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MEDITATION

Groote Tevredenheid

“Een psalm Davids. De Heere is mijn Herder, mij zal niets ontbreken. Hij doet mij nederliggen in grazige weiden; Hij voert mij zachtken aan zeer stille wateren. Hij verkwikt mijne ziel, Hij leidt mij in het spoor der gerechtigheid om Zijns Naams wil.”

Psalm 23:1-3.

Al zou er niet boven dezen psalm staan, dat David hem geschreven heeft, dan zouden we toch direkt aan David denken bij het lezen van dit schoone lied. De stijl is Davidisch. Daar komt nog bij, dat het juist David zou zijn die bij groote tevredenheid van Gods volk, zou denken aan de herder en zijn schapen. Immers, hij was herder geweest, misschien wel voor vele jaren, in het huis zijns vaders Isai.

De Heere is mijn Herder, mij zal niets ontbreken,

Dat is een stoutmoedige belijdenis, uitgesproken temidden van groote ellende, gebrek, honger en kommer hier op aarde. Hoe kan toch een mensch die in deze wereld verkeert ooit zulk een belijdenis uit spreken? Strijdt het niet met onze dagelijksche ervaring? Het schijnt wel alsof vooral een Christen alles moet ontberen.

Laat ons eens zien.

Jezus heeft ook eens gesproken van Zijn broederen, en hen vergeleken met een arme bedelaar, Lazarus genaamd. Dien man ontbrak schier alles: geen kleding, tenminste de honden schijnen geen moeite gehad te hebben om zijn wonden te lekken; geen brood, slechts de kruimpkens die van de tafel des rijken vielen; geen vrienden, want, ten eerste, wierp men hem neer bij de poort des rijken, en, ten tweede men begroef den stakkerd niet eens toen hij gestorven was. Van den

rijken man staat er dat hij begraven werd, maar niet van Lazarus.

Gaat nu voor dien man staan, waar hij temidden van de honden in zijn zweeren ligt, en zegt: De Heere, Lazarus, is Uw Herder: gij zult niets ontbreken. Schijnt dat niet te strijden met de werkelijkheid?

Of luistert naar het getuigenis van den schrijver van den brief aan de Hebreëen. Die zegt van sommigen van Gods volk, dat zij bespottingen geleden hebben en ook banden en de gevangenis. Ze zijn gesteenigd geworden, in stukken gezaagd, verzocht, door het zwaard ter dood gebracht, hebben gewandeld in schaapsvellen en geitenvellen, verdrukt, kwalijk behandeld zijnde. . . hebben in woestijnen gedood en op bergen en in spelonken en in de holen der aarde!

Gaat bij die martelaren staan, en zegt tegen den beul om even op te houden met het slachten van Gods volk, en vraagt hen dan: Is de Heere Uw Herder, en ontbreekt het U ergens aan?

En toch: dan zal hunlieder antwoord zijn: Neen, ik heb werkelijk geen behoefte aan iets, want de Heere is mijn Herder!

Wondere, mirakeleuze tevredenheid!

* * * *

Hoe zit dat?

Luistert naar de belijdenis der Kerke Christi!

Hij doet mij nederliggen in grazige weiden; Hij voert mij zachtken aan zeer stille wateren.

Dat is figuurlijke taal, de taal van de gelijkenis.

Zoo doet de herder met zijn schapen.

Grazige weiden zijn weiden waar het gras sappig en malsch is, waar het welig tiert, waar er volop van dat jonge gras is voor het wollig vee.

En deze herder doet zijn schapen daar nederliggen. Dat doet de herder als zijn schapen genoeg gegeten hebben. Dan kunnen zij rusten, rusten.

Later gaat het verder. In die oasen der woestijn zijn beken, stroompjes van frisch water. Daar leidt de herder zijn schapen heen, opdat zij mogen drinken en zich verfrisschen.

Wat schoon beeld der natuur.

Ja, en dat beeld der natuur is door Gods wijsheid in de schepping gelegd, met het doel om beeld te zijn van de groote tevredenheid Zijner schapen. Dat is waar van alle verhoudingen op aarde. Het geheele leven der menschen op aarde is beeld van het tweede mensdom, dat eenmaal het nieuwe aardrijk zal bewonen. Het aardsche is beeld van het hemelsche.

En zoo is het ook hier.

De herder is beeld van den hemelschen Herder: den DrieEenigen God in het Aangezicht van Jezus Christus. Zeide Hij niet eenmaal: Ik ben de Goede Herder?

Het schaap is het kind Gods.

Ook daarvoor hebben wij bewijs te over. In het oude Testament hoorde wij er al van. Denkt, b.v., aan Ezechiël 37. Ook in Jesaja 40, waar de Heere God de Herder is van Zijn volk, dat Hij zachtkens zal leiden gelijk een Herder zijn schapen leidt.

En de weide is het eenig noodige voor Gods volk, waarvan we meer zullen hooren in de volgende verzen: in één woord: Het Woord van God, door den Heiligen Geest Gods toegepast aan de zielen en harten van dat volk.

En dan is daar de liefelijke leiding.

Let er toch op, dat er staat: Hij *doet mij nederliggen!*

Een rechtgeaarde herder van aardsche schapen weet wanneer het tijd is om zijn schapen te doen rusten, opdat zij hun voedsel mogen verteeren, uitrusten van het loopen, en kracht verzamelen om verder te gaan. En wanneer die tijd daar is, houdt hij halt en doet hen nederliggen in de grazige weiden.

Wat liefelijke zorg van den Goeden Herder voor Zijn schapen!

Want het einde moet zijn: groote tevredenheid.

* * * *

Hij verkwikt mijne ziel!

De letterlijke beteekenis van dit woord *verkwikken* is, dat de ziel teruggebracht, teruggekeerd is.

Dat brengt een smartelijke geschiedenis voor onze aandacht.

Eerst waren wij bij den Herder in het eerste Paradijs. En alles was liefelijk en er was een aangename rust. We waren veilig, daar in dat eerste Paradijs.

Doch Satan kwam en hij verzocht ons in Eva en Adam, onze eerste ouders.

En toen is onze ziel aan 't dwalen gegaan.

De ziel stierf.

Ja, het lichaam ook, maar in den tekst is de nadruk op de ziel, want het verkwikken van het lichaam moet wachten tot den jongsten dag, wanneer de lichamen van Gods volk zullen opgewekt worden tot de opstanding des eeuwigen levens. Maar hier gaat het over de ziel.

Welnu, de ziel van Gods volk is van nature dood.

En dat houdt iets zeer vreeselijks in.

Zulk een doode ziel haat God. Zij wil niets met God te maken hebben. Zij zegt met al wat zij doet: Wijk van mij, o God, want aan de kennis Uwer wegen heb ik geen lust!

En als dan God boden zendt om die ziel te vertellen, dat Hij een Koning voor haar beschoren heeft in Sion, dan zegt alle ziele van Gods volk, zooals zij van nature zijn: Ik wil niet, dat Jezus Christus Koning over mij zou zijn!

Zoo ziet ge, dat de ziel van Gods volk teruggebracht moet worden, zal er vrede, groote vrede voor haar zijn.

En dat is geschied, dat geschiedt vandaag nog, en zal geschieden totdat alle zielen der uitverkorenen gezocht, veranderd, wedergeboren, en teruggebracht zijn, opdat zij met den Herder mogen verkeerren als Zijn kudde.

Hij verkwikt mijne ziel!

Daar zit ook een positieve gedachte in, en die positieve gedachte staat zelfs op den voorgrond.

Het beteekent, dat het nieuwe, hemelsche leven van den verheerlijkten Christus in die ziel gaat wonen. Een verkwikte ziel is een ziel waarin Jezus Zijn intrek genomen heeft.

En dan wordt alles anders. Dan wordt het gelijk Paulus zegt in II Cor. 5:17: Zoo iemand in Christus is, die is een nieuw schepsel: het oude is voorbij gegaan, ziet, het is alles nieuw geworden!

Eertijds was de weide van een verkeerde en booze ziel de zonde en alle ongerechtigheid. Men voedde zich met vuilheid en gieriglijk bedreef men alle kwaadheid. Men bleef ver van de weide Gods en de zeer stille wateren van Zijn eeuwige gerechtigheid.

Doch de ziel keerde weder, was teruggebracht van de velden der zonde, en mag nu den Herder volgen langs de zeer stille wateren, en gevoed worden in de grazige weiden.

De ziel is verkwikt geworden met een hemelsche, eeuwige, heerlijke en lieflijke verkwikking.

Onuitsprekelijke tevredenheid!

* * * *

Hij leidt mij in het spoor der gerechtigheid om Zijns Naams wil.

Dat is het gevoerd worden langs zeer stille wateren van het tweede vers.

Water heeft een zeer bepaalde beteekenis. De sprake van water is luide, duidelijk en wordt door een ieder gevat.

Water hier op aarde is een nooddrift tot leven. Is er geen water meer, dan lijdt men verschrikkelijk voor tijd en wijle, en rochelend geeft men den geest en sterft. Dat is al. Ge kunt niet zonder water.

In de Heilige Schrift is er vaak sprake van water.

Beide in het Oude en in het Nieuwe Testament hooren we van het water, en van het water des levens.

Een ieder die God kent, en Zijn Woord, heeft terstond gevat, dat hier sprake is van een nooddrift tot *eeuwig* leven.

Wat is die speciale nooddrift die we behoeven om tot in alle eeuwigheid te kunnen leven? Waardoor krijgen we het eeuwig leven?

En dan ontvangen we het antwoord op zijn duidelijkst uit den mond van Jezus, als Hij zegt: Zalig zijn die honger en dorsten naar de gerechtigheid, want zij zullen verzadigd worden.

In één woord: onze eenigste nooddrift is de gerechtigheid.

Hebt ge gerechtigheid, dan gaat ge gelukkig en tevreden zijn tot in alle eeuwigheid.

Moet ge de gerechtigheid ontberen, dan gaat ge dorsten tot in alle eeuwigheid in de buitenste duisternis. En daar in de hel kan men, mag men niet drinken van de wateren der gerechtigheid. Daar moet men immer dorsten, dorsten.

Wat is nu die gerechtigheid?

Gerechtigheid is een deugd Gods.

En als zoodanig is zij die deugd Gods waardoor Hij in al Zijn leven denkt, spreekt en handelt in overeenkomst, naar den maatstaf van het hoogste Goed, en dat is Zichzelf.

Zoo zal men zien wat die deugd beteekent voor een mensch, dat naar Zijn beeld geschapen is.

Voor ons is de gerechtigheid die deugd waardoor wij in al ons denken, spreken en behandelen in volmaakte overeenstemming zijn met het hoogste Goed, en dat is God. Gerechtigheid voor ons is, dat als we straks met ons geheele leven voor Gods troon staan, we het zullen zien, dat de Heere God Zijn Eigen Goedheid als een maatstaf aan zal leggen bij ons leven, en zeggen zal: Het is geheel en al overeenkomstig Mijn goedheid. Welaan gij goede en getrouwe dienstknecht! Gaat in in de vreugde Uws Heeren! Dat is gerechtigheid voor U en voor mij.

En dan zult ge het ook eenigzins verstaan, dat zulk een staat en toestand volkomen tevredenheid brengt.

Daar rust men voor eeuwig.

Hunne vrede ruischt en kabbelt daar als een rivier. (Denkt hier aan Zacheria's profetie).

* * * *

De Heilige Schrift nu spreekt van die gerechtigheid voor den mensch in tweeërlei zin.

Eerst in den juridischen zin.

En dan is zij die gerechtigheid die God van eeuwigheid uitgedacht heeft voor Zijn volk. Gods volk mag gaarne spreken van die rechtvaardigmaking van eeuwigheid. Daniel spreekt ervan. Als hij den Christus verkondigen hoort door den Engel Gods, dan hoort hij hem spreken van het inbrengen van een eeuwig gerechtigheid.

En de juridischen grond is gelegd door Jezus Chris-

tus aan het kruis. En dat die grond volkomen beantwoordde aan de eischen Gods is gebleken toen Hij Christus uit de dooden opwekte. En zoo verstaan we eenigzins dat wij gerechtvaardigd worden door Zijne opstanding. En die gerechtigheid dewelke als een vrije gave aan Gods volk geschonken wordt als ware zij door hen zelf verdiend, wordt hun eigendom door het geloof. Door een levend geloof worden zij gerechtvaardigd. En hebben zodoende vrede met God. Rom. 5:1.

Maar er is ook nog een andere wijze van spreken over die gerechtigheid in de Heilige Schrift. Rustende op de juridische gave van de rechtvaardigmaking, komt er een beginsel van rechtvaardigheid in het hart en leven van Gods volk, waardoor zij beginnen te wandelen overeenkomstig het hoogste Goed. En die rechtvaardigheid is de vrucht van heiligmaking. Evenwel stoelt die tweede rechtvaardigheid op de eerste. Alleen zij die van eeuwigheid gerechtvaardigd zijn worden rechtvaardig in den tijd, dat wil zeggen, ze worden daadwerkelijk rechtvaardig in beginsel. In hun diepste hart is er de zucht om den Heere welgevallig te zijn. Ze dorsten er naar dat de Heere, Zijn maatstaf van goedheid aanleggende bij hun leven, zeggen zal: Ik heb U lief! En: Ik keur Uw leven goed!

Nu dan: in dezen psalm worden de schapen van Jezus' kudde geleid op het spoor der gerechtigheid.

Ik ben van overtuiging, dat die tweeërlei gerechtigheid bedoeld wordt in dezen tekst. Trouwens, we vinden dat vaak in de Schrift. Er is een nauw verband tusschen rechtvaardigmaking en heiligmaking. Doch we moeten er voor zorgen, dat we de zaak van rechtvaardigmaking voorstellen in die orde. Stoelende op de rechtvaardigheid die Jezus aan het kruis verwierf, wordt ons de gerechtigheid in het hart en leven geschonken, en niet omgekeerd.

Daar bij die kabbelende rivier die ons drenkt is het stil.

Daar leidt de Herder ons. We worden gedrenkt uit Jezus.

De goede Herder en de weide met het kabbelende water der rivier vallen hier samen. Hij is beiden.

Reden waarom men tot driemaal toe in de Heilige Schrift hoort, dat Jezus' Naam in het Oude Testament is De Heere onze Gerechtigheid!

Ge hebt het al te danken aan den God en Vader van onzen Heere Jezus Christus die alles deed wat noodig was tot Uwen vrede.

De knechten Gods hebben groote tevredenheid.

En van de kinderen staat er: En de vrede van Uwe kinderen zal groot zijn!

En het groote motief van den Herder der schapen is: de verheerlijking Zijns Naams!

David zingt de slotsom: Hij geeft groote vrede: om Zijns Naams wil!

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EDITORIALS

Reunion?

Different attempts have been made recently, and still are made, to accomplish a reunion between the Synodicals and the Liberated Churches in the Netherlands.

The first move in that direction was made by the Synodicals. Their synod appointed a committee for a colloquy with the Liberated, and they requested the synod of the Liberated Churches to appoint a similar committee in order to see whether they cannot iron out their differences and come to reconciliation and reunion between the two, separated groups. The synod of the Liberated Churches in Groningen considered the request and responded by granting it in principle. They stipulated, however, that their committee not be permitted to enter into a colloquy at once, but have to correspond with the delegates of the Synodicals in writing, in order to have whatever is said and transacted in black and white and to prevent all possible misunderstanding. The committee of the Liberated Churches would like to start the correspondence by asking the Synodicals' committee five questions, to be answered by the latter with a categorical "yes" or "no", and granting the Synodicals' committee the privilege of following the same procedure with regard to the committee of the Liberated Churches.

Thus far these attempts have not been successful, due to the fact that the Synodicals cannot see the benefit of a written correspondence of that nature, but insist on conferring together and conducting a colloquy.

There appear to be some voices in the Liberated Churches (how many, and how strong they are, I know not; they belong to the minority, at any rate) who are strongly in favor of reunion, and who are willing to grant the request for a colloquy without the proposed, preceding, written correspondence. The leader of these seems to be the Reverend B. A. Bos, who, with the Reverend Van Dijken of Groningen, was a leader of the opposition at the Synod of Sneek-Utrecht, was strong for the Liberation at the time, and who now has evidently had a change of heart and feels that the schism is sin. He wrote a pamphlet in which he presents his view of the matter and strongly urges both sides of the schism to do everything in their power to come to a reunion. This pamphlet I do not have in my possession, but I do have the main conclusions which the Rev. Bos reaches, and some of them we propose to discuss.

The first conclusion wants to issue a call to all believers on both sides of the schism to lead in a con-

fession of sin before God and men and to exhort others to follow heartily in such a confession.

Here the great question is, of course, who must make this confession, and, particularly, which sins must be confessed. Who are here the guilty parties? Or does the Rev. Bos refer to a general, vague confession on both sides, without any specific contents?

It seems that the Rev. E. I. F. Nawijn, editor of *De Bazuin*, who discusses the propositions of Rev. Bos, is of the opinion that such a mutual confession ought to go in that direction, that is, in the direction of such a mutual, general confession, without stressing any particular sin, or putting any specific blame on either of the parties. That is the impression, at least, we receive from an editorial in *De Bazuin* of the 10th of September, 1948. He first complains that the Rev. Bos seems to think that most, if not all, of the blame for the schism is upon the Synodicals; and then he expresses his own opinion as to the way a confession on both sides ought to be conducted and a reconciliation accomplished, as follows: "And therefore, I am of the opinion that we must approach the question of confession of sin in a different way, and I believe that the Rev. Bos can also find himself in it, in this sense of the word. The question of 'guilt' must be discussed. When a breach of friendship and love exists between me and a brother in the congregation, then I certainly do not approach him in the week of preparation for the Lord's Supper with the message, 'I am right, and you are wrong!'—and now we will confess our sin of unbrotherliness together!! Such a reconciliation surely will not be a success.

"But I believe that it must be conducted in this way, and that is surely the underlying ground of the whole brochure of Rev. Bos: we are *brethren*; we believe in the same Christ; we belong together, according to His commandment; let us not start now with the question who is right, for we are of the opinion indeed that we had to act as we did; but let us commence in confessing our sin before God that we drifted so far apart; let it become a matter of guilt to us more and more that we are not one; and let the prayer become deeper and more serious for the operation of His Spirit within us; for when that Spirit works within us, we begin to be ever so small in ourselves; then learned professors and nice-preaching ministers and leading elders all become poor sinners, who feel themselves guilty of many shortcomings even in the most holy of their works.

"I am of the opinion that when the Spirit of God so works on both sides of the schism, the desire will certainly arise for a communal confession of sin,—in that way we can find one another again as brethren."

I do not believe that this is according to Scripture. Nor will it effect a proper and Scriptural reconciliation between the two groups. For in my opinion the Liber-

ated Churches are certainly the offended party; and the Lord teaches us in Matt. 18:15: "Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother."

I certainly would not deny that also with the Liberated brethren there is blame. I know by experience how difficult it is, when one is maltreated and finally cast out by the Church, to keep the spirit of Him Who was meek and lowly of heart. But the blame for the schism undoubtedly lies principally with the Synodicals. They brought their so-called doctrinal differences to the synod of 1936 without any official overture from consistory, classis, or particular synod. They forced the issue in 1939 to 1944 at a time when the country was still in the throes of the terrible World War II. And they turned a deaf ear to hundreds of petitions not to go ahead in this matter. They barred Candidate H. J. Schilder from the pulpit in Noordeloos; and no one who reads his book, "Kerk en Secte", can escape the conclusion that he was barred without any cause of justice. And they deposed Doctors Schilder and Greijdanus on the ground of articles 79 and 80 of the Church Order, although they had committed no other sin than that of opposing an hierarchical synod, who lorded it over the churches. And they deposed numerous officebearers in the local churches, who again had committed no other sin than to refuse to subject themselves under the yoke of synodical hierarchy.

It may be that a confession such as the editor of *De Bazuin* proposes will have the result that some of the weaker Liberated brethren will be deceived and return to "the mother church."

But it will surely not affect a true reconciliation.

Another of the propositions of the Rev. Bos would issue a call to all believers on both sides of the schism to cooperate in stopping immediately all attacks upon each other, such as cannot stand the test of brotherly love. He refers in this proposition to James 3:1-12.

Commenting on this proposition, the Rev. Nawijn writes:

"I read, first of all, once again in that letter of James, hence, in the Word of God: 'If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man'. The reference here is especially to the sin of the tongue, the spoken word. Who of us (on both sides!) was perfect? No one. But at this point the author must have thought particularly about the *written* words; and while we acknowledge our own faults, I am nevertheless of the opinion that the author may sound forth this call very emphatically in his own circles. Why beat about the bush? The terrible indictments, the hateful words (amounting to calling of names, sometimes), the insults which during the last couple of years were written in the papers of those under Art. 31 lie at the door of

our brethren of the other side;—and they themselves will have to give account of them. But by these the chasm has been deepened. For that reason I wrote in my first article that we have waited for a voice as that of the Rev. Bos, that we have hoped for it. When, so we said, will one have the courage again to call us brethren. For we knew but too well that there were many, very many, (they were no editors of church papers) who longed for the unity; but after the brochure of Rev. Schelhaas appeared, as a little cloud like a man's hand, this much bigger cloud came. For this there is, in our churches, rejoicing, because there is in his word the expression of brotherly love, of which we never read. We can only hope and pray that this call may find response also in the church circle of the Rev. Bos, that many of those under Art. 31 would like this very much is very evident; and when I listen to the tone of the church papers of our own churches which I read, I can assure the Rev. Bos that he may be satisfied on this score."

Now, I cannot but be surprised at the complaint of the Rev. Nawijn that the men under Art. 31 do not call them brethren. For who were they that first refused to call those of the Liberated Churches brethren? Were they not the Synodicals? Did they not cast them out of their churches on the ground of articles 79 and 80 of the Church Order? O, I am well aware of the fact that they did not mean to cast out so many of them as ultimately joined those that were expelled from their fellowship. But principally this should make no difference at all. Not only Candidate Schilder, Dr. Greydanus, and Dr. Schilder, and many other officebearers, but also the thousands of the members that follow them were expelled from the fellowship of the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands, on the basis of articles 79 and 80 of the Church Order! Does not the Rev. Nawijn know the contents of those articles? Let me quote them.

Art. 79 reads as follows:

"When ministers of the divine Word, elders or deacons, have committed any public, gross sin, which is a disgrace to the church, or worthy of punishment by the authorities, the elders and deacons shall immediately by preceding sentence of the consistory thereof and of the nearest church, be suspended or expelled from their office, but the ministers shall only be suspended. Whether these shall be entirely deposed from office, shall be subject to the judgment of the classis, with the advice of the delegates of the particular synod mentioned in article 11."

And Art 80 reads:

"Furthermore among the gross sins, which are worthy of being punished with suspension or deposition from office, these are the principle ones: false doctrine or heresy, public schism, public blasphemy, simony, faithless desertion of office or intrusion upon that

of another, purgery, adultery, fornication, theft, acts of violence, habitual drunkenness brawling filthy lucre; in short, all sins and gross offenses, as render the perpetrators infamous before the world, and which in any private member of the church would be considered worthy of excommunication."

Now, does the Rev. Nawijn still complain about the fact that the Liberated do not call the Synodicals brethren?

Are those that are considered heinous sinners, having committed a gross sin, which is a disgrace to the church or worthy of punishment by the authorities, brethren, as long as they do not repent? Are they not rather heathen and publicans?

How, then, is it possible that the Liberated, who are designated as heathen and publicans, principally, by the Synodicals, can call the latter brethren?

Is it not perfectly clear that the Synodicals must first repent of their sins before they have the right to complain of the lack of brotherliness with regard to the Liberated brethren?

I would say, with Rev. Nawijn: let us not beat about the bush.

H. H.

THE TRIPLE KNOWLEDGE

An Exposition Of The Heidelberg Catechism

PART TWO

LORD'S DAY 25

1.

The Means Of Grace. (cont.)

In the third place, the word has the meaning that lives most generally and vividly in the mind of the church, the meaning, namely, of undeserved and forfeited favor. Essentially this is the same signification as the one we just called to your attention; only the free and undeserved character of it is now emphasized and emphatically revealed. Still the word has the meaning of friendly or gracious disposition, the gracious attitude of God toward His people. But now the freedom and sovereignty of this grace is emphasized by the state and condition of the subjects that receive and experience this grace of God. Grace is always free; it always has its basis only in God. But the freedom and independence of this favorable disposition of God is brought out more clearly and vividly when the recipient is himself a sinner, who forfeited every claim

to the favor of God and deserved in fact only His wrath and disfavor. Hence, the Word of God uses the term grace as standing opposed to debt or obligation, opposed also to work. When anything is out of works or according to work, it is not of, or according to grace; and *vice versa*. Thus we read in Rom. 4: "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt." The wage-earner does not receive a token of the gracious disposition of his employer when he receives his wages. But we are being justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Rom. 3:24. In our justification we have a manifestation of the free, gracious, and friendly disposition of God to usward in and through Jesus Christ as our Redeemer and Saviour. Hence: "If it is by grace, it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, it is no more of grace: otherwise grace is no more work." Rom. 11:6. We have redemption through the blood of Christ, the forgiveness of sins, not according to works, which would be impossible, but according to the riches of His grace. Eph. 1:7. Grace, then, is such a friendly disposition, such a favorable attitude of God toward His people in Christ Jesus as makes it possible even for those that are entirely undeserving, yea, that have wholly forfeited His kindness and favor, to receive it.

Hence, in the fourth place, the word *grace* occurs very frequently in Scripture to denote that power of God whereby the sinner is actually saved and delivered from the bondage of sin and corruption, whereby he is regenerated and sanctified, and thus made pleasant in the sight of God, as well as the implication of all the spiritual blessings and virtues that are thus bestowed upon the objects of God's favor. Important in this connection is the passage in I Peter 5:10, where the term *grace* is used in its all-comprehensive sense: "But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you." God is the God of all grace. This implies, first of all, that God is gracious in Himself, as we have already explained. He is the all-gracious God. In the second place, this means that He is the source and author of all grace. Wherever you may find grace, it is the grace of God. And thirdly, it implies that He is the sole, the only author of grace. Apart from Him there is no grace: He works it, He bestows it as a manifestation of His own gracefulness. In this sense the word occurs very frequently in Scripture. It has this connotation in the apostolic benediction: "Grace be to you"; or: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you",—which can only mean that God in His grace, through Jesus Christ, may graciously work in and upon the Church, may bestow the power of His grace upon believers and make them partakers of all the blessings of grace and salvation. For when God

has graciously inclined toward men, He blesses them; and the contents of that blessing is grace. Even as, when He is displeased and unfavorably inclined to men, He curses; and the result is misery and death. Thus the word is very often employed in Scripture, as has been said. It is by grace that we are saved. Eph. 2:8. The apostle writes in I Cor. 15:10: "By the grace of God I am that I am," evidently meaning that the power of God's grace has made him what he is. And in I Peter 1:13, to quote no more, we read: ". . . hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;"—which we understand as referring to all the blessings of salvation that are showered upon the Church in Jesus Christ our Lord.

And thus it can be understood that the word *grace* in Scripture also has the meaning of thanks. When we read in our English Bible: "But God be thanked that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered unto you," the original has literally: "But grace be to God. . . ." Rom. 6:17. When the apostle exclaims in Rom. 7:25: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord," the Greek has: "Grace be to God. . . ." In the original of the well-known doxology of I Cor. 15:57 we read: "Grace be to God, Who giveth us the victory. . . ." And the same expression may be found in many other passages: II Cor. 2:14; 9:15; II Tim. 1:3, etc. The meaning is most probably that grace is ascribed to God by those that are the objects of and have experienced the power of His grace, in order that He may receive the praise as the God of all grace.

Now, when we speak of means of grace, we refer to grace in the fourth or subjective, sense of the word. It is through means that the Holy Spirit works faith in our hearts, effects within us the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and bestows upon us all the blessings of salvation.

These means are: the preaching of the Word of God and the sacraments, namely, Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Of these the preaching of the Word is the more important. This is evident, first of all, because the preaching of the Word is indispensable. Without the sacraments the Christian, if need be, can live; but never without the preaching of the Word. Without the Word of God he cannot come to a conscious faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He has no knowledge of Him, and, therefore, cannot appropriate Him by a true and living faith. It is through the preaching of the Word that the Holy Spirit works faith in our hearts. Besides, the preaching of the Word is not only the means whereby the Holy Spirit works faith within us, but it is also the main means for the strengthening and upbuilding and sustaining of our faith. The sacraments are also used to strengthen our faith, but in a

different way from the Word of God: they are really added to the Word. They obsignate and seal the promise of God in the gospel. But it is chiefly through the Word that we increase in the knowledge and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Upon the Word, therefore, the sacraments are dependent. Without it they are meaningless and have no content. This would not be true, of course, if the Roman Catholic view of the sacraments were correct: for according to the Romish Church the sacraments have power to work in themselves, even without the preaching of the Word; grace is not really worked in the heart of the believers by the Holy Spirit *through* the sacraments, but the latter *are* grace. Just as the theory of common grace proceeds, really, from the idea that things in themselves are grace, so the Roman Catholic Church teaches that grace is in the sacraments. Baptism, according to them, works regeneration; and in the Lord's Supper we really eat and drink Christ with our physical mouth. In that case we really do not need the preaching of the Word, but what we need is the Church and the priest, as the dispenser of grace. In distinction from them the reformers and the Protestants in general have always emphasized that the preaching of the Word is the main means of grace, that it alone is really indispensable, and that the sacraments are dependent on it. And, therefore, not the sacraments, but the preaching of the Word should have the chief emphasis in our churches.

Now, we explained that means in general are elements taken from the world of our experience, elements that are always employed by God for the same purpose and end, and which, for that very reason, we also are able to use, and by which we are bound. The same is true of means of grace. The Bible is for us, of course, the inspired Word of God; it is the revelation of the God of our salvation in Jesus Christ our Lord. But this does not alter the fact that the Bible as such is a human book, manufactured of human material, written in human language, and adapted to our human understanding. The preacher of the Word is a man of like passions even as we are, with the same human intellect, speaking to us in a human voice, and with human speech. The water in baptism, the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper, are elements from our world; yet it pleases God, by the Holy Spirit, through all these means to work grace in the hearts of His elect. And because He always works the same thing through these means, that is, through the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments, He always makes the elect partakers of His grace, the church in which they are instituted can administer them, and the individual believer can also employ them and is bound to their use. I emphasize here that God uses the means of grace, the preaching of the Word and the sacraments, for the *elect*. It is true, of course, that they

also have a different, the very opposite, effect of grace and salvation in the hearts of men. The Word is not only a savor of life unto life, but also a savor of death unto death; and what is true of the word is also true of the sacraments. But this does not alter the fact that both the preaching of the Word and the sacraments are used by God as *means* of grace, that is, as means to work faith and all the blessings of salvation in the hearts of the elect, and that therefore the Church is able to administer them and the individual believers can use them.

One more remark we must make, before we proceed to the consideration of the preaching of the Word as a means of grace. In a sense we can say, of course, that all things are means of grace for the elect. In the first place, it is plain, of course, that the simple reading of the Bible can be used by the Holy Spirit on one of the elect and to bring him to a living faith in Christ. In the same way God may use the conversation of believers among themselves or the Bible discussion in our societies as a means for edification and for strengthening of the faith. But there is more. The Scriptures teach us: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." Rom. 8:28. When the Word of God here teaches us that *all things* work together for good, the meaning is, of course, that they all work together unto the salvation of the children of God; and that is especially true of what we consider evil things in themselves: the temptation of the devil and of the world and of our flesh, the suffering of this present time in general, and, more particularly, the suffering for Christ's sake. That all these things are employed by the Holy Spirit unto the salvation of the elect and to cause believers to grow in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is very evident from the Word of God. So we read, for instance, in Rom. 5:2-4: "By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope." And in James 1:2, 3: "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience." And, to quote no more, in I Peter 1:6-9 we read: "Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls."

All these passages plainly teach that all things, in a sense, are means of grace, and that God, especially through tribulation and suffering, causes His people in the world to grow in the true knowledge of Jesus Christ and faith and hope and love, Even as a young oak, when it is tossed by severe storms, strikes its roots deeper into the ground, so by the grace of God tribulation and suffering have the effect that the believer strikes his roots of faith deeper into Christ and thus grows in grace.

Yet, by means of grace something else is meant.

For without the preaching of the Word, by which believers are called and through which they receive the knowledge of Christ, and without the sacraments, which are added to the Word of God as signs and seals of the promise, all these other and general means have no meaning and no effect. And therefore we may say that means of grace are very specifically those means which the Holy Spirit uses as they are officially instituted in the Church to be administered by her and to be received from her and through her and used by the individual believers.

These means of grace are only two: the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments.

2.

Preaching as a Means of Grace.

The first and chief means of grace is the preaching of the Word.

And here it should be emphasized at once that the Word of God must be *preached*. Then, and then only, as the Word that is preached it is a means of grace. Many there are who either deny or completely ignore this truth, and belittle the importance of preaching. They simply speak of the Word or even of the Bible as the means of grace. So even Dr. H. Bavinck in his "Roeping en Wedergeboorte", pp. 111, 112, writes (we translate) :

"But out of this affinity of the covenant of grace and the gospel, it follows in the second place that grace is not dependent, as presented by the Romish Church, on the institute of the church or priest and sacrament. The relation between Scripture and the Church is defined by the Protestants in an entirely different way than by the Roman Catholics. According to the latter, the Church precedes the Scriptures. The Church is not built on Holy Scripture, but Scripture proceeded out of the Church. The Church, therefore, for her being in existence does not need the Scripture; but the Scriptures for their origin, collection, preservation, and explanation are in need of the Church. The Reformation, however, reversed this relation. She placed the Church on the foundation of the Scriptures and put the latter far above the Church. Not the Church, but

the Scriptures, the Word of God, became the means of grace par excellence. Even the sacraments were subordinated on the Word, and had no meaning or power without that Word. But that Word was able, therefore, to operate and did operate also without the institute of the Church. It is true that God entrusted the Word to His Church in order that it might be explained by her, preached, and defended. But that Word is not given to the Church in such a way that without her it would have neither existence nor power. On the contrary, that Word is directed to all men; it is of value in all circumstances and for all spheres of life. And it derives its power and operation by no means only from the fact that it is being preached by an official person in the gathering of believers. It operates also then when it is being read and studied in the home, when it is being narrated by parents or teachers, when it is brought to the knowledge of men no matter in what form. Everyone, who, and what, and wherever he be, who accepts that Word in faith, is a partaker of God's promise, of grace in Christ and of the entire blessing of salvation. He does not need to wait for a Church, a minister, or for the sacrament. Whoever believes has eternal life."

Now, it is perfectly true that the Word as a means of grace is not dependent on the Church, if by Church is meant the Romish Church. Nor is salvation dependent on a Romish priest. The Church is free to institute its own offices. But that does not alter the fact that the means of grace are given to the Church. No Reformed man so belittles the institute of the Church as to think or teach that he can partake of the sacraments, whether baptism or the Lord's Supper, without the institute of the Church in his own home or in any gathering of believers. Nor is the preaching of the Word a means of grace apart from the institute of the Church.

It is true, of course, that the Church is founded on the Word of God, that the Word of God was first, and not the Church. But it is evidently not true that the Bible as we now have it was before the Church. Long before there ever was a Bible, there was preaching of the Word of God. In fact, preaching was from the very beginning of the world, as has been explained in connection with Lord's Day VI, question and answer 19: "Whence knowest thou this? From the holy gospel, which God Himself first revealed in paradise; and afterwards published by the patriarchs and prophets, and represented by the sacrifices and other ceremonies of the law; and lastly, has fulfilled it by his only-begotten Son."

How comparatively recent it is, however, that the Bible as we now have it existed not only, but was accessible to all. For many centuries the Church existed without a written Word whatsoever. For many more centuries only the Old Testament canon was

gradually written and finally completed. And again, for centuries afterward the Church waited for the completion and closing of the New Testament canon. And even then, many more centuries elapsed before the Bible was accessible to every believer. This had to wait for the invention of the printing press in the fifteenth century, for the general distribution of the Bible, and for the general education of the masses to be able to read and write.

But always the Church had the commission to preach the gospel.

And always the preaching of the Word was a means of grace.

H. H.

OUR DOCTRINE

The Names Of God

One can hardly maintain that the treatment of the Names of God by Reformed theologians in the past has been characterized by unanimity of opinion. Much difference of opinion exists. The late Dr. Bavinck comprehends everything under the concept "Name of God" (names and attributes, the Being and Trinity of God), and divided or treated this subject-material as follows: Proper Names, Essential Names (God's essence—God als de Zijnde, God as Spirit, God as Light, God as the Holy One, God as Sovereign), Personal Names (the Trinity). The late Dr. A. Kuyper distinguishes between the names and attributes of God, but does not confine himself strictly to this distinction. Discussing the names of God he distinguishes between the essential names (God as Spirit, God as Love, God as Light, God as Life), and proper names (El, Elohim, Yahweh, Shaddai, Eljon, Adonai, Sabaoth). Others also distinguish between the names and attributes of God. Calvin has no distinction.

This difference of opinion among Reformed theologians is easily understandable. Our names, we understand, have little significance. They merely serve to distinguish the one person from the other. In Scripture, however, a name has great significance. It is not merely an idle sound. It expresses one's nature or being. God's Name, for example, is His Self-Revelation. One can easily understand, therefore, why Reformed theologians in the past vary in their treatment of this material and why some comprehend everything under the concept: Name of God.

The Idea Of A Name In Scripture.

The importance of a name is also reflected among us. We read in Prov. 22:1: "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather

than silver and gold." The esteem in which we are held, the impression which our name leaves with our fellow-men, is and should be for us a matter of great concern. It is and should be more valuable than silver and gold. Let no man be able to speak evil of us. If they do speak evil of us may it be slanderous and then for the cause of God and His Christ in the midst of the world. Criminals who have been apprehended and taken into prison forfeit their names. They become mere numbers. They have lost their identity and this is reflected in the loss of their names. As far as Scripture is concerned, it is a matter of common knowledge that names in Holy Writ have great significance. They are expressions of the nature or being of anything or of one of the attributes of that being.

This idea of a name is clearly taught throughout the Word of God. This appears, in the first place, from the several names of God: the Almighty, the Holy One, Jehovah, etc. These names simply have significance. Secondly, many human names in Scripture have significance and also the reason is given why their particular names have been given them, e.g., Eve (Gen. 3:20), Cain (Gen. 4:1), Seth (Gen. 5:29), Babel (Gen. 11:9), Ishmael (Gen. 16:11), Esau and Jacob (Gen. 25:25), Moses (Ex. 2:10), Jesus (Matt. 1:21). Thirdly, either names are changed in Holy Writ or a surname is added when a person appears in another capacity, e.g.: Abraham (Gen. 17:5), Sarah (Gen. 17:15), Israel (Gen. 32:28), Joshua (Numbers 13:16), Jedidiah (2 Sam. 12:25), Marah (Ruth 1:20), Peter (Mark 3:16). Fourthly, of importance is the naming of the animals. We read in Gen. 2:20: "And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an helpmeet for him." This implies, on the one hand, that these animals had a name. They did not receive their names as such from Adam. The first man merely gave expression to the names which they already possessed. These animals revealed themselves according to their own peculiar nature. And this manifestation was their real, actual name. Moreover, Gen. 2:20 also implies that these names of the animals (their real, actual name) could be recognized by Adam. The Lord caused these animals to pass before the head of the human race in review and revealed unto him their true identity. And finally, the naming of the animals implies that these true names of the animals could be expressed by means of the human language. From all these Scriptural passages and for all these reasons it is evident that the name has significance in Holy Writ.

This Idea Of The Name Also Applies To The Lord.

That the Name (or Names) of God has great significance is clear throughout the Word of God. We have

already called attention to the fact that the Names of God as such have meaning. He is the Almighty, the Holy One, Jehovah, Lord, the Most High, Father, etc. This also appears from various texts. We read in Prov. 18:10: "The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe." Other passages occur in Holy Writ, such as: "The Name of the Lord is our salvation" and: "In the Name of the Lord is our help." From these passages and many others it is abundantly evident that the Name of the Lord is more than a mere idle sound. Surely, a mere idle sound cannot be a strong tower, our salvation and our help. Yet, this is exactly what the Scriptures attribute to the "Name" of the Lord. Hence, the "Name" of the Lord is the living Lord Himself, the revelation of Jehovah Who alone is God and Who rules forever and ever.

Of basic importance, in our study of the Names of God, is the truth: our knowledge of God is possible only in the light of God's Self-revelation. We must never confuse the knowledge of God with a comprehension of the Lord. That the Lord is incomprehensible is everywhere the teaching of Holy Writ. "Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?"—Job. 11:7; "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; and His greatness is unsearchable"—Psalm 145:3; "To whom then will ye liken God: or what likeness will ye compare unto Him?" Indeed, not as God as such but God as revealed is the object of our knowledge. We see and know the Lord, not as He is, but only in His revelation. Yet, although the Lord is incomprehensible, we can know Him. This is clearly taught, e.g., in John 17:3: "And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom Thou hast sent." The knowledge of the Lord refers to that activity of the child of God whereby he, with all his heart and mind and soul, is wrapped up in the "knowledge" of Jehovah, loves the Lord, would ever lose himself in the greatness of Jehovah, in the greatness of Jehovah exactly as the incomprehensibly glorious God.

Hence, we can know God only because and insofar as He has revealed Himself. Revelation implies three things. Firstly, the revelation of God is Self-revelation in the sense that he is the Subject of this revelation. God must reveal Himself. All knowledge of the Lord must come from the Lord. Never can we and never may we determine the essence or nature or identity of God. We do not determine who or what He is. All knowledge of God must proceed from Him and can never originate in the heart or mind of man. Secondly, God's revelation is Self-revelation in the sense that God is the Object of this revelation. The Lord must not only reveal Himself. But He must and always does reveal *Himself*. God is always the content of His revelation. It can never be otherwise. He alone is

the Absolute Reality. When He speaks He always speaks of Himself. In everything, in nature and in grace (not viewing nature and grace dualistically, as we have pointed out in a previous article—see October 1 issue of 1947), in all the works of God's hands and in Christ, all things direct us to the living God. The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament sheweth His handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge, and this speech and this knowledge are speech and knowledge concerning the Lord. God is the alone blessed Good, the Eternal, Infinite, Absolute Reality, Who created the heavens and the earth, Who realizes His eternal covenant of grace, sovereignly, along the lines of election and reprobation, and that only for the greatest and highest glory of His Name. God does all things for His Name's sake. When He speaks He always speaks of Himself. All Divine revelation is necessarily *Self-revelation* also in the sense that He is the Object of this revelation. Thirdly, Divine revelation implies a creature who is able to receive this revelation. This lies in the nature of the case. Revelation also implies that a person reveals Himself to someone. To be sure, the Lord is eternally Self-revealed within Himself. Eternally He *knows* Himself as the infinitely blessed God. Jesus Christ, as the eternal Son, is the *Word*, is He not, the Self-expressed Image of the Father. The eternally blessed Triune God is therefore eternally revealed unto Himself out of the Father in the Son, and through the Holy Spirit. However, God has also revealed Himself in all the works of His hands and in Christ Jesus. And this creaturely revelation of the Lord surely implies or demands a creature who is able to receive this revelation. And this creature is man. Man, in distinction from all other earthly creatures, because of his peculiar creation, is able to receive this speech of the Lord and recognize in creation the Creator. He is able to know his God and serve Him with all His heart and mind and soul and strength.

Only, although it is true that all knowledge of the Lord is based upon this revelation of God, not this revelation but God Himself is the object of our knowledge. Indeed the heavens declare the glory of *God*, and the firmament sheweth *His* handiwork. Throughout the Psalms we are exhorted to praise and bless and love *the Lord*, for the Lord is great and greatly to be praised. This is eternal life, that we know *God*, the only true God, through Jesus Christ Whom He has sent. His revelation is not the object of our worship and adoration. The creature is not the object of our praise; we do not bow down before it and worship it. God's revelation of Himself is but a means to lead us unto Himself. And man, created in the image of the Lord, is fully aware of this fact. He knows that "for the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the

things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse." Man knows that the creature is not the Creator, that the things are not to be identified with Him Who made them, that above all things and infinitely distinguished from them stands the living Lord. Hence, not God's revelation but the living God Himself is the Object of our worship and adoration; it is the living God Whom we adore; Him we love and worship in the light of His Self-revelation, in all the works of His hands and particularly in the face of Jesus Christ and in His Holy Scriptures.

Moreover, this revelation of the living God, particularly in Jesus Christ, is wholly adequate. This does not mean, we understand, that it is adequate in the sense that the finite can comprehend the Infinite the temporal the Eternal. However, is it necessary for the finite to comprehend the Infinite, the temporal the Eternal? Does the happiness of the creature depend upon the possibility of his understanding the Creator? In fact, is it not true that to understand and comprehend the Creator is furthest removed from the heart and mind of the Christian? This is eternal life, is it not, that we know and love and serve the living God exactly as the living God Who liveth in an inaccessible light. It is and will forever remain the longing and desire of the Christian that God remain God. The Christian desires that he remain the creature and that the Lord remain the Creator, incomprehensibly great, and that forever and ever. That the revelation of God is adequate does not mean, therefore, that finite man can understand and comprehend the living God. Neither does this constitute an essential requirement for the supreme happiness and blessedness of the child of God.

The revelation of God is wholly adequate from a two-fold point of view. In the first place, the revelation itself is wholly adequate and complete. This surely applies to the Christ in Whom the living God pleases to reveal Himself. Christ Jesus, the Mediator and Head of His Church, is, according to the human nature, the complete revelation of the living God. This, we believe, is literally taught in Col. 2:9, and we quote: "For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." The context of these words of the apostle Paul is clear. The apostle had already stated in verse 3 of this chapter that all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid in Christ. In verse 6 the church of God is exhorted to "so walk in Him", namely, "Rooted and built up in Him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving." To this the apostle adds the warning, in verse 8, that the congregation of the Lord must beware lest any man spoil them through philosophy and vain deceit, after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. The

Church of the living God must, therefore, seek her all in Christ. She must not turn to anything or anyone outside of Him. And the reason or ground for the apostle's exhortation that we seek all things in Christ alone is expressed in the ninth verse: "For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." Countless are the interpretations of this particular Word of God. According to some this particular Scripture would teach us that the entire will of God has been revealed in Christ and that in that sense He is the fulness of the Godhead bodily. We may say in passing that the words "of the Godhead" are understood by us in the subjective sense of the word. Paul does not mean to declare that Christ fills the Godhead, but that the Godhead fills Him, and that in that sense He is the fulness of the Godhead bodily. To assert that the passage merely means to teach that the entire will of God is revealed in Christ clearly does not reckon with the language of the apostle here when he states that He is the *fulness of the Godhead* bodily. Another interpretation of this text seeks its solution in the mystery of Immanuel. This text, then, would convey the same meaning as when we read in John 1 that the "Word dwelt among us".

Our Lord Jesus Christ is the fulness of the Godhead in the flesh because He is the Personal Son of God in the flesh. He is the living God Himself united in the Person of the Son of our flesh and blood. This, then, so it is claimed, is the significance of the Word of God of Col. 2:9. Against this statement of the truth as such we have, of course, no objection. That this, however, is the teaching of Col. 2:9 is something else. Does this explanation do justice to the word "bodily" in this text? Would the truth of Christ's Personal Divinity be expressed just as well were we to read: "For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead"? The word "bodily" surely modifies and further describes the words that "in Christ all the fulness of the Godhead dwells". The apostle here is referring to our Lord Jesus Christ, not from the viewpoint of His being the eternal Son of God, but as the Head and Mediator of His Church. Of Christ, as that glorified Mediator of His own, it is said that all the fulness of the Godhead dwells in Him. This implies, in the first place, that He is Himself that fulness. In Him we behold a complete revelation of the fulness of the alone blessed God, of all His virtues and blessedness. The highest creaturely reflection of the living Lord stands before us in the Lord Jesus Christ. And, secondly, Christ is that fulness also in the sense that, in living communion with Him and out of Him, we receive a fulness of salvation. The Church, too, in living communion **with her** Lord, becomes partaker of the Divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4), receives, in a creaturely measure, the very life of God Himself. And thus we understand the admonition of the apostle in the immediate con-

text that we seek our all alone in Christ and not in anything or anyone outside of Him.

In the second place, the revelation of God in Christ Jesus is completely adequate because of the creature to whom God is revealed. It is fully adequate because it completely satisfies us, will fill us and render us eternally and supremely happy and blessed. It is a revelation perfectly and completely adapted to us and we shall be completely adapted to it.

This Revelation of God is His Name, or, God's Name is His Self-revelation. Fact is, as we have already stated, the Lord has revealed Himself in nature and in Christ. Also, the Lord has created a creature (man) who can receive this revelation. Moreover, the Lord has also interpreted for us this Self-revelation and expressed it in human words adapted to our understanding, such as the words: God, Father, Jehovah, Most High, etc. The Name of God is, therefore, not merely an idle sound but a living reality, is the living God Himself revealed; yea, God's Name is His continuous Self-revelation; He always declares His Name; He does not merely speak His Name and it happens to be there; He always speaks His Name; God's revelation of Himself is continuous—His work, in nature and in Christ, is continuously maintained by the living God.

The Classification Of God's Names Which We Prefer.

We prefer to distinguish between God's proper Names and His attributes. It is true that, strictly speaking, everything can be grouped under the heading: Names of God. Also His attributes, such as His mercy, truth, love, grace, goodness, independence, immutability, etc. are surely revelations unto us of the living God. Nevertheless we prefer to distinguish between the Lord's proper Names and His attributes. Thereby we can better distinguish between those names which are attributes and the proper names which we use when we speak of the living God or address Him. We do not address the Lord as: Mercy, Grace, Love, Wisdom, Power, etc., but as: God, Father, Almighty God, Most High, etc. And, these words have meaning only because they are expressions of and speak to us of the Revelation of God in all the works of His hands and in our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Various Names Of God In Holy Writ.

Even as the glory of the Lord is revealed unto us and stands before us in Holy Writ in and through a multitude of attributes, so also the Lord Himself stands before us in the Scriptures as having many names. They all reveal the Lord unto us even as He "stands" in relation to all things and particularly to His people. In the Old Testament we have the names: El, Elohim, Eljon, Shaddai and El-Shaddai, Jahweh

and Jahweh Tsebhaoth. In the New Testament the following names appear: Theos, Kurios, Pater, Pantokrator, Despotees, Sabaoth (James 5:4). To these various names, the Lord willing, we will call attention in our following article.

H. Veldman.

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

Sorrow And Indignation

Let us once more examine that Amalekite's report to David. Here follows his story in his own words. "As I happened by chance upon mount Gilboa, Behold, Saul leaned upon his spear; and, lo, the chariots and horsemen followed hard after him. And when he looked behind him, he saw me, and called unto me. And I answered, Here am I. And he said unto me, Who art thou? And I answered him, I am an Amalekite. He said unto me again, Stand, I pray thee, upon me, and slay me: for anguish is come upon me, because my life is yet whole in me. So I stood upon him, and slew him, because I was sure that he could not live after that he was fallen: and I took the crown that was upon his head, and the bracelet that was upon his arm, and have brought them hither unto my lord."

The report contains sentences that are not clear. This is true of the statement, "And Saul leaned upon his spear." It may mean that Saul was lying on the ground, "propping his weary head with the nervously-clutched spear;" or it may be understood of the attempt to kill himself; or also of his leaning on his spear (which was fixed in the ground) in order to hold himself up in a standing position. So, too, the statement, "For anguish is come upon me. . . ." This may be understood of a death-agony brought on by a self-inflicted wound, or of a purely mental anguish arising from the awareness of the nearness of the archers, or even of a bodily cramp resulting from excitement and exertion. And what may be the meaning of the clause, "after that he was fallen." It may be understood of Saul's fall to the ground or of the defeat of his army.

But the main thrust of the report is clear. The Amalekite affirms that he slew Saul. But according to the infallible account of the sacred writer Saul killed himself by falling on his sword. The man therefore lied to David. Doubtless, his whole report in the main was an invention. But he did come in the possession of Saul's crown. And his report in so far agrees with that of the sacred writer that it, too, affirms that Saul requested a bystander to slay him. We therefore must suppose the facts in the case to have been these. The

Amalekite happened along in time to witness the suicide of Saul and his armour-bearer. But this, of course, is not certain. The man may have arrived sometime later after the storm of the battle had subsided, yet before the Philistines came to strip the slain. Removing the crown and the bracelet from Saul's corpse, and storing them among his equipment, he imagined that a wonderful opportunity presented itself to him for capitalizing on Saul's fall and death. By placing that crown in David's hand, he could prove to him that Saul was really dead. And he could say too that he was the one who delivered the stroke that ended Saul's life. David would be grateful and reward the man for opening to him the way to the throne. Such were the man's anticipations. But he still was apprehensive, it seems. Would David not charge him with murder and have him put to death in punishment of his deed? That, he thought, would not happen if he told David that Saul, being in anguish, had begged to be slain, and that the reason he had yielded to Saul's request was that he saw that the king could not live after his fall, in other words, that he would die anyway. The man was confident, it seems, that, hearing his story, David would judge that he had done no evil but rather that he had performed a good work deserving of reward. He would even rend his garment and put earth upon his head that David might perceive that he felt as bad about Saul's death and the defeat of God's people as any Israelite. All goes to show that he was an Amalekite indeed and that he judged David according to his own standard.

It was a wicked deed that the man pretended to have committed. According to his story, he had stretched forth his hand and destroyed Saul upon whose head had been poured the sacred oil. As was explained in a previous article, the action with the oil was symbolical. It signified a doing of God whereby He had appointed and called Saul to the office of theocratic king and by His Spirit had qualified him for a time for the duties of that office, but without implanting in him the life of regeneration. Thus Saul was the anointed of the Lord indeed even to the very last moment of his life, yet not in the sense that after his rejection he still was Israel's *rightful* theocratic king, but only in the sense that it was the Lord who by special revelation had appointed him to the kingship and had seated him upon Israel's theocratic throne. This was the Lord's doing, not man's. Saul as man and king therefore was not man's, not this miserable Amalekite's; he was solely the Lord's. This Amalekite, therefore, in slaying Saul, and in slaying him with malicious intent, is a murderer, and a murderer of the deepest dye. For he took the life of one who in the eminent sense was the anointed of the Lord. Needless to say, that Saul had requested to be slain, does not lessen the man's guilt, nor that Saul would have been

slain anyhow. Saul was not his own. He might as little request others to slay him as he might take his life by his own hand. And that he would have been slain anyhow could give the Amalekite no right to destroy him.

Was the man an Israelite combatant fighting on the side of God's people? Or was he perhaps a Philistine combatant fighting on the side of the uncircumcised? The text seems to indicate that he was neither. For to David's question, "Who art thou," he replies that he is the son of an Amalekite stranger, that is, of an Amalekite who had settled in Israel. Being an Amalekite, he belonged to a doomed race. For the Amalekites were under the ban of God. He could not have belonged, therefore, to the class of circumcised strangers incorporated through their circumcision into the commonwealth of Israel. It is best to suppose, therefore, that he was just a cursed Amalekite, who after the battle had hastened to the field of conflict to take part in the stripping of the slain.

The Amalekite's story horrifies and disgusts David. Twice the Lord had delivered Saul into his hand. Twice he had spared Saul's life, exclaiming, "A curse be to me from Jehovah, should I do this to my master." He had understood that slaying Saul, he would have committed a great sin and would have lost his God-given right to the throne. Yet this Amalekite reports that he has destroyed Saul, and he imagines that David is the kind of man who would allow himself to be served by such violence. David's duty is clear. He must order the man to be put to death, which he does. Calling one of the young men, he orders him to go near and fall upon the culprit. "And he smote him that he died". The man's mouth has testified against him, "saying, I have slain the Lord's anointed." The man's blood is upon his own head, whether he actually had slain Saul or not. And it would have been just as right for David to order the man put to death, had he reported that he had been fighting on the side of the Philistines against Israel and that Saul therefore was simply one of several victims found by his sword. For the Philistines had not the right to slay a single Israelite. Their making war upon God's people was a great sin. Their being used by the Lord to chastise His people did not lessen their guilt.

There is the question whether David really desired the throne. He did, certainly, but not from carnal ambition, as did Saul, but for the Lord's sake, in love of God and His cause and His people and as realizing that the salvation of the church was bound up with his accession to the throne in Israel. The view of some Moderns, therefore, must be rejected, the view, namely, that David's ordering the Amalekite slain was hypocritical, that the indignation of which that doing was the expression was feigned. David was simply putting on an act. And, so it is held, his reason was his want-

ing to make a good impression, his desiring to ingratiate himself with the followers of Saul. But if David's indignation at the crime of the Amalekite was feigned, he was not really indignant, and then sin was so far from being an object of abhorrence to him that the most shocking expression of it left him cold. But were this true, David was not a believer, not a saint as to the heart of his dispositions. Then truly in ordering the Amalekite slain he was seeking self and not God; then God was not in all his thoughts, and his sole aim was to promote his cause in Israel, were he that kind of a man. But according to the Lord's own testimony, David was a man according to God's own heart, implying that he was a man of true goodness seeking God and not himself also in sentencing the Amalekite to die and in executing that sentence. David's indignation, therefore, was not feigned. It was real. It was spiritual. As to its essence, it was hatred of sin and love of righteousness, of God.

As to David's wanting to make a good impression, wanting to do the thing pleasing to the righteous in Israel, that certainly was his duty and calling. But his motive must be right. All the works of a man, even his best works, are glittering sins in the sight of God if the motive is sinful. The sole question is then whether David's wanting to make a good impression, whether his wanting to do his duty, was the love of God in him translated into sanctified action. And we have God's own word for it that such was the case.

What must be said of David's indignation, must be said of the grief with which his heart was heavy on account of the doleful events reported to him by the Amalekite. That grief, too, was genuine and spiritual. As to its essence it was love of God and his people. To this grief he gives expression first through symbolical acts and second through a lamentation over Saul and Jonathan. Having heard the story of the Amalekite, "David took hold on his clothes, and rent them; and likewise all the men that were with him. And they mourned and wept and fasted until even, for Saul and for Jonathan his son, and for the people of the Lord, and for the house of Israel; because they were fallen by the sword."

The lamentation as literally translated reads as follows:

"The glory of Israel on thy heights is slain!
How are the heroes fallen!
Tell it not in Gath,
Publish it not in the streets of Askelon.
Lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice,
Lest the daughters of the uncircumcised
triumph.
Ye mountains of Gilboa, be neither due nor
rain on you,
Nor fields of offerings;

For their was cast away the shield of the
heroes.

The shield of Saul, unanointed with oil.

From the blood of the slain,

From the fat of heroes,

The bow of Jonathan turned not back,

And the sword of Saul returned not empty.

Saul and Jonathan, the lovely and the pleasant,
in their lives and in their death
they were not divided.

They were swifter than eagles!

They were stronger than lions!

Ye daughters of Israel weep for Saul,

Who clothed you with scarlet and with delights,
and put ornaments of gold upon
your apparel.

How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the
battle!

O Jonathan, thou wast slain on thine heights.
I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan.

Very pleasant hast thou been unto me,

Thy love to me was wonderful, passing the
love of woman.

How are the mighty fallen,

And the weapons of war perished!

The text ascribes the authorship of the song to David by the statement, "And lamented David this lamentation." This testimony is corroborated by the content of the eligy. In whose mouth but in that of David fits this song? David laments his eligy over Saul and Jonathan as representative, certainly, of the entire host of defeated and fallen heroes in this most recent war. Heading the song is the parenthetical statement, "Also he bade them teach the children of Judah the bow: behold it is written in the book of Jashar." This rendering, according to which the word "bow" is understood as the title—lamentation of the bow—offers the fewest difficulties. The whole eligy is an expression of a grief—David's grief—that arose from the consideration that the weapons of war to which belonged the bow had perished. David ordered the song taught the children of Israel as a permanent memorial of the doleful events over which he laments. He also gave command that it be written in the Book of Jashar, that is, the Book of the Upright. This book, already in existence for centuries, was a collection of songs on the remarkable events, the marvelous works of God, thus the wonders, of the Israelitish history, together with the celebration of the mighty men, the heroes, whose names were connected with these events.

David's "Lamentation of the Bow" is an ode that elicited praise from all commentators. And the praise has been profuse. Notice has been taken of what is termed the "exquisite beauty" of the song, its "oneness

and wonderful variety," the "artistic skill with which its successive thoughts are introduced," the "passionate tenderness of the thoughts themselves," the "beauty and life, the deep and faithful love that fills its lines." Yet it is held even by some conservatives that the song is non-religious. "It is to be observed," says Toy (in Lang's commentary)," that the divine name does not occur in the song, nor does it contain any theocratic or religious thought. There is no reference to Jehovah's wrath, no prayer for Jehovah's intercession, no expression of resignation to the divine will. Whatever David may have thought of these things, he here says nothing about them. The eligy, therefore, though noble in feeling, is not religious; it is a national song, as the title seems to indicate. . . .a gem of ancient poetry, not only pleasing as poetry, but instructive in the light that it throws on the personages and events of the time."

But if the song is not religious—truly religious both in the objective and subjective sense, how can it be a thing of nobility and beauty? If it is not religious it concentrates not on the things above but on the things on earth, and in these things it ends. If it is not religious, it takes its rise not in sanctified emotion but in David's sinful flesh. Thus if it is not religious it differs not essentially from such a song as Lamech's "Ode to the Sword" of Genesis 4. Imagine a man like David making that kind of poetry and ordering it taught to all the children of Judah. David's song is as little non-religious as the Lamentations of Jeremiah. It is just as religious as the Lamentations. It belongs, does this Ode, to the same species of inspired poetry of the Bible as do the Lamentations.

G. M. Ophoff.

50TH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On November 4, 1948, the Lord willing, our beloved parents,

MR. and MRS. GERRIT GRITTER SR.

hope to celebrate their 50th Wedding Anniversary.

We are thankful to our covenant God for His care bestowed upon them in the past, and pray that He may continue to bless them in the future.

Their grateful children:

Mr. and Mrs. Ray De Meester

Mr. and Mrs. Joe Geelhoed

Mr. and Mrs. George Gritter

Mr. and Mrs. Gerrit Gritter Jr.

Arthur

Joe

9 grand-children.

Grand Rapids, Michigan.

SION'S ZANGEN

Israel's Liefdevolle Heiland

(Psalm 105; Slot)

In deze psalm zingt men van de groote liefde die Jehovah beweest aan Israel, het volk van God.

We waren toegekomen tot aan het vers waar sprake is van de haat van Egypte. God had hun hart omgekeerd zoodat zij Zijn volk haatten en listiglijk met Zijne knechten handelden.

Nu gaan we verder.

"Hij zond Mozes Zijnen knecht, en Aaron dien Hij verkoren had."

Iets verder zullen we lezen van het gehoorzamen dier mannen, het hooren en doen van des Heeren Woord.

Maar als we de plaats en opslaan waar dit verhaald wordt in het boek Exodus, dan bemerken we, dat de Heere zwijgt aangaande het weigeren van Mozes om op Gods bevel naar Egypte te gaan. Het schijnt wel alsof de schrik van een veertig jaren geleden hem nog in de leden zat.

Evenwel, de Heere hield aan, ook bekrachtigde Hij Zijn knecht om te gehoorzamen. En weldra zien we Mozes op reis naar Egypte. Straks voegt de Heere Aaron tot Mozes, en de broeders staan klaar om des Heeren Woord te doen onder de goddelooze Egyptenaren die het volk van God nu al voor honderde jaren geknecht hadden.

Dat werk word door God verder gekarakteriseerd als volgt: "zij deden onder hen de bevelen Zijner teekenen, en wonderwerken in het land van Cham."

De plagen zijn "bevelen Zijner teekenen", en ook: "wonderwerken". Zij zijn dat beiden.

Een teeken is iets zichtbaars, hetwelk gebruikt wordt om iets dat op zichzelf onzichtbaar is, in het zichtbare te openbaren. Zooals een vlag van een land, b.v.

Welnu, de twaalf plagen onder de Egyptenaren zijn evenzoovele teekenen van God. Zij zullen iets in het zichtbare afbeelden van verschrikkelijke onzichtbare dingen. In dit geval: de groote verbolgenheid des Heeren. O, God is kwaad geweest en is het nog op dit volk, hetwelk Zijne kinderen zoo vreeselijk geplaagd had. En het had zoo ontzettend lang geduurd. Voor honderde jaren hebben zij geplaagd, gemarteld, gehoond het arme volk van God. En God had het al gezien. De tijd is gekomen, dat Hij het zal zoeken en thuisbrengen op het schuldige hoofd van Egypte.

Vreeselijk is het te vallen in de handen van den levenden God!

Daar zullen de volgende bladzijden van gewagen!

“Hij zond duisternis en maakte het duister, en zij waren Zijnen worde niet wederspanning.”

Ik denk, dat “het niet wederspanning zijn aan Zijne woorden” ziet op de gehoorzaamheid van Mozes en Aaron in het uitvoeren van de bevelen “Zijner teekenen”.

Maar in Egypte was het donker en duister.

Het moet een vreeselijke duisternis geweest zijn. Onnatuurlijk. Benauwend. Bang.

Dat de Heilige Geest hier begint met de duisternis, dat is, de negende plaag, is zeker vanwege het feit, dat vooral duisternis, meer nog dan die andere plagen, een teeken is van Zijn grooten toorn tegenover het goddelooze volk van Egypte.

Bovendien, de Heilige Geest stoort zich niet aan de chronologische orde in dewelke de tien plagen geschied zijn. En Hij sloeg er ook twee over, dat wil zeggen, de vijfde en de zesde. Ik denk, dat de Heilige Geest een andere orde voor Zijn aandacht gehad heeft, misschien wel de orde die nadruk legt op het uitstorten van Gods ongenoegen. Hoe het dan ook zijn mag, ik weet niet waarom twee plagen weggelaten zijn, en waarom de chronologische orde niet gevolgd werd hier. De orde is als volgt in dezen psalm: 9, 1, 2, 4, 3, 7, 8, 10. En, zooals ik reeds zeide, 5 en 6 zijn weggelaten.

Ge kunt het U levendig voorstellen hoe benauwd het moet geweest zijn in Egypte gedurende den tijd, dat God dit volk plaagde en plaagde. Van ellende tot grootere ellende, totdat het alles uitliep op den dood der eerstgeborenen, “de eerstelingen van alle hunne krachten.”

Ja, alle eerstgeborenen zijn gedood onder de Egyptenaren, doch niet bij het volk van God.

Niet bij het volk van God?

Wacht eens even! Wat is dat blaten van lammeren die gedood worden? (Misschien heeft niet één lammetje zijn mond opengedaan.) In elk geval, er werden eerstgeboren lammeren gedood onder Israel. Wonder, of er onder de Joden geweest zijn die er op gelet hebben.

De Eerstgeboren Zoon Van God is daar in Goshen gedood.

Neen, niet daadwerkelijk. Daar was het nog te vroeg voor. Maar Hij is er wel gedood in type. Egypte had zwaar gezondigd: daarom moest het sterven.

Maar Israel had ook gezondigd, en daarom moest een ander voor hen sterven. En het is beter dat wij dien Andere met een hoofdletter schrijven. Want het is de Zoon van God.

In dezen psalm wordt niet gesproken van het feest der verlossing, van het Pascha. Direkt na de opsomming der plagen lezen we: “En Hij voerde ze uit met zilver en goud; en onder hunne stammen was niemand die struikelde.”

Ik kan het mij levendig voorstellen hoe men dit volk belaadde met goud en met zilver. Er was een

vreeselijke angst gevallen op dit volk, dat zwaar geteisterd was door Jehovah. Het was te veel voor hen. Er was geen rust meer over voor hen. Daarom: weg met dit volk. Geeft hen alles wat zij U vragen, alleen: weg met hen.

Het staat er treurig bij als Gods volk weg moet.

En het volk in kwestie is dan te beklagen.

Ik denk hier aan Lot.

Hij verliet Gods volk (Abraham). En wat geschiedde met hem? Ziet hem, eerst in Sodom, en dan in die grot niet ver van Sodom. Het laatste wat we van hem hooren is, dat hij door bloedschande vijanden voortbrengt van Gods volk: Moab en Ammon!

En zoo is het ook hier gegaan met Egypte: Honderde jaren geleden was het eenigzins anders. Want toen Jozef den troon was en niet kwalijk behandeld werd, toen was er wel de toorn Gods tegen de goddeloozen, doch er waren nog geen plagen die hen vreeselijk benauwden.

Er is een zeer rechtvaardige wet bij God: zondigt ge weinig, dan slaat Hij met enkele slagen; zondigt gij veel, dan komen er dubbele slagen. God is rechtvaardig.

En daar gaan zij!

Er is niet een die struikelde onder hunne stammen!

Dat is wel bijzonder. Want er moeten vele oude mannen, ja, ook stokoude grijsaards bij geweest zijn. Maar het scheen wel, alsof de Heere hunne ouderdom verjeugdigde. In elk geval, zij hebben niet gestruikelde.

Laat het nooit vergeten worden: die uittocht op zichzelf is een wonder. Ja, en ook een teeken. Het is het teeken van onze uittocht, van de uittocht van al Gods volk, uit de wereld tot het Kanaan der ruste. Wij ook, wij trekken geduriglijk uit de wereld, om naar den hemel te reizen. Niet in lokalen zin maar in geestelijken zin. En als het al te bar wordt, dan ook in lokalen zin.

En nu komt er een bang vers.

Luistert!

“Egypte was blijde als zij uittrokken, want hunne verschrikking was op hen gevallen.”

Is dat niet vreeselijk? Blijde te zijn als de zonen en de dochteren van den Almachtige U verlaten? Als ge de achtertocht daar in de verte ziet van Gods lieve volk, dat U verlaat, moet ge voorts maar Uw tijd doorbrengen met weenen en klagelijk huilen. Als Gods volk niet meer bij U verkeert, dan verkeert God ook niet meer in Uw landpalen, of het moest alleen zijn om U te verharden en steeds rijper te doen worden voor Uw eindelijk oordeel. Maar laat mij niet langer den tweeden persoonsvorm van het voornaamwoord gebruiken, want ik verwacht betere dingen van en voor mijn lezers.

Maar het is waar geweest van deze Egyptenaren.

Zij zijn al verder verhard, en hunne geslachten zijn verloren gegaan. Gaan nog verloren. Egypte is veelal een heidensch land. Moge God zich over hen ontfermen, en ook daar nog een overblijfsel redden. Naar Zijn Woord: Psalm 87, vers 4, want Rahab is Egypte.

“Want hunne verschrikking was op hen gevallen.”

Het is de tweede keer dat ik deze woorden afschrijf.

En heb er reden voor. Deze woorden klinken zoo vreemd. Gods volk is het beste volk, dat op aarde woont. En bij dat volk te verkeerren is goed. David zegt er van: Ik ben een vriend, ik ben een metgezel die U naam ootmoedig vreezen! Bij dat volk te verkeerren is goed want God woont daar.

Maar hier staat, dat de verschrikking van het volk Gods op hen was gevallen. En daar zit een wondere gedachte in. Ik heb er al vaak op gewezen in deze zeer lange serie van psalm-artikelen. Keer op keer heb ik gezegd: als ge iemand bestrijden, plagen, folteren wilt, dan moet ge nooit een kind van God daarvoor gebruiken. Ge moogt dat natuurlijk nooit doen, ook niet met een goddelooze. Maar ik bedoel, dat als ge nu met alle geweld iemand toch wilt plagen en vertrappen, als Uw natuur nu eenmaal zoo goddeloos is, kiest dan nooit een kind van God voor Uw slachtoffer. En waarom niet? Hier is de reden: God woont in hem. Die Zijn volk aanraakt raakt Zijn oogappel aan. En stelt het U nu eens voor: voor honderde jaren had dit goddelooze volk in Gods oogappel gestoken. Kunt ge bedenken hoe groot des Heeren toorn was voor dat ongelukkige volk van Egypte? De verschrikking van mijn tekst is de verschrikking van Gods toorn die aan Israel kleefde. De arme dwaze Egyptenaren zien bevreesd naar Israel, maar den verschrikkelijken God zien zij niet.

“Hij breidde een wolk uit tot een deksel, en vuur om den nacht te verlichten.”

Wat wondere bewaring op de lange reis naar het beloofde Kanaan. Des daags is de wolk van Gods heerlijkheid die hen bedekt, en des nacht is er het vuur van Zijn onbegrijpelijke liefde dat hen beschermen zal.

En zoo ging het volk voorwaarts naar Kanaan. Op den weg “bad en zij tot God en Hij deed kwakkelen komen, en God verzadigde hen met hemelsch brood”.

Merkt ge wel op, dat de Heere hier niets zegt van het goddelooze murmureeren van Israel? Ik heb er al eerder op gewezen. In dezen psalm is slechts één thema: Israel is de liefdevolle Heiland van Zijn volk. Daar zwijgt Hij in liefde van Zijns volks zonden. En de verworpenen, die het hardst gemurmureerd en gezondigd hebben, ook ten overstaan van die kwakkelen, worden zelfs niet genoemd. God zwijgt dat volk dood in dezen psalm. Vreeselijke profetie van hun doodgezegen worden in de buitenste duisternis.

“Hij opende eene steenrots, en daar vloeide wateren uit, die gingen door de dorre plaatsen als een rivier.”

En dat is Christus. Zoo zegt Paulus het in I Cor. 10:4. En de steenrots was Christus.

En het water is de gerechtigheid Gods waarnaar Gods volk dorst en dorst.

En die gerechtigheid Gods gaat door de dorre plaatsen van ons huidig bestaan om ons te verkwikken keer op keer.

En waarom? Omdat: “Hij dacht aan zijn heilig Woord, aan Abraham Zijnen knecht.”

God had aan Abraham beloofd, dat hij en zijn zaad het land Kanaan zouden bezitten tot een erfenis. Welnu, dat heeft de Heere nooit vergeten. En nu is het aan 't komen. Daar gaan ze, twee millioenen volks, op weg naar het beloofde land.

“Alzoo voerde Hij Zijn volk uit met vroolijkheid, Zijne uitverkorenen met gejuich!”

O, we weten het, dat velen gevloekt hebben, doch dat was het ware volk niet. Zoo is het vandaag nog. Er zijn kerkleden die brommen en murmureeren in hun kerkleven. Ze zijn er nooit mee verzoend geweest. Maar er zijn ook anderen. En die zeggen van den opmarsch naar Sion: Hoe lieflijk, hoe vol heilgenot, O Heer der legerscharen God, zijn mij Uw huis en temelzangen!

O, zeker, er is gejuich en groote vroolijkheid bij het volk van God.

“En Hij gaf hun de landen der heidenen, zoodat zij in erfenis bezaten den arbeid der volkeren.”

Israel heeft lang in Kanaan gewoond. Het was hun land, want God verjoeg en verbande en liet dooden die er in woonden. Zij waren goddeloos en de mate hunner goddeloosheid was vol geworden. En al de arbeid die in Kanaan was werd aan het volk van God gegeven, zooals huizen, landen en akkers en vruchten. Het was een erfenis Godes.

En het doel? Hier is het: “Opdat zij Zijne inzettingen onderhielden en Zijne wetten bewaarden.” En die inzettingen kunt ge uitspreken in één woord, en het is het laatste woord van dezen psalm: Hallelujah! Looft den Heere!

G. Vos.

IN MEMORIAM

The Consistory of the Fourth Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Mich., wishes to express its heartfelt sympathy to one of its members, Deacon Peter Pastoor, in the recent and sudden death of his father,

GERRIT PASTOOR

May our covenant God comfort the bereaved according to need.

Rev. R. Veldman, Pres.

M. Meulenbergh, Clerk.

IN HIS FEAR

Training For Life's Calling (2)

Training In The History Class.

In the last issue we presented certain principles according to which the subject of history should be taught in the Christian schools. Briefly they were: (1) History is the study and observation of God's eternal plan and purposes in regard to the earth's peoples. (2) This plan God has made known to us. It is principally to bring His Church into the final glory of His perfected kingdom. (3) In it all God reveals Himself to us, and therefore in history we ought to contemplate the infinite greatness of God and to worship Him, not men or countries. We refer you to the former issue of the Standard Bearer for a more detailed statement of these principles. Let us now consider this interesting subject of history which is taught in all the schools of our land and requires a special treatment in the Christian school.

We might begin by emphasizing the remark above that this subject must be treated differently in the Christian school. There the teacher is giving instruction to the man of God, the royal priesthood of God's children. The children of the world live only for this world. They live in the present and cannot see another and better world prepared and realized by God in Christ. Spiritually they are blind, for they are spiritually dead. No special training need be given them, and no special training can be of any spiritual value to them. According to their own slogan, "Let us eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die." With such a philosophy and outlook upon life, past present and future, no principles founded on God's Word are needed or wanted. The past and present can by them only be considered from the viewpoint of what it teaches us in the way of making possible more eating, drinking and merriment in the future before history brushes us aside and another generation arises to continue where we left off on this quest for pleasure.

This is clearly to be seen in a history book which we have at hand. Its very title speaks volumes. This book on world history is significantly entitled, "Man's Great Adventure". And inside is inserted a dedication of the book which reads thus,

"Written for young America,
To help him get his stride
as he enters upon the great adventure,
And inscribed to G.C.P.
Who shared in the adventure
Joyously, valiantly, and kindly."

That surely should not be our approach to the works of the Infinite, Almighty and Sovereign God. To do so

would be a slap in His face, and indeed throughout this book man does exactly that. Let me quote a few passages to give you an idea of what the world's children are taught in this widely used book, published by one of the largest publishers of school books in the United States. Tracing the origin of the Hebrews, this is what is stated of them:

"The Hebrews started with many of primitive man's ideas about the supernatural world, but from time to time certain exceptional members of the group introduced new ideas and practices. Abraham himself made a beginning by giving up human sacrifice. Moses told his people what the ten fundamental rules of conduct were, as given him by Jehovah, *their tribal god* (the underscoring is mine. J.A.H.) who said he was a 'jealous God, visiting the sins of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation.' This idea of Jehovah held for over four hundred years; then it began to occur to some exceptional men, whom we call prophets, that it was ridiculous to think of their deity as being meaner than many of the people around them. If men in their dealings with others could give a square deal, surely God could and would do as well. So, bit by bit, a higher conception of him appeared." A little later we come across this paragraph, "Then, about 750 B.C., came an astonishing revolution, a complete break with the past, when the *self-appointed* (underscoring again is mine) wandering teacher named Amos taught to those who would listen, a new view as to what was really important in religion and what was not. God, he said, did not care about ceremonies, but only about what men did to each other. No religion was real unless it was social; that is to say, unless it brought about better relations between men, as well as between God and men. As Jesus was to say later, 'By their fruits ye shall know them.' *So that is one thing that these prophets mean to our Western world*". (Underscoring of this last phrase is also mine.)

Let us also present this piece of blasphemy which appears in the paragraph following that which we quoted above. "Another achievement of the prophets from Amos on was that they made a start at driving fear and magic out of the world, though these were a long time in going. There was no magic in their teaching; yet only fifty years before Amos, other prophets—like Elijah and Elisha—had told about oil cruses that always stayed full, iron that floated, and that sort of thing". Is there freedom of religion if our God and belief in Him has to be treated so shamefully and His works spoken of so irreverently? Or is it a freedom of irreligion? *Your child* is not taught these things in schools of the world, is he? Life surely is not a great adventure. Life is serious! And it is not *Man's* adventure either. It is the work of the Almighty God. It is not man's attempt to get somewhere. It is God working out His counsel with the goal eternally deter-

mined and every step of the way with all its details planned in infinite wisdom. Webster has this to say of an adventure: "A bold undertaking in which hazards are to be met and the issue hangs upon unforeseen events." To call life such an adventure is indeed to deny the wisdom, the sovereignty, yea the very existence of the living God. To call life a great adventure rules out the very idea of a life's calling, that is, a calling before God. At the very best such a view demands a utilitarian training for the few brief years that a man remains on this earth and that for man's sake, for the good of the whole human race which has set out on this adventure. To use the words of this history book, training in the subject of history serves the purpose of helping the child get his stride as he enters upon this great adventure. Then, as we already stated, no principles based upon God's Word are needed or wanted.

The child of God, however, must be trained for the future life. He is not trained for a life that continues for but three score years and ten. Here already in infancy he is regenerated, as a rule at least, and he has in him a life that is eternal. He is God's royal priesthood. He is citizen of God's eternal kingdom. His calling as such a citizen when presently that kingdom shall have fully come and he is in the Holy City is one and the same as the calling he has right now. He is called in this life by God (I Peter 2:9) to be His royal priesthood in order that he may show forth God's praises. He is formed by God (Isaiah 42:21) to show forth these praises eternally but also in this life. God by the power of His Spirit has given His Word (II Tim. 3:16, 17) to thoroughly furnish man to every good work in this life already. He has that Word in this life that he may begin to be prepared and equipped for that calling of life to glorify his Creator in all that he does. That is why he is called a royal priesthood. God has subjected the things of this earth to him. He has made him as king of creation. And He has done so that man as His priest might dedicate and consecrate it all in service to Him. Through man as king and priest of creation all the irrational creatures and the inanimate things must be to the praise and glory of God's name. That briefly is the life's calling of man. Otherwise stated it is to love the Lord his God with all his soul, with all his mind, with all his heart and with all his strength. That is not his calling in some far distant day when he is placed in the Holy City. That is his calling today. It is his eternal calling. And when a covenant child is trained and instructed that fact must ever be borne in mind. In that light *no unbeliever* may ever be trusted to train your child, the man of God, the royal priesthood and citizen of the kingdom of heaven. And the instructor of these children in the Christian school has a tremendous responsibility but also a blessed work to perform.

It follows then that when these children are instructed in the subject of history, when they are instructed in regard to all that which has taken place on this earth from creation onward, they must see it all as God's work. That is fundamental. If they do not see history, the appearance of man on this planet, the rise and fall of nations, the appearance of men who lead people and nations into new channels, etc. etc. as God's work, they do not see history. If they simply see men and nations but not the Almighty God Who created them and brought them into being and leads them according to His eternal counsel, they see very little, and the little they see is of no ethical value to them. No unbelieving historian really understands history, and his title, historian, is a gross misnomer. For he ignores the most fundamental facts of history. He discounts the one Being Who is behind all that takes place in heaven and on earth. A historian who would attempt to write a history of the United States and would consistently and completely ignore the father of our Country, George Washington, would surely be classed as a man wholly unqualified to teach American history. Even more so are those so-called historians, who ignore The Creator and Sovereign Ruler of all things in Whose hand is the heart of kings, unqualified to teach history to the royal priesthood of God. They refuse to recognize God, and surely they cannot train your child to see God in all the events that belong to the history of this world or of any one nation. No historian who relegates God to the position of being a "tribal god" of the Hebrews understands the history of Israel. Nor does he or can he understand then the history of Egypt, of Babylon, who served Israel, or any other nation. He can philosophise about events, but he has closed his eyes to that which would help him understand them. He may train the child to watch the chisel, but meanwhile he also trains him to disregard the Sculptor and the finished product. The finished product, as briefly stated in these principles is, the final glory of God's perfected kingdom to which all events in history are subservient. The worldly historian would have you watch the chisel and then look at the mass of chips on the floor to discover what cute and pleasing shapes they "happen" to form. He is concerned only with the chisel (the men and nations God uses) and the chips but not the finished product.

Our approach surely should be not to teach church history, but yet to train the child to understand world history in the light of the fact that it all takes place because God is seeking that perfected glory of His Church. And in the history class we must bear in mind that we are dealing with those who are citizens of that kingdom as well as being temporary citizens of an earthly kingdom.

(to be continued)

J. A. Heys,

FROM HOLY WRIT

The Hand Of The Lord

We read repeatedly in Scripture of "the hand of the Lord". This is, of course, a figurative expression like God's eyes, God's mouth, or His face. Comparing the various passages in which the expression is found, we soon discover that it is both varied and rich in significance.

A Symbol of Power.

The hand is first of all a symbol of power. To man in paradise God gave a hand to enable him to carry out his appointed task as image bearer. No, that hand was not formed originally for menial labor, but for assuming the position of a king. It was shaped to hold a scepter. For man was created as king in this earthly creation, a viceroy under God, to devote all things in praise to his God. His hand speaks of power and authority.

Thus the Lord's hand is powerful. It is almighty, as only God's hand can be. He holds the scepter as sovereign over heaven and earth, for all power belongs solely to Him.

Ps. 89:11, 13, "The heavens are Thine, the earth also is Thine: as for the world and the fulness thereof, Thou hast founded them. . . Thou hast a mighty arm: strong is Thy hand, and high is Thy right hand."

Only the Lord can give riches and honor, power and might to whomsoever He will.

I Chron. 29:11, 12, "Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is Thine; Thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and Thou art exalted as head over all. Both riches and honor come from Thee, and Thou reignest over all; and in Thine hand is power and might; and in Thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all."

Therefore He gave His law unto Israel and His commandments to Jacob as a permanent ordinance, engraven in tables of stone by the finger of His hand.

The Hand of the Eternal Architect.

Man's hand is marvellously made. It is perfectly designed to serve the purpose for which it was created. Think of the hand of the sculptor, who with keen precision cuts into the marble, making an object of lasting beauty. Or consider the hand of a doctor, whose steady fingers control the course of the knife through delicate tissue with an uncanny accuracy. Or even the hand of a musician as it glides over the keyboard of an

organ, producing a masterpiece of beauty and harmony. This again is but a small, insignificant, creaturely reflection of the skill of the eternal Architect, the Maker of heaven and earth, both the old and the new.

Psalm 8:3, "When I consider the heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained. . . ."

Psalm 95:4-7, "In His hand are the deep places of the earth: the strength of the hills is His also. The sea is His, and He made it: and His hands formed the dry land. O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our Maker. For He is our God; and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand."

In the Palm of His Hand.

This last passage from Psalm 95 is also significant because it pictures before us the hand of our God extended with palm uplifted, bearing all His handiwork before His face. The deep places of the earth lie in the palm of His hand. The creatures of the earth even eat from His hand.

Psalm 104:27, 28, "These wait all upon Thee; that Thou mayest give them their meat in due season. That Thou givest them they gather: Thou openest Thine hand, they are filled with good."

That knowledge of being in the hand of the Lord is too wonderful for us as often as we pause to consider it. For:

Psalm 139:7-10, "Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend up to heaven, Thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me."

Prov. 21:1, "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: He turneth it whithersoever He will."

In the palm of His hand lies God's church, chosen of the Lord and precious before Him. He has chosen her unto Himself as His peculiar heritage from among all the nations of the earth. He has purchased her with His own blood on the cross, so that her righteousness shall shine forth as the sun at noontime. He has formed her as a most costly treasure. Her name is so wonderful that only the mouth of the Lord can name it. And the kings of the earth will see her glory. She shall reign with Christ, and God will be glorified in her.

Isaiah 62:3, "Thou shalt be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God."

Mighty in Judgment.

For her salvation the Lord sends His judgments

upon the earth. With a mighty hand He pours out the cup of His indignation.

Psalm 75:8, "For in the hand of the Lord there is a cup, and the wine is red; it is full of mixture; and He poureth out the same: but the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out, and drink them."

His hand is lifted up against the wicked, to push them away from before His face in hot displeasure. Or that hand may even reach out to strike blow upon blow, as was the case when the Lord sent His plagues upon Egypt. Ex. 3:20. Thus Isaiah speaks of the judgments of the Lord upon unfaithful Israel. They follow one upon the other, because the people remain rebellious, even in the face of judgments. The prophet repeats after each announcement of judgment, "For His anger is not turned away, but His hand is stretched out still." Is. 5:25, 9:12, 17, 21. Like the hand-writing on the wall in the palace of Babylon, God is inscribing upon all the history of this present world by the signs of the times, sent by His mighty hand, "Mene, mene, tekel upharsin." It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God for He is a consuming fire. Heb. 10:31, 12:29.

Even His people experience the sore chastisement of His hand. Before their consciousness His hand is turned against them also.

Job 19:21, "Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends, for the hand of the Lord hath touched me."

A single touch, but one blow is sufficient to fill our lives with anguish.

Psalm 39:9, 19, "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because Thou didst it. Remove Thy stroke away from me: I am consumed by the blow of Thine hand."

Yet after committing the sin of numbering the people contrary to the implicit command of God, David would rather commit himself and his people into the hands of the Lord than to be given over to the enemy for a season.

2 Sam. 24:14, "And David said unto Gad, I am in a great strait: Let us fall into the hand of the Lord; for His mercies are great: and let me not fall into the hand of man."

Strong to Save.

The Lord is merciful, strong to save. His mighty hand is stretched out to His people in love. Israel's deliverance from the house of bondage was but a type of the power whereby the Lord always delivers His people from sin and death and takes them unto Himself to dwell with Him forever.

Exodus 13:3, "And Moses said unto the people, Remember this day, in which ye came out from Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand the Lord brought you out from this place." Exodus 15:17, "Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of Thine inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which Thou hast made for Thee to dwell in, in the Sanctuary, O Lord, which Thy hands have established."

Therefore the Lord also stands with outstretched hands, ready to receive His own unto Himself. Just as the father goes out to meet the prodigal son with outstretched arms, eager to take him into His bosom, so the Lord also is ready to receive those who come to Him in true sorrow of heart and sincere repentance. How could it be otherwise? For God loves His people with an eternal love in Christ. He has atoned for all their sins by the death of His Son on the cross. And His love seeks them out, even in their sins. For He draws them with an almighty, irresistible calling, whereby they are transformed out of darkness into His marvellous light. He makes them conscious of sin and guilt, so that they flee to Him as their only refuge. He is the good Shepherd Who knows His sheep and is known of them. His sheep hear His voice and they follow Him. Thus God always reveals Himself in the Scriptures. The Gospel is the glad tidings for those who have learned to know the joyful sound. It draws us to the Father, Who is ready to receive us, even while we confess, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against Thee, and am not worthy to be called Thy son. Make me but a lowly slave in Thy house."

God also manifested Himself as such overagainst rebellious Israel in the old dispensation. Always He declared that He is the merciful Father, Who is ready to receive His sons, even His wayward sons unto Himself, when they come in sincere repentance. This is not an offer of salvation, promiscuously offered to all, but is a very definite testimony of God's unfailing love to His people. Thereby carnal Israel was exposed in all the rebellion of their sinful hearts, so that they stand forever without excuse. Thereby it always becomes evident that the wicked refuse to repent, and even become the more hardened in their sins. This is the very evident significance of Isaiah 62:2 when compared with Romans 10.

Isaiah 16:2, "I have spread out My hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts." Romans 10:20, 21, "But Isaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought Me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after Me. But to Israel He saith, All day long I have stretched forth My hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people."

With a strong hand the Lord fulfills all His promises to His people in Christ. These promises cannot fail, nor are they contingent upon any willingness on our part. The Lord carries out all that He has spoken:

I Kings 8:15, "And he (Solomon) said, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, which spake with His mouth unto David my father, and hath with His hand fulfilled it."

Sometimes it would seem to us as if the Lord's hand were too short, that He is not able to reach out far enough to grant us all that we desire. Israel in the wilderness complained that they were tired of manna and desired meat. But when the Lord assured them of an abundance of meat, it sounded so unbelievable that even Moses did not think that the Lord could supply so much meat for such a great company. Therefore the Lord rebuked him by saying,

Numbers 11:23, "Is the Lord's hand waxed short? Thou shalt see now whether My word shall come to pass."

Again in Isaiah, the prophet warns the people that the reason why God does not save them from their enemies is not because He is not able. But their sins are the cause that He withholds His hands from saving them.

Isaiah 59:1, 2, "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither is His ear heavy that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear."

The Lord is always strong to save. Therefore His people are safe in His care. As a mother steadies her toddling child as it learns to walk, so the Lord firmly holds our hand and gives us grace to cling to Him.

Psalms 73:24, "Nevertheless I am continually with Thee: Thou hast holden me by my right hand."

His mighty hand makes us strong against all our foes.

Gen. 49:24, "But his (Joseph's) bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob: (from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel.)"

Under the shadow of His hand (His palm shielding us) we may securely abide forever.

Isaiah 51:16, "And I have put My words in thy mouth, and I have covered thee in the shadow of Mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, Thou art My people."

C. Hanko.

PERISCOPE

Uniformity in Invitations to the "Second Reformed Ecumenical Synod"?

From *De Wachter* of October 12, 1948 we translate the following:

"Now we are looking forward to the meeting of the Second Reformed Ecumenical Synod in Amsterdam in 1949. As we know, the First Reformed Ecumenical Synod met in Grand Rapids in August of 1946.

"Concerning this anticipated Synod we read the following in *"Eenigheid des Geloofs"*:

"Since the end of the war plans have been attempted for a Reformed Ecumenical Synod. Already in 1946 an official meeting was held (in Grand Rapids, U.S.A.) between delegates from "The Christian Reformed Church of America", "Die Gereformeerde Kerken in Suid-Afrika" and "De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland". Invited will be all Reformed Churches of the world. They are described more specifically as those churches which "are faithful to their Reformed confession and exercise discipline over the word, the administration of the sacraments and the life of the congregation."

Thus far the quotation from *"Eenigheid des Geloofs"* after which the article continues and again we translate:

"Which churches are these?"

"Each of the three churches that already have contacted one another must judge this for themselves in their own sector of the world.

"Netherlands must decide who shall be invited from Europe and the Indies.

"Already invited besides the Gereformeerde Kerken are the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken and the *Gereformeerde Kerken (Article 31)*. Correspondence with church groups in other countries is still in process. We rejoice in these plans and eagerly await the actual realization of the Synod of 1949. . . .

"One question is burning on my lips.

"What about the Hervormde Kerk?"

"Must they in 1949 be placed in the camp of those who are doctrinally indifferent (gezet in de hoek van de leervrijheid)?"

"There they have been since 1816.

"But will they still be there in this following year?"

"A way must be found to feel out the Hervormde Kerk in the hope. . . .

"Therefore we may not and cannot ignore the Hervormde Kerk next year. Without the cooperation of the Reformed groups in the Hervormde Kerk this Ecumenical Synod will, to say the least, be onesided.



"Here, therefore, is a plea that also the Hervormde Kerk in Netherlands be invited.

"Here, in our circles, were voices that expressed the wish that also the Reformed Church in America be invited. But upon advice of a committee our Synod did not send them an invitation to attend.

"Churches are expected that "Confess and maintain the Reformed Faith."

We were indeed surprised to learn from this article that the Gereformeerde Kerken of Netherlands had also invited the Gereformeerde Kerken (Art. 31) to attend the next Ecumenical Synod.

And yet a strange impression is left upon one by reading of this invitation as well as the rest of the above article. What a strange situation! On the one hand a plea for the inclusion of the Hervormde Kerk and yet well satisfied at the exclusion of the Reformed Church in America. On the one hand an expression of pleasure at the invitation to the Gereformeerde Kerken (Art. 31), ("We rejoice in these plans . . .") and an evident agreement with the exclusion of the Protestant Reformed Churches (they are not even mentioned in the article).

Nor must we forget that from a formal point of view there is the most striking similarity in the two cases. On the one hand the Gereformeerde Kerken in Netherlands were called upon to determine whether an invitation should be extended to the Hervormde Kerken, a church group from which they were banished because of their protests against the doctrinal position of the Hervormde Kerk. So also the Christian Reformed Church was called upon to determine whether the Reformed Church from which they withdrew because of their lax position should receive an invitation. The situation from a formal viewpoint was the same—and yet—when both are excluded a plea goes up from within the Christian Reformed Church that the Hervormde Kerk also be invited! Perhaps it is true that distance lends enchantment. Will we perhaps hear the plea from the Gereformeerde Kerken that the Reformed Church of America be invited?

And the same is true from a formal point of view when considering the decisions regarding the Gereformeerde Kerken (Art. 31) and the Protestant Reformed Churches. Once again the Gereformeerde Kerken were called upon to judge whether an invitation should be sent to that church group which was the outgrowth of the recent developments in the Netherlands. Added to this is the fact that formally the Gereformeerde Kerken (Art. 31) are composed of or at least headed by those who have been deposed by the Synod of the Gereformeerde Kerken. And formally the same is true in America. The Christian Reformed Churches must judge whether an invitation should be sent to the Protestant Reformed Churches, headed by those

who were deposed by that same Christian Reformed Church. Added to this is the fact that both in the Netherlands and here the two groups to be judged maintain that the mother church is, in that which led to their deposition, heretical and hierarchical. The one is invited and the other is not and both rejoice over the one invitation while both are silent over the refusal.

If the invitation to the Liberated Churches is indeed a fact (and I have no reason to doubt it) it is all the more strange in view of the fact that the "First Reformed Ecumenical Synod" considered the situation in the Netherlands and virtually condemned the Liberated and upheld the Synodical factions in the old country. However this may be it certainly becomes evident, whatever the motives may have been both in America and Netherlands, that the Gereformeerde Kerken used a different and more honest standard in determining upon an invitation to the Gereformeerde Kerken (Art. 31) while the Christian Reformed Church departed from the Synodically established standard—"those that confess and maintain the Reformed Faith"—choosing instead to use the arbitrary and rather haughty standard of "attitude overagainst the Christian Reformed Church".

Incidentally in this is also seen the fallacy of leaving to the individual churches the decision determining who shall receive an invitation to attend.

And we cannot help repeating once again: No uniformity in invitations! But then there will be no uniformity in the meeting—and . . . "this Ecumenical Synod will, to say the least, be onesided".

Church Membership in the Netherlands.

From *The Banner* of October 8, we take over the following:

"While the eyes of so many in the Christian world were centered upon Amsterdam this summer, Ecumenical Press Service took occasion to give some figures on church membership in the Dutch nation. From its report we learn that the Netherlands Reformed Church and the Roman Catholic Church in the Netherlands together include over 88 percent of the total church membership in the country, with a membership of 3,000,000 each. The Reformed Churches are next in order of size, with 600,000. The Christian Reformed Church and the Lutheran Brotherhood follow with 50,000 each. The Remonstrants number 30,000, the Mennonites 40,000, and the Old Catholics 10,000. Baptists and Free Evangelicals complete the list with 8,000 and 7,000 respectively. By a narrow margin the Reformed people constitute a majority of the Christian population of the Netherlands."

J. Howerzyl.