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MEDITATION

I Will Never Forget!

I will never forget thy precepts: for with them thou hast quickened me.

—Ps. 119:93.

Marvellous Word of God!

Wonderful, because it is God that speaks, and it is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword. . . .

Glorious, too, because of its infinite perfection, for always God speaks concerning Himself, and through that Word addressed to us He reveals Himself as the Holy One of Israel, as GOD, the incomparable One!

That Word is the theme of this entire psalm, but more particularly in this section.

We remember that the one hundred and nineteenth psalm is divided into twenty-two sections according to the number of characters in the Hebrew alphabet, and that each of these sections has its own main theme. The beauty and power and glory of the Word of God is the chief subject of this part. The poet beholds the Word of God in the heavens. It is established there for ever. It is revealed in God's faithfulness upon earth throughout all generations, for by it He established the earth, and it abideth. All creation reveals that Word of God, for it is only through the ordinances of the Most High that heaven and earth continue, and all creatures are His servants, obeying His precepts. That Word of God, too, has been the delight of the poet: he rejoiced in it, relied on it, kept it, hoped in it, put all his trust in it; and it kept him from perishing in his afflictions. And seeking the Word of God, he was conscious of being God's servant, and found confidence to pray: Save me! The wicked waited for him to accomplish his utter destruction, and that, too, because of that Word of God which he loved; yet, he would continue to

regard and keep it. An end to all perfection he had seen, but the perfection of the Word of God is broad beyond his comprehension. . . .

And thus also in the ninety-third verse: "I will never forget thy precepts."

"For with them thou hast quickened me!"

Wonderful Word of God!

Thy precepts!

But emphatically as *Thy* precepts!

Precepts, not as a prescription, not as a code of laws and ordinances which a man may nail to the wall of his office, or carry in his pocket; which he may consult occasionally to refresh his memory, and which he may keep and obey; or, perhaps, when there is no one near to enforce them, violate to his own advantage or, at least, with impunity.

Yes, precepts, not even as the mere record of divine ordinances and revelations as we have them in the Bible, and may learn them by heart, useful and salutary, yea, indispensable though that may be.

But precepts as the living and powerful and quick and efficacious Word of God, the Word which God Himself speaks, even though it be through the Word that is preached.

Of that Word the poet is speaking here. That Word, as precepts, was the means whereby God Himself quickened him. God spoke it to Him and he lived. And, therefore, that Word, as precept, he will never forget.

By different names that one Word may be called, and in this psalm it is designated by different terms. It is simply the Word of God, or His law, or His commandment, or His statutes, or His testimonies, or His promises. And here that same Word of God is indicated by the term "precepts."

Essentially, that Word of God is one, even as God is one. It is always the revelation of God to us, for by His Word God speaks concerning Himself, and concerning no one and nothing else. He spoke concerning Himself through the prophets of the old dispensation;

and in these latter days He has spoken to us through His Son. He speaks concerning Himself in the Word of creation, and in the Word of providence, for the heavens declare the glory of God and, the firmament sheweth His handiwork; day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. And the wrath of God is revealed from heaven over all iniquity and ungodliness of men that hold the truth in unrighteousness. And He speaks concerning Himself in the Word of the gospel, the Word He speaks through His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ: the Word that makes Him known as the God of our salvation, full of grace and truth.

Yet, as that Word of God addresses us, it has different aspects.

It comes to us in the form of rich and glorious promises, of salvation and redemption, of the forgiveness of sin and eternal righteousness, of the adoption unto children and heirs, of deliverance from the dominion of sin and death, of the resurrection and eternal glory, of the inheritance incorruptible and undefilable and unfadable, of the new Jerusalem and the new creation. And all these promises are one in Christ Jesus. For even in the promises the Word of God speaks of Him, and by it He promises Himself and His fellowship: I will be thy God!

And it reaches us in the form of precepts, equally rich and wonderful, in which the God of our salvation calls us to repent and believe, to come to Him and drink, to rise from the dead and live, to come forth out of darkness into His marvellous light, to forsake iniquity and love righteousness, to seek, not the things that are below, but the things that are above, to put off the old and to put on the new man, to be faithful even unto death, to walk as children of light, to fight the good fight of faith, to trust in Him, to tell His wonders, to proclaim His praises. And again, all these precepts are fundamentally one. For also in the Word of His precepts God speaks of Himself to us. He wills that we will Him, that we shall hunger and thirst for Him: Love Me!

And once more, these precepts as the one precept, and these promises as the one promise, are the one Word of God!

For the one cannot be divorced from the other.

He that hears the Word of God as precept, hears it also as the promise.

And only in the way of the precept can the promise be attained!

For in the keeping of His Word there is great reward!

For God is one, and His Word is one. Never does He speak the Word of precept without the Word of promise; nor does He ever utter His Word of promise without the Word of precept.

And it is always He that speaks it, efficaciously.

And as He speaks His Word, precept and promise, we hear and are saved!

Of that one Word of God, from the aspect of precept, with which, however, the promise is inseparably and immediately connected, the poet speaks here.

These precepts of His God were wonderful to him. Never would he forget them!

For by them God had quickened him!
Mighty Word of God!

Quick and powerful is the Word!

As such the poet had experienced it.

And it is because of that experience that he is able to vow, that he is absolutely assured that he will never forget the precepts of his God.

For with them thou hast quickened me!

The Word of God he had experienced in its quickening power, in its power to make alive. To him it had been a word of resurrection never to be forgotten.

God's precepts to him had been: Arise from the dead! And he had heard, and obeyed. And he lived!

And thus it is the experience of every child of God. By His Word God has caused him to live, to rise from the dead.

By nature we are dead, and we lie in the midst of death. For we have sinned, and the Word of God kills the sinner: the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. And death had come at once. For as the Word of God is quick to make alive, so it is quick and powerful to kill. And this death implies that our whole nature is become hopelessly corrupt, hopelessly that is, as far as man is concerned. His mind is darkened, so that even the light that is in him is darkness, and he loves the darkness of the lie rather than the light of the truth. His will is perverse, so that he is always inclined to wallow in iniquity, and can nevermore choose that which is good. All his inclinations and desires are impure, so that he hankers after the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. From the heart his whole life is motivated by enmity against God: he cannot, he will not, and he cannot will to love God!

Such is his death!

And this death is the Word of God!

Exactly that is the horror of death. It is the Word of God spoken to us by Himself, quick and powerful to kill!

The Word of His wrath!

The curse!

Cursed is every one that abideth not in my Word, in the Word of my precept! And who shall resist or overcome the Word of God? And if it be impossible, and it is, to overcome the Word of God, how shall man wrest himself from the clutches of this death and escape? He cannot. There is no way out, as far as he is concerned. It is impossible for him to live.

Yet, what is impossible with man, is possible with God!

And what is more, it must become evident that things are impossible with man, in order that no flesh should glory in His presence, and that it may become clearly manifest that He is God, the Lord, Who calleth the things that are not as if they were, and Who quickeneth the dead! If it be the Word of God that kills us, and keeps us in the bonds of death, no word of man, but only the same Word of God is able to deliver us, and to raise us from the dead!

And that Word He spoke, and speaks!

He spoke it according to his eternal good pleasure, freely, sovereignly, as the Lord!

He spoke it through His Son. Even as in the beginning He spoke through the eternal Word, and the heavens and the earth were created, so in these last days He spoke through His Son, Whom He appointed heir of the world, and salvation, deliverance from sin and death, eternal righteousness and life, were established for ever. He spoke as the God of our salvation, Who loved us, freely, sovereignly, from before the foundation of the world. He spoke, and the Son assumed the flesh and blood of the children: the Word became flesh. He spoke, and He was made sin, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. He spoke, and the Son descended into the deepest depth of hell and damnation, bearing the curse that was upon us, and offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice of obedience. He spoke, and the world was reconciled unto Him, their sins being blotted out for ever, and everlasting righteousness being obtained through the blood of the cross. He spoke, and the Son was raised from the dead, was taken up into the highest heaven, was exalted at the right hand of God, was given the promise of the Spirit, returning unto His own, that to them this Word of life, this Word of quickening, the Word of the resurrection from the dead, might be spoken. . . .

The Word of God through His Son!

The Word of salvation!

The Word of righteousness overcoming sin, of life overcoming death, of grace overcoming wrath, of sovereign election, of light out of darkness, of eternal glory out of everlasting desolation!

Arise from the dead! Come and drink! Eat, and your soul shall live! All ye that are thirsty, come to the waters! See, ye blind! Hear, ye deaf! Be cleansed, ye lepers! Leap, ye lame! Live, ye dead! Love Me! . . .

The precepts of the God of our salvation!

That Word the poet had experienced!

O, make no mistake! He had not read about it. He had not heard the word of man, the word of some preacher, calling him, begging him, urging him to hear and to obey, offering him grace and salvation if only he would hear and come. How vain, how utterly futile

that would be over against the Word of God that held him subject to the power of death! No word of man, no offer of salvation, no begging of a preacher, could have been of any avail to quicken him.

No, but God had spoken His own Word to him: By them thou hast quickened me!

And he had heard, not the word of man, but the Word of God!

He had experienced that Word as quick and powerful to make alive!

His mind had been enlightened, his heart and will and all his inclinations had been radically changed, so that the enmity against God that was in his heart was overcome, he longed for forgiveness and righteousness, for life and the love of God. . . .

And the promise had followed the precept!

Through the power of the Word of God as precept came the faith to embrace the promise!

The Word of the commandment gave the power to obey!

He had risen from the dead, and he lived!

Quickened by the Word of God!

Never will I forget!

Does the poet here offer a vow, make a pledge?

And, if he does, is not the vow a rash one for a sinful man to make?

Yes; and No!

A vow, indeed; but not a pledge that is based on the weak and deceitful choice of the will of sinful man, but rather on the faithfulness of that same Word of God that quickeneth him, and raised him from the dead.

A vow, but first of all the expression of an inner assurance: never will it be possible for me to forget thy precepts! And only as a result of that assurance does he make the pledge to remember God's precepts always.

There are things we cannot forget. There are things we would be glad to forget, but which remain constantly in our memory. And there are things we rejoice in recalling and contemplating all our life. Things there are, of such tremendous importance, that they remain engraven upon the record of our mind, and the memory of which we take with us to the grave.

Such a profound experience was the quickening from the death into life of which the poet speaks. Never would he forget the Word by which he had been raised from the dead. Still more. The experience continued. Still that Word remained with him. Still it called him. Still it quickened him, day by day. And he knows that that Word will never fail him. How then can he forget?

He will remember it, keep it in mind, have his delight in it, walk in its way. He may stumble, but never will he finally forget. . . .

For the Word of God is faithful!

Even unto the end!

H. H.

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EDITORIALS

The Text of a Complaint

The complainants insist that the preacher must proclaim that God sincerely seeks the salvation of the reprobate. And in spite of this ostensibly Arminian position they claim the sole right to the name of being Reformed. This claim they defend by appealing to the principle(?) of irrationality. They take the position that the Reformed faith is irrational. And on that position no one can successfully attack them.

But, as we have seen, if we deny them the right to that irrational position, and, as rational beings, try to explain their position, we discover that they embrace the Arminian view of reprobation.

But let us now also demonstrate how superficial and erroneous this part of the "Complaint" is.

The complainants find it strange that Dr. Clark is reluctant to admit that the gospel is an offer and an invitation. And they quote from the Westminster Confession to condemn this reluctance on the part of Dr. Clark. That confession does not hesitate to speak of the gospel as an offer. For in VII, III, we read: "Wherein (in the covenant of grace, H.H.) he freely offered unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ."

But how superficial is the reasoning of the complainants here! Dr. Clark is reluctant to speak of the gospel as an offer and "invitation" in the sense in which the Arminians, and also the complainants use these terms. They understand these terms as meaning that in the gospel God sincerely seeks the salvation of the reprobates. But the Westminster Confession in the passage quoted knows nothing of this modern connotation of the terms. This should be evident from the fact that the word *offered* is used in the sense of the Latin "*offert*" from *obfero*, and may be translated just as well by "*present*". But that it was far from the minds of the authors of the Westminster to teach that in the gospel God is sincerely seeking the salvation of the reprobate is especially evident from the rest of the same passage: "and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto life his Holy Spirit, to make them willing and able to believe." This, then, is the promise of the covenant, the promise that must be preached: *God will give to all the elect His Spirit*. But the complainants are not satisfied with this. They insist that Dr. Clark must preach and teach "that in the gospel God sincerely offers salvation in Christ to all who hear, reprobate as well as elect."

It is, therefore, not strange at all, but quite understandable that Dr. Clark is willing to subscribe to the

statement in the Westminster to which the complainants refer, while, at the same time, he is very reluctant to use the terms "offer" and "invitation" when required to do so in the sense of the complainants.

The same superficiality and dodging of the real issue characterizes the following paragraph:

"Dr. Clark stedfastly refuses to describe as sincere the offer which God makes to sinners in the gospel. This is surprising strange. To be sure, the Westminster standards do not employ the word *sincere* in this connection; but is it not a foregone conclusion that the offer is sincere? Would it not be blasphemy to deny this? For that very reason there was no need of the Westminster divines' describing the gospel offer as sincere. Its sincerity goes without saying. But obviously that is not Dr. Clark's reason for refusing to characterize it as sincere."

No, indeed. Nor would Dr. Clark object to use the word "sincere" to characterize the offer of God as explained in the Westminster: God promises to give unto all that are ordained unto life his Holy Spirit. And yet, it is not "surpassing strange" that he refuses to employ that word in the sense in which the complainants would have him use it: that God sincerely offers salvation to the reprobate as well as to elect. And this alone is the issue.

The following interpretation of the Arminian controversy appears to be especially invented to fit the facts in the case of Dr. Clark as the complainants see them:

"When the Arminian controversy was at its height the Reformed churches faced a different situation. It was contended emphatically by the Arminians that the Reformed doctrine of reprobation rules out the sincerity of God's offer of salvation to the reprobate and that, consequently, the Reformed faith has a gospel only for the elect. Precisely the sincerity of the gospel offer was now at issue." p. 13.

The complainants should not make such broad statements interpreting historical facts without offering definite proof. And where would they find such proof? One would naturally look for it in the *Remonstrantie*, composed by the Arminians in 1610. At that time the "Arminian controversy was at its height." Moreover, in that document the Remonstrants carefully formulated their objections to the Reformed conception of predestination. But in vain does one look for support of the interpretation of their stand offered by the complainants. They simply and openly rejected absolute predestination, both election and reprobation, and instead offered their own, that of election on the ground of foreseen faith and obedience, and of reprobation on the ground of foreseen unbelief and disobedience.

They expressly objected to the doctrine (I translate from the Dutch):

"That God—as some say—by an eternal and unchangeable decree ordained some to eternal life, others to eternal damnation, only because of His good pleasure, without regard to their righteousness or disobedience. That further in virtue of a second decree the elect must necessarily and inevitably be saved and cannot be lost, and the reprobate—constituting by far the larger part—must necessarily and inevitably be damned."

They could not accept the doctrine:

"That Jesus Christ did not die for all men, but only for the elect"; and that in the elect "the Holy Spirit operated with irresistible power, so that they must be converted and believe and thus necessarily be saved, while the reprobate do not receive this grace."

They did, indeed, point to the inconsistency that the reprobate, according to the revealed will of God, are also called to conversion and faith, but that they rationally concluded from this external calling to a denial of reprobation, as the complainants interpret,—of this one does not find a trace in the *Remonstrantie*.

It would seem, therefore, that they simply impose their own interpretation upon the history of the Arminian controversy, in order to show that Dr. Clark, by a similar, rationalistic error, moves in the opposite direction, and denies the sincere offer of salvation on the part of God to the reprobate. This is superficial because it falsely interprets the facts.

Superficial, too, and erroneous, is the quotation the complainants offer from the Canons, and the argument based on this erroneous quotation. The quotation as it appears in the "Complaint" is as follows:

"As many as are called by the gospel, are unfeignedly called. For God hath most earnestly and truly declared in His Word what will be acceptable to him; namely, that all who are called should comply with the invitation." (Third and Fourth Heads of Doctrine, art. 8).

And the argument the complainants base on this quotation is as follows:

"In the course of his examination Dr. Clark did indeed express agreement with this teaching of Dort, but he made it clear that in doing so he conceived of the gospel as a command. . . . He said that it is the preceptive will of God that those who hear shall believe the gospel, and it is 'acceptable' to God that they do so because he insists on being obeyed. But the Synod of Dort obviously meant much more than that when it employed the word 'acceptable.' That appears from its description of the gospel as an invitation, from its insistence that all who are called are called 'unfeignedly,' as well as from the fact that it was refuting the Arminian contention that the Reformed faith leaves no room for a sincere offer of salvation made by God to the reprobate. What the authors of the Canons had in mind was that God has 'no pleasure in the

death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live' (Ezekiel 33:11).

Now, we do not have to defend Dr. Clark's position that the gospel is a command. This is not the point we wish to make. Nor is it our purpose at present to refute the interpretation the complainants give to this passage of the Canons, though it may be remarked that on the face of the matter it seems very far fetched. Surely, if it had been the intention of the fathers of Dort to express that God sincerely seeks the salvation of the reprobate, they could have chosen less ambiguous words.

But the point we do wish to make is that the complainants very superficially quote a wrong translation, thus arrive at the conclusion that the Canons characterize the gospel as an invitation, and make this error the basis of their argument against Dr. Clark's refusal to call the gospel by that name.

If laymen, who have access only to existing translations, make such errors, it is excusable. But that men of learning, who are able to consult the Latin original, and, besides, are acquainted with the Holland translation of the Canons, make such blunders is not to be excused. When they, nevertheless, do meet their opponents with such erroneous arguments, they give evidence of having done very superficial and careless work.

Fact is that the Canons, in the passage quoted, do not describe the gospel as an invitation at all. The Latin original is as follows: "Serio enim et verissime ostendit Deus verbo suo, quid sibi gratum sit, nimirum, ut vocati ad se veniant." That is: "God seriously and truly declares in His Word what is pleasing to him, namely, that the called come unto him." And this is correctly rendered in the Dutch translation: "Want God betoont ernstiglijk en waarachtiglijk in Zijn Woord, wat Hem aangenaam is; namelijk, dat de geroepen tot Hem komen."

The passage, therefore, does not describe the gospel as an invitation. And the argument that is based on this wrong translation must fall together with the translation.

As far as this passage of the Canons is concerned, Dr. Clark does not have to call the gospel an invitation, and retains the right to his interpretation that it is a command. And that the command be obeyed is pleasing to God, because it is pleasing to Him that men glorify Him. This interpretation is given of the eighth article of the Canons, III, IV, more than once. See, e.g. Ds. T. Bos, *De Dordtsche Leerregeelen*, p. 155.

But whether this is the correct interpretation of the passage or not, the complainants should not make the blunder of basing an argument on an erroneous translations.

H. H.

The Triple Knowledge

An Exposition Of The Heidelberg Catechism

Part Two.

Of Man's Redemption

Lord's Day XVI.

1.

The Death Of The Son Of God (cont.)

What, then, is physical death? What does it mean for sinful man to die? And what is the meaning of the grave?

From the viewpoint of experience, of what we, who are on this side of the grave, can see of death, it is the complete dissolution of our earthly house, the end of our earthly existence; and the grave is corruption, our return to the dust, whence we are taken.

It is an utter loss.

In death the organism of the body collapses and is dissolved, and with it man's entire earthly existence is completely destroyed. As far as this world is concerned, he is no more. For it is through the body that man is a living soul. Through his physical organism, with its senses of sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell, he has contact with the outside world, the world of his experiences. When his body is dissolved that entire world, as the object of his experience, dissolves with it. In death he sees and hears, he tastes and touches and smells, he eats and drinks, he thinks and speaks, he desires and pursues, he craves and delights in the things of this world no more. Everything is taken away from him. His power and talents, his house and possessions, the objects of his love and friendship, his position and name, the fruit of his toil and labor and invention,—all are suddenly and completely lost. His very place knows him no more. He may have been very important, he may have occupied a position of honor and great influence; perhaps, he was considered indispensable: all his importance and influence ceases absolutely and with utter finality when he dies. His very name perishes.

No, he is not annihilated. He continues to be, though he cannot possibly conceive the mode of that existence on the other side of death and the grave. For it is very really *he* that dies, and that passes through this terrible reality of dying. But in and through death, he is left utterly naked. From the viewpoint of his present existence, death means that he is deprived of all rights and privileges.

And the grave seals it all, and signifies that there is no return, means that there is no way out as far as his own knowledge and power can conceive of and effect such an escape. In the grave the corruption and dissolution of his body are finished. It becomes a mere heap of dust without form and meaning.

Such is the meaning of death as far as we can even now interpret its mystery.

But in the light of revelation we know far more about death. For the Word of God reveals to us that death is not a normal process, but a violent intervention of the hand of God to take away our name. Death is punishment. It is the wages of sin. It is the expression of the wrath of God, the revelation of His justice against the sinner. We do not simply die as a matter of fact: God kills us. And therefore, death is God's verdict over us. In death, physical death, God declares that we are unworthy, wholly unworthy, to have a place and a name in this world, that we have forfeited the right to be, to exist, and that, on the other hand, we have made ourselves worthy of destruction: "the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die!"

Still more.

Death, so Scripture informs us, is the end; but it is also the beginning. It is the end of all existence in the world; it is the beginning of eternal desolation. Physical death is only the entrance of a dark and horrible pit, the pit of hell, of outer darkness, where there is nothing but the experience of the just wrath of a righteous and holy God. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth,—and nothing else!

That is why man is terribly afraid of death, and, always being in the midst of death, the fear of death holds him in bondage throughout all his present living. Nor should we characterize this fear of death as cowardice. On the contrary, for mere sinners, apart from Christ, it is mere folly and also haughty rebellion to pretend that we are able to face death without fear. How can mere man speak of courage over against an enemy he cannot successfully hope to oppose, he cannot even begin to fight? We may cover our coffins with beautiful flowers, and decorate our graves, but through it all the grim spectre of death mocks our vain attempts to deny Him, and strikes terror into the very heart of every man!

Christ also died.

And He, too, was buried.

But His dying unto death was from beginning to end a voluntary act of His own.

From the very beginning, He, the Son of God, until He gave up the ghost at the cross, performed the act of dying. We lie in the midst of death. All our present existence is oppressed by death. Death surrounds us on every side, and the fear of death pursues us every moment. And at His incarnation He

entered into this death. He became like us in every respect, sin excepted. He assumed the flesh and blood of the children. He took upon Himself the likeness of sinful flesh. And in that likeness He was, even as we are, in the midst of death. But He came voluntarily. For He is the Son of God. He came from without, though He is born of a woman. Into the prison of our death He entered by an act of His own, in obedience to the Father.

And all His life He tasted death.

He could taste death in all its horror, because He was the Son of God in sinless human nature. He knew and experienced the reality of death, for He apprehended it as the expression of the wrath of God, as the execution of God's justice against the workers of iniquity. He felt that in death the hand of God was heavy upon Him. Nor was His attitude towards death that of courage and indifference in the worldly sense of the word. He knew the fear of death. And this suffering of death and of the fear of death was aggravated as His "hour" approached. Just hear Him complain, as the shadow of the cross begins to creep over His soul: "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour." John 12:27. Or behold Him, on the eve of His deliverance into hands of sinners, as He casts Himself into the dust of Gethsemane, a worm and no man, His soul exceeding sorrowful even unto death, His agony so great and deep that His sweat became as it were great drops of blood, crying from the depths of fear to the Father that the cup may pass from Him if it were possible!

Yet in all His fear and suffering He never became disobedient, nor did He ever despair. His was the true courage, the only possible courage over against death, the courage that is based on the assurance that God was with Him in all His dying, even unto the end. For, first of all, His dying was an act of perfect obedience in the love of God. Knowing death as the just judgment of God against sin, and standing in the place of His sinful people, He willingly assumed the suffering of death. In all His life He died, and in all His dying He was obedient. And being obedient in dying, He never lost the consciousness of God's favor upon Him personally, even while He experienced His wrath in dying. And in the consciousness of His perfect obedience, and of the favor of His God, He trusted that God would not leave His soul in hell, nor suffer His Holy One to see corruption. And, in the second place, in this consciousness He was constantly assured of the victory. He had power to lay down His life, and He had power to take it again. Trusting in God, He saw through death and looked forward to the resurrection. Hence, suffering the fear of death, He was not afraid.

And so He died.

O, yes, it was necessary that He, too, should die

the physical death. He might not simply suffer the agonies of death on the cross, in order then to be revived or glorified in the sight of the enemies. He might bear the wrath of God to the end. The sentence of God in physical death is that the sinner has absolutely forfeited every right to his existence in the world. This sentence must be executed upon Christ also. God takes away His whole earthly house. His very name perishes. His body, too, collapses, and He gives up the ghost. Also upon Him the sentence is pronounced that He is unworthy to exist on the earth. Only, as the Head of His people, He agrees with the sentence of God with all His heart. He makes of death an act. His life He lays down even as God takes it. His spirit He commends to God, His body He delivers over into the place of corruption. His name and position He freely offers up to the righteousness of God. And in delivering up His soul unto death He confesses: "Thou, Father, art just and righteous, when Thou judgest that the sinner has no right to be, should be utterly destroyed from the earth, and should sink into everlasting desolation. Take my life, my name, my all. Freely I offer it in love to Thee. For even now it is my meat to do Thy will!"

And so He was buried.

The Catechism explains that He was buried to prove that He was really dead. If this may be explained as meaning that His burial set the seal upon His death, inasmuch as the grave is the place of corruption, the finality of death, the return unto the dust, there is sense in this answer. However, if it merely means that from His burial it became evident that He had died on the cross, the answer is hardly correct. One hardly buries a person to prove that he is dead. Besides, such proof was not needed in the case of the death of Christ. If there had been any doubt that He died the moment He cried out: "Father, into Thy hands do I commend my spirit," it should have been completely removed by the spear thrust that pierced His heart, and caused blood and water to gush forth from His side. But Christ must die unto the end. He, too, must enter into the place of corruption. He must deliver His body to the humiliation of the grave, to the place where the sinner returns to the dust. In perfect obedience to the Father He enters into Hades, and commits His body to the grave. For let us not forget that even His burial was an act of His own. As He entered into the womb of the virgin, and thereby into likeness of sinful flesh; as He voluntarily suffered the reality of death all His life; as He willingly entered into death finally, and gave up the ghost; so He obediently submitted to the sentence of God: "dust thou art, and to dust thou shalt return," and entered into the grave. He could do so, because He was the Son of God, and the person of the Son was never separated from His human nature, even in the grave.

And so, He accomplished all of death, and fulfilled all righteousness.

And thus satisfaction was made for our sins. For, as the Catechism explains, "with respect to the justice and truth of God, satisfaction for our sins could be made no otherwise than by the death of the Son of God."

A bold expression this is: "the death of the Son of God." There are those who consider the phrase too bold. They argue that the Son of God is very God Himself, that He has life in Himself, and that, therefore, it is blasphemy to speak of His death. It was, therefore, the man Jesus that died on the cross. And even while the man Jesus died the Son of God lived in eternal glory.

But this objection is based on a misunderstanding of the phrase, and the expression should certainly be retained. It is quite true, of course, that the divine nature cannot suffer death. God is the Lord. He is the living God. He is life. He is the most Blessed for ever. In His divine being He cannot suffer. But this is not denied by the expression: "the death of the Son of God." We must remember that Christ is the Person of the Son of God. As such He subsists eternally in the divine nature. And in that divine nature He is in the bosom of the Father, and lives the life of infinitely perfect divine friendship with the Father and the Holy Ghost in infinite bliss. But this same Person of the Son also assumed the human nature. He is not two persons, a human and divine; but He is and remains one Person, the divine Person of the Son, subsisting in two natures, the divine and the human. And it is this Person of the Son of God that suffered the death of the cross, and that was in Hades, that committed His spirit to God, and that was buried in the sepulchre of Joseph. Only, it must be remembered that He suffered all this, not in the divine, but in the human nature. And so it is perfectly proper to speak of the death of the Son of God.

And this expression must be retained, because "satisfaction for our sins could be made no otherwise than by the death of the Son of God."

If it was a mere man that died on the cross, the cross is made vain. No mere man, even though he were righteous, could ever bear the full punishment for sin and finish it. Still less could a mere man make satisfaction for others, and that, too, for countless millions of sinners. Only the Son of God could taste the depth of death. Only He could bear the full burden of the wrath of God and sustain it to the end. Only He could make of death an act of obedience, and voluntarily lay down the life He had voluntarily assumed. Only He could finish death in dying. And only He had the right and the power to take the place of the elect, and satisfy the justice of God in respect to their sins. Only His death, the death of the Son of God

Himself in human nature, could be so deep, so precious in the sight of God, that by His obedience many could be made righteous. Only when the death of the cross is the death of the Son of God can we have the assurance that our sins are blotted out for ever, and that in Christ we have the righteousness of God by faith.

2.

The Death Of Believers

The question arises quite naturally: why must believers die the physical death? Christ died for us. His death is the satisfaction for our sins. Now, if physical death belongs to the punishment for sin, and the death of Christ is really satisfaction, it would appear to follow that believers were also delivered from temporal or physical death. Yet, this is not the case. The Catechism, therefore, inquires into this matter, and asks the question: "Since Christ died for us, why must we also die?"

We may notice that the Heidelberg Catechism does not directly answer the question. It does, indeed, explain that the death of believers is no satisfaction for sin, and it removes the apparent contradiction between the death of Christ as an atonement for sin and the death of those for whom He atoned. But the question, why the death of believers, even though it be no satisfaction for sin, is still necessary, is not answered. The question remains: why is it that believers must pass through the suffering of physical death? Why could they not be translated without enduring this suffering? Enoch was so translated. Elijah ascended up into heaven without seeing death. The saints that shall be living at the coming of the Lord will be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. Why could not also believers be glorified, and taken up into heaven, without having to face the horror of death and the grave?

Several answers may be suggested to this question. And these answers are really all controlled by the one fact that, before the saints can be completely glorified, all things must be ready, the entire elect Church must be born and saved, and the new heavens and earth must be created in which righteousness shall dwell.

If the elect were to escape the suffering of physical death in all its implications, they would have to completely be glorified at the moment of their regeneration. And what is more, their regeneration, and also their glorification would have to take place at birth. For the reality of physical death is not limited to the moment when we give up the ghost, and our spirit leaves the body, but involves our entire earthly existence. We are born in the midst of death, with a cor-

ruptible and mortal body. Living our earthly life, we die constantly. The power of death reveals itself in all the diseases, suffering and sorrow of this present time. If, therefore, the elect were to escape physical death, they must be regenerated and completely renewed at their coming into this world, and at once taken into heaven. But this is absurd, for in that case the Church of the elect could not be brought forth. The generations of the elect must be born. And to them we can give birth only in our present, earthy, and corruptible bodies. And in these corruptible bodies we lie in the midst of death, and must needs pass through death and the grave into glory.

Moreover, it is no doubt the will of God that the glory of His grace shall eternally shine forth in the Church of the redeemed. And this glory must be realized in the consciousness of the elect. They must know by experience from how great a depth of sin and misery and death the marvellous grace of God redeemed and delivered them. But unto this end they must have experience of the suffering and power of death. From the depth they must cry unto God, that they may for ever extol the wonder of His grace whereby they are redeemed. And, therefore, they must not at once be glorified in body and soul, when they are regenerated, but as renewed children of God in principle suffer a while and pass through the darkness of death, that they may taste the goodness and glorious grace, the mighty power and dominion of God their Redeemer, Who calls the things that are not as if they were, and Who quickens the dead.

H. H.

The Lord Departs From Samson

So had Samson, in his carnality, played into the hands of the enemy, who finally succeeded in getting him into their power through the treachery of a woman. With him asleep on her knees, she caused the seven locks of his head to be shaven off; and she began to afflict him and his strength went from him. At the sound of her cry, "the Philistines be upon thee Samson," he awoke out of his sleep. Still feeling secure in his strength, he said, "I will go out as at other times before and shake myself. But he wist not that the Lord was departed from him." And the Philistines took him and bound him with fetters of brass."

The statement, "and he wist not that the Lord was departed from him", calls for closer study. The statement is significant. It forms the clue to a right understanding of Samson's achievements as the deliverer of

Israel. The Lord had departed from him. It implies that hitherto the Lord was with him as his helper. Having determined, in the light of the Scriptures, wherein this help consisted, we will know what it means that the Lord departed from him in the moment of his defilement. This help consisted firstly in the Lord's endowing Samson with great physical strength. How wonderfully strong he was. With no effort to speak of, he rendered assunder the jaws of a lion that roared against him on the way to Timnah. He vanquished, in battle, as a lone hero, an army of Philistines whose number may have run into thousands. He bore away on his shoulders the doors of the gates of Gaza, the doors and their two posts. When they thought him impotent in bonds, he broke the chords from his arms like thread. And when they finally had him in their power, he pulled down over himself and them the temple of their god where they were congregated, and his soul died with the Philistines. Indeed, Samson was wonderfully strong.

Yet, it would be a serious error to ascribe his victories over the adversary in battle to his prodigious strength. Ordinary warfare is a pitting of power against power and, speaking now of modern warfare, the greater power—the side that can boast of the larger and better equipped army, better trained soldiers and generals of surpassing military skill, can boast of the larger number of formidable battle wagons in the air, on sea and on land—wins the war, and this according to the law that, in ordinary warfare, the victory goes to the strong. Therefore the nations of the world strive to overreach one another in military might. Such might is the arm of flesh in which they put their trust. Hence, there is nothing miraculous about the military achievements of the nations of the world on the field of battle. The weaker of two opposing forces must yield ground from the nature of matters. God so wills. We deal here with a divine working. For all power is His. The superior military power of the conquering nation is his. Hence, it is He Who gives victory, not in love, but in His hatred of man's world—the world that lieth in darkness—and in punishment of the unrighteousness of man's world. The strength of a big brute of a man who murders a defenceless child is God's. In this case too, God gives victory (if the word *victory* is in place here), but not in love of the murderer and in answer to prayer. God does all things in love of His people whom He knows and chose in Christ.

As to Samson, his combined victories present to us a case of one man chasing a thousand. Therefore his war with the Philistines was not ordinary warfare. It was not human might pitted against human might with the superior might the victor as in ordinary warfare. The explanation of Samson's victories was not his strength. For, however remarkable his strength,

he had but one pair of hands wherewith to fight. His great strength alone cannot account for the dead lying about him in heaps after his encounter with the Philistines at Lehi. And they were all his victims, slain by his own hand. That was truly astounding. Yet things similar to this had taken place before in Israel's wars with the heathen. In these wars Israel was the few, comparatively speaking and the heathen the many, Israel the weak, from the point of view of nature, and the heathen the strong, thus the few against the many, the weak against the strong, with the few, the weak, always the victor, when the people of Israel kept covenant fidelity. The complaint of the spies, reporting to Joshua, was true. The people of Israel were no match for the Canaanites. From the point of view of nature, the proposed warfare was doomed to failure. For the Canaanites were the stronger and their cities were walled and very great and the children of Anak were men of giant stature. For this very reason, all Israel's wars with the heathen were foolhardy undertakings, humanly speaking. In these conflicts, it was always the weak against the strong, the few against the many. What brings this out is the language used to describe the military might of the heathen. The combined armies that went forth to do battle with Joshua were "much people, even as the sand that is upon the sea shore in multitude, with horses and chariots very many." Joshua 11:4. The Lord drew unto Barak and Deborah to the river Kishon "Sisera, the captain of Jabin's army, with his chariots and multitude. . . ." Judges 4:7. Against this "multitude" Barak was instructed to oppose but ten thousand men. Of the Midianites it is reported that "they came up with their cattle and their tents. . . . as grasshoppers for multitude," and that "they and their camels were without number." Judges 6:5. But they were overcome by Gideon's band of three hundred. Samson slays a thousand Philistines with the jaw bone of an ass. Some twenty years thereafter "the Philistines gathered themselves together to fight with Israel, thirty thousands chariots, and six thousands horsemen, and people as the sand which is on the sea shore in multitude." I Sam. 13:5. What worsened the situation is that the Philistines had so completely disarmed the Israelites that "there was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any of the people that were with Saul and Jonathan." I Sam. 13:22. The above-cited cases of the surpassing might of Israel's adversaries are but few of the many reported to us in the Old Testament Scriptures. Humanly speaking, the Hebrews in Canaan were doomed to extinction at all times. In battle they were always outnumbered; and their war equipment included nothing more formidable than the bow, the sword and the spear. The use of the horse and the chariot was forbidden them. Always were they the few against the many, the weak against

the strong, the smaller military might. In Gideon's band this might was reduced to a paltry three hundred and in Samson to a lone individual. Yet it was to this band, to the few and the weak, that the victory went. This was the miraculous element in Israel's warfare with the heathen. And it had been foretold, promised. Spake the Lord to Israel by the mouth of Moses, "And ye shall chase your enemies, and they shall fall before you by the sword. And five of you shall chase a hundred, and a hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight: and your enemies shall fall before you by the sword." Lev. 26:7, 8. At Josh. 23:10 it is said even that "one man of you shall chase a thousand." Samson was not the only hero in Israelitish history in whom this promise was fulfilled. It was fulfilled also in the mighty men whom David had. There was Adino, the Tachmonite, of whom it is related that he lifted up his spear against eight hundred, whom he slew at one time. There was Eleazar the son of Dodo, who arose "and smote the Philistines until his hand was weary, and his hand clave unto the sword: and the Lord wrought a great victory that day. . . ." Mention is made of Shammath, the son of Agee. "He stood in the midst of the ground, and defended it, and slew the Philistines: and the Lord wrought a great victory." "Three mighty men (of David) brake through the host of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem, that was by the gate. . . ." "Abishai, the brother of Joab, lifted up his spear against three hundred, and slew them." II Sam. 23:8-18.

So, then, in Israel's warfare, the victory went to the few in combat with the many, even to the one in combat with a thousand. And the one and the few were God's people. What now is the explanation of the victory of the one and of the few. Not, certainly, the strength of the one and the few but the fact that "the Lord your God, He it is that fighteth for you, as He hath promised you." Josh. 23:10. The reason that is here given for the victory going to the few or the one calls for closest attention. In the Old Testament dispensation there was but one nation under heaven of whom it could be said that the Lord fought for it. That nation was Israel. And, so, too, now in this dispensation there is but one nation under heaven of whom it can be said that the Lord fights for it. That nation is still not the Jews and neither the American, British and Chinese nations for that matter, but the true Israel, the Church, that people to whom the apostle had reference when he said, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy." I Pet. 11:9, 19. It is thoroughly unscriptural and

thus foolish and untrue to say that Germany was destroyed because God fought for the Allies and this even in answer to the fervent prayers of those praying preachers among the Allies. God fights for His chosen people, whom He chose and knows in Christ. And therefore they have the victory—the victory that overcometh the world. And their victory is their faith, the working of their faith in prayer—the fervent prayer of righteous men. Yet, to be sure, the surpassing military might of the allies was and is God's, the victory that was achieved was efficaciously willed by Him, and it came forth out of the womb of the sovereign providence of the Most High. Yet, for all this, it is amiss to say that God fought for the Allies and this in answer to prayer.

What, then, was that doing of God, according to which He fought for His people, for the few, the one? First, it was a work of love, a manifestation of grace, an indication of a gracious attitude. The Lord loved His people Israel, they being His chosen people; as moved by the pity of love He fought for them in their distress and thus saved them from the power of the greater, the overwhelming, military might for His name's sake, in order that He might be feared. Thus His fighting for His people was a gesture of love, a revelation of her mercy upon such as feared Him and kept His covenant. Secondly, through that doing of God according to which He fought for His people, for the few or the one, the victory always went to His people, to the few. Lastly, the doing of God with which we here deal was a special divine working, a wonder of Israel's God that, in combination with the diminished military might of His people, plainly brought out that the victory was the Lord's and not His people's. There is then this question finally. Just what was that wonderful work of God? Wherein did it consist? Scripture makes this very plain. Turning to Ps. 78:12, we read, "Marvellous things did he in the sight of the fathers in the land of Egypt," and at verse 43, "(How) he had wrought his signs in Egypt, and his wonders in the field of Zoan." Recalling these signs, the psalmist continues, "He turned their rivers into blood; and their floods, that they could not drink. He sent divers sorts of flies among them; which devoured them; and frogs, which destroyed them. He gave also their increase unto the caterpillar, and their labor unto the locust. He destroyed their vines with hail, and their sycamore trees with frost. He gave up their cattle also to hail, and their flocks to hot thunderbolts. He cast upon them the fierceness of his anger, wrath, and indignation, and trouble, by sending evil angels among them. He made a way to his anger, he spared not their soul from death, but gave their life over to the pestilence; and smote all their first-born in Egypt; the chief of their strength in the tabernacle of Ham." Through the centuries the Lord con-

tinued to do marvellous things in Israel,—things, wonders, by which he gave victory to the few, to his people, saved them from the arm of flesh of the adversary. However, these wonders worked salvation only because they were accompanied by another working of God in the minds and heart of the adversary. What was known of God through these wonders, namely, His power and Godhead, God also revealed in them, the adversaries of His people. In the words of the sacred narrator, he laid His plagues upon Pharaoh's heart (Ex. 9:14); He looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud (Ex. 14:24). He put the speech that went forth from these signs in the heart of the enemies and thereby filled them with the terror of God, so that they said, as said the Egyptians, "Let us flee from the face of Israel, for the Lord fighteth for them against the Egyptians," and they confessed, as did Pharaoh, "the Lord is righteous and I and my people are sinful. And so did the Lord, through the speech of his signs continue to terrorize the adversary in every conflict with His people Israel. Their will to fight was broken down; and with the terror of the almighty in their soul they fled in four directions. In the words of the psalmist, God arose, He scattered His enemies, and they that hated Him fled before Him. As smoke is driven away, so God drove them away, as wax melteth before the fire, so the heathen that went forth to do battle against Israel, perished at the presence of God. Ps. 68. It is this doing of the Lord about which the psalmist sings over and over. So in Ps. 48, "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great king. God is known in her palaces for a refuge. For, lo, the kings were assembled, they passed by together. They saw it, and they marvelled; and they were troubled and hasted away. Fear took hold upon them there, and pain, as of a woman in travail." When Israel walked in the way of God's covenant, the terror of God was in the heart of the heathen in their conflicts with His people. Therefore they could not stand before the few even before the one. Said Rahab to the spies, "I know that the Lord hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you. For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when ye came out of Egypt; and what he did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that were on the other side of the Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed. And as soon as we heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did their remain any more courage in any man, because of you: for the Lord your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath." Josh. 11:8-11. The Lord did very actually fight for His

people through His terrorizing the enemy by laying all his wonders upon their heart. Therefore the victory went to the few, even to the one. And therefore there victories, without exception, were prophetic of the victory of the church over the world in the last judgment. Then, too, the victory will go to the few, because Christ will fight for His people. For in that day, too, God will do wonders. There will be a great earthquake; the sun will become black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon will become as blood; and the stars of heaven will fall unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken by a mighty wind. And the heavens shall depart as a scroll when it is rolled together: and every mountain and island will be moved out of their places. And God will lay these wonders upon the hearts of the wicked. And, in the language of the apostle, the kings of the earth and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, will hide themselves in the dens and the rocks of the mountains; and will say to the mountains and the rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the lamb; for the great day of wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand." Rev. 6:12-17. In the Old Dispensation, God terrorized the heathen on the battlefield; and all their opposition to Him and His people ceased; and therefore, in the words of Joshua, the enemy was bread for Israel; their defence was departed from them. God in Christ will again terrorize the wicked in the judgment by His presence; and their opposition to God and His Church will cease everlastingly. And the victory will go to the few. That will be the final wonder of His grace.

In the light of the above observation the essential difference between Israel's victories over the heathen and the military achievements of the nations on the battle fields of the world is plain. Not the latter but the former only are wonders of God's grace bespeaking His mercy upon His chosen people. In the light of the above observation, we can also explain Samson, his victories over the Philistines. In his prodigious strength he was a sign, a wonder of God. As such he also spoke to the Philistines; for the Lord put the speech of his amazing strength in their hearts. And that speech was that Jehovah is *the* God and that He is mighty and willing to avenge the wrongs done His people. This speech was so applied to the hearts of the Philistines that, at the sight of Samson, their souls were seized by the terror of God and their defence departed from them and they became bread for Samson. So did the Lord fight for him. Thus his victory was not his strength; his victory was his God, his faith in God, and his holding sacred, under the constraint of that faith, the consecration of his person to God. But he allowed himself to be destroyed as the walking altar

of God. We now see what it means that, on this account, the Lord departed from him. He means that the Lord took from him his strength—"and his strength departed from him"—and with his strength went his courage. Thus he ceased to be a sign, a wonder of God. Hence he ceased to speak to the Philistines for he had destroyed himself as a sign, thus had silenced the speech that went out from him as the wonder of God, the speech by which the Lord had terrorized the Philistines. Hence, with his seven locks shaven off, their fear of him was gone. For the Lord had ceased to fight for him, had ceased to put His terror in their hearts, had thus very actually departed from him which also means that He now made the Philistines bold so that they drew near to Samson and laid violent hands on him. It was all the Lord's doing. Thus, the word of God "one man shall chase a thousand" ceased to apply to him. For he had broken the covenant of his God. The Lord departed from him and he knew it not, until it was demonstrated unto him. Then he knew. But he could have known even before then; for he must have been aware that his seven locks had been shaven off. But perhaps he did not think that the Lord would take so serious what had been done to him. But the Lord did take it serious, for Samson had allowed himself to be destroyed as the wonder of God.

G. M. O.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

1905 — 1945

On May 17

ISAAC KORHORN

and

HENRIETTA KORHORN (nee Zylema)

celebrated their 40th Wedding Anniversary. We their grateful children and grandchildren are indeed thankful to our Heavenly Father for sparing them for each other and for us. We extend to them our sincere congratulations and pray that the Lord will continue to bless and keep them in the years to come.

Mr. and Mrs. Maynard Veenstra

Mr. and Mrs. Gerald Korhorn

Mr. and Mrs. Bert I. Korhorn

Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Kuipers

Mr. and Mrs. Henry Velthouse

Betty Korhorn

22 grandchildren.

Grand Rapids, Michigan.

The Motives of Idol-Worship

Before we enter upon our subject it may not be superfluous to determine what we mean by idolatry. This is the more necessary because of the definition which is so familiar to us, from the Heidelberg Catechism. For it is only because of the very practical purpose of the Catechism on the first commandment that we accede to and justify the very broad and somewhat figurative definition. It is also from this motive that Dr. A. Kuyper in his commentary, "E VOTO" includes all those things in which men seek their welfare without God and with bold and forceful strokes of a genius brings it all into a construction.

But strictly speaking it is undoubtedly better to limit the idea of idolatry as the act whereby man seeks a fellowship and favor which is due only to God, with some being in whom he assumes a conscious reaction possible toward himself.

However even so limited the field is of immense embrace and brings us to the very beginning of peoples as we know them from Scripture and the pages of profane history.

The statement is often made that the explanation of man's tendency to worship idols lies in the fact that he is so created that he has to worship something. We may take the presentation of "E Voto" as typical. The author writes Vol. III, p. 516: "By virtue of his existence as conscious creature man must worship (eeren) *something* above himself, but that something can be either God or something else, and from this follows the necessity that the urge of man's being to worship something, must receive guidance and direction and therefore man must receive the command: 'you must worship God and not something else in His stead'."

Now there is indeed in this presentation a very important element of truth, namely, that man does easily because of his nature turn to the worship of something, yet it does not give the true cause and as it stands leads in the wrong direction.

To say that man must worship something does not at all express the true nature of his being. In this presentation the worship of God as the highest purpose is left out of sight and the idea of an impulse to serve is greatly exaggerated.

The fact, however, is that the purpose of man's creation is not to serve something merely but to serve God his Creator, and the only necessity that is laid upon him is to fulfill that service. Hence, if he does not fulfill that service he is not of necessity shifted to another alternative, namely, to find another object but he can also, and may just as well serve nothing at all.

We may demonstrate this with both an illustration and a parallel case.

As an illustration I may say man *must* eat. Then having severely established this dictum I can say he must eat food, but if he does not do this then he must eat ashes or poison. Now plainly this alternative is not valid and that for the simple reason that the eating and ingestion of foreign material is not the ruling necessity and is not the end in itself, but the need of nourishment must control this ingestion. Man must eat *food*; if he does not ingest *food* there is no reason for continuing to eat.

But we also have a parallel to the case we are considering. We see in the angels, namely, a case of creatures who are made to serve and worship, even as men are made to worship God. And yet when the angels apostatize from the service of their Creator they do not turn to idol worship. We have no reason to believe otherwise than that they serve nothing. And should we here be inclined to counter that even the apostate angels serve themselves, then we are plainly transgressing the definition of idolatry.

If then we would desire to persist that man must serve something because he is so created we can only maintain this in the sense that he must and shall and ultimately does even now serve Him who made him for that end.

There is another approach sometimes made to this problem. This view begins with man's corporiety. It holds that because man is a material corporeal being he easily turns to the worship of some tangible, visible object, and so his sin lies in his desire to visualize the wholly invisible One.

Against this two considerations are effective to show its invalidity.

In the first place the cause is thus sought not in his perversity, but in the manner of his creation.

Secondly, that this desire to see God is not in itself sin appears from the fact that vision is one of man's most noble senses whereby he receives contact and knowledge of things outside of himself, and that God the Invisible One has exactly made Himself known by coming within the reach of man's senses. That fact is evident in creation, in the Tabernacle, and in the Incarnation. But man's perverse desire to deal with a god who is the perversion of the true God, causes him to misuse his power of visual contact.

What then must we consider man's motive for turning to idols? Our first remark by way of an answer is that Scripture nowhere gives a direct answer. The reason for this is evidently that Scripture in all of its dealings with idol worship is very positive, and especially toward His own people, simply condemns it as wickedness and folly.

In this connection we must remember that Israel did not have its own idols and did not worship them

as the heathen did. Israel borrowed its idols from surrounding nations and is so usually for political and social reasons, further with the idea that they might also help them as they did the heathen, and finally often for the very debaucheries and orgies that accompanied the worship.

But we find an indication of the motive in the Scriptural characterization of it as fearing idols, trusting in idols, boasting in idols, and being led by dumb idols. And to explain this we must remember that idolatry grew up out of the life of the nations. The idols of the various peoples are very closely related to that which is prominent in their several environments. The sun, the moon, the stars, the rivers, the mountains, the wind, the fire, the lion, the ox, the ancestors, all became object of worship for the various peoples.

In view of this the motive is plain. Although man has lost God and the knowledge of Him through sin, yet he remains surrounded with His revelation, His power, His wisdom, His wrath. These virtues are manifested in all the impressive powers and movements of the creature. Man sees and knows that these are greater and stronger than he; by comparing them with himself and other living things that he knows, he comes to the conclusion that they are great and mighty conscious powers and he learns to fear, trust and adore them as deities.

This view is sustained both by the fact that the history of primitive religions reveals to us this animistic origin and by the fact that even modern man reveals a dependency on the creature that often lapses into trust in magic and charms.

This motive or motives of idol-worship is also very instructive for us as Christians. Is it not evident that if man does not retain his proper relation to his God he can no longer be the master that he is meant to be over the creatures in which God lays and reveals His mighty power? If man is a faithful willing servant of God he has dominion over all the creatures of the earthly creation, but when he forsakes God's service, he loses dominion and control and stands often frustrated and in fear in trembling amid those powers and creatures and in his folly kneels to them and implores their favor. He does not know or understand the creature since he has lost the light of God's revelation and so he tremblingly worships the river that carries his boat or destroys his crops and endangers his life. He worships the sun that can warm his body and advance his tillage. He trembles before the wind and lightning and rain or adore them when they prosper him.

And let us not forget that this is essentially true even today with modern man. Although he may no longer seek conscious favors from the powers of nature yet man strives continually and futilely to bring nature under his subjection. With all his apparent progress

we must confess that he has not at all succeeded in really making the creature his docile and dependable servant. Wars and famines and economic reverses continue to vex him and he fears and trembles in anxiety at the prospect of what that mystifying power of nature may have in store for him.

Now wherein is the situation of the Christian different from this?

Then in the first place we must answer that also the Christian has fallen under the curse with its resultant loss of dominion over the creature. The ground yields thorns and thistles under his tilling hand; the ox that should pull his plow gores him to death in an unguarded moment; the car that should so much elevate his life plunges him to destruction.

But that is not the last word. In principle his dominion has indeed been restored. Not now in himself it is true, but through the second man who has received all things in subjection under His feet and we do see all things now put under Him. And so he goes about his service with the creature. He goes about his plowing and his motor trip in the consciousness that all these things are in Christ's hand, that all things whatever betide, must and are working together for his salvation and his service of the one only true God.

He is no longer an idol-worshipper who trembles in anxiety at the fortune that overcomes him from the mystical power and course of creation, but he is a worshipper of the one only true God and knows that in His Almighty hand are also the powers of nature for his good.

In the New Testament this principle is carried through so that in a figurative sense any trust in the creature is called idolatry, as also our Catechism does. So the apostle Paul calls covetousness something that is of the nature of idolatry, (Colos. 3:5; Eph. 5:3-5) and John warns that any departure or untrue conception of the only true God whom he has testified gives place to a god that is colored by our own imaginations and that is an idol. Therefore—little children, keep yourselves, guard yourselves from the idols. 1 John 5:20, 21.

The ultimate manifestation of this principle of idol-worship will be revealed in the end-time when Antichrist shall appear. He indeed will have such power over nature that the inhabitants of the world will stand in awe at his lying wonders. They will really see in him that which they have always sought and they will worship him as God.

Yet in the midst of those times when all the powers of nature seem to be against the Christians and their cause even when they will not be deceived to worship this glorious idol, for they will testify by faith that although God is nowhere to be seen and seems to be against them yet they know that all things are still

in His hand and that all things are for them, because they by the exaltation of Christ have become the true lords of creation and the God of peace shall also presently crush Satan under their heels.

A. P.

Man's Responsibility and God's Providence

The reader will notice that the above subject is formulated differently from the usual formulation. Usually our attention is drawn to the formulation: "God's Sovereignty and Man's Responsibility." Essentially there is no difference in expressing the problem in these two ways. However, as the problem is formulated above it seeks to bring out the impossibility of denying the sovereignty of God in any way in history. If we confess God's Providence as it is implied in Scripture we do more than just speak of God's sovereignty in His counsel, but we also explain His counsel as a living counsel, a sovereign rule executed over all things. That makes the problem of man's responsibility more acute.

It is the purpose of this article to present the problem of man's responsibility and to maintain that the sovereign power and rule of God brings out and maintains man's responsibility.

Of late we have been reading and hearing about the subject of God's sovereignty and man's responsibility as a mystery. With this is meant that it is impossible for man to harmonize the sovereignty of God on the one hand with the responsibility of man on the other. So far it is easily understandable how that our interpretation of the Scriptural teachings about God's sovereignty and its emphasis upon man's responsibility may lead us to such a conclusion. However, it is altogether another matter to dogmatically assert that one's own teaching of the relation of the sovereign God to man who is responsible is the correct teaching of Scripture. Furthermore, it is another matter to use the conclusion that this is a mystery as an excuse for the failure to study the problem any further.

We should realize that although our finite minds cannot fathom the infinite, nevertheless, we may not despise the teachings of God or say and teach anything contrary thereto. We should realize that although we are dealing with a problem, it is exactly at this point of difficulty that the danger of error is so immanent.

Our calling to warn from heresy is in place here especially.

History reveals that many conceptions of the relation of the divine to the human are contradictory to the plain teaching of the Bible. Usually human responsibility is emphasized to make room for the Pelagian and Arminian desire to make man somehow a determining factor in the matter of salvation. Often the emphasis upon *human responsibility* is nothing more than an emphasis upon the Pelagian teaching *human ability*.

The problem of human responsibility in relation to God's Providence arises from the problem of the freedom of the will. Human responsibility implies human freedom. Moral accountability demands a free moral agent. Thus the problem is to explain how such a moral agent, man, is free and accountable to God who is sovereign in determining all things, whose will is free in the sense that no one can resist it.

If we approach this problem from a philosophical rather than a theological point of view we are doomed to failure. G. Watts Cunningham in his "Problems of Philosophy" and in his chapter on the Problem of freedom begins by stating that there was always a controversy in theological discussions about this subject. However, he decides upon the approach, to eliminate the theological setting. He writes, "Enmeshed in its theological setting the problem is practically hopeless from the beginning. There are here so many by-paths not clearly marked, so many labyrinths of traditional feelings and preconceptions, so much vagueness in short, that a straightforward following of the main problem is rendered practically impossible. So we shall arbitrarily leave aside the religious bearing of the problem and endeavor to fix attention upon its simpler and more immediate phases."

If we believe in the sovereign God of the Scriptures we cannot begin a study of any problem without approaching it from that point of view, that is, asking what the Word of God teaches us. We must consider ourselves in the light of God; our problems in the light of His Word; history in the light of His counsel; our life and accountability in the light of His law and providence.

The Heidelberg Catechism gives us in a brief statement the teaching of the Word of God about His providence. It states that it is the almighty and everywhere present power of God; whereby as it were by His hand, he upholds and governs heaven, earth, and all creatures. . . . so that all things come, not by chance but by His fatherly hand. For our purpose it is only necessary here to emphasize the point that the Scriptures explain that this almighty power of God also governs the moral actions of mankind. Thus we are not only concerned here with the sovereignty of God in His counsel, in the matter of choice, but with

the sovereignty of God in action, His power and the direction of that power in the development of all things.

The Bible teaches us plainly that the governing power of God determines the good and the evil deeds of men. Ephesians 2:10 is a proof for his determination of the good deeds of His saints. The text not only says that the good works "were afore prepared that we should walk in them"; it also states that we are His workmanship.

Proverbs 21:1 is a very strong statement of the word of God respecting this problem, and which gives definite proof of the determining power of God with respect to moral actions of men. We read, "The king's heart is in the hand of Jehovah as the water courses; He turneth it whithersoever he will." Out of the heart are the issues of life. The Lord therefore controls the source of the actions of mankind. Everything serves God's purpose. Proverbs 16:4, "Jehovah hath made everything for its own end; yea, even the wicked for the day of evil." There are besides these passages many others which speak of this providence of God. See, for example, Acts 2:23; Psalm 115:3; Daniel 4:35; Romans 11:36.

If we were to leave the subject of God's providence here without giving the further elucidation of Scripture as to the responsibility of man, we would leave room for the charge that this is determinism.

Determinism contends that man's will is determined by his nature. It, therefore, denies man's responsibility, if it does not explain itself further in the light of the truth of Scripture. There is an element of truth in the position of the determinist. Correctly he states that man's will is largely determined by his nature. Who can deny the reality of heredity and the part it plays in our choice of action. Psychologists are observing a truth and are correct with qualifications in their contention that man is a victim of circumstances. In the Bible the truth of man's total inability to do any good is clear. He is born in death, and unable to will even to do the good. The truth of Scripture is that man is not morally free and able to will the good. His will is in bondage. In our consideration of the problem of the responsibility of man we must take this truth by all means into our consideration. From the philosophical point of view the freedom of the will is postulated without consideration of the truth of Scripture and the truth of experience. Only a few exceptions of children and mentally incapacitated individuals are made to their assumption that man has a free will. In the Bible there is no such distinction made. The demon possessed are examples of all mankind in the service and bondage of the devil. The miracles of Jesus in casting out the demons is the gospel to us that so He shall deliver us from the bondage of sin.

Nevertheless, each individual is responsible. That is each moral rational creature of God is held accountable before God of the deeds he has done in the body. (Cf. 2 Cor. 5:10 et. al.) Furthermore, the law and the admonitions of the Word of God irrevocably place before mankind their responsibility.

This places the problem squarely before us. We are now committed to the truth of the position of the determinist; yet we must maintain the responsibility of man. We maintain the providence of God and also the responsibility of man. K. Schilder correctly warns us that between "natuurwetten en normen, natuur en Geest, noodwendigheid en vrijheid nimmer een tegenstelling mag worden gezien, die mij of anderen zou machtigen het ééne tegen het andere uit te spelen." (Heid. Cat. Bijlage, II 25).

We get no further by taking the position of A. Kuyper who distinguishes between absolute providence, that is the theological point of view, and the providence of God from the human subjective side. (Cf. his chapter, "Gebonden toch Vrij, in *De Gemeene Gratie*, vol. II, p. 387 ff.) If I from my subjective point of view am impressed with my responsibility that does not answer the problem at all how that God from His point of view, from the point of view of the preaching of His law, can hold me responsible.

If we explain human responsibility as human ability we have denied the sovereign power of God and His claim in His Word that there is no possibility of salvation except by Himself, through His Son, Jesus Christ. This position destroys the problem and cuts the Gordian knot.

However, we should not contend that the problem is a "Gordian knot" for the Scriptures. Our effort should be applied to searching its unfathomable depths.

There are some passages in Scripture which will enlighten us more. Proverbs 16:1 explains that God is not the author of sin. He does not determine man so that he forces him to sin. Sin arises out of the heart of man. "The plans of the heart belong to man". Yet God determines the course. "But the answer of the tongue is from Jehovah." God made Baalim speak, contrary to his own plans. Yet Baalim sinned and was held responsible for his plan and given no credit for his praise of Israel.

God did not make us with a depraved nature which only gives us the will to sin, to hate God, and our neighbor. He made us in His own image, free to serve Him. The Bible explains the situation very clearly in Romans 5:12. There is the explanation that we are responsible for our sin because we have sinned in Adam. Though we now do not have the will to serve God, that does not mean that God deprived us of that will. We deprived ourselves of that freedom in Adam. So we are yet held responsible in the way of righteous-

ness, upon the basis of having the freedom of will in Adam.

In the providence of God all creatures are caused to enter the situation in which they stand condemned before the bar of God's justice. In the providence of God their responsibility is made plain to them for their sin in Adam and the actual sin which develops from it. So it is ordained and who can speak against the sovereign Lord who has ordained it so and works it out in His providence. Compare Romans 9.

As new creatures in Christ we are given a new will and ability to fulfill the law of God. We do so now by faith. That faith in Christ also causes us to see how that we could not fulfill our responsibility in our old nature, and cannot even now with a new nature fulfill it in the old. We see the power of our bondage and cry out "who shall deliver?" (Romans 7). Our deliverance is in the mortifying of the old and the putting on of the new.

The solution of the problem is not in ability of the old but in the ability of the new man, which is given us in God's providence, by grace in Christ.

L. D.

The Term "Soul" in The Old Testament

In our study of the Old Testament term "soul" and in determining the meaning of that term, it will be necessary first of all to gather what information we can concerning the use of the term in the Old Testament Scriptures and then, in the light thereof, we may attempt to form some conception of it. We must also bear in mind that the term "soul", as so many other concepts of Scripture, is not an isolated term. We cannot treat it as we would the concept "man" or "tree", which belongs to a category all its own. The concept "soul", on the other hand, is very closely related to other similar concepts, such as "heart, life, body" and "spirit", especially the latter. It will be necessary therefore that we take some of these terms into account, especially in as far as they relate to the term in question. At the same time we must be careful that we remain within the proper limits of our subject material and confine ourselves to the term "soul". Only in as far as the related concepts relate to the concept "soul" are they to be discussed. The main question is, what is the meaning of the term "soul" in the Old Testament? And in arriving at the answer to that question we shall have to ask ourselves also

such questions as: How is the term used in the Old Testament? Wherein does the soul differ from the spirit and how are they related? Does the term "soul" always denote the same things? etc.

It is interesting to note first of all that with but one exception the word "soul" in our English Bible, is a translation of the original Hebrew word *nephesh*. However the Hebrew *nephesh* is not always translated by the word *soul*, which means that the Hebrew word for soul has a much broader meaning than the English word soul. *Nephesh* is translated also as, *any, appetite, beast, body, breath, creature, desire, ghost, heart, life, lust, man, mind, person, pleasure, self, thing* and *will*. It will not be necessary for us in this discussion to consider all these terms, although we shall have to bear in mind that these various terms are used for the Hebrew *nephesh*. In this light we understand, for example, that when Genesis 2:7 tells us, "and man became a living soul", it does not mean to say that man became a living soul in distinction from the animal. For in Gen. 1:21 and 24 and other passages, where Scripture speaks of "living creatures" we find in the original the term *nephesh*. The animals also are called *living souls*. Gen. 2:7, therefore does not mean to emphasize the fact that man is a living soul but rather *how* man became a living soul. Man did not become a living soul in the same way in which the animal became a living soul. This does not mean, however, that man is a living soul exactly in the same sense and only to the same extent in which the animal is a living soul. Nevertheless, there is a point of similarity. Notice that in the forming of both man and animal as *living souls* the Lord uses the earth. When He creates the animals the Lord simply calls them forth from the earth. He says, "Let the earth bring forth the living creature (*nephesh*)". In the creation of man, however, we read that God "formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life". Although therefore there is indeed a difference in the way in which each was brought into being, they nevertheless both are brought forth from the earth. And since in both cases it is stated that each became or was a *living soul*, we may conclude that there must be a sense in which the soul of man and animal are alike. And then it must be evident that they are alike in the sense that in each case not only the body but also the soul belongs to the earth. This is evident from two things. In the first place from the fact that when Scripture describes to us the creation of man and tells us that God formed him from the dust of the ground, it cannot simply have reference to the body of man. For we do not read that God formed his body from the dust of the ground and breathed into him his soul but that God formed *man* from the dust of the ground. The forming and the breathing into him the breath of life are two acts of God that belong together and

cannot be separated. It was therefore the whole man, *soul and body*, which God formed from the dust and into whom He breathed the breath of life. In the second place the animal likewise was created body and soul from the earth. Scripture teaches us that the soul of the animal is in the blood, Lev. 17:14. Therefore Israel was not to eat flesh in which there remained blood. In fact this same text tells us even more. It says that the life (*nephesh*, i.e. soul) *is* the blood and that is true of all flesh, "for the life (*nephesh*) of all flesh is the blood thereof". From this it is evident that the soul has a physical existence. It belongs to the body and is, as belonging to the body, destroyed with it through death. In this sense we may say that the soul is the seat of all physical life, in respect to man as well as the animal. Therefore Scripture uses the word *nephesh* to denote that life and we so often read in Scripture of those whose life was sought, or whose soul was sought (in both cases the word is *nephesh*) which means that men sought to kill them. For the very same reason Scripture uses the word soul *nephesh* to denote the whole man, where *nephesh* is translated *person*.

To this physical aspect of the soul belong what we call the five senses. The power to see, hear, smell, taste and touch are powers of the soul in connection with the body. Therefore when that somatic soul is destroyed through death the body is left without the power of action or perception even though it retains the instruments of that activity. And so the Psalmist of Psalm 30 can say, "What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit? Shall the dust praise thee? shall it declare thy truth?"

However, Gen. 2:7 teaches us more than this.

In view of the fact that man was made a living soul in a different way from that in which the animal became a living soul, we must conclude that there is more to man's being a living soul than what has been said above, which applies to both. The manner in which God created man denotes the fact that man was a very special creation of God. He was created after God's own image. He is therefore not simply a living soul but also a spiritual soul. For God formed him after His image and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. Job expresses this beautifully when he says in Job 33:4, "The spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life". This seems to indicate that it was through the in-breathing of God that man was caused to be a *man*, that is, a rational-moral being. He does not merely live a physical-earthly life as do all other animated creatures but he is also a spiritual being. He stands in a definite relation to the living God because he is a creature who can think and will. He acts rationally and he is held accountable to God. And the fact that God so created him when He made him a living soul

would seem to indicate that there is a positive relation between his *nephesh* and his being a spiritual creature. To ascertain just what position the soul of man occupies in respect to his relation to God, we must turn to other passages of Scripture.

In the first place then we may notice that man also possesses a spirit. In speaking of man's spirit the original uses the Hebrew word *ruach*. It is interesting in this connection to note that Scripture sometimes identifies man's soul with his spirit and oftentimes uses them interchangeably, so that it says the same thing about the spirit that it does concerning the soul. So, for example, dying is represented as a giving up of the soul (*nephesh*), Gen. 35:18 and Job 11:20, but also of the spirit (*ruach*), Ps. 31:5 and Ps. 146:4. Also conditions of grief and anguish are ascribed to both soul and spirit, e.g. Job 7:11, "I will speak in the anguish of my spirit: I will complain in the bitterness of my soul." At the same time we might also mention that the very same things are predicted of both *heart* and *soul*. Also these terms are sometimes used interchangeably.

All this seems to indicate that Scripture does not always intend to make clear-cut distinctions between these terms and we cannot therefore contend that in every given case, Scripture has only one particular thing in mind and that in distinction of other well-defined realities. The *nephesh* does not always mean the soul in distinction from the spirit or heart. None of these terms therefore necessarily excludes the others. This means that we are not justified in placing one particular construction upon each of these terms in every instance, no matter in what connection they may appear in Scripture.

This does not mean, however, that there is no distinction and that in many places Scripture does not have in mind the idea of the particular concept, as differing from other similar concepts.

In general, the distinction between the *nephesh* on the one hand and the *spirit* and *heart* on the other is that soul is a broader term and may imply both heart and spirit. The term *heart* signifies essentially a different kind of concept. It is the center of man's life from a spiritual-ethical point of view and therefore determines the spiritual character of a man's life as being either good or evil. Soul and spirit pertain to man's life from the psychological point of view, regardless of its spiritual character.

As to the relation of soul and spirit, it is evident that man is essentially spirit. In this respect he differs from the animals which, although said to have a soul, are never referred to as spirits. However, man is an embodied spirit and in this respect he differs from the angels which, although said to be spirits, do not possess a body; nor do we read of the souls of angels. We find therefore that man is essentially spirit and body. There-

fore we read in Eccl. 12:7, "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return to God who gave it." The *nephesh* is the seat of man's life as a personal, rational-moral individual in relation to the body through which he is joined to the earth and is active in it. It is for this reason that the terms *soul* and *spirit* may be used interchangeably in many cases and that also the same things are predicated of both. For this reason also it is sometimes said that the soul lives on after death and sometimes that it is the spirit that continues.

In the light of the above mentioned facts, it will be evident that the term soul does not always have the same meaning. Since the *nephesh* has a physical side as well as a spiritual side and may be viewed from either aspect, the context will have to determine which is meant. In either case the soul may be said to be the seat of man's life as a rational-moral creature and therefore the subject of all his activities.

H .D. W.

Our Own School — An Injunction?

OUR CATECHISM, OUR CHURCH ORDER, THE BAPTISMAL FORM, AND THE SCHOOL QUESTION

I have been asked to introduce the following question: Do Lord's Day 38 of our Heidelberg Catechism, Article 21 of our Church Order, and the Baptismal Pledge enjoin us to have schools of our own?

Two remarks of a general nature may serve to introduce my introduction.

First, I am not too concerned about the question whether or not these particular passages directly enjoin us to have our own Protestant Reformed Christian Schools. You understand, I am not indifferent toward the idea of our own schools. I believe we must develop our own educational system. I believe no Protestant Reformed parent may and will dare to oppose either the principle or its realization. I believe that without our own schools our churches are doomed. I agree fully with the opinion expressed recently by a minister of the Christian Reformed denomination. When asked: Do you think our Protestant Reformed Churches have a future? this leader replied: If they establish an educational system of their own, yes; otherwise, no. Still, I am not too excited about the question: Do these particular passages directly enjoin us to have our own schools? If the matter

is indeed one of principle it must and does rest on much more than a few individual passages; it rests on truth and principle as a whole; it is based on the whole principle of Christian training, and the whole of our mandate as Christian parents to know God and teach Him to our children as He is, according to our faith in His revelation. For this reason, I hope and expect to discuss these passages dispassionately and in all fairness. I have no desire and will make no effort to make them say anything they really do not say. I do not feel that the matter of our own schools stands or falls with these places. Hence, let them say what they intend to say, no more, no less; and let the chips fall where they may.

Secondly, I would caution you: stick to your subject! The question is not: Do I or do I not desire Protestant Reformed Schools? Are they mandatory for us? Are they necessary? Shall we begin with a grammar school, or is it the better part of discretion to direct our attention toward the establishment of a high school first? How must we go about this thing? Shall it be now, or later; at once, or after further efforts toward reforming the present schools? Remember, this is not a propaganda meeting, designed to press a certain cause. This is a consistorial league meeting and the question to be discussed is: Do the above mentioned places enjoin us to have our own schools, yes or no?

What about Lord's Day 38 of our Heidelberg Catechism?

The Lord's Day in question reads as follows: "What doth God require in the Fourth Commandment? First, that the ministry of the gospel and the *schools* be maintained; and that I, especially on the sabbath," Do these "schools", for us who are Protestant Reformed, mean Protestant Reformed schools?

It is the Lord's Day on the sabbath. To sabbath means to rest. God rested; we must rest. The implication is: we must rest God's rest. Our lives must be patterned after the life of God. We must be busy eternally in the things of the Lord, in the glorification of His name and His work of redemption in the Lord Jesus Christ. That heavenly life takes on tangible form, in this spiritual work we are busy, the sabbath we remember and keep, especially in connection with the instituted church with its ministry of the Word and the sacraments. We need that church and that ministry of the Word. We need them to instruct us, admonish us, exhort and comfort us with respect to the things of God, the revelation of His Name and the work of salvation. In connection with this church and its ministry of the Word the "schools" are mentioned. We desire and need a well-trained ministry. This

trained ministry is made possible by the schools.

From all this we may draw some definite conclusions:

1—The immediate reference is to those schools that are directly responsible for the training of the ministers of the Gospel, seminaries and all schools of theology. Ursinus, chief author of the Heidelberg Catechism, the late Dr. A. Kuyper and all expositors of the Catechism agree on this point.

2—However, this does not mean that we need or should exclude our other schools, elementary as well as secondary. All expositors of our Catechism agree on this also. Ursinus refers in this connection to these other schools and he calls them: "Planthoven der gemeente, waarin de jeugd niet alleen in het lezen en schrijven, of eenige andere eerlijke kunsten, maar voornamelijk in de kennis en vreeze van God, onderwezen moeten worden; opdat er altijd mogen zijn, die men tot den kerkendienst zal kunnen gebruiken." Dr. Kuyper assumes a similar position. Says he: "Christian schools also have the purpose of preparing for the preaching of the Word. . . . This is impossible if children receive heathen education and hear another language only on Sunday. Children must always hear the same language. (It should be clear to all, that I do not quote these lines to suggest that the education our children receive in the present schools is "heathen" education; I only wish to emphasize the principle that our children may not hear a different language during the week than they hear on Sunday. (R.V.) We need schools, also with a view to the ministry of the Word, where preachers learn to preach and listeners to listen." Says Dr. B. Wielenga: "The church owes much to Christian Schools also with a view to its ministry. Support of the Christian schools is certainly our sabbath obligation". For two reasons, therefore, Lord's Day 38 may certainly be understood to refer, not only to our theological school, but to all our Christian schools. First, the training of our children as such belongs to the idea of the sabbath, the idea of entering into God's rest and being busy in the spiritual things of the kingdom of God. Secondly, the Christian schools are definitely involved in the training of the ministry of the Word.

3—In the face of all this, the conclusion, with a view now to our subject, should seem forced to no one: a. That not only the seminaries, but all Christian schools are referred to in this Lord's Day. b. That for our people this should mean, that not only the former but also the latter must be Protestant Reformed. Our children must enter into God's rest and be trained to be busy in the things of God in the way, not of the lie, but of what we are deeply convinced is the way of truth. If, as the late Dr. Kuyper suggests, preachers learn to preach and listeners learn to listen in the Christian school (and this is a deep truth), we shall

certainly have to have Protestant Reformed schools. A Protestant Reformed seminary on the foundation of Christian Reformed schools, Protestant Reformed preachers and listeners trained all their lives by ardent supporters of Christian Reformed churches and doctrine, is illogical and inconsistent, to say the least. On this basis the Protestant Reformed ministry of the gospel (and that is the specific point in this Lord's Day) cannot and will not survive, any more than the Christian Reformed ministry of the gospel would survive if their preachers and their people were taught, year in and year out, by a staff of Protestant Reformed teachers. Even our opponents, I'm confident, *must* see our point.

What about Article 21 of our Church Order?

Article 21, as we have it today, reads as follows: "The consistories shall see to it that there are good Christians schools in which the parents have their children instructed according to the demands of the covenant." What is meant here by "good" Christian schools? What must we understand by "the demands of the covenant"? Does this article, then, enjoin us as Protestant Reformed parents to have our own schools?

This article has a history. Originally it read considerably different than it does today. Translated from the Dutch, the article, adopted in the year 1586, read as follows: "Everywhere Consistories shall see to it, that there are good schoolmasters who shall not only instruct the children in reading, writing, languages and the liberal arts, but likewise in godliness and in the Catechism." (The translation is from "The Church Order Commentary" of Van Dellen and Monsma). The main difference between the original reading and the present version, therefore, is this: According to the original Consistories must see to it, that there are good *teachers*; according to the present reading, they must see to it that there are good *schools*.

At that time, almost four centuries ago, free, parental, Christian schools such as we have now, were unknown. All schools were owned, controlled, supported by the government. They were *public* schools. This does not imply, however, that they were *neutral* schools. Today "public" and "neutral" mean to be synonymous, because the government is no longer committed to any specific religion. In the days of our fathers this was quite different. The government, it is true, owned, controlled and supported the schools. The lines between state and church and home were not drawn as tightly as they are now. However, every government in Europe stood committed to some church, either Roman Catholic or Protestant. Such a government left the management, the supervision, the actual care of the schools to the churches to which they were com-

mitted. These churches saw to it that schools were established wherever they were needed. They appointed and examined the teachers; they watched over the instruction; and they took the necessary measures against such teachers as did not meet with the requirements of such a church. That made the schools, not neutral schools, but church schools in practise, wholly controlled and supervised by the church.

In the Netherlands the schools thus became *Reformed* Christian schools, though government sponsored. The Reformed faith was spreading rapidly about the time this article was written in its original form. The government stood committed to the Reformed churches; consequently it was to them that the management of these schools were entrusted. These churches saw to it, that the government established schools wherever needed; that teachers were appointed, who were members of a Reformed church, who professed the Reformed faith, who signed the Reformed confessions, who walked in a godly way and who knew and could teach the Heidelberg Catechism. The result was: *Reformed* schools. Our fathers were satisfied with nothing less. Hence, this article. "Everywhere Consistories shall see to it, that there are good schoolmasters, etc." Yes, it was a matter of *reforming* the setup that prevailed at that time. But, theirs was not a hopeless attempt, like that of us who would reform the present schools. They were not content with having a Reformed teacher here and there. They reformed the schools from top to bottom and wanted *only* teachers committed to the Reformed truth.

About two score years ago this article was changed to read as it does today. The change was made for two reasons. There was the practical reason that the government withdrew more and more from the domain of the church and became neutral. Consequently, the church lost its grip on the school entirely. This necessitated an entirely new course of action. There were also the principal reasons, that the instruction of our children is not the work of the government at all; that also the church has not this task; that parents have the duty to instruct their children, and therefore to establish and support the schools. Hence, the present reading.

We should notice, however, that the fundamental principles involved have not changed. Our fathers of the 16th century saw, that the schools were of vital importance; that the welfare of the churches was wrapped up in that of the school; "that", says Joh. Jansen, an authority on Church Order, "the seed of the Reformation would take no root, if the children continued to be instructed in the Catholic doctrine in school"; that everything, after all, depends on the school-teachers who instruct our children. Consequently, they wrote the article as they did. They accommodated themselves to the conditions of their times. They needed no more

to reach their immediate purpose. The later fathers saw, that the education of the child is the work of the parent, and that the teaching of the Catechism does not belong to the task of the school. Therefore, certain changes were called for. However, they also saw, as did the fathers ages ago, that the schools are of vital import; that the welfare and future of the church is bound up in that of the school; that, say Van Dellen and Monsma in their very helpful Church Order Commentary, "the church cannot tolerate, to see much of her teaching contradicted and silenced 5 days a week, year after year, in school,—in the formative years of life." Hence, the article as it reads today, an improvement, to be sure, but no change fundamentally.

In view of all this the conclusion is not sought or forced: that this article does enjoin us to have our own schools. We adopted the Church Order with application to our own churches. To the Protestant Reformed man the Christian schools of today are not "good". Any fair-minded individual will understand that. In the schools of today our parents cannot instruct their children "according to the demands of the covenant". To our parents that should mean: "in the aforesaid doctrine." If, somehow, the present schools can be made to serve this purpose, well and good. If not, there is only one alternative. Schools are still of vital importance. The welfare and future of the church is still wrapped up in that of the school. If it is true "that the seed of the Reformation would take no root if the children continued to be instructed in the Catholic doctrine in school", it is also true, that the seed of our Protestant Reformed doctrine will take no root as long as our children continue to be instructed in the Christian Reformed doctrine. What is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. To us, too, apply the words of Van Dellen and Monsma: "The church cannot tolerate to see much of her teaching contradicted and silenced 5 days a week, year after year, in school,—in the formative years of life." That our teaching is contradicted in the present schools is obvious to all who are willing to see.

One need only to read the article carefully to be convinced: "The Consistories (*our* consistories, of course) shall see to it that there are *good* Christian schools, in which the parents (*our* parents, of course) have their children (*our* children, of course) instructed according to the demands of the covenant (Protestant Reformed doctrine, of course; not Christian Reformed)".

Plainest of all is the Baptismal Pledge.

It reads as follows: "Whether you promise and intend to see these children, when come to the years of discretion, instructed and brought up in the aforesaid doctrine, or help or cause them to be instructed therein,

to the utmost of your power? YES."

There are many things here on which we must certainly agree and which we may regard as axiomatic as far as our discussion is concerned. Everything, it seems to me. We agree: 1. That "these children" refers to all our children; all who are born and baptized in our Protestant Reformed churches. 2. That "the aforesaid doctrine", in the mouth of a Protestant Reformed man, refers to the Protestant Reformed doctrine. "Aforesaid" here refers to the preceding question. There our form speaks of "the doctrine which is taught here in this Christian church". That can mean only one thing. 3. That "instructed and brought up in the aforesaid doctrine" refers not only to the indoctrination of our children in the narrower sense of the word, but also to their daily instruction in school. That has always been the position of the Reformed churches. 4. That "to the utmost of your power" means exactly that.

What is the only possible conclusion? We agree also, do we not? that the present schools do not fill the bill, for us. I know we agree on this. It cannot be denied. *Our* parents are not bringing up *our* children in the "doctrine which is taught here in this Christian church." Nevertheless, this vow must be kept. True, the pledge does not mention schools at all. It says nothing about moral obligations, reforming the present schools, etc. Hence, if this vow can be kept and this purpose reached in any other way, well and good. But, if *not*, there is only one alternative: Schools of our own.

Certainly, looked at now solely from the viewpoint of principle, the thing is as plain as the sun in the heavens. The present schools cannot properly instruct our covenant seed. They cannot be made to do so for a thousand reasons. Christian Reformed boards and teachers simply cannot instruct, and cannot be expected to instruct, and cannot be made to instruct our children "in the aforesaid doctrine". They themselves will corroborate this in no uncertain terms. Our children, from the viewpoint of *our* churches and *our* doctrine, are slowly but surely being weaned away. Our own schools is the only answer. Else, our churches are doomed, because we refuse to keep our pledge. Or should I say: our reluctance to want to keep our Baptismal Pledge is proof, that we are lost already?

(Speech delivered at the last consistorial league meeting.)

R. V.

The Lord takes pleasure in His saints
He is His people's strength,
He will glorify the meek
With victory at length.

Welgelukzalige Woning

(Psalm 84)

Als wij altijd stonden waar de dichter van dezen psalm staat, behoefde de kerkeraad nimmermeer te vermanen om toch de onderlinge vergadering niet te veronachtzamen. De dichter verlangt naar Gods Huis. Psalm 84 is een van de psalmen die Gods volk gaarne zingt.

Hoe liefelijk zijn Uwe woningen, o Heere der heirscharen!

Wel mocht deze psalm gezongen "op de gittith"! Dat beteekent de verheuging der wijnpersbak. Zooals men zich verheugde in den wijn, zoo zal men opspringen van vreugde bij de gedachte aan het verkeer in de voorhoven des Heeren.

Hoe liefelijk! Het woord in de Hebreeuwsche taal beteekent: geliefd, bemind. Het is een vorm van hetzelfde woord David, de beminde des Heeren. De zanger Israels spreekt uit zijn liefde voor en tot God. Want als hij de liefelijkheid der woningen Gods bezingt denkt hij natuurlijk aan God. Het gaat altijd om God.

Uwe woningen! God woont. Evenwel moeten we niet denken, dat God woont in denzelfden zin zooals wij wonen. Als wij wonen dan omsluit het huis ons. Zoo woont God niet. Dat gevoelde Salomo toen hij zeide: De hemel der hemelen kunnen U niet bevatten, o Heere! Hoeveel te minder dit Huis dat ik gebouwd heb. Als wij spreken van Gods woningen en Gods huis, dan gedenken wij aan Gods nederbuigende genade, dat Hij Zichzelf wilde openbaren, zooodat wij er iets van kunnen zien hoe heerlijk en glorieus God is. Zooals "God die de eeuwigheid bewoont" is, kunnen wij nooit zien. Maar op aarde en zelfs nu en straks in den hemel zien wij niet dan een openbaring van den wonenden God.

Die woning des Heeren is geopenbaard op het heerlijkst toen Jezus op aarde kwam. In Hem woont God en mensch te zamen in harmonie.

Daar verlangt de zanger naar. Het gaat hij hem om de gemeenschap met God. Daarom gaan we dan ook naar de kerk. De kerkgang en ons werk daar is de groote hoofdzaak van ons leven. En die uitdrukking is eigenlijk ook nog te zwak. Ik mag nog verder gaan. Ik mag de woorden van David hier gebruiken en zeggen: Wij begeeren eigenlijk slechts één ding: Dat ik alle de dagen mijns levens mocht wonen in het Huis des Heeren! Dat beteekent dit: Alle andere dingen zijn slechts bijzaak; de groote hoofdzaak is God! (Echt Gereformeerd!)

De liefelijkste naam van God wordt hier gebruikt: Heere! Die naam Heere komt van een werkwoord, dat *zijn* beteekent. God is de onveranderlijk Zijnde. Ik zal zijn die Ik zijn zal. O daar zit zooveel in. Als God mij bemint voor de grondlegging der wereld, dan

bemint Hij mij ook nu. En dan zal Hij mij beminnen wanneer geen maan meer schijnt. Nog meer: als God mijn God is, dan mint Hij mij ook toen ik nog zondaar was, dat wil zeggen, in den tijd toen ik Hem nog niet kende. Als God mijn God is, dan bemint Hij mij terwijl ik zondig. Hier zit iets verschrikkelijks in. Gedenkt aan Petrus. Toen hij vloekte, bad Jezus en werd hij door God bemind met een onveranderlijke liefde.

En denkt nu maar niet, dat deze leer onvoorzichtige en slordige mensen zal maken. Dat doet het nooit. Let er op: dit volk heeft God lief. En dat beteekent hetzelfde als te zeggen: zij haten het kwaad. En de gedachte, dat God onophoudelijk, eeuwiglijk, onveranderlijk hen bemint met al de liefde van Zijn Goddelijk Wezen, doet hen vromelijk strijden tegen de zonde en al het inwonend kwaad.

En nu krijgen wij een vers, dat moeilijk te verklaren is. De opzet is zoo hoog, het sentiment is zoo verheven, de zielsadel is zoo wonderlijk schoon. Stelt het U voor: deze zangen durft te zeggen, dat wanneer hij aan Gods huis denkt, hij verbleekt van verlangen. Meer nog, dat hij verteed wordt van verlangen. Dat is de letterlijke gedachte der woorden. Als er staat: Mijn ziel is begeerig, dan wordt er een woord gebruikt, dat letterlijk beteekent *verbleeken*. Ik denk, dat ge direkt verstaat, waarom dit woord gebruikt wordt. Als ge iemand zeer lief hebt en plotseling aan hem of haar herinnerd wordt, dan verbleekt men van aandacht. Dat wil de zanger eigenlijk zeggen. Hij zegt tot U en mij: Als ik aan Gods gemeenschap denk, dan verbleek ik, dan bezwijk ik van verlangen, dan wordt ik verteed (letterlijk) van het hunkeren naar de zalige verkeer met God.

Ach, wie staat daar altijd? Niemand.

Mijn hart en mijn vleesch roepen uit tot den levenden God.

Het Woord *roepen* is luidkeels roepen of schreeuwen. Denkt niet dat ik overdrijf. Ge kunt trouwens hetzelfde woord vinden in psalm 42. Daar staat toch: alzoo schreeuwt mijn ziel tot U o God! Het oorspronkelijke woord beteekent een roepen, dat luid is. Het is de uitdrukking van het verlangen en het bezwijken van verlangen.

Mijn hart en mijn vleesch. Hoe kan dat? Ik kan nog wel zien, dat het hart naar God toe wil, doch het vleesch? Staat mijn vleesch niet allen godsdienst tegen? Het vleesch is niet het zondige vleesch hier. Het houdt in de openbaring van den verborgen mensch, het hart. Ge moet vleesch en hart tezamen lezen. Het hart is het ethische centrum van ons leven. Zooals het hart is van den mensch zoo is hij. Dieper dan het hart kunt ge niet gaan. Daar zijn de uitgangen van ons leven. De eerste roerselen van onze gedachten en motieven en beraadslagingen komen vanuit dat hart. Ge zoudt kunnen zeggen, dat ge daar het eerste *leeft*.

Nu dan, het hart schreeuwt naar God en kan niet

rusten totdat het rusten mag in God. En de zucht van dat hart is zoo sterk, dat het den geheelen mensch meesleurt naar God. Het hart staat in vlam van verlangen en streven en het wordt gezien, het wordt duidelijk gezien: die man, die vrouw wil naar den hemel, daarboven bij God.

Hoe teeder! Hij spreekt de musch en de zwaluw zalig. Zij wonen bij Gods altaren. Die mensch en zwaluw zijn vertegenwoordigers van al de andere schepselen. Zij hebben allen hun plaats bij de altaren des Heeren. We gevoelden het als kinderen wanneer dit versje gezongen werd. Als we dan later de zwaluwen zagen, werden we eraan herinnerd: God is ook de God der zwaluwen en der musschen!

Welgelukzalig zijn ze die in Uw huis wonen, zij prijzen U gestadiglijk!

Hij dacht hier aan de priesters en de levieten. Wij denken aan de leeraars, de ouderlingen en diakenen.

Zonder twijfel, er is geen heerlijker leven, dan leeraar in Israel te mogen zijn. O ik weet het wel, dat wij niet waardig zijn, ik weet het ook wel, dat wij er niet altijd staan, zooals de dichter ons voorstelt: zij prijzen U gestadiglijk. En toch wilde ik er voor pleiten om het te laten staan. Zoo is het: zij prijzen U gestadiglijk. Laat dan de zonde ons somtijds bevangen en doen zuchten. Ook in dat zuchten wordt God geprezen. Als de tollenaar zegt: O God wees mij zondaar genadig! Wordt God dan niet geprezen?

Laat het staan. Het is waar zooals het er staat. Wij mogen gedurig bezig zijn met de dingen van Gods huis.

Ge moogt gerust een dienaar Gods al het goed en het goud van Uw huis bieden voor dat ambt: hij zal U ten eenemale verachten.

En aanstonds zijn we allen gelijk daar waar geen tranen vloeien. Straks prijzen zij U allen, o Heere mijn God.

Zalig het volk dat naar Gods gemeenschap hunkert: zij worden zekerlijk vervuld.

G. V.

OFFICIAL NOTICE

The Ministers' Conference of Classis East will meet on Tuesday, July 10, at 9:30 A. M., in Fuller Ave. Protestant Reformed Church, the Lord willing.

PROGRAM:—

"Supra and Infra in Bavinck and Kuyper" — Rev. Geo. Lubbers.

"The Old and New Covenant" — Rev. G. M. Ophoff.

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IN MEMORIAM

On May 18, 1945, it pleased the Lord to take unto Himself, after a lingering illness of eleven months, our dear husband, father and grandfather,

MARTIN ZUIDEMA (age 74 years)

Although we mourn our loss we rejoice in the assurance that he is now in glory enjoying the rest that remaineth for the people of God.

Mrs. Martin Zuidema
Mr. and Mrs. Albert Zuidema
three grandchildren.

Grand Rapids, Michigan.