, de Wonderschoone en Aanbiddelijke. Het is geheel en al korrekt als het geheele heelal en alle schepselen om Zijns wil bestaan en zich bewegen tot in eeuwigheid. Hij is het middenpunt van alles en bezit alles wat Hem tot een middenpunt, tot den spil maakt.

Tweedens, gij zijt Zijn kind! En bij God staat het nu eenmaal onomstootelijk vast: het kind is er om den Vader, hoor! De glorie van het kind is de glorie van Vader tot in eeuwigheid.

Nu dan al dit heeft Asaf begrepen.

Hij zit er over in, dat het verkeerd gaat met Gods erfenis, tempel, volk en gunstgenooten. Ziedaar, zijn smart.

Hoe waren ze in zulk een smart gekomen?

Het antwoord is: omdat Jeruzalem zwaar gezondigd heeft. En nu had de Heere die zonde bezocht bij Zijn volk. Hij had Israel verbannen en in den smeltkroes van de ellende geworpen. Hij had tot Nebuchadnezar (of tot een anderen booswicht) gezegd: Kom! Verdelg Mijn volk en vertrap Mijn Tempel en stad! Ik ga Mijn volk kastijden!

En het was gebeurd.

En het doel van dit doen des Heeren?

Ik kan het U nooit schooner verklaren dan Jesaja het doet: "En Ik zal Mijne hand tegen U keeren, en Ik zal uw schuim op het allerreinstste afzuiveren, en Ik zal al uw tin wegnemen!" Jes. 1:25. Het is er den Heere om te doen om Zijn volk te zuiveren en te heiligen in den smeltkroes der ellende.

En we kunnen in dezen psalm merken, dat de vrucht



gevonden wordt. Asaf bidt zijn smeekbede om Gods wil. En daarin is hij de vertegenwoordiger geweest van al Gods ware volk in die dagen. O God! geef ons zulke bidders vandaag!

Nog één ding moeten we opmerken vooraleer we verder gaan. Het boven neergeschrevene heeft zijn algeheele vervulling ontvangen toen Jezus bloedend aan de schandpaal hing. In Hem hing daar Gods volk van alle eeuwen. En ze hingen daar in Hem vanwege de zonde en de schuld die op ons was. Daarom gaf God Jezus over in de handen der heidenen. Waarlijk, ge moogt het zingen op Jezus: "Zij hebben den Tempel Uwer heiligheid verontreinigd!" Want, immers, Jezus is de belichaming van Land, Tempel, Stad en Volk.

En dan gaat Asaf aan 't bidden om verlossing. En zijn gebed is verhoord. Ik zou hiervan willen zeggen: zijn gebed is vreeselijk verhoord en heerlijk verhoord. Vreeselijk, waar hij bad om de verdelging van de instrumenten die God bezigde voor het lijden van Zijn volk. Heerlijk, in de verhooring toen Israel ten hemel voer van eeuw tot eeuw. Ze hebben op U vertrouwd en Gij hebt ze uitgeholpen! Bad Mozes dit niet? Of David? God is de Hoorder der gebeden.

Hoe lang, Heere?

Ja, wie bidt die bede niet? En dagelijks? Het duurt zoo vreeselijk lang! Hij had pas gezegd: Wij zijn onze naburen een smaadheid geworden, een spot en schimp dien die rondom ons zijn! Hoe lange, Heere!

Dat zal waar zijn. Voor Asaf waren dat Ammon, Moab, Filistia en wat vuil volk er meer rondom des Heeren erfenis woonde. In andere psalmen lezen we, dat toen Babel kwam om Israel te tuchtigen, zij lachend en smadend dit vreeselijk schouwspel gade sloegen en spottend tarden: Aha, aha! Voor ons zijn het de goddeloozen in de kerk en daarbuiten. En Israel aller eeuwen klaagt: Hoe lange, Heere!

En voor Jezus? Luistert naar Hem: "Gaet het ulieden niet, gij allen die overweg gaat? Schouwt het aan en ziet, of er eene smart zij, gelijk Mijne smart die Mij aangedaan is, waarmede de Heere Mij bedroefd heeft ten dage der hittigheid Zijns toorns!" (Klaagl. 1:12) En als men zou denken, dat dit te ver gezocht is, leze men Marcus 15:29,30. Jeremia leed vooral de smarten van Hem wiens naam is Man van Smarten. Denkt ge, dat Hij niet geschacht heeft naar verlossing en in der eeuwen eeuwigheid van den eeuwigen dood geroepen heeft: Hoe lange, Heere? Vooral als we de volgende zinsnede beluisteren, denken we onwillekeurig aan Golgotha: Zult Gij eeuwiglijk toornen? Zal Uw ijver als vuur branden? Ik vraag U: Kunt ge van Uw smarten zoo spreken? Ja, Asaf deed het en wij volgen hem na. Het schijnt een eeuwigheid te zijn als de Heere Zijn aangezicht voor een tijd verbergt, doch als wij spreken van "eeuwiglijk toornen" dan spreken we oneigenlijk. Van die bezoeking zegt God Zelf: "Voor een kleinen oogenblik heb Ik U verlaten. . . in eenen

kleinen toorn heb Ik Mijn aangezicht van u een oogenblik verborgen. . . ." Jes. 54:7, 8. Voor Israel is de bezoeking altijd "een kleinen toorn van een oogenblik", maar kunt ge zoo van Jezus' bezoeking spreken? O neen. Als Hij in de bezoeking komt, dan klinkt Zijn: Hoe lange, Heere!" heel anders, veel dieper; Hij onderschept al het lijden Asafs, Israels en van ons. Hij leed den eeuwigen toorn en smaakte de volle hittigheid van Gods gramschap over alle onze zonden en schuld. Zoo luistere men naar het bange: Waarom Mij verlaten?

En dan komt de bede om vloek, om straf, om vergelding over de tirannen van Gods volk. O ja, zij zijn door God gebruikt om Zijn volk te tuchtigen. Edoch, zij worden daarin juist rijp voor het verderf, want zij doen het uit pure boosheid en haat tegen God. Daarom worden zij rijp voor het verderf. Dit wet Asaf. Hoort hem: Stort Uwe grimmigheid uit over de Heidenen die U niet kennen. . . .

Asaf zal die vloekbede ook motiveeren. Luistert: Want men heeft Jakob opgegeten en zijne lieflijke woning verwoest!

Dat is een goed motief. Zij weten, dat God rechtvaardig is. Rechtvaardiglijk moet Hij straffen. Welnu, zij komen aandragen met de zonden van de goddeloozen waar geen verzoening voor is. Ziet aan de gruwelijke zonden der Godvergetenen, Heere! Die zonden zijn tweërlei: Jakob at men op; zijn lieflijk huis hebben zij verwoest. Jakob is Gods volk, het kleinood des Heeren. Zij zijn kostelijker in Gods oog dan het fijnste goud van Ofir. Zoo kostelijk, dat Hij Zijn eenigen Zoon niet spaarde, doch heeft Hem voor ons allen overgegeven. En de lieflijke woning is Gods huis. Het is de gedachte van Gods trouwverbond: Hij zal met Zijn volk tot in eeuwigheid wonen. Welnu, Jakob at men op en de Tempel verwoestte men. Dat roept om wraak. Heere, HEERE, gedenk toch de smaadheid en de groote goddeloosheid der boosdoeners!

En, Heere, wat onze groote zonden aangaan: Gedenk die niet! Machtig bidden! Gedenk ze niet! O, als onze zonden niet gedacht worden, dan zijn ze weg; dan worden ze vernietigd; dan draagt Jezus ze weg. Ziet, het Lam Gods, dat de zonde der wereld wegdraagt! Gedenkt ze niet, wil zeggen: Geef ons onze Zaligmaker!

Haast U, laat Uwe barmhartigheden ons vóórkomen!

Dat is de grond, de fontein waaruit de Zaligmaker ons toekomt. Alle deze dingen, zou Paulus zeggen, zijn uit God! Dat Uwe zonden niet meer gedacht worden bij God vloeit voort uit de fontein van Gods rommelende ingewanden, en die zijn Jezus. Barmhartigheid is die deugd van God waardoor Hij bewogen is met de smarten van Zijn volk, het verlangen om hen uit hun nood te verlossen. Wilt ge die barmhartigheden voor oogen geschilderd? Staat dan aan den voet van de kruispaal en ziet, en luistert, en aanbidt, en siddert: in dat bloed, die tranen, dat zweet, die schreeuw zingt God Zijn lied

van eeuwige liefde tot U, mijn broeder! Barmhartigheid is de bewogen liefde voor U, Gods volk!

Help ons, o God! God onzes heils! Verzoen onze zonden! En doe het alles om de eere Uws naams!

Ik vraag U: kan het schooner, zuiverder, glorieuzer, ik zou haast zeggen: meer Gereformeerd? Alles, om Gods wil! Soli Deo Gloria! Gode alleen de eer. Gij wordt verlost door Jezus, en dat is de barmhartigheid Gods. En Gods diepste motief in alle deze dingen is de eere Zijns naams. Hij wil tot in alle eeuwigheid menschen en engelen voor Zijn troon zien die Hem eeren. En de menschen zullen het Hem eeuwiglijk toeroepen: U komt toe alle eer en dankzegging tot in eeuwigheid. En de dorpelen der deuren bewogen zich en het Huis werd vervuld met rook. . . .

Zóó moet het gaan. O ja, Asaf weet de goddelijke Theologie: waarom zouden de Heidenen zeggen: Waar is hun God? Hij voelt het aan: de heidenen mogen zulks niet zeggen. Der Heidenen mond gesnoerd in eeuwigheid. Wat ze zeggen is klinkklare leugen. God is de God van Israel. Heere, neem die doodssteek uit onze ingewanden, daar de heidenen zeggen: waar is Uw God? Toon, o mijn God, dat Gij onze God zijt.

Zie aan het vergoten bloed. Het roept om wraak, om Uwe wraak, van den aardbodem.

En nog blijven we vragen. Dat bloed is nog op den aardbodem, beginnende bij het bloed van Abel en door de eeuwen heen toenemende, totdat het een groote stroom is van onschuldig bloed. En het bloed van Jezus is daarmede vermengd. Al dat bloed zal geëischt worden van dit geslacht.

God zal dat bloed eischen en het gekerm van Zijn volk hooren. Hij zal hun haastiglijk recht doen. Wacht op den Heer, gij vromen!

En die ons bespot hebben toen Nebuchadnezer kwam om ons te slachten, geef hen zevenvoudig weder in hunnen schoot hunnen smaad, waarmede zij U, o Heere, gesmaad hebben! En dat is recht. God is de God van Zijn verbond. Die God smaadt, smaadt den God des Verbonds. En dan telt gij zevenmaal. Want het verbond is zeven. Het is het heilige verbondsgetal. Vier plus drie. (Ik had moeten schrijven: Drie plus vier. God eerst). God is drie en de mensch met de aarde is vier. Die twee zijn ineengestrengeld in zeven. Tast ge die ineengestrengeling aan, dan krijgt ge een zevenvoudige wrake. Het verbondsvolk is Gods oogappel. Vreeselijk te vallen in Zijn hand!

Doet ge dat, Heere, dan zullen wij U loven in eeuwigheid!

Ziedaar het slot.

Wel, dat is de hemel. En God zal het doen, doet het en heeft het gedaan. Maar het is nog niet ten volle geopenbaard. Een klein beetje van dien roem vertellen we nu al. Gij, o mijn God, zijt lieflijk! Hallelujah!

G. V.

## Debate

### RESOLVED: — THAT HEIDELBERG CATECHISM PREACHING IS MINISTRY OF THE WORD

#### *Negative Rebuttal:*

When the Negative now undertakes a refutation of the arguments of the opponent, we must clearly understand what the justified assumptions are. The Affirmative has plainly assumed too strongly the a priori validity of his position, and also assumed that he was defending the status quo.

We take this connection to remind our esteemed opponent that his position far from a priori valid, is rather the decretal of group of men subject to the weaknesses that mark all men and its apriori probability of inherent truth is as weak or strong as their power of judging ultimate things, and that the burden of the proof falls squarely on him as defender of the proposition.

Secondly, we would remind that the assumption of my opponent that he is defending the status quo is too easily adopted. For the fact is that not all churches nor all groups nor even all members of the Reformed churches adopt his proposition. And he shall have to remember, moreover that even those who see the advantages of some systematic order of preaching are willing always to grant only that the Heidelberg is a valuable approximation to such a systematic study.

So much for the control of these assumptions.

But notice now how far the affirmative carries these assumptions. To express it in his own words "that once each Sunday the sermon material should be based on a Lord's Day of our Heidelberg Catechism instead of (underscoring by negative) on the Word of God directly." Hereby he has quite outdone even the composers of the Church Order who dared to prescribe that "The Minister shall on Sunday explain briefly the sum of the Christian Doctrine comprehended in the Heidelberg Catechism".

Observe here what the affirmation would advocate. It would advocate that all right and ability to judge and develop the truth be taken out of the hands of the Christian people and entrusted to one man—Professor Ursinus of Heidelberg. Obviously it is a precarious procedure to set the Scriptures in the background and to give undue emphasis to a platform of the church's own doctrine, but it is much worse to take this doctrine from the care of the Church and give it into the hands of one man who lived 375 years ago. Think of what this means! The Affirmative states that the Heidelberg gives us the faith of the living church as a whole, a faith elicited from the Scriptures through years of diligent and difficult labor for future genera-

tions. But will he dare to maintain that the ancient and Medieval church has given us a sound and ripened fruit—the church from 100 to 1517 A.D.? He dares not of course. The history of dead Scholasticism and of heretical Romanism is too well known.

But will he begin at 1517 and take the span of 45 years up to 1563, a beginning date which he would only take by using undue liberty, as the span in which the final formulation of the truth is rooted?

It will immediately appear how arbitrary it is to separate a span of some 45 years, by what standard I have nowhere seen indicated, out of approximately 1900 years, and assign to it such a normative value.

We are all convinced? I am sure that the living church would not submit to such domination, and we also feel that a faithful minister always would take an unsuppressible liberty toward such domination, when he would be required to preach from, as it is called, the Heidelberg Catechism. But the Affirmative would bring us to that pathetic phenomenon, that is sometimes seen of a minister of the Gospel giving some of his own well based Scriptural thoughts, and then wavering, complete his sermon according to the prescription of some leader or a group of leaders or a school.

Herewith we have sufficiently disposed of the argument that the preaching of the Heidelberg is presentation of the ripened fruit of the reflection of the church of all ages, whereas the faithful conscientious preaching from a text in its complete context is considered the mere arbitrary, presumptuous word of some individual.

There is, however, another argument which the affirmative has put forth to bolster his position. It is an argument from experience. It runs as follows: "How invaluable catechism preaching is can be ascertained from mere observation. What becomes of churches that discard it? Examine churches that to our minds have departed from the pure truth, note the preaching in such churches, and do you not find that in as far as it is based on Catechism the preaching is still comparatively sound, much more so than the exposition of free texts?"

Now let us see how sound this argument really is. An illustration will make this plain.

Perhaps the broad and general departure from the truth in modernizing churches is in a very general way concurrent with the shedding of the Prince Albert coat in favor of the business coat. But will he now maintain that the Prince Albert is essential to sound doctrine? He will of course smile at such a suggestion. The obvious fallacy here is that what is a vague symptom has been wrongly taken for a cause. But my worthy opponent committed precisely this fallacy when he said "Observe. . . what becomes of churches that discard it." He saw a symptom for a cause. Will the

removal of the symptom effect a cure? Any person who would not preach sound doctrine without the catechism would not do so with it. Putting a P. A. on a liberal does not make him an Orthodox. The whole underlying fault is that the Word has been forsaken as the only foundation.

And has not Catechism preaching often been precisely the occasion for much superficiality? Is not the doctrine of sin in the first part often explained as having to do only with our salvation, whereas the sphere of our natural life is said to be judged by the standard of "civic righteousness"? And is not the law often expounded as merely a rule for being a fine neighbor and a noble citizen? This argument from experience can surely be turned back against the affirmative itself.

But we are eager to present our final and most basic argument in refutation of the position adopted in his positive thesis. I quote from his argument. "Heidelberg Catechism preaching can be abused, certainly, when it is exegeted like Scripture itself, however this cannot serve as an argument against its use. Commentaries can be abused. Everything good can be abused. What suffers more than Scripture itself? If catechism is not ministry of the word, neither is the sermon of any minister. When the sermon is preached, is the church receiving the Word of God directly? Of course not. . . . What she is getting is the exegesis, the exposition, the interpretation. . . . the work of man."

Now what is the matter with this argument? Simply this? And that is my basic objection to whole of the Affirmative position, that the Scripture which is admittedly infallible and can bear up under the most penetrating exegesis without ever yielding a wrong conclusion, is taken away from the Church as the basis of her operation, and for this Scripture is substituted the work of a man which is demonstrably and admittedly imperfect. And this weak product must on one hand be faithfully abided by to safe-guard the church, but on the other hand we cannot know its meaning as a norm, because it cannot at all bear the exegesis as the Scripture itself.

To this situation the Affirmative has committed itself. And it cannot extricate itself by any reference to abuse, and misuse of the Catechism, for that is the only way the Catechism on his stand can be used, whereas misuse of the Bible always leaves the way open to continued appeal to itself and thereby eventual correction. This point I consider so strong and so damaging to the affirmation that even though the preaching of the Catechism seemed in general to be very good, whereas that from the Bible itself seemed to be rather poor, yet Catechism would effectively close the possibility of bringing the Pure Word, while the Bible-preaching poor though it might be, would have

the open road to the ideal. The fact that grandfather John who chewed tobacco from his infancy attained the ripe old age of nine-five, while his brother Peter by strict abstinence, could barely reach seventy, is certainly no argument for the benefits of tobacco.

As true sons of the Reformers we will maintain that regardless of precarious position we appear to assume by holding to the principle that Scripture is the only judge of conscience, yet we would not think of surrendering it in exchange for the imposing power of Papal Infallibility and Canonized Tradition.

And so as truly Reformed we will maintain that by standing on the Scriptures immediately the way is always open for us to reach ultimate truth, and that to the best of our knowledge we are now in accord with it. But if we place the work of a man between ourselves and the Scripture, we have set up a barrier by which we make it permanently impossible to get our feet directly on the rock of the Scriptures. We have cut off the possibility of really preaching the Word.

Hereby, I trust we have convinced all those competent to judge that we answered all the german arguments of our opponent and successfully sustained our contention that Heidelberg Catechism preaching is not preaching of the Word.

A. P.

#### *Affirmative Rebuttal:*

Had the negative presented his arguments orally instead of on paper, I would open this rebuttal by saying: I enjoyed listening, brother. I invariably do. There is something about the style and method of the Rev. Petter that is truly refreshing and makes him pleasant to hear and read. However, when in that same Petterian style he ends his argument with the statement, as bold as it is sweeping, "These many arguments will, I trust, elicit from all those competent to judge, the verdict that notwithstanding the unsurpassed beauty, the almost prophetic spirit, power and discernment that mark our Catechism, yet Heidelberg Catechism preaching is not preaching of the Word of God", he is carrying his trust too far, and seriously underrating the competency of those same judges. Brother, you made the best of a difficult situation, but not enough to force us to that dismal conclusion.

To the question: What is preaching of the Heidelberg Catechism? my opponent replies, "To be honest we will have to define this as the exposition of the words of a given Lord's Day without anticipation or retrospection, and that as words of unqualified and infallible authority". In spite of the fact, that in doing so my honesty is called into question, I DON'T

ACCEPT THIS DEFINITION of the negative. It is not true that Heidelberg Catechism preaching, in order to be what the term implies, must be defined "as the exposition of *the words* of a given Lord's Day", if thereby is meant, that we are not *preaching* the Catechism, unless we exposit its words as we do the words of a text from Scripture, treat this symbol as we do the Word of God itself, place this confession on a par with Holy Writ, make the Catechism as such the basis of our preaching, and exegete and analyze it as we do the Scriptures. It is easy enough to see that on such a basis preaching of the Catechism could never be preaching of the Word of God. That would be substituting the word of man for God's Word. Exactly what is meant by the phrase "without anticipation or retrospection" in the definition of the brother is not clear to me. If it means what I think it means, I reject that part of the definition also. Perhaps, however, I'm mistaken in what I think it means; nor is this phrase pertinent to our discussion. I certainly disagree with my opponent, when he states, that Heidelberg Catechism preaching is only what the phrase implies, when it exposite the *words* of a given Lord's Day "as words of unqualified and infallible authority." I agree, shall Catechism preaching be ministry of the Word its contents will have to be "of unqualified and infallible authority". *This it is*, not because it is based on and draws its material from the infallible Word of God.

Heidelberg Catechism preaching, to me, is the official proclamation of the Word of God as expressed, expositied in this Reformed confession by the church herself. Thus understood it will be evident, that the preaching of the Catechism is very really preaching of the infallible Word of God. The former, too, is preaching by the church in the Name of Christ Himself. It, too, is the proclamation of the Mediator Himself as the center of all revelation. It, too, ministers beautifully to the spiritual needs of the church in the world, opens and shuts the kingdom of heaven, feeds the elect kernel, instructs in the way of salvation in Christ, admonishes and exhorts and increases in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Catechism is a preaching, that lets Scripture speak, that holds before the church only the "thus saith the Lord" of God's own Word, that leads always and only to Holy Writ as our only rule of faith and conduct, and that regards the Catechism itself as a mere echo of the Scriptures, an empty vessel that receives every drop of its contents from the living Word of God.

Against the proposition, that Heidelberg Catechism preaching is ministry of the Word the negative raises a series of objections, the first three of which are named "damaging presumptions" and the last four of which are said to be "still more damaging to an unqualified trustworthiness of the Catechism." Let us

see how damaging these presumptions really are.

"Presumption" No. 1 complains, that the Heidelberg Catechism is principally the work of one man. History shows clearly, says the negative, that regardless of the persons, the faculty, the councilors, and others that are mentioned as advisors, the work grew from the heart and mind of one man—Ursinus. Nor, "presumption" No. 2 continues, did either the annual Synod of 1563 or the great Synod of Dordt revise or recast the Catechism to any marked degree. In fact, the negative doubts that the great Synod, that exalted the Catechism to the dignity of a Reformed confession, made a careful study of the work as a whole, and he strongly suspects that the loud approval of said Synod was not with a view to the work as a whole but had in mind "a certain favorite portion or even a favored person or small group". Thus the one-man authorship of the work remains sustained, and the Rev. Petter feels that "what one man with his personal bias, his own peculiar spiritual experiences and his own peculiar bent of mind, has produced cannot be a balanced and full reproduction of the Gospel." To all of this I beg to reply: 1/ What of it? That Ursinus was the chief author of the catechism cannot constitute an objection. The majority of the Church's great documents grew from the heart and mind of one man. 2/ The negative does not and cannot tell just how much all these other persons contributed toward the composition of the Catechism and thus prevented it from being wholly molded by the personal bias and peculiar bent of mind of one man. 3/ the fact, that neither of the above mentioned Synods revised or recast the Catechism is nothing to bemoan. The simple conclusion is, that the church of God did not feel the need of changing this great work. 4/ The Rev. Petter does not tell us nor does he know just how carefully the Synod of Dordt studied the Catechism before approving it, and certainly he does not and cannot prove that the fathers acclaimed this work so loudly because of reasons that were personal and incidental. Fact is, that the Catechism was read from beginning to end in the full gathering and that it was enthusiastically approved as excellent from the pedagogical point of view and Scripturally sound. Besides, by the time this Synod convened the Catechism was already 60 years old. Our learned fathers knew this work from A to Z, so well, no doubt, by 1618,19 that they felt no need at this time of much study and debate. 5/ The negative should have proved that the catechism bears the stamp of the "personal bias, the peculiar spiritual experiences and peculiar bent of mind" of one man. One who carefully studies and regularly preaches the Catechism does not discover this fault at all. Our competent judges, brother, demand evidence for such sweeping assertions. Your failure and obvious inability to adduce such evidence destroys the entire argument. 6/

We do not love and preach the Catechism as the work of one man, nor even as the creed of the Reformed Churches, but for the sake of the truth it contains and proclaims. Regardless of authorship, the Catechism stands on its own merits. Tested, preached, criticized and analyzed for more than 300 years, the Catechism is its own defense, and stronger than ever is the conviction of the Reformed Christian that its preaching provides God's church with a well-balanced diet. All one sees when one studies the Catechism is not one man, not a group of men, not a church, but the living Word of God.

"Presumption" No. 2 objects, that the Catechism was written at a time when the doctrine of the Reformation was only in the beginning of thorough consideration and formulation. "How," the negative asks, "can we regard the Catechism as a perfect reflection of the mind of the church, when we see the few short years in which it rooted, as compared with the 375 years of doctrinal development since its composition?" My reply to this objection. 1/ Sound confessions are always born in just such times. History teaches that after a Reformation it is soon too late for such work. 2/ Irrespective when the Catechism was written, it was accepted as a confession more than 50 years after it was written and more than 100 years after the Reformation of 1517. Why, then, should not the Catechism be a faithful reflection of the mind of the church? 3/ Those 375 years of doctrinal development of which the negative speaks still have failed to produce adequate reasons why the Catechism should be drastically revised. It is evident, therefore, that the Catechism did and does reflect the mind of the church. 4/ Regardless of the time of its composition, the Catechism stands on its own merits. The negative may say in amazement: How can it be? It just isn't possible! But, THERE IT IS, speaking for itself, and bearing the testimony of all the ages, that it is indeed "a perfect reflection of the mind of the church."

"Presumption" No. 3 objects, again without a shred of evidence, that from the viewpoint of its practical application it was written with a view to 16th century life and problems. I beg to answer: 1/ THE CATECHISM STANDS ON ITS OWN MERITS. What is there in the entire symbol that does not apply directly and beautifully to our own lives and problems. 2/ The spiritual needs and problems of God's people remain essentially the same. The misery of man has not changed since the Catechism was composed, neither have Redemption or Gratitude. The Apostolicum, the Law and the Lord's Prayer are still the same in meaning and application. 3/ The negative should have produced evidence for his contention. He calls this a "damaging presumption," but wisely refrains from attempting to show wherein the Catechism fails to meet our present spiritual needs. His failure and



inability to adduce proof destroys this argument, too. 4/ The one thing, that could perhaps be mentioned in support of this objection is the extra emphasis on the Sacraments. However, it may be said, that also here the Catechism is strictly Scriptural in contents, and that all it teaches about the sacraments applies to us today as well as it did to God's people of the 16th century.

The remainder of the arguments presented by the negative concern themselves with the so-called weaknesses and errors to be found in the Catechism. To these I wish to reply: 1/ The viewpoint of Lord's Day 1 is not Anthropocentric (man-centered). Also this statement is unaccompanied by one iota of proof. The negative simply says, "It is well-known". Perhaps, but "those competent to judge" demand proof. Read Lord's Day 1 and the entire Catechism and it will be clear as crystal that our confession does not make man the center and end of all things. The mere fact that the Catechism considers and explains the truth from the viewpoint of the consciousness and subjective experience of the Christian, from the aspect of faith and comfort, does not warrant the accusation that is is not theocentric, but anthropocentric in character. 2/ The Rev. Petter seems determined to prove that Heidelberg Catechism preaching is not preaching of the Word. We grant this at once. There are weaknesses in the Catechism. Answer 41 is weak and void, although the negative will find it quite impossible to find another answer like it. There is here and there a lack of due proportion. And this goes to prove, that the Catechism as such is the work of mere man. For that reason we must and do not preach the confession as such. We proclaim, when we preach the Heidelberg Catechism the Word of God as it is reflected, confessed, expositied in this Reformed creed, and he who does so does not bring the word of man, but preaches the Word of the living God.

That, I'm sure, will be the verdict of "those competent to judge".

R. V.

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## Miracles and The Laws of Nature

To the person who is at all acquainted with doctrinal controversies that have arisen in the past, the above subject is familiar. He will recognize it as being the topic of much discussion and deliberation in the sphere of Reformed circles especially during the years 1919-1920. At that time, it will be remembered, the well-known Dr. Janssen was accused, among other

things, of exposing heretical views concerning the miracles which took place at the time of the Old Testament dispensation. He maintained, for instance, that the fall of the walls of Jericho was to be ascribed, not chiefly to a special demonstration of divine power, but to a divinely sent earthquake at the occasion of the sound of the trumpets and shouts of the people of Israel who encircled the city.

It is, of course, understood, that it is not our intention at all to treat the controversy of the years mentioned above. However, although much has been both said and written concerning the subject of miracles and their relation to the so-called "laws of nature", it is certainly not superfluous to once again acquaint ourselves with the subject. Important issues such as these are easily neglected as the years pass by. Hence, it is well that we guard against such neglect, and freshen our minds in respect to the issue implied in our subject.

Turning to the Word of God which frequently employs the word miracle, we find that in the Old Testament there are especially four Hebrew words which have reference to miracles. Two of the words are usually found together, such as, for instance, in Deuteronomy 13:1, 2 and Jeremiah 32:20. Another word is used in the book of Job, 37:16; while Daniel exclusively employs still another word denoting the miracle in Daniel 3:31, 32 (4:2, 3, King James Version) and in 6:28 (27).

The New Testament employs three words denoting the miracle. The chief of these is the one denoting the word: "sign". Another word is also used only in conjunction with the above mentioned word, and never without it, which word means practically the same. Consequently we often read of: "signs and wonders". cf. John 4:48. We also notice that even the very common Greek word of which we have spoken, is sometimes translated by the word: "wonder". (cf. Rev. 12:1, King James Version). Attention must be called also to the less common word employed by the New Testament in respect to the idea of the miracle, namely to the word: "dunamis" meaning: power. Reference to this use are to be found in Acts 2:22, where Luke expresses the fact that by miracles (powers) and wonders and signs Jesus was a man approved of God among the Jews. Acts 8:13 and II Cor. 12:12 are other passages employing the less common word "dunamis" to denote the miracle or wonder.

From all these Scriptural passages it becomes very evident that all the words which are used to denote the miracle imply that the miracle is a *Divine power*, and too, that it is a power that is to be considered worth special attention and consideration.

From the pages of Holy Writ we also gather that the miracle is exclusively *Divine* in origin: cf. Joshua 3:5. Also Deut. 4:34, 35 refers to the fact that signs



and wonders, and other demonstrations of power were used by God to show that Jehovah is God and that there is none else besides Him. Does not Nicodemus testify in John 3:2 that no man can do these signs (miracles) except God be with Him? In John 9:16 the Jews even admit that no man who is a sinner can do miracles.

We notice, too, that at times God employs human individuals to perform miracles. This does not mean to imply that *men* perform miracles and in doing so give the power of God the glory. Such is the contention of some, and this contention goes so far as to say that: "the miracles of Jesus are not evidences of His Divine nature but of His human nature. He did not heal the sick, nor cast out demons as the Son of God, but as the Son of man. He performed miracles by virtue of His kingly office." (Rev. Van Baalen in "The Banner" March 3, 1933.)

The truth of the matter is, however, that God alone has the power and the ability, and the dynamic to perform the miracle, and even though He may use the agency of men to carry their performance out, they are *His* doings, and His only.

What strikes us too, when we make a study of the word miracle in the Word of God, is the fact that we read of the *wicked* also that they at times perform signs and wonders. Matt. 24:24 is, for instance, a passage which speaks to that effect. II Thess. 2:9 speaks of: "lying wonders". This latter passage immediately gives us the clue to what is implied when the wicked performs wonders, for the passage informs us that they are wonders of *falsehood*. They are wonders covered up by the cloak of apparent genuineness and truth.

Finally, another thing which must not confuse us in respect to the miracle is the fact that in John 6:2 we read that the people followed Jesus because they beheld the signs which He did on them that were sick. In John 6:26 we read, however, that Jesus tells the multitude they follow Him *not* because they had seen signs, (miracles) but because they had eaten of the loaves and were filled. This apparent contradiction of terms is clarified when we take into consideration that as long as Jesus was healing the sick by means of miracles, the things did not concern *them* personally, and thus their desire to see more such miracles was aroused. However; when Jesus multiplies the bread, the miracle in its outward manifestation and effect, touches them personally, and their personal interest for bread covers up the value of the miracle as such for them. Hence they seek Jesus the next day for the sake of *bread*.

Since our attention has now been called to the fact that the term miracle, or wonder, or sign, is clearly to be found in the Word of God, it is necessary for us to understand secondly, that the term: "laws of nature"

is not a Scriptural term whatever. Rather is the term: "laws of nature" one coined, perhaps by a scientist, who denies the power and work of God by using the term; or by the believing theologian, who, considering the ordinances and laws by which it pleases God to work continually, classifies those deeds of God's continual activity in the sphere of the universe: "laws of nature".

We must then, not hesitate to employ the term: "laws of nature", provided we mean to express thereby that they are God's laws for His creature according to which the creature always functions in its God-ordained manner and place. To put it in the words of the late Dr. Bavinck: "A law of nature expresses only that definite powers, under like circumstances, work according to the same manner always". (Dog. I).

It is always the law of the fish to live in the water. It is always the God-ordained law for the air-plane that it shall soar through the air, as well as for the stars to travel through the firmament. It is the law of the sun that it rise every morning in the East and set every evening in the West. More need not be mentioned. The examples of God's "laws of nature" are abundant as well as extremely clear.

Now it is the question: what is the difference between the miracle and the "laws of nature"? which, to my mind, must be answered in this writing. To this question many an answer has been given in an attempt to arrive at a clear expression of the truth.

Dr. Chas. Hodge affirms: "A miracle is an event in the external world brought about by the *immediate* efficiency or simple volition of God. Physical causes are not simply ignored, but by intimation denied. In the miracle God contradicts the laws of nature. It is something new."

Somewhat the same is the contention of Dr. A. Kuiper who too affirms that in the sphere of the natural God works mediately, while in that of the miracle He works immediately. (cf. Dict. Dogm. Locus de Creatione B, p. 23, 24)

Taking the above into careful consideration we find that both these men do not clearly state the difference between the miracle and the "laws of nature" to the fullest extent. They speak of mediate and immediate activities of God; the former coming to the foreground in the laws of nature and the latter in the miracle. The truth of the matter is, however, that even God's activity in the realm of the natural is immediate since He speaks and it comes to pass, He commands and it stands fast. This is true not only of God's activity of creation but also of His work of providence.

The same Dr. A. Kuiper states in his "Gemeene Gratie" III, p. 106, that (I translate from the Dutch) "Wonder is exactly the name of the series of manifestations, which reveal powers in nature, which are not out of nature, but are above nature and are being

added to it." Here too, we must differ with Dr. Kuiper, for on the contrary, it is certainly not Scriptural language to speak of natural and super-natural works of God. The mere fact that we become so accustomed to the way God always providentially upholds His creature is not a reason for us to claim those are natural activities of God and that the miracle is super-natural in as far as we don't often experience such an activity. The Lord our God does all things, and His work may not be called common or natural in any sense whatever!

There is still another prevalent idea, namely, that a miracle is something unusual and something which we cannot understand. Also here we must contend that this is also not the chief element of distinction in the miracle and the laws of nature. There is nothing in the whole sphere of the natural which is even not unusual, because it is the manifestation of the work of God the Creator to His creatures. Neither is it true that we cannot *understand* the miracle that it is a miracle. Can we understand the most simple work of God in nature? By no means.

According to our opinion, the chief difference between the miracle and the "laws of nature" is that the former serves the purpose of grace exclusively, while the latter does not exclusively serve the purpose of grace. This is especially clear when we read in Matt. 13:58: "And He did not many mighty works (*dunamis*) (powers) there because of their unbelief."

However, let us hasten to add that the "laws of nature" certainly have something to do with the miracles. And this function is that the "laws of nature" serve the miracles, so the miracles may serve the purpose of grace. Then surely we rid ourselves of the possibility of being accused of dualism. If the miracle served the laws of nature, then it would seem as though the miracle was some kind of after-thought on God's part after His attempt to use the laws of nature to attain His purpose, failed. Then the miracle would serve as the only way out of the curse and the lie.

But now we have this idea. God always, even from eternity had prepared something new for His people. It never was God's intention to have man remain as His covenant friend in Paradise I, but in order to bring out the marvel of His work, He brings out this work in bold relief. Just as the artist paints a beautiful scene against a dark background to bring out the details of the picture, so too, the "laws of nature" serve the beauty of the work of Him Who does all things well and for His own name's sake.

Then it is God's "law of nature" that man is born from a woman as the result of the union of husband and wife, that he lives here in this sin-cursed world, and presently returns to the dust from whence he was taken. But now the miracles come, and it brings

out the marvel and beauty of grace against the dark background of sin and the curse. Therefore Christ Jesus is THE Wonder. He through the wonder was born of a *virgin*. He was raised from the *dead* the third day. Overagainst all the curse of the law He stands as the victorious One Who giveth us the victory.

Our viewpoint does not undergo a change when we consider the wonders of the Old Testament dispensation. The natural flowing of the Jordan and the Dead Sea served as a background upon which was brought out the power of the miracle by which Israel was led through on dry ground. The natural course of the sun through the heavens serves the beauty of the work of God in His deliverance of His people at the time of Joshua when He caused the sun and moon to stand still for the salvation of Israel. So, too, it is with the walls of Jericho. The natural laws of the standing of the walls served the purpose of bringing out the beauty of the power of the wonder of God's grace by which He delivers the city into the hand of Israel by the wonder.

God opens the eyes of the blind signifying redemption from spiritual blindness, as well as the opening of the ears of the deaf signifies relief from spiritual deafness. And so one could go on. Sin and grace, life and death, light and darkness are always the contrasts which must serve to bring out the glory of grace and life and light. The natural always serves the spiritual. The earthly must always serve the heavenly. The chaff must serve the wheat. So, too, the "laws of nature" serve the miracle. God manifests thereby that it eternally was His good pleasure to do a new thing for His people, in order that the old and the natural might be shown to be inferior. Understand me well, not as though the natural is not fit, to serve God's purpose. The natural is His work as well as the miracle. But the former serves as the scaffolding to build the manifestation of the work of the Lord Who alone does wondrous things.

S. T. C.

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O! may thy hand be with us still,  
Our guide and guardian be;  
To keep us safe from ev'ry ill,  
Till death shall set us free.

Help us on Thee to cast our care,  
And on Thy word to rest;  
That Israel's God, who heareth prayer  
Will grant us our request.

## The Presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper

That Christ is present in the Lord's Supper cannot and may not be denied, for the very simple reason alone, that Christ Himself told His disciples, when He instituted the Holy Supper and broke the bread: "This is my body", and when He poured the wine: "This is my blood". Christ is surely very near, when we partake of Communion in the church of Jesus Christ in the world. But because we strongly oppose the theory of Transubstantiation to which the Roman Catholics hold, and also oppose the theory of Consubstantiation to which the Lutherans hold, we are apt to fall into the cold and unspiritual theory held to by the reformer Zwingli, who in reality denied all presence of the Christ at the Lord's Supper, believing that the Supper is only a memorial, bringing to our memory the death of our Lord. We will try to examine these things a bit more closely.

It is well known to the readers perhaps that the Roman Catholic Church believes that at the Lord's Supper, the believer literally eats and drinks the body and blood of Christ. Truly, they say, it was bread and wine, before it was put on the altar, but that bread and wine actually changed into the body and blood of the ever blessed Lord. Thus, when the believer eats and drinks this bread and wine, then he actually eats and drinks of Christ's body and blood, and thus partakes of Christ in the most real and literal sense of the word. And so the Roman Catholic Church attaches great significance to the outward, physical, and visible signs partaken of, for a miracle of God has taken place with the original bread and wine. According to the Roman Catholics, the bread and wine are made HOLY and so it can be called a holy communion.

The Lutherans, also attach to the bread and wine of communion, a power that is not merely physical but also spiritual. Though they do not believe as the Roman Catholics that the bread and the wine have literally been changed into the actual body and blood of Christ, nevertheless Christ is present. Yea, He is present in that bread and in that wine which is partaken of. Christ so attaches Himself to that bread and wine, that when eating of the bread and drinking of that wine, the believer actually eats and drinks Christ. Not because of a miraculous change wrought in the bread and wine, but because Christ attaches Himself to these means, and without those means will not communicate Himself to the believer. It can readily be understood that there is essentially no difference between the Roman Catholic or the Lutheran theory.

Now both these theories have been attacked and proven to be entirely without basis in Scripture, by our Reformed people, and in the denial of these two theories we see a danger that the true significance of the Lord's Supper will be lost to the believer when the church celebrates the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper is not merely a supper or meal wherein we bring to remembrance the suffering and death of our Saviour. Then it would really be doubtful if it has any benefit at all. In fact the Word of God, which is the highest means of grace, surely also brings to our memory the passion and death of Christ. After all, the preaching may never be anything else but essentially the preaching of Christ and Him crucified. And therefore the preaching of the Gospel is surely sufficient to bring to memory the death of our Saviour. If the Lord's Supper is merely such a memorial then it would not be a loss to the Church of Christ to dispense with communion entirely. For a memorial is not a sacrament, and a sacrament is much more than a mere matter of bringing to memory. The sacrament of the Lord's Supper is a sign and seal, and an undoubted testimony that God in Christ feeds us with the bread of life, spiritually nourishing us, and thus strengthening our faith. But to attain this end, namely, to feed us the bread of life and to spiritually nourish us and strengthen our faith, it is not a matter of choosing between the Transubstantiation of the Roman Catholic or the Consubstantiation of the Lutherans. Nor need we of necessity believe in the one or the other theory, to bring Christ close to us during the communion service.

To be sure, Christ our Saviour IS near in the Supper, in fact He is very much present. Sufficient proof of this we have in the words spoken by our Lord when He instituted His Supper, "This is my body", and "This is my blood", Matt. 26:26. And these words may not be changed so that they simply mean that, "this bread refers to my body", or "this wine BRINGS TO MEMORY my blood." But that bread and wine is symbolically the body and blood of Christ the Saviour. Just as you would see a picture of President Roosevelt hanging on the wall, you would say: "That is President Roosevelt", without in the least meaning to imply that physically Roosevelt hangs there on the wall. But a symbol of the president hangs there. However with this difference we apply this to the Lord's Supper, that whereas with respect to the picture, the president himself is not near, with the Lord's Supper, OUR SAVIOUR IS VERY NEAR AND IS PRESENT. No not his body is present, for His body is in heaven, at the right hand of God, the Father. He is in highest glory and not on earth. That is why Christ could say when He instituted the Lord's Supper, "I will not henceforth drink of this fruit of the wine, until that day, when I drink it new

with you, in my Father's kingdom", Matt. 26:29. Christ is not now and will not be on earth physically and literally until WITH YOU (believers) He will drink of the fruit of the vine in the new, eternal kingdom of the Father. No, He is not physically and literally present. But Christ is nevertheless present, and that very much so, spiritually. And spiritually Christ is eaten at the table by the spiritual believer.

In article 35 of our Belgic Confession we have a beautiful and rather detailed explanation of the spiritual presence of our Lord at the table. In that article it is explained that the believer has a twofold life. He has first of all a natural and temporal life which he receives in his first birth from the natural father and mother. He has secondly also a spiritual and eternal life, which he receives at regeneration and is "affected by the Word of the Gospel". Accordingly that believer is in need of a twofold nourishment: Earthly bread and drink for the natural, temporal life and spiritual food for the new and heavenly life in Christ Jesus. This spiritual food now is Christ Himself, for in Him is all our salvation. Everything we ever obtain and receive pertaining to our eternal life and salvation comes solely from Christ. He is our all and all we ever have or shall receive is exclusively IN HIM. Thus at the Lord's Supper, He gives Himself to eat and to drink. He is indeed very present in the Supper. But His presence is spiritual and not physical, even as the benefits of the Supper for the believers are also not physical but spiritual. They are spiritually fed and spiritually they become strong. Thus the Lord's Supper is surely a spiritual feast, wherein Christ communicates Himself with all His salvation to the believer.

We must therefore not forget that only the believer appropriates the Christ at the Lord's Supper. He does that by faith. Faith believes in Christ and is the bond that unites us to Him. That faith appropriates all that is in Christ. It knows Him and trusts Him. It relies on Him and looks away from self. It seeks Him and will not let Him go until He has blessed and given of His fulness, even grace for grace. And so as that faith takes hold of all the benefits of Christ it is strengthened by the Lord's Supper and built up.

And this takes place by an operation of the Holy Spirit upon the believers. Not the signs as such give nourishment, but the Holy Spirit gives this nourishment by making an appeal to the signs which speak of the suffering and death of Christ for us. Even as the Holy Spirit appeals to the spoken word and thus works in us through the hearing, so the Holy Spirit appeals to the signs of communion and works or rather strengthens that faith in us through the sight of the eyes upon the visible signs. Thus that bread and wine is not only a sign, but also a seal. The faith of the

believer is sealed with the genuine stamp of God's approval. It is at the table of the Lord that the Holy Spirit testifies to the believer that he is the benefactor of the death of Jesus Christ our Lord and that all His benefits accrue to him, making him a son of God, and heir of the righteousness which is by faith and thus an heir of eternal glory.

Finally it thus becomes plain that the presence of Christ at the Lord's Supper is then a presence of grace and love to the believer but is also a condemnation to those who do not partake or even to those who do partake only outwardly. Such as merely eat without faith, eat and drink to themselves condemnation. Even as the Christ is spiritually present in the preaching of the Word, giving grace unto those who believe, for it is a power of God to whoever believes, so also is Christ spiritually present in the Lord's Supper, giving grace only to those who believe, for it too is a power of God to strengthen and nourish the faith of the child of God. In the Supper of the Lord, Christ our Saviour therefore, comes very close to His people and feeds them unto everlasting life.

L. V.

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#### IN MEMORIAM

The Consistory of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Holland, Michigan hereby wishes to express its heartfelt sympathy to our brother consistory member, Deacon T. Elzinga, in the loss of his

#### MOTHER

May the Lord of all grace comfort and sustain the bereaved.

The Consistory of the  
First Protestant Reformed Church of  
Holland, Michigan

Rev. W. Hofman, Pres.  
Mr. J. Kortering, Clerk.