

# THE STANDARD

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## MEDITATION

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### Having Much, Yet Being Nothing

“And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.”

I Cor. 13:2.

The Apostle will teach the church at Corinth the difficult lesson that all their gifts and talents, if they are to be conducive to edification of the congregation, must spring from conscious love of God.

He had told them that speech, be it ever so beautiful in the outward sense, yea, even though it would be angelic in sound, without love is a discord in the ears of God. Speech, if it is to be pleasant in God's ear, must be the expression of the love of God. If it is not that, it were better if we had never uttered a word. It is nothing but as sounding brass and as a tinkling cymbal, discordant, ugly and void of real harmony.

He will now proceed to apply that principle to the gifts of prophecy and faith, for both mysteries and knowledge are mentioned in connection with prophesying.

Though I have the gift of prophecy . . . and have not charity, I am nothing!

Is that possible?

Indeed, it is.

There are instances recorded in the Word of God where men had the gift of prophecy, and yet they were lost. At once we think of Balaam and of Caiaphas.

The one uttered a most beautiful prophecy of the promised Redeemer. Listen to him: “I shall see Him, but not now: I shall behold Him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and

destroy all the children of Sheth. And Edom shall be a possession, Seir also shall be a possession for His enemies; and Israel shall do valiantly. Out of Jacob shall come He that shall have dominion, and shall destroy him that remaineth of the city.”

And when we read the whole history we are struck with the excellency of his prophecies. He *saw* the wonders of God's redemption and the beauty of the people that was redeemed by God's right hand. It is from the prophecy of Balaam that the people of God are wont to quote the text which tells of the marvel of eternal justification: “He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath He seen perverseness in Israel”.

And of Caiaphas we all know how he gave expression to the very heart of the Gospel, prophesying that it “is expedient for us, that one should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not”. And the Holy Ghost expressly adds: “And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation”.

So we see that a man may have the gift of prophecy and still be nothing in the Kingdom of God.

And as it is with the main concept of prophecy, so it is with the gifts of the understanding of mysteries and the gift of knowledge. If they are not put in the employ of the love of God, they are nothing. Indeed, they will make us the more culpable before the great white throne. It will be more tolerable for Balak who employed Balaam than for Balaam who allowed himself to be thus employed. This man certainly knew much of the mysteries of the kingdom and had much knowledge. It would be entirely possible to build a little dogmatics on the basis of his utterances. But his heart was filled with the hatred against God and His people. For worldly riches he would fain employ all the gifts that God bestowed on him, in order to curse the people of God.

And, yes, Caiaphas uttered the beautiful and fundamental truth of vicarious atonement, but his heart, even as Balaam, was filled with wrath and hatred against God and His Anointed Son. And he was instrumental in hanging Him on the accursed tree.

Many there be that perish who knew the mysteries of the kingdom and who had knowledge of the thousand and one details of the unfolding counsel of redemption. And they perished because they lacked the one motivating principle: the love of God which should vitalize all prophecy, understanding and knowledge. It is a terrible thought to think of prophets in hell, but God's Word has revealed that awful truth.

Such revelation makes us shudder.

There is a serious and solemn warning in our text.

I may write a complete Reformed Dogmatics, and be able to pass muster and censure of a reading orthodox church, and yet be nothing, stand naked before the throne of judgment. I may talk in my prophesying and reveal mysteries and exhibit great knowledge of the things of God's Kingdom, so that others are edified, and still be nothing . . .

Oh, let us not make a mistake and think that in such case we are merely neutral. That the Lord will say in that great day: No, there was no positive fruit for yourself! But no harm done: you are merely nothing! The Holy Ghost employs the word *nothing* here to indicate that the fruit we might rightfully expect upon the employ of prophecy is not found after all. But it also implies that we are in awful debt. Prophecy, if not employed through and in the love of God, is employed in and through hatred against God: no man ever does anything without a motive. And the two motives expressed are the sum total of all motivation. There is no third motive at all. You either act from the love of God or from the motive of wrath against God. The two examples from Scripture also teach such. Add to it the case of Saul. He also was found among the prophets. And we know how he stood over against the Lord and His anointed king David. Paul really writes about the same thing when he tells us that we either call Jesus a curse, or that we say through the Holy Ghost: Lord Jesus! There is no neutrality possible over against God.

Yes, we shudder at the thought.

How often do we prophesy from the motive of purest love?

How often do we employ our understanding of mysteries and our knowledge of the things of God's kingdom because we love Him so very much?

If this verse teaches anything at all, it tells us that we ought to prophesy because of God's love. That wherever we talk about God and His wondrous works (and that is prophecy) we should do so because our hearts are burning with zeal for our great Shepherd.

Mark the literal meaning of prophesying: it means to boil over! It means that the love of God so boils within our hearts and minds that we cannot keep still, but tell everyone within our sphere that His works are most marvellous and worthy of glory and honor.

Mark also the motive of such prophesying: the love

of God! And that Divine virtue cometh by the Holy Ghost: "for the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us". Rom. 5:5.

And thus we can understand in a measure that the New Testament Church declared the wonderful works of God when Christ poured out the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost. The exulting church broke out in most beautiful prophesying, declaring the mighty works of God.

But there is more.

Note how the apostle proposes the possession of prophecy to the utmost degree. And yet, if love does not accompany such tremendous gift, we are still nothing.

Try and understand him. Suppose a man would possess the knowledge of all the mysteries of the Kingdom of God, so that he would harbour in his mind all Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Isaiah, and Paul knew of the mysteries and the knowledge of the kingdom. And suppose that he had mastered all the dogmatics that were written by the church-fathers, that is, those that were pure in doctrine,—and yet lacked the love of God, he would be nothing!

Oh, yes, we are thirsty for knowledge, and we would fain know about the mysteries, that is, the truths that are so great and so wonderful that I cannot fully grasp them, the truths that become still greater, the more I approach them with a wondering mind: we surely would desire to know and to know much.

But our text tells us that knowledge and understanding of mysteries are nothing without love.

They are less than nothing, for the more I know the more responsible I am for that which I have grasped of the works of God. Responsible, that is: I must give the right response, the right answer to God.

And this is the response that is pleasant to the ears of the Almighty: "O Lord, how manifold are Thy works! in wisdom Thou hast made them all: the earth is full of Thy riches!" And in the New Testament: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!"

Standing before Him, having received the gift of prophecy, and in order to give content to such admirable work of prophesying, having received your share of the knowledge of His mysteries, you raise your voice in the song of the redeemed, and praise Him because you love Him! Doing this, you are a mirror in which the Lord beholds His image, for He praises Himself forever.

And as it is with the gift of prophecy, so also with respect to the gift of faith: "and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing".

Let us note, first of all, that the faith which is mentioned here is not saving faith. A man having saving faith cannot be lost. Moreover, saving faith worketh by love. Faith is essentially the love of God. It is the cleaving love of God which throws itself upon His Word of promise. Its two elements are the knowledge of God and the relying on His Word. Such a one cannot be lost. But must be saved. His faith saves him, according to the words of Jesus.

But miraculous faith is meant here, as is evident from the text: "so that I could remove mountains".

There have been miserable souls who had this miraculous faith, and who perished nevertheless. Think, f.i., on Judas Iscariot. There is no doubt but he also went out to preach the gospel of the kingdom at the commandment of Jesus; and he also came back exulting: that the very devils were subject unto them!

But this miraculous faith did not save him. He is lost forever.

Such miraculous faith existed during Jesus' sojourn on earth, but is no more.

I know that the Roman Catholic church *claims* this faith and its exercise and triumphs, but we know that it is all a sham.

Also other churches claim this gift. Especially in our day, the sects that claim this wonder-working faith are on the increase. They come to us with wonderful stories of "faith-healing", etc., but time and again it has been disproved.

The question is often asked: why no miraculous faith now? And: why did the Lord give this gift during and shortly after Christ's sojourn on earth? And the Word of God gives us the answer: God wrought *with* the preaching of the Gospel, in order to establish the New Testament church among the heathen nations, and caused many miracles to be performed.

And if we persist and ask: but why not now, then our answer must be simply this: the Lord does not deem it necessary for the establishing and the edification of His Church. He is the same mighty Lord, but it does not please Him to use this power today.

In the last days He will, indeed, again show wonders and miracles. And He will do so on a great scale. But those wonders will be terrible.

The point, however, of the text is, that even though a person would have all the miraculous faith which once was exercised by Jesus and the apostles, it would not mean anything if the love of God would not accompany the gift.

He would be nothing in such case.

Miraculous faith, in order to benefit its possessor must be mixed with the love of God.

And also here: it will be terrible for that person, having possessed this faith, and yet to find himself

outside the kingdom. It were better for him if he never had been born. Think on Judas once more. It had been better for him if he never had gone out with the disciples of Jesus, teaching and preaching and performing miracles of healing and casting out of devils. All such action aggravates the judgment, if there is no love as the deepest motive of all such actions.

I said: we shudder at these solemn warnings, and well we may.

There is no one among us who possesses the gift of prophecy to the extent that he knows *all* mysteries and has *all* the knowledge. And no one among us possesses all the faith.

But we do possess "in part" the wonderful gifts of God in prophecy, the knowledge of mysteries and of the various facts of knowledge of the works of God.

And all these gifts make us responsible before God. It makes us greater debtors before Him who gave the gifts. And He will one day call us to account, to a minute accounting of each and every one of them.

And if we have used those gifts unto envying and strife, even as in the case of the four parties at Corinth, we shall suffer loss. That is also found in God's Word.

We should employ them in the sphere of the love of God and from that same love as the motive of the deepest heart.

It is the only excelling way to the heart of God.

It is the way that lead Christ to His heart. He prophesied and spoke of God from that wonderful motive of love. He employed all the gifts of God in the sphere of that love. It was the reason why He merited salvation for His sheep. And He bids us on every page of the Bible to follow His footsteps. It is even now the only way to God: the way of the walk in love.

The same Paul teaches this truth in Ephesians 5:1, 2: "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour!"

I would conclude by saying that we can do so only through the operation of the Holy Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ, operating in our heart and mind. If we have that Spirit, our hearts will boil over: we will prophecy. And you will do so in the measure that you have received the gifts of understanding the mysteries and the knowledge of the facts of redemption. It will vitalize these gifts so that you too will stand before His face, exulting in God.

It is the beginning of heaven on earth.

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## EDITORIALS

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### Dr. Schilder Answers Rev. Van Halsema

An article appeared in a recent issue of *De Wachter* against Dr. Schilder. The brother is far from home, and thus also far from his own paper, and since it would take considerable time for the copy to go to Holland, and the paper to come back to our shores, the Standard Bearer offers the use of its pages for his reply.

We grant him the space otherwise taken by our editorial and by SION'S ZANGEN.

Here follows the brother's reply to Ds. Van Halsema:

#### "DE WACHTER" SPREEKT SCHOONE WOORDEN, MAAR BEPLEIT GEEN TROUWE DADEN"

Het weekblad "De Wachter" van 16 Sept. jl., bevat een artikel van Ds. E. Van Halsema, waarop we gaarne antwoorden. We zouden liefst het blad zelf dit antwoord hebben toegezonden, maar omdat er gegronde reden is voor het vermoeden, dat de copie toch niet zou worden opgenomen (stel u voor, dat een man die "by order of the synodical committee" niet door de kerkeraden der Chr. Ref. Church tot *spreken* mag worden uitgenoodigd, in het blad van een lid van dit committee zou *schrijven*!) beperk ik me tot de Standard Bearer.

Ds. Van Halsema spreekt in zijn artikel onderscheidene schoone en vriendelijke *woorden*. Maar hij bepleit geen trouwe *daden*, en, om het heel duidelijk te zeggen: hij camoufleert de positieve daden van *ontrouw*, waaraan de Chr. Ref. Church en haar "synodical committee" (waarvan Ds. Van Halsema lid is) zich *tegenover de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland, en dus ook tegenover mij*, bij herhaling, en ook thans, schuldig heeft gemaakt en nog maakt. Hijzelf klaagt, dat ik de "milk of human kindness" verzuur met de gal der bitterheid. Hij bedoelt blijkbaar, dat ik, die op de boot fatsoenlijk tegenover den medepassagier opgetreden ben, me van de *ambtelijke* relatie, die hijzelf als Wachter-redacteur (in een artikeltje over den "*Schilder-representative*", *dien men niet ontvangen moest*) heeft geschapen, blijf doordringen; en tevens, dat ik de *ambtelijke* relatie hooger acht dan de private: een christen moet zijn ambt vóór alles doen gelden. Maar kom aan, we twisten dáároveň niet. *Ik* klaag erover, dat Ds. Van Halsema de gal der bitterheid in de "milk of human kindness" verstoppt.

Laat ons maar eens zien.

1. Ds. van Halsema hoopt, dat mijn bezoek "de zaak des Heeren ten goede zal komen". Dat klinkt vriendelijk. Maar hij voegt er aan toe: "al heeft zijn bezoek dan ook geen officieel kerkelijk karakter en al zijn de kansels onzer kerken voor hem nu gesloten".

Hij wil blijkbaar zeggen: er is wel een zeker "fatum", dat er nu eenmaal ligt (die gesloten kansels), maar de Heere kan toch ondanks die gesloten kansels wel Zijn zegen geven.

Nu, dit laatste meen ik ook. Persoonlijk ben ik overtuigd, dat er reeds zegen ontvangen werd.

Maar Ds. Van Halsema moet zich wel herinneren, dat *hijzelf* voor die gesloten kansels, althans van "zijn" kerk, mede verantwoordelijk is: Zijn eigen blad "De Wachter" heeft al het stormsignaal geheschen, toen een "Schilder-representative" werd aangekondigd, en gezegd: niet ontvangen! Hij heeft in zijn blad omtrent het doen en laten der nederlandsche synodes, en ook omtrent ons zelf, en onze eigen meening, berichten gegeven, die wij geheel en al *onwaar* noemen. Hij is bovendien lid van het "synodical committee", dat wederom gezegd heeft: ontvangt hem niet op uw pulpits, o kerkeraden, die de gemeente van Christus weiden moet.

En nu heeft Ds. Van Halsema mij op de bootreis wel gezegd, dat dit laatste geschied is *in zijn afwezigheid* (alsof hij er onschuldig aan was), maar ik had hem te voren al—(blijkbaar nog in "the milk of human kindness". . .) eraan herinnerd, dat "De Wachter" *net zóó* geschreven en gewaarschuwd had tegenover den Schilder-representative, dien men destijds verwachtte. Dat was toen Ds. D. Van Dijk. Welnu, als men voor een "representative" de deur dicht doet, dan toch zeker ook voor den man zelf, dien men (een dwaze probleemstelling) denkt "vertegenwoordigd" te zien? Ds. Van Halsema is dus wel degelijk verantwoordelijk voor den geest en ook voor de letter van het decreet van het synodical committee, waarvan hij lid is. En als hij meent, dat de heeren Danhof c.s. verkeerd hebben gehandeld in zijn afwezigheid, welnu, ik zal eens uitkijken of er ook een officieele afkeuring verschijnt in The Banner, of in De Wachter, waarin Ds. Van Halsema zich openlijk en duidelijk losmaakt van de "order" (!) van dit comité. Tot zoolang neem ik op goede gronden aan, dat ook hij voor dat fraaie stukje hiërarchie en trouweloosheid geheel en al verantwoordelijk is.

2. Ik sprak daar van "hiërarchie". Toen ik op de boot Ds. Van Halsema sprak (hijzelf vertelt iets uit dit gesprek, en ik mag hem dus daarin volgen) merkte ds. v. H. op, dat wat de *bladen* schreven (b.v. "De Wachter" over dien Schilder-representative) niet voor rekening van de *kerk* kwam. Daar had hij gelijk in, al meen ik, dat een blad als De Wachter, dat "*het eigendom is van de Chr. Ref. Church*", en dat *onder toezicht* van een door de *synode* benoemde Publicatie-

Commissie staat, aardig *kerkelijk* is van karakter. Maar goed, toen ds. v. H. door bovengenoemde opmerking den indruk gaf, dat ik niet moest denken, dat wat *De Wachter* schreef, officieele houding van de *kerk* was, heb ik dit aanvaard. Toen evenwel één van de passagiers van de boot, wiens naam trouwens door ds. v. H. met eere vermeld wordt op bl. 570 van het Wachter-nummer, mij met verontwaardiging liet lezen een knipsel uit The Banner, het stukje, n.l., waarin "by order of the synodical committee" de kerkeraden werden vermaand, *zoowel voor spreekbeurten* als voor preekbeurten de deuren voor ondergeteekende gesloten te houden, toen heb ik daarna aan ds. v. H. dit stuk getoond, en hem gezegd: maar *dit is toch wel kerkelijk, en officieel*. Hij gaf dit toe. Het is trouwens klaar als de dag. Welnu, zulk optreden is pure hiërarchie. Een commissie, die als manusje-van-alles maar optreden kan of mag om als een soort opperkeraad op te treden, en de zaken te bedisselen, is bij het goede, oude, gereformeerde kerkrecht onbekend. Een gereformeerde synode kan wel deputaten benoemen met een strikt *beperkte* en *nauw omschreven* opdracht, en *verantwoordelijk* aan de volgende synode, maar die deputaten hebben daarom juist geen enkele *algemeene* bevoegdheid van regeeren of zelfs van adviseeren. De kerkeraden blijven vrij binnen het kader van Schrift, belijdenis, kerkenordering. En het kerkverband doodt de *zóó* omschreven vrijheid van de kerkeraden niet. De kerkeraden hebben geen heeren boven zich. De afgevaardigden naar de classis b.v., krijgen *geen oorspronkelijke*, maar *alleen gedelegeerde* macht, gebonden aan hun *lastbrief*. Die naar de synodes hebben ook geen andere dan gedelegeerde macht. En daarom is zulk een "order" van een "synodical committee" hiërarchie. En hiërarchie beteekent een doodelijk gevaar voor de kerk. Menschenheerschappij stelt zich in de plaats van Christus' regeering. En heel gemakkelijk wordt de *partijdigheid* de baas waar de hiërarchie den toon aangeeft. Zooals ook thans de Chr. Ref. Church zich aan droeve partijdigheid schuldig maakt. Maar daarover afzonderlijk.

3. Want ik sprak hierboven ook over "trouweloosheid". Ds. van Halsema gebruikt schoone woorden. Maar hij camoufleert slechte, trouweloze daden.

Dat hij camoufleert, blijkt al uit zijn ietwat bizarre opmerking: "Kom, professor, betracht nu eens dezelfde vriendelijkheid aan broeders *in Nederland*, die gij hier aan de broeders in de Protestant Reformed Church meent te moeten bewijzen. Beiden toch verschillen van u, waarom dan gemeten met twee maten?" Tot zoover ds. v. Halsema.

Ik kan over zulke woorden me slechts verwonderen. Verschillen de broeders van de Prot. Ref Churches van mij? Als ds. v. H. bedoelt, dat er Protestant Reformed *theologen* zijn, die over eenige *theologische* vraagstukken anders denken dan ik, of—wat meestal het feit is—

een andere *terminologie* volgen, en andere *dilemna's* zich zagen opgedrongen in hun kerkelijke worsteling, dan heeft hij daarin volkomen gelijk. Is het bij de Chr. Ref. Church soms anders? Praat daar iederen b.v. prof. Berkhof in *alles* na? Wel, dan is het nog erger dan men vermoeden kan. Geen enkele *levende* kerk zal onder *theologen* geen verschil zien. Maar daar gaat het niet over. Ds. van Halsema weet natuurlijk heel goed, dat volgende feiten *officieel* en voor ieder *controleerbaar* zijn:

a/ de Prot. Ref Churches hebben gezegd: *laat ons eens hooren*, wat er in Nederland gebeurd is, en één van de broeders zelf daartoe *uitnoodigen*. Dat was prachtig. Dat was broad-minded, want de Prot. Ref. Churches hadden met ons nog geen correspondentie, en toch zeiden zij: give him a hearing. Maar de *Chr. Ref. Church* had met ons in Nederland WEL correspondentie. Maar ze zei: deuren toe, deuren toe. Als ds. v. H. nu onze relatie tot de Prot. Ref. Churches zóó prachtig vindt, dat hij ze ten voorbeeld stelt, dan zou ik willen zeggen: kom dominee, bedracht nu eens dezelfde vriendelijkheid aan broeders in Nederland, die gij hier in de broeders van de Prot. Ref. Churches meent te moeten prijzen. Dat is: protesteer nu eens tegen uw eigen synodical committee, heb den moed, dien Rev. Hoeksema getoond heeft, en zeg dat eens *hardop* tot uw eigen broeders, en dus publiek: laat ons den man eens hooren *in het openbaar*; Rev. Hoeksema is niet bang voor zijn feiten materiaal, waarom zouden wij het zijn?

b/ de kwestie in Nederland loopt er niet over, of iemand een bepaalde theologische *verbonds*-beschouwing aanhangt, of zoo iets. *Dat moet ds. v. Halsema wel weten*. Ze loopt erover, dat wij zijn geschorst en bij honderden uit de ambtelijke bediening, ja uit de kerk, het kerkverband gezet (Bergschenboek), of van het avondmaal geweerd, o.a. omdat we niet beloven wilden, *toen dat geeischt werd*, NIETS te leeren, dat niet VOLKOMEN in overeenstemming was o.a. met de formule, dat men het zaad des verbonds moest houden voor *wedergeboren* en in Christus geheiligd, totdat bij het opwassen uit leer of leven het tegendeel bleek. Dat was een dwaze, en onwetenschappelijke en onschriftuurlijke eisch; hetgeen *reeds daaruit* af te leiden valt, dat men een paar jaar later (in 1946), toen men weer aan het knoeien ging, vrijheid gaf, om óók iets te leeren, dat NIET in overeenstemming was met die formule: men mocht *toen* (nadat *wij* waren uitgeworpen) OOK wel zeggen: niet "wedergeboren", doch "te wederbaren". Maar als ds. v. Halsema heeft gelezen wat Rev. H. Hoeksema schreef, dan weet hij bijzonder goed, dat deze openlijk verklaart, dat hij van die onderstelde wedergeboorte niets moet hebben. Hij weet ook, dat Rev. Hoeksema openlijk verklaard heeft, het *kerkrecht*, dat de synode in Nederland gebruikt heeft, hartgrondig te verwerpen. Hij weet dus ook (wat ik trouwens

reeds lang openlijk geschreven heb), dat Rev. Hoeksema op de vragen, die *mij* gesteld zijn, *ook zelf* zou hebben geantwoord: NEEN, evenals ik. En dat dus Rev. Hoeksema zou *geschorst* zijn, en *afgezet*, in Nederland, net als ik. Hij is veel te goed en veel te eerlijk theoloog, om in Nederland *niet* afgezet te zijn in het dolle jaar 1944, toen de Amsterdamsche theologen de kerk hebben laten verongelukken met hun ondeskundige adviezen in betrekking tot sacrament, wedergeboorte, etc. Van die ondeskundigheid, zelfs met betrekking tot hun eigen slachtoffers, geeft b.v. blijk de brief, dien dr. F.W. Grosheide schreef aan ds. J. Waagmeester over "cand. Schilder" en over den vromen en geleerden prof. dr. S. Greydanus, dien men óók heeft durven schorsen,—een blijvende smaad over wie het durfden doen, tenzij ze zich openlijk in berouw bekeeren. Wat ds. v. Halsema zegt, is dus volkomen onzakelijk, ook kerkelijk gezien.

Maar nog op een andere wijze camoufleert ds. v. Halsema de feiten. Hij zegt, dat hij mij de gelegenheid wilde geven, om, indien ik in zijn huis was, IN BESLOTEN KRING "mijn" zijde van de historie in Nederland te vertellen. Maar hij verzwijgt, dat ik toen verwezen heb naar het Wachter-artikel: Geen Schilder-representative. En tevens, dat ik hem gezegd heb, wat ook ds. D. van Dijk hem onder het oog gebracht heeft, en wat in den brief van onze Groningsche synode aan de Chr. Ref. Church is opgemerkt, nl. dit: DAT DE CHR. REF. CHURCH, althans in *officieele* bladen en door *officieele* handelingen en thans ook door een *officieel* synodical committee, *met twee maten meet*. Ds. van Halsema durft mij (omdat ik met de Prot. Ref. Churches, die me inviteerden, spreek, terwijl ik in Nederland tot onze UITWERPERS zeg: eerst schrijven en dan spreken) de vraag voorleggen: "waarom gemeten met twee maten?" Men kan over zulk een vraag uit DEZEN mond slechts het hoofd schudden. *Inviteer me maar eens*, ds. van Halsema, *om te spreken voor uw volk* (de dominees *alleen* zijn niets zonder het volk, en *het volk moet erbij kunnen zijn*, als uw zaak het licht kan verdragen). *Als ik dan weiger*, spreek DAN van meten met twee maten. Maar Gij zelf zegt tot uw volk, en tot uw kerkeraden (gij als zwijgend lid van uw synodical committee, en als Wachter-redacteur): laat hem niet spreken; en dan *toch nog* praten over meten met twee maten? Kom, word consequent en wees mannelijk. WANT GIJ EN UW LEIDERS METEN MET TWEE MATEN. Uw synodical committee zegt: laat hem niet preeken *en ook niet eens spreken*, want: we hebben met zijn denominatie geen correspondentie. Maar iedereen in Amerika weet, dat op de platforms van de platforms van de Chr. Ref. Church heel wat personen optreden die allesbehalve goed gereformeerd zijn.

Maar dat is het ergste niet, althans in *dit* geding.

Gij zegt, ds. v. Halsema, en het klinkt heel ferm:

“van mondje snoeren houden we niet en . . . we hooren iemand graag uitpraten”. Wel, *is dat zoo?* Maar uw kerkvolk dan? Is dat een stel onmondigen? Als Gijzelf in De Wachter het volk waarschuwt tegen ds. D. van Dijk, om hem NIET te vragen, en als uw eigen synodical committee nu hetzelfde doet tegenover mij, dan kan men de ééne uitlating met de andere slechts verbinden, indien men er uit leest: een paar *dominees*, die mogen het wel hooren, maar het volk niet. De *dominees*, in een *besloten* bijeenkomst, die laten iemand (nadat ze hem eerst publiek beleedigd hebben) “gaarne uitpraten”, maar het *volk* moet er buiten blijven. Maar ik heb geen zin, uw volk te negeren. Ik weet ook veel te goed, dat het altijd weer van het *volk* moet komen, als de *leiders* zich laten bepraten door de ééne partij ten nadeele van de andere. In Grand Rapids zijn alle theologische professoren geinviteerd, publiek, en ook namens of door mijzelf persoonlijk, om te komen luisteren als ik in het openbaar sprak. Dat is geschied, NADAT, o ds. v. Halsema, uw bladen die waarschuwend stukjes hadden gepubliceerd. Dr. C. Bouma, b.v., die in Calvin Forum over mij allerlei leelijks (dat is niet erg), maar vooral allerlei *onwaarheid* verteld had, kreeg zoo de kans voor een gereserveerde plaats: hij kon dan eens nagaan, of hij het eenvoudige volk van God en het buitenland naar waarheid had ingelicht over een broeder en collega. Ik heb hem niet gezien. En anderen evenmin, al had niet ieder zich onttrokken.

Maar ook dat is het ergste niet in *dit* geding.

Het ergste is, dat gij, ds. v. Halsema, gij en de uwen, WEL toelaat de ééne partij, en niet de andere. Dat gij oordeelt over zaken waar gij niets van weet. Dat gij het officieele nieuws, dat gij WEL weet, negeert, en dan liever afgaat op oncontroleerbare mededeelingen van de synodocratische uitwerpers in Nederland.

Kijk, ik zou me hebben kunnen voorstellen, dat gij gezegd hadt: er is in Nederland een scheuring; wij hadden met de uitwerpers en de uitgeworpenen tevoren correspondentie; wij willen nu *zelf* oordeelen, wie aan de oude grondslagen vasthielden en wie niet, en *tot dat wij alles zelfstandig en openlijk hebben onderzocht en beoordeeld*, zullen wij MET GEEN VAN DE NEDERLANDERS in officieele relatie treden. En NIEMAND van hen laten optreden. *Of*: met beiden, indien zij op de *basis der drie formulieren van eenigheid* staan. DAT ware onpartijdig geweest. En *daar* hadden we niets tegen in kunnen brengen. *Maar gij handelt anders*. Gij laat wel den man preeken (Barkey Wolf), die een telegrammetje aan de synode stuurde, dat ze toch zou optreden tegen den man die de kinderen niet voor wedergeboren wilde laten houden, maar die overigens de kansels openstelt voor menschen van *allerlei* slag, ook al tasten ze de grondwaarheden der Schrift aan. Gij laat wel ds. Meijster optreden, die, zonder een woord te hooren van de betrokken hoór-

leeraren zelf, hen zonder blikken of blozen mee helpt uitwerpen door de synode, al is hij secretaris-curator. Gij laat wel optreden dr. Brillenburg Wurth, die de plaats durfde innemen van een ander, die weggewerkt was omdat hij een formule afwees, die men later . . . veranderde. Gij laat wel optreden dr. P. Prins, die Calvin Forum voorzag van copie, waaruit dr. C. Bouma naar eigen zeggen zijn onwaarheid schrijvend artikel distilleerde. Gij laat wel optreden een man als dr. Berkhouwer, die zijn handteekening zette onder allerlei banvonnissen en rapporten, waarvan wij beweren en bewezen: ze staan vol fouten (net zoo dwaas soms, als wat Grosheide schreef over de theologische meening van Greydanus). Maar gij zegt zoowel van ds. D. van Dijk als van ondergeteekende: niet laten preeken, niet laten spreken, zelfs dat niet. Ooren toe. En dan durft ge nog uw artikel besluiten met den wensch, dat ik mijn pen zal gebruiken tot samensnoering van het volk van God. Ds. van Halsema, dat uw broer, en vele anderen, in Nederland zich hebben laten verleiden tot het gehoor geven aan Amsterdamsche adviezen van zich vergissende theologen, en toen Gods saamgesnoerde volk *uit elkaar gejaagd hebben*, dat kan *ik* niet helpen. Maar *gij* moet de zaak niet op haar kop zetten. Wij hebben geen menschen om onze opinie geschorst of zoo. Maar anderen hebben ons geschorst en uitgeworpen. En dat, omdat ze weigerden in 1944 te beloven, wat blijkens 1946 God niet eischte te beloven, doch verbood te doen: God verbiedt ons nl. ons te laten *binden* aan een formule, *die men ook veranderen mag*. Gij hebt in Grand Rapids een z.g. oecumenische synode gehad, die verklaarde: ook al zou de Nederlandsche synode verkeerd gehandeld hebben, ook dan is dat nog geen reden de kerk te verlaten. Dat zei ik ook;—en daarom zei ik tot Nederlandsche synoden, *toen het nog tijd was*: bindt niet, bindt niet. *Maar men bond toch*. En het was juist toen een synodale commissie, en later de synode, die zeide: kunt gij het met uw geweten niet overeenbrengen, u te binden aan onze formule, nu, loop er dan toch uit, *verbreek dan toch het kerkverband!* De oecumenische synode *dacht*, dat ze *ons* veroordeelde; maar ze veroordeelde *in feite* de Nederlandsche synode, die tot *ons* zeide: die zaak is WEL een reden, om de kerk te verlaten. Waarom zij dan ook een kerk buiten het verband plaatste, hetgeen zij echter in de Acta zorgvuldig verzwijgt.

En dit mooi *spreken*, maar niet alzo *handelen*, dat is het wat ons grieft. Juist in ons ambt. Gij loopt achter anderen aan. *Gij meet met twee maten*. Den één gelooft ge zonder onderzoek, den ander laat ge zelf niet *uitspreken*, en niet eens *beginnen* te spreken. Gij zijt ons ontrouw geworden. Want wij HADDEN met uw kerk correspondentie, en wij zijn in niets veranderd. En nu hebt *gij* de correspondentie *afgebroken*. Dat moet gij zelf weten; maar ge moet dan ook niet doen. alsof *iii* samensnoert. en *wii* scheuren. Gij hebt

gescheurd, door lieden, met wie gij correspondeert, *zonder eenig verhoor uit te sluiten*. Gij hebt ons een *nieuwe* denominatie genoemd, en ge weet niet eens, wat wij kunnen of willen aanvoeren om te bewijzen, dat de anderen wat nieuws zijn, en wij het oude.

Als gij schrijft: "*wel is er iets tegen, om vóór dien tijd, d.w.z., vóórdat uw synode eindelijk eens onzen brief beantwoordt, stemming in den boezem der kerken te wekken*", dan zeg ik: het *klinkt* mooi, ds. v. Halsema, maar het *is* humbug. Want *toen gij nog niets wist*—ge verklaart het zelf—*van het bestaan van dien brief onzer synode aan u, reeds toen* hebt gij gezegd: geen Schilder-representative. Als U deze Uwe houding wat veranderen wilt, zeg het dan ronduit zóó, maar gebruik geen ander als "kop van Jut". En wat dat "stemming wekken" betreft: *dat* hebben de persartikelen van Banner en Wachter gedaan; *dat* doen ook uw waarschuwingen: laat hem niet eens spreken.

Breed ben ik ingegaan op Uw artikel. Omderwille van uw menschen. Reeds sprak ik er velen, en nog meerderen hoorden mij. Ik zoek hen, want ik weet, dat zij verkeerd zijn voorgelicht. Zie in dit uitvoerig antwoord geen teeken van boosheid of van een gevoel van teleurstelling. Ik wist, toen ik naar Amerika kwam, hoe de "leiders" der Chr. Ref. Church zich zouden houden. Ik wist uit brieven óók, dat velen hunner kerkleden het met hun methoden niet eens waren en gaarne eerlijk wilden worden voorgelicht. Hen bereik ik toch wel. Komt er straks bij U een andere stemming, dan zal dat mede aan dit verblijf en aan deze contacten te danken zijn. De hiërarchie houdt het alleen uit bij de dooden, niet bij de levenden. En er zijn er, die ook bij u nog vragen naar recht en waarheid. Wij zijn bereid, als kerken met u te corresponderen, maar niet bereid, erom te *bedelen*. Wij richten 't hoofd omhoog, en hebben een beetje te doen met hen die zich laten leiden door Nederlandsche theologen, die in de zaak van 1944 zich hebben geblameerd door hun ondeskundigheid, hun zig-zag-beweging, hun eerst beweren en later terugkrabbelen, al veroordeelen we ook hun weigering van boetedoening over wat reeds openlijk misslag *gebleken* is. Wij *bedelen* niet om een plaatsje in een vergadering, die noch oecumenisch, noch synode is. Wij zeggen wel tot U: als gij ons opwekt, Gods volk saam te snoeren, welnu, ds. v. Halsema, *gebruik* dan uw pen tot samensnoering van Gods volk, en zorg ervoor, dat ook de Prot. Ref. Churches, vlak naast uw deur, een invitatie krijgen, als staande op de basis der drie formulieren. Leg u niet vast op drie punten, als waren die het criterium van trouw aan de confessie; ze zijn het trouwens niet. Maar pleit eens voor trouwe daden. Tegenover Amerikaansche gereformeerden. En tegenover Nederlandsche. Tot nu toe hebt gij in de relatie tegenover de kerken, die óók art. 31 K.O. onderhouden ontrouwe daden getoond: want wij hadden met u correspondentie, en die hebt ge

afgebroken op gezag van anderen, zonder ons zelfs te willen hooren. Al uw spreken over "milk of human kindness" wischt het feit niet af, dat Gij ons *in ons ambt* diep hebt beleedigd, en de prachtige Amerikaanse gastvrijheid hebt geweigerd aan iemand, die collega is van uw theologen in Grand Rapids, belijder van de drie formulieren van eenigheid en verdediger van het recht der kerkeraden tegenover machtsmisbruik van synoden, en ook tegenover heeren van de V. U., toen *zij* aanvielen. Gij moet nu zelf maar weten, hoe ge verder doen wilt. Ik hoop bij niemand uwer te bedelen, en geef u allen de gelegenheid, mij te hooren en zoo ge wilt tegen te spreken. Maar dan in het openbaar: de kerk moet erbij kunnen, en onderonsjes stichten niet.

Afgevaardigen van uw kerk hebben reeds op de z.g. oecumenische synode verklaard, dat men de kinderen moet beschouwen en behandelen (*dus ook doopen*) als deelende in de wederbarende genade van den H. Geest. Zij hebben daarmee iets anders beleden dan wat in den Catechismus staat. *Die* zegt, dat hun de BELOFTE des Geestes, die het geloof werkt, is gedaan. Zij hebben tevens daar hooren zeggen, dat een oecumenische synode wel iets kon besluiten, *maar*, de landelijke kerken moesten daarna nog zelf uitmaken, of zij die besluiten zouden aanvaardden. Hoe dus uw kerk reageeren zal op dit besluit, staat nog te bezien. *Maar juist daarom moet uw volk er over kunnen worden ingelicht*. Waarom toch zoo bang? Is er een afstand tusschen de leiders en het volk? Waarom toch zoo schuw? En ten slotte: als de oecumenische synode niet besluiten kan, zonder dat de landelijke kerken daarna voor zichzelf beslissen, of zij die besluiten zullen ratificeeren, waarom werpt men in Nederland ons dan de kerk uit, onder het zeggen (ondertekening-Berkhouwer), dat besluiten eener SYNODE *altijd* moeten worden uitgevoerd door de "mindere" vergaderingen, ook al zijn ze niet goed, *altijd, totdat* ze eventueel herroepen zijn? En dat ratificatie ervan geen apart punt van behandeling en van *vrije* beslissing mag zijn bij de mindere vergaderingen?

Kom, kom, ds. v. Halsema, er is toch zooveel werk aan den winkel. Laat u niet beïnvloeden uit Nederland, noch door mij, noch door anderen. Kijkt samen uit eigen oogen. Komt ons niet aan boord, gij, noch uw medestanders, met het argument: we hebben met die menschen geen correspondentie nog, en DAAROM mag men hen niet laten spreken, zelfs dat niet. Want dat argument wordt weerlegd als ondeugdelijk door uw gedrag tegenover anderen die wel spreken bij u. En denk aan uw these over het samensnoeren van Gods volk. Ge weet het adres van Rev. Hoeksema, of van het comité, dat de tournée van ondergeteekende regelt; Rev. Hoeksema zal het u graag melden. Komt dan eens naar voren als ik spreek. 't Kan niet schelen, waar. Ge kunt een mooie plaats krijgen. Ge moogt

weerspreken zooveel ge wilt. *Brengt dan dat volk Gods*, om welks samensnoering ge zoo bekommerd zijt, *mee*, en laat hen eens zien, wat ge kunt bereiken met het Woord des Heeren tegenover Berkouwer en Greydanus, tegenover Meijster en Van Dijk, tegenover Brins en Vonk, tegenover Barkey Wolf en den man, die de Youth for Christ niet samenroept, maar wel de youth of Christ wil brengen onder het *Woord*, belofte en eisch, en ze niet in een *onderstelling* voor wedergcboren houdt. Den man, die geen eigen meeninkje opdringt aan een ander, maar óók geen vergissing van Kuiper of Grosheide of Ridderbos of Polman wil behandelen als het Woord van God, door te beloven, zooals geeischt is, niets te zullen leeren, dat daarmee niet volkomen in overeenstemming is. De *medereiziger* van Halsema is een ander dan de schrijver in De Wachter.

K. Schilder  
Orange City, Iowa.  
19 Sept., 1947.

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## OUR DOCTRINE

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### The "Proofs" For The Existence Of God

The attempt has been made throughout the ages to "prove", i.e., to establish by means of logical reasoning, the existence of God. It cannot be said that these attempts speak convincingly of a living faith on the part of those who would thus establish the existence of God. *Faith*, not reason, is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen—Heb. 11:1. And, he that cometh to God must *believe* that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him—Heb. 11:6. These proofs date back to the days of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, etc. Gradually these so-called proofs were overrated, and the conviction was increasingly expressed that the truths of God revealed in nature were provable as were the rules of mathematics and logic. The Reformation brought a temporary change in this state of affairs. To be sure, the leaders of this tremendous movement did not ignore or discard them. They recognized their value. They acknowledged the fact that God had not left Himself without a witness, that the heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament sheweth His handiwork. What the reformers refused to do, however, was to place reason above faith. They refused to concede that our faith in the Creator depends upon the process

of logical deduction, that only then can we believe in the Maker of heaven and earth after His existence had been proven logically and scientifically. They rendered these "proofs" subservient to the principle of faith, and recognized the fact that the natural man can no longer see God and that faith is a primary requisite. Soon, however, "protestant Theology" pursued the course of rationalism. The existence of God, it was alleged, could be proved from nature, and must be proved from nature. And the Church oftentimes succumbed to the principle that Reason is mistress of the Scriptures, that we must believe only that which can be proven. The result was that Revealed Theology, the Scriptures, more and more receded into the background and finally, in many instances, disappeared altogether. The same struggle was evident in the church's attempt, made over and over again, to "convince" the world of the Scriptural presentation of the existence of God over against evolution's "explanation" of the origin and development of the world. The Church appeared to stand powerless over against the tremendous strides and development made in the field of science. The bones and fossils unearthed by Science seemed to paralyze the church of God. They actually felt ashamed of themselves because they believed or wished to believe in the "old-fashioned" theories and beliefs of the Scriptures. They attempted to answer Science with science, proof with proof, to convince the world of the Scriptural presentation of the origin and development of all things. Too often the "proofs" for the existence of God appeared in the framework of this logical reasoning. Before we appraise, evaluate these proofs for the existence of God, let us regard them as such.

#### *The Cosmological Argument.*

This argument proceeds from the idea that the world is a cosmos. In fact, the words "world" and "cosmos" are identical. The word "cosmos" means literally: order, harmony, beauty, beauty in the sense of harmonious arrangement. The world is characterized by the law of cause and effect. This law is evident everywhere. The child has its parent; the fruit or vegetable its seed; rain or snow is preceded by clouds thunder, and lightning; whatever exists reminds us of something or someone which produced it and was the cause of it. This even applies to phenomena which causes have hitherto been unknown, such as diseases. Late scientific research has explained much which in the past had been a mystery. What applies to all things in the world, so this argument continues, also applies to the world itself. Hence, the world, too, must have a cause. And this cause, or course, must be greater than the world, inasmuch as it produced the world and must therefore be distinct from and greater than the world. This cause is God.

For a long time this cosmological argument met little opposition. During the eighteenth century, however, it was attacked and criticized by the philosophers, Hume and Kant. The former questioned the law of cause and effect as such. He simply declared that it could not be proved that such a law existed in the universe. Presuppose, for example, that my cue strikes a billiard ball. The ball will roll down the billiard table. Now one may conclude that the ball rolled because the cue struck it. But, according to Hume, this must be proved and it cannot be proved. He therefore questioned and rejected the law of cause and effect as such. Kant, on the other hand, did not deny the existence of God. He denied the knowability of God. He did not deny that God is but that He could be known. And this German philosopher even used this cosmological argument to prove that God did not exist. If it be true that all things in the world are characterized by cause and effect and that also the world must therefore have a cause, does this reasoning not also apply to God? If all things have a cause then also God must have a cause. One can reason in this manner ad infinitum, endlessly. Logically, therefore, the law of cause and effect cannot establish the existence of a God. Besides, does the law of cause and effect necessarily establish the fact that the world has a single Cause? Could not, logically, several causes have produced this world? Then we would have Polytheism instead of Monotheism, many gods instead of one god. The cosmological argument, therefore, as far as logically proving the existence of God is concerned, falls short of its goal. It fails to prove that one Lord created the heavens and the earth.

#### *The Ontological Argument.*

This argument was advanced in its most perfect form by Anselm, an Englishman of the eleventh century, the father of medieval scholasticism. The ontological proof inquires after the essence of things. It proceeds from the idea that there is a world of thought and a world of being. It assumes that the world of thought, of our ideas originates in the world of being, of essence. Man has the idea of an absolutely perfect Being. This idea of God is necessarily greater than we and, hence, it cannot be attributed to us. It must be ascribed to God. Consequently, the ontological argument would establish the existence of God by asserting that it is God Who gave us this idea of Himself. The weakness of this argument as a proof for the existence of God is apparent. It is guilty of begging the question. It accepts what must be proven. As a *logical argument* it must *prove* that a world of essence lies at the basis of our world of thought, that our idea of God comes forth out of the existence of such a God. The mere fact that we may have an idea of God does not necessarily *prove* objectively His existence.

#### *The Teleological Argument.*

The word "teleological" is derived from a Greek word which means: end, purpose. It is the argument which concludes the Designer from the fact that this world is characterized throughout by purpose and design. It "proves" that there is a God Who designed all things. This argument is undoubtedly the riches of the four. It not only seeks to prove that there is a Cause of this world, or that there is an infinitely perfect Being which lies at the basis of our idea of a God, but it would also tell us who and what that Cause and Being is. Surely, the world is characterized abundantly by design. What a wonderful and truly amazing adaptation we discern in all of life round about us! The birds in the air are wondrously adapted to their particular sphere and mode of existence, and the same is true of the fishes that have their abode in the seas. Purpose and design characterizes the life of plant and vegetation in all its innumerable phases. Examining the life of the animal world in general the tremendous mystery merely deepens and our admiration increases accordingly. The coloration among animals is surely wonderful to behold. Marvellously they are protected against danger because they are able to merge into the particular color scheme of their particular surroundings. The cat with its paws and wonderful eyesight, the dog with its sharp sense of smell, the squirrel with its tail which serves to balance the animal while in flight, the lion with its claws and tongue which can tear the flesh off our arms,—the woodpecker, the horse, the fly,—all these animals and many more, proclaim to us how wondrously they are adapted to their own particular mode of existence. And the crown of the earthly creation is man. We can surely understand the psalmist when he declares that he was fearfully and wonderfully made. He, too, and in an unfathomable manner, was adapted to lead his peculiar existence. Marvellous is his organism. His eye, his ear, etc., simply transcend all human understanding. Every part of our amazing organism has its own function to perform, serves its own particular purpose. And they all serve one another and together constitute the one human organism. Hence, this world, characterized by design throughout, must have a Designer. Besides, purpose and design presuppose consciousness, one who intelligently and consciously has designed and purposed all things. The conclusion: this Designer, of course, is God.

However, also this teleological argument falls short of its goal. On the one hand, it also fails to prove that a God designed all things. Also here, the argument is guilty of begging the question. Why can we not conclude from the phenomenon of purpose and design in all things round about us that a Wise Nature has purposed all things, or that all things develop blindly? Is it not true that the creature spontaneously adapts

itself to its own sphere of existence? Does not that creature spontaneously seek its own welfare? Must not this teleological argument *prove* that a living, personal, infinite God is the Designer of all things? Besides, is it really true that, by merely regarding this world, we can conclude that a wise God has intelligently designed all? Could I, by looking at the same creation and world, not come logically to the opposite conclusion, namely, that all things are hopelessly confused? What purpose and design do we really discover in all of life round about us? Are not all things subject to death and corruption? The hideous power of death and decay operates in every living creature and in every part of that living creature. Animals devour one another by the thousands upon the thousands. It is true, modern science conveniently calls this amazing phenomenon the "survival of the fittest" or the "balance of life", declares that thus the balance of life is maintained in this world. If it were not for this fact, so the wise of this world would have us believe, life itself would soon become impossible. Of course, the worldly wisdom does not consider the living God, no, not even when that Almighty God is daily executing thousands upon thousands of living creatures through His intense anger and hot displeasure. We know, however, that death is the operation of the living God, that He is daily executing the living creature because of His righteousness and holiness (it might be interesting to explain this phenomenon of the wrath of God in the light of His "common-grace" and so-called general love). But, do all things round about us then not speak to us that all is vanity and vanity of vanities? Where, then, is the design? What may be the purpose of the birth of the living creature when it, sooner or later, must die? Why all this plant-life and vegetation when it is subject to corruption and presently withers and dies? Are not all things in the bondage of corruption and decay? Cannot I conclude logically therefore that the element of design and purpose is lacking in this world, and that there is consequently no Designer who purposed all things? Logically, therefore, the teleological argument also falls short of its goal and fails in its objective.

#### *The Moral Argument.*

Kant regarded the moral argument as far superior to any of the others. This German philosopher, in his "categorical or absolute imperative" taught that he was conscious of an inner obligation to obey the law. His moral theory advanced an obedience which was freed from every intermixture of personal interest and self-gratification. He declared that we must have reverence for the law as such. The thrust of Kant's reasoning here is quite plain. If we discover within ourselves an obligation to obey the law for selfish reasons, from the principle of self-interest, we might

seek the origin of this inner urge to obey the law within ourselves. But, according to Kant, this inner urge to obey the law is of such a character that our obedience is freed from every intermixture of personal interest and self-gratification. This moral argument is therefore plain. Man experiences within himself the consciousness of moral responsibility. He is conscious of a law which he must obey—this is the first premise of this argument. The second premise of the argument is that there must be someone who is responsible for this consciousness of moral responsibility. This person necessarily stands higher than man, is distinct from man, inasmuch as man feels that he must obey the law for reasons outside himself. Hence, he who works this consciousness in man is God. The weakness also of this moral argument is apparent. It does not *prove* that this moral consciousness is from God. Is it not possible that human self-love can dictate a course of law and order? Does not the apostle Paul declare in Romans 2:14 that the Gentiles, who have not the law and who did not know of God, do by nature the things contained in the law, and that they, having not the law, were a law unto themselves? Does not the creature realize that it is profitable for him to do that which is contained in the law? Hence, also the moral argument falls short of its objective, namely, to establish by the process of logical reasoning the existence of God.

#### *The Historical Argument.*

This argument really furnishes us with nothing new besides the proofs already set forth. It proceeds from the universal phenomenon of religion and concludes that this religion must belong to the very nature of man. And if the nature of man naturally leads to religious worship this can only find its explanation in a higher Being Who has constituted man a religious being. In answer to this argument one may remark, however, that this religious attitude appears strongest among primitive races, and disappears in the measure that they become civilized. The weakness of this "proof" is therefore self-evident.

#### *Conclusion.*

Firstly, we need not underestimate the value of these so-called proofs for the existence of God. To be sure, we cannot "prove" God's existence by means of logical reasoning. However, if we *believe* that God is these "proofs" can confirm us in our faith. In the cosmological argument we observe the relation everywhere of cause and effect. Standing upon the basis of Scripture and that of faith, is it logical to conclude that, whereas we observe everywhere the relation of cause and effect, also God must be subject to the law of cause and effect? Is it not far more logical to say that the Creator of all things, also of the law of cause

and effect, is Himself infinitely exalted above the creature which He brought forth? The law of cause and effect so evident everywhere tells us that the creature cannot create, that all things develop organically, that therefore this world did not bring itself forth, that the universe was called into being by the infinite Maker of heaven and earth. The ontological argument declares that God created within us the idea of a perfect, infinite Being. I may not be able to convince an evil world of this fact, but, again standing upon the principle of faith, it is surely perfectly natural to me that the Lord did not leave Himself without witness and that He wrote the indelible testimony concerning Himself into the very nature of man. The same applies to the teleological argument. Again, I may not be able to "prove" to a wicked world that a heavenly Designer designed all things. But, we stand upon the principle of faith. We believe that God is. And then all things do speak to us of an incomparably wise Creator. Then all things confirm us in the belief that "in wisdom hast Thou made them all." And if it be true that all things round about us speak to us of death and that all is vanity of vanities, then again, of course upon the basis of the Word of God, I answer that it is the will of my God to call light out of darkness, life out of death, the heavenly renewal of all things out of the misery of sin and corruption. The world may then refuse to acknowledge this fact, but the Christian, even apart from the testimony of Holy Writ, experiences this truth in his own spiritual life. Was he not called out of darkness into the light, out of death into life? He knows that God's way into eternal life is out of and through death. The moral argument also confirms the child of God in his faith in the living God. God made the heavens and the earth. He is the sole Sovereign over all. Of course, he demands of men that they serve Him, Him alone—the moral argument naturally follows, as far as the child of God is concerned, from the fact that Jehovah reigns.

Secondly, man cannot prove the existence of God. We cannot attain unto the knowledge of the Infinite through a process of logical reasoning. The reason for this is apparent. The infinite cannot be reached by the finite, the temporal cannot touch the Eternal, man cannot ascend unto God. My human reason can move about only within the sphere of the creature. I cannot lift myself up out of the things that have been made. We need not be concerned, therefore, if our finite mind cannot grasp the Infinite. And does it not constitute the height or depth of sinful folly to deny or doubt the existence of God because I cannot comprehend Him? What is more logical than to assume that an infinite God cannot be comprehended by finite man?

However, in this connection we may remark in the third place that, on the one hand, we cannot convince

the world of the existence of God. The knowledge of God is also a spiritual, ethical activity. And the natural man is horribly prejudiced. He hates God. Hence, all neutrality, a neutral approach is simply impossible and non-existent. And, on the other hand, it is not necessary to prove the existence of God. Fact is, God has revealed Himself. He has revealed Himself in all the works of His hands, has surely not left Himself without witness. He created a world which speaks of His eternal power and Godhead and He brought forth a creature adapted to this undeniable testimony of the living God. He also revealed Himself in Holy Writ. Whatever the godless world may say of that Divine testimony, fact is that it is the only book written exclusively by the Lord. In that Word the Lord does not prove his own existence. He simply testifies of Himself and declares unto us that He, and He alone, is the living God. Besides, the existence of God need not be proven to the church for the simple reason that the Church loves the Lord and believes that He is and that He is a Rewarder of all who serve Him and diligently seek Him.

Finally, what, then, is our calling? To prove the existence of God is not necessary. We have only one calling. The Church must speak of the Lord even as the Lord has spoken and speaks of Himself. We must testify, boldly and without fear. This in our calling, in the home and in the church and in the school. We need not be concerned about the reception which our testimony of God shall receive. God will continue to speak of Himself by His Spirit. He will speak as a savor of death unto death in some, but also as a savor of life unto life in His own. All we need do is be His party. The Lord will gather His Church.

H. V.

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#### IN MEMORIAM

Zondag, 7 Sept., nam de Heere onze God tot Zichzelf onze geliefde man, vader en grootvader,

#### FREDERICK FABER

in den leeftijd van bijna 76 jaar. Dat hij nu juicht voor den troon Gods, en dat hij is verlost van Zonde en smart, is voor de diep bedroefden een vertroosting en groote blijdschap.

Namens de bedroefde Weduwe,  
 Jennie (De Borst) Faber  
 Mr. en Mrs. Arie De Borst  
 Mr. en Mrs. Henry B. Holtrop  
 Mr. en Mrs. Henry De Borst  
 Miss Janet De Borst  
 7 Klein-kinderen  
 1 Over-Kleinkind.

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## THE DAY OF SHADOWS

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### Saul's Rebellion

So is Jonathan rescued out of the hands of Saul by the people. Saul shall have to reap the consequences of his vile adjuration. His curse in its flight will be made to return to him. For the military might of the Philistines is not broken; and the result will be that the Philistine's will triumph over Saul in the end.

Now follows a summary account of Saul's wars and family relations (chap. 14:47-52). Its introductory statement reads, "And Saul took the kingdom over Israel, and fought against all his enemies on every side". The meaning undoubtedly is that after the battle of the Philistines, related in the preceding narrative, Saul vigorously addresses himself to the task of delivering the whole nation out of the hands of all its enemies. He now makes a beginning of fighting against his enemies *on every side*. The enemies mentioned are Moab, the children of Ammon, Edom, Zobah, the Philistines and the Amalekites. Most of these wars, if not all of them, must have been fought between the defeat of the Philistines related in the preceding narrative and the defeat of the Amalekites, the last war mentioned. For it is impossible to find a place for all these wars elsewhere in the narrated career of Saul.

(There is another interpretation of the statement: "And Saul took over the kingdom and fought against all his enemies on every side". The interpretation is to the effect that the reference is to Saul's accession to the throne, which the sacred narrative mentions—such is the view—to supply himself with a starting-point for the historical-statistical statement of the various wars which he carried on from the beginning of his government. This interpretation of the statement in question has in its favor that the already-related war against the Ammonites is here again mentioned. However, it is not improbable that Saul's victory over the Ammonites under Nahash was not decisive so that the war against this people has to be fought over again. Be this as it may, certain it is that, with the acceptance of this one war, all the wars here mentioned must have been waged after the defeat of the Philistines related in the preceding narrative and that therefore the sacred writer can now state that Saul addressed himself to the task of fighting against all his enemies *on every side*.)

How long a time it took Saul to fight all these wars, not counting the one against the Philistines, of which it is said that it extended throughout his whole

reign,—is not stated. It must have taken him some years. Every one of these military enterprises was successful—"whithersoever he turned himself, he vexed them"—and therefore they greatly endeared Saul to the nation. For the spoils of these wars he lavished upon the people, so that in his lamentation over him David with reason could appeal to the "daughters of Israel" to weep "over Saul, who clothed you in scarlet, with other delights, who put on ornaments of gold upon your apparel". And even Samuel was much taken up with Saul. The revelation that it repented the Lord that he had set up Saul to be king grieved Samuel; "and he cried unto the Lord all night". And so unwilling was the seer to let Saul go that the Lord finally said to him, "How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel".

That Saul believed not in wonders, that he made not God his expectation, did not stand in his way of manfully fighting these wars. He did not have to believe in wonders to fight these wars. His natural courage carried him through. For he was naturally a brave man. The only time his courage failed him therefore is when he had no one to rely upon but the Lord, as in the recent crisis. He was an expert at taking the field as heading a large, well-equipped and eager army to put to the sword Moabites and Ammonites in their unguarded moments; but when there was a battle to be fought that called for true spiritual heroism, he was an expert only at making himself as inconspicuous as possible. Yet the importance of Saul's achievements on the battlefield for the true Israel must not be overlooked. Through the natural courage of the unbelieving king the Lord delivered His people out of the hands of their spoilers. This explains why Saul by His military achievements could ingratiate himself with Samuel even to the extent that the seer held unto him despite his disobedience and rebellion. Samuel was a great man of God but for all that a man impressed by Saul's countenance and the height of his stature. And being but a man, he could not know Saul's heart and discern the vile ambitions that stirred in his bosom and the carnal zeal under the impulse of which he fought his battles. Being but a man, Samuel mistook Saul's natural courage for true zeal. For these reasons he wanted Saul spared also, it is certain, for Jonathan's sake, who by the grace of God had shown himself capable of greatest deeds of faith. What a worthy successor of Saul Jonathan would be!

The sacred narrator also has considerable to say about Saul's household and family. He mentions three sons: Jonathan, Ishwi, and Malchishua. Instead of Ishwi in 31:2 is Abinadab, "And the Philistines . . . slew Jonathan, Abinadab, and Melchishua, Saul's sons." Likewise in Chron. 8:33, "And Saul begat Jonathan, and Malchishua, and Abinadab, and Eshbaal". Here the text adds a name—Eshbaal—to those previously

mentioned, and likewise 9:39, "And Saul begat Jonathan, and Malchishua, and Abinadab, and Eshbaal. And 2 Samuel 11:8 mentions the son Ishbosheth. Ishbaal is the same with Ishvi and with Ishbosheth, "man of shame". The change to this name is accounted for by the shameful murder of this son narrated in 2 Sam. Altogether, then, Saul had four sons. His two daughters were Merab and Michal, and his wife's name was Ahinoam, a daughter of Ahimaas. Saul's captain of the host was Abiner, abbreviated in verse 51 to Abner, his cousin. This appears from the next verse, where the relationship is stated more fully: Kish, Saul's father, and Neri, Abner's father, were sons of Abiel.

The sacred writer closes this section of his narrative with the notice, "And there was a sore war against the Philistines all the days of Saul: and when Saul saw any strong man, or any valiant man, he took him unto him". Eventually the Philistines proved Saul's undoing because he made not God his expectation, but trusted in the arm of flesh. This agrees with his gaining for military service any strong or valiant man that he saw.

If the wars against the nations mentioned in verse 47 of chapter 14 were fought after the defeat of the Philistines related in the preceding narrative—and doubtless they were fought after that defeat—then the first verse of chapter 15 is chronologically related to 14:47. Some time after the waging of the war last mentioned in this verse—the war against the Philistines—Samuel comes to Saul and sends him to destroy Amalek. Mindful of Saul's former disobedience and fervently desirous that henceforth he submit to the word of the Lord, the seer, in imparting to him the divine communication, sets out with reminding him that "the Lord sent me to anoint thee to be king over his people, over Israel: now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the Lord". Saul must consider that in Samuel he has to do with a true prophet, who speaks to him God's word; and he must also consider that, as king, he is the Lord's and not his own, and that he reigns over God's people so that he is in duty bound to obey the Lord's voice. The seer goes on to tell him that the Lord remembers that which Amalek did to Israel, how he lay for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt; and that Saul shall now go and smite Amalek.

The Amalekites were a wild, warlike, desert-people, descended from Esau's grandson Amelek (Gen. 34:12, 13). The first attack of this people on the children of Israel is narrated in Exodus 17:8 sq., "Then came Amalek and fought with Israel in Rephidim." What the Amalekites there did to the people of Israel was a thing of revolting meanness and cowardice. They met them by the way, and smote the hindmost of the marching host of the Lord, all the feeble, faint, and weary. The Lord's anger burned. At His command, Joshua

discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword. Then the Lord swore that he would have war with Amalek from generation to generation until his remembrance was utterly put out from under heaven (Deut. 25:17-19). It means that the Lord put Amalek under the ban of His curse. Amalek, like Esau, is thus reprobated; he cannot be redeemed, but must be destroyed. Accordingly, the Lord hardened his heart, so that the hostilities of Rephidim were often afterwards repeated in Amalek's alliances with the Canaanites (Num. 14:40 sq.), with the Moabites (Judg. 3:13), and with the Medianites (Judg. 7:12). Amalek therefore was now ripe for judgment. Accordingly, Saul receives the command to "go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman; infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass." Such is the Lord's will. For He is purposed to reveal His wrath on Amalek in order that it may appear that He is righteous and holy God with eyes too pure to behold sin; and appear further that they who touch His people, touch the apple of His eye and that therefore without fail He will avenge them, who cry unto Him day and night. It can also be stated thus: God is purposed to reveal His wrath on the Amalekites, the vessels of wrath; and through His destroying these defiers of God and persecutors of His people, reveal the riches of His glory on His people, the vessels of mercy. Hence, the destruction of Amalek will be solely to His glory but only in the way of Saul's carrying out the instructions of the Lord to the last letter.

Saul musters the people. As collected together they form a great host; it numbers 200,000 footmen. Besides, there are 10,000 men of Judah. Thus, the whole of the population, able to bear arms, is assembled together. This is according to Saul's orders. For he puts his trust in numbers instead of in the Lord; and he is convinced that the powerful Amalekites can be overthrown and destroyed only by the full force of Israel. And with that force behind him, he takes the field against the enemy, full of confidence that the victory in his not as a thing *toward* which he fights, it being God's gracious gift to His people; but as a thing that he will gain for himself through his bravery and ability as a leader of men. With this mind in him, he advances toward an unnamed city of the Amalekites.

The way leads through the settlement of Kenites that lies well within the territory of Amalek. The Kenites must be spared. For they are a people friendly to Israel and a people that always have been friendly to Israel. They had shown kindness to Israel after their departure from Egypt (Num. 10:29). Moses' brother-in-law, Hobab (Judg. 1:16), was one of them; and it was through his services that this kindness had been shown. And so the Lord is not numbering them

with the Amalekites; for blessing His people, they are blessed of the Lord. Saul, therefore, urges them to depart from among the Amalekites; and so they do.

The battle between the Amalekites and the men of Israel is fought in the valley of that unnamed Amalekite city; and it goes against the Amalekites. Saul smites them throughout their whole territory. Their defeat reaches from Havilah to Shur. According to Gen. 25:18, Havilah forms the boundary of the Ishmaelites; while Shur is that portion of the Arabian desert bordering on Egypt; and into which Israel came on leaving Egypt.

But in the prosecution of this war, Saul is forgetful of the word of the Lord. He sets himself up as judge over God's instructions, and discards as many of them as, according to his view, are too foolish and unnecessary to be carried out. The Lord has given orders to destroy all the people, both man and woman, infant and suckling. Saul can see sense in that. Amalek is a real menace; and always has been. It is a good thing—good for Israel and for Saul—that this people be destroyed out of the earth. Saul will have one enemy less to contend with. Accordingly, he "utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword" with the exception of one solitary man—Agag, the king of the Amalekites. Him Saul takes alive and spares. As he sees it, sparing Agag is the wise and right thing to do. He will be able to provide the people at home with the best possible evidence that, thanks to his superb energy and force and to his inspiring presence on the battlefield, the Amalekites, as a people, are no more. For, behold, he leads captive their king. How the people will rejoice. How they will applaud him, their warrior-king, and bless his memory. And when he has done with Agag he will put also him to the sword. That ought to satisfy Samuel perfectly. For what difference should it make to the seer when Agag is slain, if only he be slain. Saul also can see no good in destroying what is best among the sheep, and the oxen, and the fatlings and the lambs. What a wanton and useless destruction of prize cattle and herds that would be! Does the Lord really demand it? Saul won't believe that He does. That order must have originated with Samuel, not with the Lord; and the people fully agree with their king, and he with them. For both want those oxen and fatlings spared. For, they say, there is the Lord's altar to be considered. How pleased the Lord will be with the sacrifice of such specimens of perfection among the kinds of the animals that were appointed by him for his altar. Yet, of course, they are not interested in the Lord's altar at all but in themselves, as is evident from their flying upon the spoil (verse 19). How can it be the love of God's altars than constrains them, if in sparing those oxen and sheep, they disobey the word of the Lord?

Yet such is Saul's argument by which he persuades

himself, against better knowledge, that in sparing Agag and all that is best among the sheep and oxen and fatlings and lambs, and that thus in destroying only every thing that is vile and refuse, he obeys the voice of the Lord through not the voice of Samuel. But what does he really have to do with Samuel? Nothing at all, says *Saul*. What proof does he really have that all or even any of the old seer's instructions originated with God and not with Samuel? None whatever, says *Saul*. But he is willingly ignorant of the evidence to this effect with which the Lord literally overwhelmed him at the time of his anointing, at the very beginning of his career as king. But Saul is unbelieving. As if the old seer is always speaking for God! As if it can be the Lord's will that he, the king, blindly do what Samuel says, thus do what he says without subjecting his orders to his own good judgment. Yet that precisely is what the Lord demands of Saul; He demands of him that he receive Samuel's word as the very word of God and consider always that in Samuel he verily has to do with God. And Saul well knows that Samuel speaks God's word. This was made plain to him. Hence, he is without excuse. But Saul will not have it so. For God's word, as obeyed, exalts God. And Saul wants himself exalted. For he is carnal; and being carnal he is wholly self-absorbed. He loves not God but self in contra-opposition to God. He seeks self. He seeks his own glory, fame, and advantage. This explains all that he does. It explains his partial obedience. Thus it explains his slaying all the Amalekite men and women and infants and sucklings. It explains his sparing Agag. It explains his sparing the best among the oxen and sheep. The people insisted. And he will not resist the will of the people. It will hurt his popularity.

"Then came the word of the Lord unto Samuel, saying, It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king: for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments." What is here asserted of God—it is asserted that it repented Him—can only be understood in the light of the truth about God in His divine capacity of man's sovereign Maker and Lord. That truth is this: God sovereignly determined Saul's disobedience, so that Saul transgressed God's commands according to God's own sovereign will, and as sovereignly hardened by God. Hence, that it repented God that He had set up Saul to be king, cannot mean that, as compelled by Saul's disobedience, that God at best could only foresee but could not determine, God, contrary to His original desire, will and purpose, and thus according to His changed purpose and will, rejected and removed the disobedient and rebellious Saul and chose David to rule in his stead. To so explain God's repentance is to say that He is a man. For that precisely is repentance with man. Frustrated by things, conditions and circumstances

over which he has not the slightest control, man, contrary to his original purpose and desire and thus according to his changed purpose and will, turns about face and sets out to his great disappointment and grief in a direction opposite to that in which he was going to avoid coming to grief or to salvage as much of his original plans as he can. Thus, that it repented God that He had set up Saul to be king means: 1. That Saul's disobedience grieves God; and 2. That God, when He has done with Saul, that is, when Saul, as sovereignly raised up by the Lord in all his disobedience and rebellion, shall have fully served God's counsel, God will remove Saul through the agency of the Philistines. Why should the Lord not be grieved with the wicked Saul, hate him on account of his wickedness, and punish him for sins? How could God, being holy, not be grieved with the wicked Saul? That God has need of Saul and accordingly raised him up cannot certainly imply that he takes delight in the rebellious king. In the light of these observations, it ought to be clear that God repents continually, in that His repentance spells the progressive realization of His counsel. It is only because God repents that there will be new heavens and a new earth on which will dwell righteousness.

G. M. O.

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## The Lord's Supper

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We must now inquire after the sacramental working in the Lord's Supper. This working was set forth by Christ Himself, when He said, "Except ye eat my flesh and drink my blood, ye have no life in yourselves." The believers then do very actually eat Christ's flesh and drink His blood. But how can Christ give us His flesh to eat and His blood to drink? Not through changing the natural bread and the wine into His flesh and blood, as Rome teaches. This doctrine is not according to the Scriptures and must therefore be rejected. Nevertheless, the believers do eat and drink, the Christ, not with their physical mouths but by faith, spiritually. For Christ through the prophets and the apostles has placed in the possession of the church a revelation of Himself by word and symbol. It is this revelation, this word by itself and as imposed upon the symbols of the Lord's Supper that the believer eats and drinks, and eating and drinking this word, he eats and drinks the Christ set forth by word and symbol—the Christ, the suffering, dying, resurrected and the glorified Christ. Thus, the eating and drinking is by faith. It is a spiritual action. For it is the word, the word-picture, the idea, conception, revelation of the Christ, and thus, whereas this revelation is true and not a lie, the very Christ that is eaten

and drunken. And this spiritual eating—this eating and drinking the word and thus the Christ—is just as real and actual as any physical eating by physical organs, can possibly be. This is true in general. All men eat in a twofold sense. They eat words, ideas, concepts with their mind, spirit, and with their physical mouth they eat the natural bread with which they nourish their immortal frames. Therefore the world builds schools. Institutions of learning are places where men are fed and where they do eat words, ideas, good or bad, spiritually wholesome, upbuilding, or poisonous, soul-destroying. But eat and drink they do with their mind. Words, ideas, mightily effect a man. Someone brings him a glad tidings, and he leaps with joy, the reason being that very actually he has eaten the message, its words, the idea of which in their totality the words of the message are the embodiment and the vehicle. Therefore sad news has the effect of bringing the tears to the eyes of the man. So does the believer eat and drink the idea of the Christ, and thus the very Christ Himself, set forth by God's Gospel. He eats and drinks the Christ by eating and drinking the word-picture of the Christ hung before his eye by the preaching of the Gospel. We set pictures of our loved ones in conspicuous places of our homes, especially when they are away from us. And we fix our eye on these pictures and drink in the features of those beloved faces. So does the believer have a picture of Christ. And the Gospel of God and the symbols of the sacraments that He instituted for the strengthening of the faith of His people, is that picture. And by the mercy of God the believer fixes his eye upon that picture—the picture of the Christ. And drinking in the beauty and the loveliness of the Christ, he says, also at the communion table, "My Saviour". So does he by faith eat Christ, the crucified Christ, as atoning for the sins of His people, His sheep; the Christ as raised up from the dead unto the justification of His people, and the Christ set in heaven with His people and blessed with all spiritual blessings.

And so eating the Christ by faith, Christ nourishes, feeds this eater and drinker of the Christ, feeds him in the way of his spiritual hunger and thirst, and of his spiritual eating and drinking—Christ's own work in him. The saying, "Eating and drinking Christ, the believer is fed and nourished," again gives expression to a reality. Eating and drinking Christ, the believer receives out of Christ life and grace. For Christ is the bread of life, the living water. A hungry man, having eaten a wholesome meal, will tell you that he is strengthened, refreshed by the food that he has eaten and that has been assimilated by his body and poured into his bloodstream. So the believers, who by faith eat Christ—they are spiritually fed, nourished, and strengthened by their Christ who gives them to eat His own flesh and to drink His own blood; who thus

continued to give them out of Himself the grace and life that He merited for them and of which His Father is the creative source and He, the Christ, the seat and channel—the channel of grace. For He is the true bread of life. This is the essence of the sacramental working of the sacrament.

But this is something that the Reformer Zwingli seemed not to have understood. "We have", said Zwingli, "in the words and the signs of the sacrament a revelation of Christ to our consciousness. And with our minds we receive the revelation and believe and are saved. And we associate the idea of the Christ presented to us by the word with those signs. And we see those things as a picture of the Christ." But this is all the farther that Zwingli went. He never seemed to have come to the understanding of the fact that Christ in the way of the believer's spiritual hunger and thirst eating and drinking of the idea of Christ, and thus the Christ,—Christ imparts His very own life to them also when they are seated at His communion table.

But what now has faith to do with all this? If a man has no true saving faith, if on this account he is dead in trespasses and sin, and as spiritually dead, devoid of hunger and thirst, he cannot and does not eat; and Christ does not feed him. For Christ, the true bread, is not for the dead but for the living.

The fact and truth that Christ now and everlastingly nourishes His people, imparts unto them His life and grace, in the way of their eating and drinking Him—His work in them—is brought home to us in the Scriptures by still other images, among others by the allegory of the vine and the branches. Says Christ, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Abide in me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in me." The natural vine and the branches in nature also is a mystery, it being a creature, a work of God's hands. The seat of life of the branches is the vine; and of the life of the vine the branches are full; and on this account the branches must needs abide in the vine, the vine being their very life, so that, as separated from the vine, they must needs wither and die. Thus applying this figure, we get this: The seat of life of the believers is Christ, now and ever; and of the life of Christ the branches are full. On this account the branches must abide in Christ, He being their very life, so that as separated from Him they must needs whither and die. And therefore His admonition to them, "Abide in me". And they shall abide in Him; for He prayeth for them, so that their faith cannot cease.

But this is not all. To understand the sacramental working of the Lord's Supper, it is also necessary to contemplate it as a seal. The Lord's Supper—and this is just as true of the sacrament of Holy Baptism,—is a

seal, can be a seal, only because of the words that Christ spake, and still speaks, when He instituted this Supper. "This cup is the New Testament in my blood which is shed for you and for many for the remission of sins; do this as often as ye drink in remembrance of me." The words of the institution of the Lord's Supper of our Lord Jesus Christ, as they are delivered by the Apostle Paul reads, "For I have received of the Lord, that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat; this is my body which is broken for you, this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also, he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the New Testament in my blood; this do ye as oft as ye drink of it in remembrance of me: for as oft as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come."

Firstly, we should realize that these words of the institution of the Lord's Supper, as spoken by Christ, are not words by which He offers Himself and His salvation to His people, but words, a command—"Take, eat; this is my body which is broken for you"—that He Himself, as the chief prophet of His church, realizes in the hearts of His people, to whom He gives His flesh to eat and His blood to drink. Through His command, "Take, eat," He genders in them spiritual hunger for the Christ, the living bread, so that, as commanded to eat His flesh and to drink His blood, His people, as so commanded by the Christ who realizes in them the virtues of His atonement, do verily hunger and thirst after him, the true bread, and the living water, and do eat and drink Him, the living Christ, in order that, in the way of their hungering and thirsting, eating and drinking, He may feed, nourish and strengthen their faith, by imparting to them His life and grace. Only on this account can the Lord's Supper be a seal and is it a seal. But to understand just why the sacrament of the Lord's Supper can and does serve Christ as His instrument whereby He seals unto His people that He is theirs and they His, we must by all means have understanding also of this, namely, that natural bread is a creature of Christ; and that it is He who feeds and nourishes the bodies of His people by the natural bread, just as well as it is He who nourishes the new creature in them by the true bread of life—the Christ. Thus it is plain that the Lord's Supper is a seal because of Christ's speaking in the hearts of His sheep this word, "As truly as I feed your mortal bodies with my natural bread, so true it is that I, in the way of your hunger and thirst—my work in thee—nourish the new man in you with my flesh, and satisfy the thirst of this man with my shed blood. And know this, my people, as surely as I do the former—nourish your bodies with my natural bread, so without fail, I do the latter. And Christ's people believe this word of

Christ, always as *made* to believe by Him, and believing, they have joy and peace and are greatly strengthened as to their faith. But it all is Christ's work in them. The bride wears a ring on her finger. It affirms, does this ring, the marriage vows spoken to her by her husband. As often as she looks at that ring, she is reminded of his vow, so that the presence of that ring on her person, revives and strengthens her faith to the effect that her husband will keep covenant trust with her. So, too, the Lord's Supper (and the sacrament of Baptism as well); it is Christ's seal for strengthening the faith of His people in Him and in His promise that He, with whom they were crucified, and with whom they died, were raised and set in heaven, will certainly redeem them from all their sins and make them to inherit the kingdom.

So was the Lord's Supper (and the sacrament of Baptism) indeed instituted for the strengthening of the faith of the believers. And because Christ works, it does strengthen their faith. For this very purpose this sacrament was instituted. Eating the Lord's Supper, the believers receive a strengthening that would not be their, should they, in their self-will and self-conceit, imagine that the preaching of the word is sufficient to them. If it should be asked, "Why is not the preaching of the Gospel sufficient to the believer," the answer must be, "because Christ wills otherwise; wills to strengthen the faith of His people in a special way and measure through the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, through the symbols, the signs and the seals of His covenant. God has created His people with two doors to their inner man. And in saving His people, in strengthening them by His Gospel of the Christ, He avails Himself of both of these doors. Accordingly, He addresses His Gospel of His Christ to the ear of His people by means of the word and to the eye of His people by means of the symbol, the signs and the seals of His covenant. Not alone through the one but through the both of them, through Word and symbol, does He make His word, His Christ, to dwell richly in them to the salvation of their souls. Thus the word and the sacraments belong together. The one is not complete without the other. Rightly considered, therefore, the Lord's Supper should be eaten as often as the word is preached on the meetings for public worship.

There is still this question. Just what is that life that Christ imparts into the believers, the church, which is His body? There is this admonition from Paul's pen, "Seek the things above—for your life is hidden in Christ in God." The idea is that the life that is in Christ and of which the father is the creative source, is also in the believers, the branches. Therefore the faces of the believers are turned heavenward; therefore do they seek the things that are above. Their life is in Christ, who is at the right hand of God. But

what is that life? It is the heavenly life that Christ merited for Himself as to His human nature and for His church by His suffering and death. It is thus a created life of which God is the creative fountain and Christ the channel. For He is the true bread. Thus it is not God's own personal life that is imparted unto the church. To say the latter is to teach that the church in Christ is an extension, an efflux, of God's very being, which, to be sure, she is not.

Finally, it is not correct to speak of the magical working of the sacraments. For Christ is not a magician; but He is the wonder-working Christ. And therefore he can and does strengthen the faith of His people through their use of the sacraments. This strengthening, being a work of Christ and not a work of man, is a wonder; it is one of God's mysteries; and it therefore defies our powers of penetration. We do not comprehend it. Nevertheless, the believers know it to be an actuality; as they taste that the Lord is good.

G. M. O.

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## IN HIS FEAR

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### Living In His Fear

*With and Through our Children.*

If the end of all things was at hand in the days of Peter, what must we who are living two centuries later say of the time in which we are living? And if Paul could say that the night is far spent, the day is at hand, then what part of the night still remains now that it is two thousand years after Paul spoke these words? And if the time was "short" when Paul wrote his first epistle to the Corinthians, how much should we expect that there is left today? Without fear of contradiction it may be said that we are speeding toward the days of the final manifestation of the anti-christ.

If in the days of Peter and Paul there were signs in nature, in the church and in the history of the world, which indicated that the return of Christ would soon be realized, then how much clearer those signs are today. Earthquakes in diverse places, places not even known by the Apostles; wars and rumors of wars, wars and plans and rumors for bigger and more dreadful wars; apostacy on every hand, a growing indifference to things spiritual and an increase in the itching ears that clamor for entertainment instead of spiritual instruction and comfort; nations seeking peace and prosperity in the way of the formation of one world; these are the things we see today. How much more distinct the signs become! Paul and Peter with tre-

mendous spiritual insight could see the end rapidly coming even though to others the signs were not distinct. We do not need to see these things from such a great distance. They are right before us and with us. The time is short, the night is far spent and the end of all things is at hand.

What has served and will serve the purpose of the final, dreadful, world-embracing manifestation of the antichristian spirit in the world? What always has and always will mold the thought of man and prepare him for this world-wide kingdom of darkness? The answer is at hand. Men are prepared for things by means of instruction, propaganda, the printed page, the spoken word and constant repetition of the lesson you would have them learn.

Indeed, in a very real sense, the world must be instructed and prepared for the coming of the antichrist. The antichrist has not come as yet because men were not ready to receive him, and today the world still is not ready to receive him. Russia is bitterly opposed to the idea of one world unless it is a Russian-controlled and dominated world. We must never forget that tremendous fact of the confusion of speech at Babel when God frustrated man's first attempt to form such a world-wide power of deviltry. It will take much education and instruction even today to bring the whole world into a universal kingdom under one head as the antichrist is pictured to us in Revelation 13. But the devil and men are striving toward this thing and fashioning their educational systems accordingly. The invention of the atomic bomb has caused them to hasten in their work. And it can be said without fear of contradiction that the schools, both of higher and lower education, will and are being used for that end. What other end can the world seek? How else can the world interpret current events? In socialistic nations the youth in its education was the special target of the propaganda put forth to insure the future of the views of the governing powers. Thus also today the youth is the special target of antichristian education to insure his rise and to prepare his way.

What explanation can the world give our children of the signs of Christ's return? The world surely will not explain them as signs of His personal, final, triumphant and glorious return to redeem His own also from that last enemy, death. This they do not believe. How then shall they explain this increase of earthquakes and disturbances in the realm of creation. How will the world explain the wars and rumors of wars? Surely not in a way that will increase the fear of the Lord in our children.

Then, too, in close connection with this, it may be stated that such corrupt institutions in our own country as Hollywood are exerting a growing influence upon the educational systems and practices of our schools.

In these last few moments of the history of this

world and just before the antichrist appears in that final form, we may surely believe that the institutions of education are the sure tool of the devil to prepare his way; and the danger in these schools for our children is greater than ever.

That holds true, as we said above, for the schools of higher education as well. In fact we would even begin there. The teachers that instruct your children in the schools of the world today receive a far more atheistic and antichristian education than before. And they come to their pupils with further developments of the lie than those of a few generations back. Instruction is becoming more and more uniform. Conventions are held, and attendance is demanded. Here the teacher in the one-room country school, who formerly went more or less his own way and was permitted to present his material from his own viewpoint, comes under the influence of more atheistic and antichristian philosophy than he would have experienced in his isolated position back home. For we must never forget that the world develops in the lie and in its foolish philosophies which become the backbone of its teaching methods and content. The unbeliever did not always believe in evolution. The world always scoffed at the idea of a divine Creator of all things. But when questioned as to where all things came from, a shrug of the shoulders simply expressed ignorance. But the particularly foolish and atheistic theory of evolution is of comparatively recent origin. So the world develops in all the fields of the lie. And one may say what he will, but one exposes his children to all this corruption when he gives his children over to the world for instruction.

You may say that this is all counteracted by the education and instruction he receives at home, in catechism and Sunday School. But the question may be asked, "Is it very likely and is it practiced, that the parent who so indifferently sends his child to the world for his instruction, will and does show enough interest in his instruction when he returns home in the late afternoon to feel him out in regard to his instruction and to correct the dangerous impressions he received in school?" We are afraid that this is not the case. It is a tedious task that must be performed EVERY day. You cannot wait for your child to reveal of himself the evil philosophies he has learned. If he reveals them, then it shows that he has detected the lie himself. But there are so many small, unnoticed bits of philosophy which soon build up—and that in a systematic way—into a deeply entrenched evil outlook on life. Do not forget that a teacher who has received his A.B. degree and has taught for years is a capable instructor with the qualification to impart his own philosophy upon his pupils. And your children will respect his opinion before they will yours, even though you are his parent. Recently undersigned spoke

to a group of thirteen and fourteen year old grade school pupils who had been taught that God created all things in periods of thousands of years rather than in six days. The instructor, apparently a capable teacher, skilled in presenting his view, had convinced his pupils that this was very true and also entirely in harmony with Scripture. The point we wish to make here is that we wonder how many of the parents of these children were aware that their children believed this, and how many were able to refute it to the satisfaction of their children? In this particular case all appeal to Scripture by the undersigned had little effect, for at that age children can easily be deceived by a text that seems to substantiate the false doctrine. A day is as a thousand years in God's sight. So the Psalmist speaks, and to these children by the teacher's guidance, that meant that those days were indeed really thousands of years. The group became convinced only when it was made plain to it that then Adam could not have been 930 years old when he died but must at least have been 1930 years old, for he must have lived through the entire thousand year long seventh day. Thus these things creep into the minds of our children and constant vigil is needed. But if we throw off our calling to see to it that they are instructed in the fear of the Lord to the utmost of our power and instead send them to the world, will we retain enough interest to check up EVERY day on what they have received in the way of subtle instruction in the lie?

Besides this, school occupies such a big place in the life of our children. In comparison with home training, catechism, Sunday School and church services the world has our children if we send them there for their training the greater share of the time. How can we expect our little to overthrow so much? Then, too, by our very act of sending them to the world we are teaching them a wrong lesson. You may teach them at home that the natural man can do no good. In catechism he may be taught the total depravity of man. But when you send him to the world, you say by your actions, "Yes, but there is some good yet left in the world. The world is so good that I can send my child there to his schools without the fear of ethical moral taint. In the realm of the natural, at least, the world does good." But be not deceived, your child does not simply get a little training in reading, writing and arithmetic. He gets all these from the viewpoint and unto the goal of those who are ethically under the dominion of the evil one.

Our children are our most precious heritage and gift here below. And as we live in the fear of the Lord, we ought to do so with them and through them. Our own fear of the Lord ought to be exercised through our dealings with our children. And this fear of reverence and deep respect for the God of our salvation ought to cause us to be extremely diligent and faithful

in bringing up our children—His children—to the utmost of our power in the truth and strive as much as in us lies to keep them away from all danger of worldly philosophy.

We should not send our children where they cannot live in the fear of the Lord with us. And if we are not living in the fear of the Lord through the instruction to which we submit them, we are not personally enjoying the fear of the Lord ourselves either. We can enjoy the fear of the Lord ourselves only when we are seeing to it that the children God has given us are also enjoying the truth and growing in His fear.

We are not advocating world flight when we demand the withdrawal of all God's covenant children from the dangers they face when taught by the unbelievers. But we are indeed advocating world fight, the world fight of Genesis 3:15. And we may not deceive our children into thinking that there is any cessation in any sphere of life of this battle of the ages. In these days when the world and the false church put forth such a hypocritically friendly front, it is above all urgent that they be reminded of the spiritual difference between light and darkness. When the world tries to appear christian, you may be sure that the antichrist is not far away. It still denies the incarnation, the cross and the resurrection and is antichristian rather than Christian. Let us not lay a stumbling block in the way for our children but with them and through them live in the fear of the Lord.

J. A. H.

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## FROM HOLY WRIT

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### Signs In The Gospel Of John

#### *Introduction.*

When this article appear in our Standard Bearer already a new volume of the Standard Bearer will have begun. It seemed to me that this would be the proper place and time to begin a series of articles on another subject in this rubric. Expository articles, of course. This would be profitable for the readers since a change would stimulate fresh interest. Not that the studies on "O. T. Quotations In The N. T." could not have been continued by the undersigned with joy and devotion. There are still some very interesting Scripture passages, which we have not yet discussed in this series, worthy of a careful study and exposition. But, mindful of the proverb "a change of diet whets the appetite", we decided that a change in reading material would be the course wisdom dictates.

We have chosen to write a series of article on the

subject written above this essay: "Signs In The Gospel of John".

The venerable apostle John assures us with great fervor, that his purpose in writing his Gospel is a practical one. His is the service of ministering to the needs of the saints; his goal is the strengthening and working of faith. Writes he, "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name". Chapter 20:30, 31.

If the inspired writer had this goal in mind in writing this testimony concerning Christ, concerning the things which he had seen and heard and what his hands had handled concerning the Word of life, then well may we give heed. And such giving heed we must do in faith. It must be an act of obedience. It must be more than an idle pastime, a satisfying of a natural craving for learning. For all Scripture is God-in-Spirited, and is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction for admonition in righteousness, that the man of God be thoroughly furnished unto every good work!

We shall then give heed in faith; in obedience of faith and love for God!

Then our labors shall not be vain in Him.

For a correct understanding of our subject as a whole, as well as for the understanding of each separate "Sign" recorded in the Gospel of John it is necessary to have a preliminary insight into the meaning of the various terms employed in Holy Writ to designate the miracles of Jesus. Names, after all, have the function of telling us something of the nature of the thing or person named. Something of the essential and hidden qualities are related in the names.

Thus it is with the names, for example, of God and of Christ in the Scriptures. To confine ourselves to the latter, we notice that Jesus is given many names in Scripture. Such names as Jesus, Christ, Lord, Son of God, Son of Man, Son of David, Root of David, Lion out of Judah's tribe, etc., which each in turn tell us something of the fulness which is in Christ's person and work, His mission and calling as our Savior. They all designate the same Christ from a different viewpoint and each name enriches the sum-total picture that the Scriptures portray to us of the Son of God in the flesh.

It is, therefore, but wholly natural that also the great and mighty works that this Son of God in the flesh performs, should be designated with more than one name. These mighty works are so many radiant beams of light shining from the Person of the Son, who testified concerning Himself: I am the Light of the world. John 8:12. To put it in the words of the scholarly Richard C. Trench: "The wonderful is for St. John only the natural form of working for Him who

is dealt in by all the fulness of God; He must out of the necessity of His higher being, bring forth these works greater than man's. They are the periphery of the circle whereof He is the center. The great miracle is the Incarnation; all else, so to speak, follows naturally and of course. It is no wonder that He whose name is "wonderful" (Is. 9:6), does works of wonder; the only wonder would be if He did them not".

There are in the New Testament Scriptures six different names given by which we are told something of the nature and purpose of the miracles of our Lord.

A brief statement of these names we here submit. They are as follows: 1. "Wonders". 2. "Powers" (krachten). 3. "Signs". 4. "Works". 5. "Marvelous" things. 6. "Paradoxical" things. The last two names each only occur once in the Gospels. The term "marvelous" is the rendering of the Greek "Thaumasion", that which causes wonderment, makes men to marvel. It is used in Matthew 21:15. The term "Paradoxa" is found only in Luke 6:26. It, like "Thaumasion" expresses the "unexpectedness of the wonder, and so implies, though it does not express, the astonishment which it causes". (Trench).

This leaves us the first four names to consider. These four names are the most common, and unitedly they afford us an insight into the nature and purpose of the miracles as well as into their effect upon the people. We will consider them in the order that they are given in the former paragraph.

The first that calls for our attention is "Wonder". Wonder is a translation of the term "Teras". The word is derived from verb "teereoo", that which is watched. It is therefore that which in the miracle strikes the eye. And, whereas that which is seen nowhere fits in with the common experience and the created laws it causes wonderment on the part of those who behold them. This wonderment, this effect that the works of Christ and also those of His disciples (John 14:12) produced in men is carried over to the deed itself. Hence, the sign, the miracle is called a "Wonder". It startles men, it makes them take notice, it calls their attention. As yet they do not understand, they wonder. If left to themselves, if no further word accompanies them, if no other element were present in the works of Christ, men would not see the implication of them, they would not hear the message they convey, at best it would fill them with fear and with superstitious awe. Think of the experience that Paul and Barnabas have in superstitious Lystra when Paul heals the man who had never walked. Acts 14:8-18. A word of explanation is necessary. Nevertheless, we can be sure that in all the mighty works of Christ this element of "wonder" is present. Compare Acts 2:22.

The next term, meriting our attention is "powers". The Greek term is "dunamis". Compare our English word "dynamite". It is suggestive of the strength

manifested in the works. The lame walked, the deaf heard, the lepers were cleansed, the sick healed, the dead were raised to life; this was power, the working of the power of God's might. At one time Jesus intentionally calls attention to this "power" and the transcending character of the same. Thus we read in Mark 2:1-12 amongst other matters, "Which is easier to say to the paralytic: thy sins be forgiven thee, or to say raise up, take up thy bed and walk". Surely this saying refers to the "power manifested" and this power manifested in turn indicates the *authority*, the right of Christ in the midst of death to overcome it. There was in every work not merely wonderment, such as was occasioned by the tricks of soothsayers and magicians (compare Acts 8:9-11), but men say that indeed this was the power, the divinity of God! Wonderment was therefore present, certainly. But also there should be fear. For here is the great power of God, His mighty arm!

Thirdly, there is also the term "Signs" to consider. In considering this term we must call attention to the following elements.

First of all we notice, that the term for "Signs" in the Greek is "Seemeion". In this word the ethical end and purpose of the miracle comes out the *most* prominently, as in "wonder" the least. (Trench). It denotes the real meaning and implication of the miracle, and it points to the revelational content, the testimony of God that is present in each wonder work of God in Christ. This is very clearly the implication of the term in John 6:26. In this instructive passage Jesus replies to the multitudes who followed Him from beyond the Sea of Galilee to Capernaum. The day before this Jesus had fed the multitudes, about five thousand men, with five loaves and two fishes. In their enthusiasm this multitude had wanted to take Jesus and make Him King. Consequently, Jesus sensing this purpose of the multitude, had gone into a mountain alone to pray. During the night He had joined His disciples by coming to their rescue, walking on the sea. With them He had come to Capernaum. And now the multitude, which yesterday had been so miraculously fed, comes to Capernaum too, seeking for Jesus. Finding Him they ask Him: "Rabbi, whence camest thou hither?" Most significantly Jesus replies to them, "Ye seek me not because ye saw *signs*, but because ye ate of the bread and were satisfied."

Now this reply of Jesus is most strikingly significant. First of all because of the contrast here drawn. The contrast is: not "seeing signs" but "eating bread". All that the people had noticed was the abundance of bread. They had seen much bread. Even so much so had this been the case, that they exclaim: "This is indeed that Prophet that should come into the world." John 6:14. But what the miracle wished to teach, its real implication concerning the Christ they did not

notice. It escaped their attention altogether. They did not see that this "bread", multiplied, was a picture and an evident "Sign" of Christ Himself as He is the Bread of Life. From this it is evident that there is a special significance to the term "Signs" in the book of John.

It requires faith in the Son of God to see the "Signs" in the wonders of Christ, His mighty works. These latter were more than meaningless occurrences, more than events causing mere wonderment and amazement, which in their meaning were left to the fanciful interpretation of each spectator for himself. Nay, the works of Christ are "Signs"; they have a definite prophetic, priestly and kingly, a Messianic content.

Wherefore it is not without good reason that the Evangelist John rather consistently calls all the miracles that he records for his readers "Signs". That such is the case is not so evident in our King James Version. Thus in John 2:11 we read "This beginning *miracles*" instead of "beginning of *Signs*". However in idem 4:48 "Except ye see *signs* and wonders . . ." Here the term "Signs" is used. However in the same chapter, vs. 54 the translation is "This is again the second *miracle* (not: signs) when he come . . ."

Interesting and instructive is the remark of R. C. Trench on this question of the translation of the term "seemeion" in the King James Version. Writes he: "That defect so frequent in our English version, namely, that it does not seek as far as possible to render one word of the original always by one and the same word in English, but varies its renderings capriciously and without necessity, is noticeable here. There is no reason why "Seemeion" should not always be rendered "sign"; but in the Gospel of St. John with whom the word is a special favorite, far oftener than not, "sign" gives place to the vaguer "miracle" and this sometimes not without injury to the force and entire clearness of the words".

(To be continued)

G. L.

#### ANNOUNCEMENT

The second edition of "The History of our Prot. Ref. Churches" is off the press. This book gives a complete history of the causes that led up to the breach between the Chr. Ref. and Prot. Ref. Churches. It also contains a catechism which refutes the pernicious doctrines of "common grace" and "a well-meant offer of salvation". The book is profusely illustrated with pictures of our churches, consistories and ministers. It is printed on a very high grade of paper, and is beautifully bound. It has 410 pages. A copy of this book should be in every Reformed home. The price is \$2.00.

Prot. Ref. Mission Committee,  
Box 562,  
Grand Rapids, Michigan.

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## PERISCOPE

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### *The Picture of Christ . . . .*

We recently received a publication which we had never seen before. It is called *Bible Christianity*. In glancing through its pages we are informed that it is a monthly journal "for the furtherance of the doctrines of the Bible" and is issued by ministers of "The Presbyterian Church in Canada". Under the title which appears above we found the following editorial, which we have taken the freedom to condense and reprint. We like the note which it strikes as well as the fact that it gives us food for thought. What do you think?

"Pictures of Christ are becoming increasingly popular in Protestant circles. Plaques of the face of Christ and framed pictures can now be seen in many homes. We noticed a news item that on the desks of increasing numbers of business men and women in a certain city is a small plaque of the face of Christ. One woman's reaction to having such a plaque is expressed in her words: 'It sure helps me keep my redheaded temper.' And a business man stated: 'No one has cursed in my office since the picture has been on my desk'.

"Recently, in a folder from a firm selling such pictures and plaques we were informed that these things help to create a spiritual atmosphere in the home; such things are an aid to prayer and reflection. It is an aid to devotion and worship.

"Now all this may seem very innocent and of benefit to the Church. However, it is time that the Church considers the question whether or not such pictures of Christ meet with the approval of God. What appeals to the popular mind may not meet the approval and blessing of God . . .

"The first thing to consider is that the Gospels or the Epistles nowhere give us a description of the physical appearance of Christ. This is most remarkable. . . No one writing a biography of a famous person would forget to give a pen description of this person. That there is such an omission in the Gospels is startling. It is evident that God did not want a physical description of Christ.

"When man seeks to supply what he thinks is a lack in teaching and worship, he sets himself above God . . . He will make up for this deficiency of God and supply a picture of Christ. What God neglected to do man will supply.

"Of course, since no description has been given of Christ, every picture is false. No one has any idea what Jesus actually looked like and any picture may be far from any likeness to Him . . .

"But can we not teach a great deal about Christ through pictures? That leads to another question. Can truth be taught by that which is false? Can we

use false means to teach truth? The Roman Catholic Church thinks that truth can be taught through means of pictures, images, crosses, and crucifixes. Slowly but surely we are beginning to follow the example of the Roman Catholic Church.

"All this is in direct transgression of the second commandment. It reads: 'Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them'.

"It will be pointed out that Protestants do not bow down before pictures and plaques nor do they serve them. But that is not all that is forbidden. It is forbidden *to make* any likeness of any thing in heaven, earth, or the water. Making a likeness of Christ is in direct transgression of the second commandment.

"It is a question, however, whether Protestants do not venerate pictures and plaques of Christ. They do attach a certain holiness to them when they do not swear or lose their tempers in front of a picture of Christ. When holiness is attached to a material thing it is spiritual adultery. Greater power is attached to a material object than the ever present God. That is a sin and a transgression of the second commandment.

"God does not want us to fall in love with any physical likeness of Christ . . . The beauty of Christ is seen in His virtues and in His love for God . . . That is the beauty which we must behold and adore.

"There are those who call it very narrow to object to any picture of Christ. But actually they are the ones who are narrow. They would narrow Christ to a picture and a false picture. How can any one receive the proper view of Christ in all His power, majesty, and glory by a human artist's conception of Christ? No human picture can possibly do justice to the Son of God. Christ is not only man but God. One cannot narrow God to a picture!"

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### *Report on Europe . . . .*

Our next item of interest is self-explanatory and needs no introduction. It is taken from *The Presbyterian Guardian* of September 25, 1947. We will merely add a brief comment.

"The fourteen clergymen who made a tour of Europe under the auspices of the United States Secretary of War returned to this country about the end of July, and the reports of their trip are being published in various religious periodicals.

"Since it appears that the Rev. Harold J. Ockenga of the National Association of Evangelicals and the Rev. W. O. H. Garmann of the American Council of Christian Churches were more particularly intended to represent American evangelicals, we have perused

with interest their reports, published respectively in *UEA* and the *Christian Beacon*.

"Certain things stand out in both of these accounts. First is the terrible destruction wrought in many of the cities of Europe, destruction so terrible that it seems fifty years would be required to repair the damage. Berlin in particular is described as a mass of rubble. People live in the midst of the rubble, in any hole they are able to find.

The second point emphasized is the tragic need of the people themselves, physically, and also spiritually. Even in countries where destruction such as that mentioned above is not the rule, the people are terribly destitute. The black market flourishes in some places. Russia is draining off to the east food raised in countries under her domination. Clothing is scarce and the poorest sort. Italy, Germany, Austria are nations dependent to a very large extent upon the generosity of those in other countries who send gifts of clothing and food through recognized relief agencies. The indications are that in general these agencies are doing a wonderful piece of work.

It also appears that Russia is taking away to slave labor camps many of the more able-bodied men, especially of Germany. Young men in good health and sound in body and limb are scarce in the Russian zone.

"Then there is the tragedy of the displaced persons. These are people who are not welcome in what was once their homeland, because the present powers in control do not consider them acceptable. Because of general conditions, they cannot find a place to live anywhere else. They wander about, trying to discover some area in the great continent where they will not be too unwelcome, and where they may find a little hope. But the word hope does not loom large in the European vocabulary these days.

"In addition to this suffering incident upon the results of the war, there is the tragedy of persecution. That religious persecution exists cannot be questioned. And perhaps the group which suffers most from this persecution is the Protestant group in lands such as Italy, Austria, and similar areas. For the Protestants are so few in numbers in these parts, that they do not loom large in the overall picture and so receive little attention. They are persecuted alike by the Communists and the Catholics. If there is any semblance of religious liberty, it is liberty to practice one's Protestantism in secret.

"An illustration comes from Rome. The group of clergymen met with the Protestants in that Catholic city. The Protestant ministers reported their condition and Ockenga declares that he and his companions "were vividly reminded that the Vatican has not ceased its persecution of Protestants in any way". Garman goes more into detail, and reports that these Italian Protestants asked the clergy commission, or the Pro-

testants in it, not to make the scheduled visit to the Pope. Garman himself refused to go to the Vatican, and thus was the only "Protestant" on the trip, in the opinion of the American Council. The Roman Catholic members of the Commission refused to go to the headquarters of the World Council of Churches in Geneva, a distinctly Protestant movement.

"Since the Communists are fighting the Catholics, and the Catholics are fighting the Communists, and yet both are oppressing the Protestants, especially evangelicals, the lot of the latter is particularly desperate.

"The final thing that stands out in the picture these men present is the ever present menace throughout Europe of Russian Communism. From our own reading of American newspapers this menace is clearly in existence. But the clergy commission encountered it in the person of many individual citizens who seriously fear Russia. Because of the situation, it is emphasized that America must not only talk "tough" to Russia, but must be prepared to back up that talk with force. Garman goes so far as to support "universal military training, under certain restrictions". The withdrawal of American troops from European countries, it is said, will but open the way for the entrance of the Russians, for the native population is in no position to protect itself, and will not be for many years."

These things cry out to us of "Revelation". The "four horsemen" are riding fast and furiously! The "Beast" and the "False Prophet" are raising their heads everywhere! Babylon becomes great and Jerusalem is made desolate. The "time" is at hand; watch and pray! Behold, I come quickly!

W. H.

#### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On Friday, October 10, 1947, our beloved parents,

JOHN HOFMAN

and

JENNIE HOFMAN nee Hoorn

celebrated their 35th wedding anniversary. We thank and praise God with them that He has kept and provided for them together through the years. It is our earnest hope and prayer that the Lord may grant them His peace in their remaining years.

Their grateful children,

Mr. and Mrs. A. Vermeer

Rev. and Mrs. W. Hofman

Rev. and Mrs. A. W. Hoogstrate

Eleanor Mae

Mildred Ruth

John Jr.

Eight Grandchildren.

Grand Rapids, Mich.