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MEDITATION

De Belofte Van Vernieuwing

“Want zie, Ik schep nieuwe hemelen en eene nieuwe aarde, en de vorige dingen zullen niet meer gedacht worden, en zij zullen in het hart niet opkomen.”

“Maar wij verwachten, naar Zijne belofte, nieuwe hemelen en eene nieuwe aarde, in dewelke gerechtigheid woont.”

“En Die op den troon zat, zeide: Zie, Ik maak alle dingen nieuw. En Hij zeide tot mij: Schrijf; want deze woorden zijn waarachtig en getrouw.”

“En Jezus zeide tot hen: Voorwaar Ik zeg u, dat gij die Mij gevolgd zijt in de wedergeboorte. . .”

“Zoo dan, indien iemand in Christus is, die is een nieuw schepsel: het oude is voorbijgegaan, zie, het is alles nieuw geworden.”

Jes. 65:17; II Pet. 3:13; Openb. 21:5; Matth. 19:28a; II Cor. 5:17.

Nog enkele dagen, en we vieren Nieuw Jaar!

Wacht even: is dit werkelijk waar?

Wel, er worden duizende kaartjes verzonden, en men wenscht elkaar duizende malen een gelukkig Nieuw Jaar toe, is het niet?

Nog eens: is dat werkelijk waar? Het is niet gemakkelijk om waar te zijn bij de wisseling des jaars. We liegen zoo gemakkelijk. De wereld gaat ons daarin voor, en wij volgen gemakkelijk, haast gelijk een lam dat ter slachting geleid wordt.

Er is zooveel contrabande in ons ellendige leven.

Wat is het Nieuwe in het Nieuwe Jaar? Ik word al ouder. De aarde wordt al ouder. De aarde, haar bewoners en alle dingen worden steeds ouder, leelijker, rijper voor de eindelijke verdoemenis.

Wat is het eigenlijke Nieuwe?

* * * *

Het eigenlijke Nieuwe is Jezus Christus, de Heere! Hij is het beginsel van al wat waarlijk nieuw is. Door Hem komt er straks een nieuw heelal, ver-

nieuwd, verheerlijkt, verhemelscht, vereeuwigd.

Als Jezus Uw deel is, dan moogt ge spreken van een gelukkig Nieuw Jaar!

Want dan zult ge in dat Nieuwe Jaar ontmoeten de nieuwe dingen van Zijne Nieuwe aarde en hemel. In beginsel.

Jezus heeft zulk leven Zelf genoemd een Hem volgen in de wedergeboorte. Hier is sprake van meer dan net maar onze wedergeboorte. Hier duidt Hij op de wedergeboorte aller dingen.

Dan, dan wordt alles nieuw. Paulus zegt, dat ge dan een nieuw schepsel zijt.

Dan verwacht ge een nieuwe hemel en een nieuwe aarde. Dan hebt ge ontvangen een nieuwe geest en een nieuw hart. Zulke menschen hebben een nieuwe tong om een nieuw gezang den Heere te zingen. En wij wandelen naar een nieuw gebod. Zij zien, dat al dat nieuwe in hun gezegend leven rust op een nieuw verbond of testament, en dat het einde ook nieuw is, want zij zien van verre een Nieuw Jeruzalem waar zij een nieuwen naam zullen ontvangen, die niemand kan lezen, dan die hem ontvangt.

Ziet ge, geliefde lezer, als ge vat hebt aan al die nieuwe dingen, dan kunt ge spreken van een gelukkig Nieuw Jaar. Dan is elk jaar het “jaar van Gods goedheid” of ook “het jaar van het welbehagen des Heeren”.

Dan is alles wel met u, want dan zijt ge een nieuw schepsel in Christus Jezus!

Dan wordt het al nieuwer met U, totdat ge geheel en al vernieuwd aan zult komen bij een nieuwe, of liever, een vernieuwde wereld waarin gerechtigheid zal wonen.

En dan zal al Uw zingen ook nieuw zijn.

Ge doet het nu al een beetje, want ik heb U wel eens hooren zingen: Zingt, zingt, een nieuw gezang den Heere. . . .

Gelukkig Nieuw Jaar: het jaar van Gods welbehagen in den Heere Jezus Christus.

* * * *

Hoe oud, hoe onbeschrijfelijk leelijk in hun oudheid zijn de oude dingen!

De wereld spreekt, zingt, bralt van de nieuwe dingen: de leugenaars!

De oude dingen zijn de dingen die God gemaakt heeft, doch die nu onder Zijn vloek verkeereren. En daarom in het verband van de teksten die we boven afschreven leest ge van de "vorige benauwdheden", en ook van "tranen, den dood, rouw, gekrijt en moeite". Vreeselijke dingen van den vloek des Heeren.

En dat is alles wat de wereld heeft. En dat is alles wat wij, de uitverkorenen Gods, hebben van nature. Meer hebben ook wij niet.

Ziet ge, dat is zoo gekomen vanwege onze zonde in het Paradijs.

Eerst waren de dingen die nu nabij de verdwijning zijn schoon en lieflijk. Toen Adam en Eva en het paradijs wandelden was alles lieflijk en schoon.

Doch er kwam een donkere schaduw uit de hel en Satan roerde zijn liegende tong. En de bondgenoot Gods werd afvallig en viel den duivel toe.

Toen is alles oud geworden. En toen moest alles ouder worden, totdat het zóó oud zou zijn, dat het verdwijnen moest in een zee van vuur, om plaats te maken voor een vernieuwde schepping.

Het oude is dus eigenlijk een tweërlei iets. Het zijn de dingen van de eerste schepping, en het zijn die dingen zooals zij onder den vloek van God liggen.

En dat is alles wat de mensch van nature heeft. In het midden van die oude dingen beweegt hij zich, wordt rijper in het vervloekte oude, en vergaat straks met de geheele oude schepping in het vuur dat onuitblusschelijk is.

En die menschen roepen elkaar hier toe: Happy New Year!

Wat vreeselijke ironie zit daar in!

Gelukkig Nieuw Jaar! en de stakkerds worden al ouder, leerlijker, gruwelijker, verdoemelijker voor God die alles hoort en ziet.

Gelukkig Nieuw Jaar!

Ziet toe, dat ge weet wat ge zegt, als ge die woorden op Uw lippen neemt.

Als de Bijbel spreekt van de Nieuwe dingen, dan bedoelt hij de dingen van den Heere Jezus Christus! Dan, ja dan, is het een gelukkig Nieuw Jaar!

* * * *

Hoe is alles zoo gekomen? Hoe worden alle dingen weer nieuw naar Gods belofte?

Dat zit zoo: Jezus Christus, door Wien God alle dingen eerst schiep en sinds bewaarde, is ook de Eerstgeborene uit de dooden.

Ziet ge, in de dingen die oud en leelijk werden door de verleiding Satans en de moedwillige ongehoorzaamheid van den eersten Adam, in die dingen die nabij de verdwijning zijn schuilt de wereld van Gods eeuwige liefde.

God heeft de wereld van Zijn eeuwige geneugten gezien en gekend met een kennis der liefde. En die wereld van Gods eeuwige liefde kwam eerst tot openbaring in wat wij eerder noemden de eerste wereld. En toen die eerste wereld viel door de zonde van Adam, toen viel Gods uitverkoren wereld van Hem af.

Maar Gods liefde is eeuwig.

Daarom moest er een weg gevonden worden waarlangs die uitverkoren wereld van God tot een hemelsche hoogte verhoogd zou worden. Zelfs de val des menschen is daartoe middel.

En die weg is Jezus Christus.

Hij is de Eerstgeborene uit de dooden.

De geheele wereld van Gods uitverkiezing is dood.

En in de volheid des tijds komt er Eene uit de dooden op, en dat is Jezus Christus in Zijn verrijzenis. Dat is de wedergeboorte van Jezus.

En die wedergeboorte, die verrijzenis van Jezus geeft ons iets nieuws te zien, iets wat deze aarde nooit eerder zag.

Het is het leven van Gods eeuwig Verbond, zooals het geproefd, gesmaakt, geleefd werd door Adam en Eva in *aardschen* zin, doch nu zooals het opgevoerd is tot hemelsche, glorieuze, heerlijke en eeuwige hoogte. De Bijbel noemt dat verbondsleven het eeuwige leven.

Dat leven is nieuw in den vollen, eigenlijken zin des woords. Het werd nooit gevonden op aarde. En het komt rechtstreeks vanuit den hemel, daar boven bij God.

Hebt ge dien Jezus in het hart, in het leven, op Uw anderzins donker pad, dan mag ik U gerust toegewenschen een gelukkig Nieuw Jaar!

* * * *

Ja, want dan werd alles anders.

Die Jezus is verheerlijkt naar lichaam en ziel.

Toen de Apostelen Hem zagen na Zijne opstanding was Hij al schoon. Doch toen Johannes Hem zag op Patmos, toen viel hij als dood aan Zijne voeten, want Hij was voortgeschreden van heerlijkheid tot heerlijkheid als door Zijn Eigen Geest.

En de reden?

Al de volheid der Godheid woont in Hem lichamelijk.

Al het heerlijke van Gods Wezen is uitgestort in dien Zoon naar de mate van den Zone Gods en den Zoon des menschen.

Staat mij toe, dat ik op één verblindende straal van die heerlijkheid wijs. En die ééne straal is de straal der liefde.

De Goddelijke liefde is geopenbaard in Jezus zooals wij haar nooit zagen in Adam in het Paradijs. Ook Adam liefde God en zijn medemensch in den staat der rechtheid. Maar let toch op Jezus; ziet sterk op den Zoon van God, en ge zult de heerlijkheid

van een liefde zien, waarbij de heerlijkheid van Adam's liefde moet verbleeken.

Ziet sterk op Jezus! Hij staat op den bodem der hel en schreit: Wat hitte doet Mij branden! Hij staat in de vlammen van den toorn Gods die over Hem uitgestort wordt in eeuwige mate! En daar zegt Hij: O God! Ik heb U lief! En daar zegt Hij: Ik heb Uw volk lief, O Mijner Vader!

Zult ge het nu eenigzins verstaan, wanneer Hij tot U zegt: Een *nieuw gebod* geef ik u? Hij wil hebben dat ge minnen zult ook dan wanneer men U vervloekt en liegende alle kwaad van U spreekt. Als zij vloeken moet gij bidden. Ziet ge, dat gaat boven het oude gebod om te lieven uit.

Het behoort bij Uw Nieuwe Jaar van Gods welbehagen, mijn broeder!

Dan, ja dan, mag men tot U zeggen: Veel geluk in 't Nieuwe Jaar!

Want dan zijt ge een openbaring van Jezus Christus, het Nieuwe Beginsel van een Nieuwe wereld waarin gerechtigheid wonen zal.

Gelukkig Jaar van Gods goedheid!

* * * *

Dan wordt alles anders want dan zijt ge in Christus Jezus.

En dat beteekent, dat gij van eeuwigheid in Hem besloten zijt door de verkiezende liefde van God over U.

En dat beteekent ook, dat ge in den tijd door Hem opgezocht wordt om in U te wonen door Zijn Woord en Geest.

En dan, ja, dan wordt alles anders.

Dan zijt ge een nieuw schepsel geworden.

En dan is het oude voorbijgegaan.

Klinkt U dat vreemd in de ooren?

En toch is het gemakkelijk te verstaan.

Laat ons eens zien: als ge in Christus Jezus zijt in den organischen, geestelijken zin van het woord, dan zijt ge wedergeboren en bekeerd. En dat wil zeggen, dat ge in het diepst van Uw bestaan omgezet zijt van den dood tot in het leven. En voorts, dat door den Geest van den verheerlijkten Christus U het verbondsleven van den Christus ingestort werd. En daarvoor werd ge in gedurigen levensgemeenschap gesteld met het Lichaam van Christus. En dat Lichaam van Christus zal wassen en toenemen totdat het geopenbaard zal worden in Zijn dag, en dan zal men juichen met groote verwondering en blijdschap over zijn heerlijkheid.

Nu dan: dat leven van den verheerlijkten Christus wordt door U dan geleefd te midden van deze oude aarde die de vervloeking nabij is.

Al het oude is voorbij gegaan.

In het diepste van U bestaan haat ge al het oude, het leelijke, het zondige en God-onteerende van geheel het aardse leven, zooals het onder de wet des

vleesches en des doods ligt. En door de kracht van Gods Woord en den Geest van den verheerlijkten Christus die in Uw hart woont en werkt, zet gij U tegen al dat oude en zondige en vervloekte. En allereerst zooals het nog in U overgebleven is. Laat mij het nu eens duidelijk zeggen, en ook eenvoudig. Als ge een kind van God en een discipel van Jezus zijt, dan is er geen zonde die ge bemint, maar dan haat ge alle zonde. Dat beteekent het, dat alle oude dingen voorbij gegaan zijn voor U. Dat is de kracht van het beginsel van Christus, dat in Uw hart woont. En dat kleurt Uw gansche leven.

Ziet het is alles nieuw geworden!

Zoo nieuw, dat men U al den dag toeroepen mag: Gelukkig Nieuw Jaar! Alles in Uw leven ligt onder de bestraling van het licht des levens des Nieuwen Testaments.

Eenvoudig uitgedrukt: ge bemint alles wat goed en lieflijk is en welluidt.

Alles werd nieuw want de Nieuwe Mensch, de Nieuwe Adam woont in u, en dat is Jezus!

Dat men dan U toeroepe: Gelukkig Nieuw Jaar!

Hemelsch, en eeuwiglijk correkt!

* * * *

Ja, ik stem het toe: er is nog veel van die oude wereld in ons. En daarom zijn er de benauwdheden, de dood, rouw, gekrijt, en tranen!

Vele zijn de smarten van Sion op aarde.

Hun bloed ververde de aarde rood. En het zal nog erger worden.

Straks zullen de doode lichamen van de twee getrouwe getuigen liggen, onbegraven, op de straten van de stad die geestelijk genaamd wordt Sodom en Egypte, waar ook de Heere gekruist is.

Ik hoor van uit de verte een brekende stem die mij toeroept van de smart en tranen van Gods kinderen in alle eeuwen. Sommigen hebben bespottingen geleden en geeselingen en ook banden en gevangenis. Ik hoor van hun ellende in hun steeniging, verzoeking, verdrukking en kwalijke behandeling. Sommigen zijn zelfs in stukken gezaagd!

Er zijn vele smarten voor het Nieuwe Volk.

Zijn worden gehaat door de ouden der aarde, het volk dat oud geworden is in de zonde en de ongerechtigheid.

En toch hebben dat zelfde volk hun nieuw gezang gezongen, hun nieuw gezang den Heere, dien grooten God die wonderen deed. Denkt hier maar aan het centrale wonder, dat Hij Jezus riep uit de dooden.

Zij zingen in hun lijden want zij weten, dat alle dingen hun medewerken ten goede. Hun lichte verdrukking werkt een onuitsprekelijke heerlijkheid.

Kinderen Gods! Wensch elkaar een gelukkig jaar: het Jaar van Gods goedheid! En dan zal 't gaan!

G. Vos.

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EDITORIALS

As To Teaching Our Confessions

We received the following communication:

CATECHISM SYSTEM, ETC.

I have no desire whatever to enter into debate with our brother, Rev. H. Hoeksema, but I feel it my duty to come back on the issues involved. When first we broached the matter of catechism system, my articles of that time will bear out that the one thing we were after is this: that our catechumens become acquainted with our Confessions, I mean, all three of them. And we wrote about this with but one aim in mind and that is to help build the church upon that only foundation.

In order that our youth might become acquainted with the Three Forms during their catechetical years we proposed a system of catechism over the years.

Before we argue about this system it seems to me there is one thing which must be settled, and that is, whether our brother agrees that our youth must be catechized in and thus learn to speak the language of the Confessions.

Brother Hoeksema presents us no definite system of catechism over the years, hence it is difficult to compare his and mine.

But the principal thing is whether our youth should be catechized in the Three Forms of Unity. May God graciously forbid that we develop either dead little intellectualists or dead little historians, but may the truth be developed in the church.

Does our brother agree that our youth should be catechized in the Three Confessions?

If not, may he kindly say so. Then we have something definite. If so, will the brother kindly show us a better system than the one we proposed.

M. Gritters.

REPLY:

There are especially two items in the above communication that demand attention.

The first is the rather amazing statement that "brother Hoeksema presents us no definite system of catechism over the years. Hence it is difficult to compare his and mine." To this I reply: 1) That I hope that the brother does not mean to intimate that in all the years that I taught catechism I did not follow a system. 2) That the brother can be well acquainted with the system I always followed in my catechetical instruction, and still would follow if I still superintend-

ed the catechism classes myself. 3) For years I was teaching catechetics in our Theological School. I know not whether brother Gritters followed that course or not; but, at any rate, he should be sufficiently interested in the instruction that is given in our own Theological School to be acquainted with the system of catechetical instruction I there taught for years. And rather than individualistically ignoring that system and following his own way, he should have brought the matter to the attention of classis and synod, in order to discover whether the churches prefer the system taught at our own school or his.

The second item is a question, namely: "Does our brother agree that our youth should be catechized in the Three Confessions (I suppose he means the Three Forms of Uunity)?" Now, this question is no less astounding, seeing the Rev. Gritters is thoroughly acquainted with my catechetical instruction of former years. But I will answer it nevertheless, in due time.

First of all, let me say that from a historical point of view it is decidedly a step backward not to instruct our covenant children in Biblical history in catechism, but only in doctrine. That was the method followed long ago, while in later years, especially in Reformed churches, it was generally recognized that in catechetical instruction Biblical History must have a place alongside of instruction in doctrine.

Now, as to the proper system of catechetical instruction, let me quote from the Catechetics which I taught at our Theological School in past years. All our people ought to be interested in what I taught at the institution in which our young men are trained for the ministry in our churches, and it may be beneficial for them to read it. I will quote, therefore, from my manuscript and will translate it rather freely, because originally it was given in Dutch.

"In general we may remark that although Scripture is not a text-book for catechumens, it nevertheless is and must remain the main source of the material for catechetical instruction. The danger is not imaginary that by all the various helps and question books the catechumens are kept aloof from the Word of God itself. Now, it cannot be denied that in the catechism class the time is lacking to teach directly from the Bible or to read the Bible. Besides, the material of Scripture must be so worked over that it can be teaching material which is properly adapted to the age and the development of the child. All the more it is necessary for the catechete that in his instruction he takes the following into consideration.

"First of all, he must direct his instruction to the end that he teach the catechumens and give them an incentive to read the Bible for themselves at home. This is in itself already a very good lesson. The child of the covenant must be thoroughly acquainted with

his Bible, must feel himself at home in it, must reveal love and desire to search the Holy Scriptures. A continual incentive for this may not be lacking in the catechism class. Such an incentive the catechete can give in different ways. Thus, for instance, it would be very good if the catechete would assign every week one or more chapters of Scripture that are connected with the teaching material for that particular week with the demand that the contents of such a passage from Scripture be briefly summarized by the catechumens. Or another very efficient and fruitful way would be to propose different questions with reference to various parts of Scripture, in such a way that reading of those passages would be necessary to answer the questions. In this the catechete must, of course, take into consideration the age of the catechumens.

"In the second place, the catechete must take care that he points out as much as possible the connection between the material taught and Holy Writ, in order that it may become clear for the catechumen that the instruction is derived from Scripture and is in harmony with the Bible. In this way the scholar will not receive the impression that what is taught him is merely a system of dead dogmatics, but will learn to bow before the authority of Holy Writ itself.

"In the third place, it is a very good custom to have the catechumens commit certain texts to memory. It is, of course, necessary to accustom the catechumen to this from childhood, for if he must still become accustomed to the habit of committing texts to memory when he is sixteen or eighteen years of age, the attempt is often fruitless. One must be careful, however, on the one hand not to assign the class too much, in order that the weak ones may not be discouraged; on the other hand, one must not be too afraid to assign a proper portion of memory work. It is, for instance, not necessary that a child understands everything he commits to memory. In a child memory develops first; in a later age comes the reflection. And the child commits things easily to memory. The catechete, however, must insist that such texts be memorized both thoroughly and correctly. He must memorize them thoroughly, for that which is learned superficially is usually not retained. There are children that can commit something to memory in a flash, so that they can recite without difficulty in the class, but who a week later have retained very little or nothing of what they learned. Memory work demands repetition. If, therefore, a child commits certain texts to memory, it is a very good custom to have him recite the same texts some weeks later. And these texts must be committed to memory correctly, that is, literally. The catechete must not permit the scholar to reproduce the thoughts of the text in his own words. This is not in accord with proper reverence for the inspired Word of God.

"Finally, it is beneficial to devote some time to the discussion of the origin of Holy Writ. However, it is not advisable to trouble the catechumen with the questions of higher criticism. Rather must such a discussion be adapted to imbue the catechumen with child-like faith and proper reverence for the Word of God.

"Now, as concerns the definite material that must be taught in the catechism class, the first thing that demands our attention is Biblical History. Thorough knowledge of Biblical History is of great significance. For the history of salvation itself is revelation. God revealed the fulness of His salvation in His covenant in Christ to His people in the way of historical development. The catechete, therefore, take care that he present sacred history in such a light that it is the realization and the revelation of the gospel of God concerning His Son. In this respect Biblical History is distinct, and cannot be put on a level with history in general or even with the history of the Church. Secular history is in a certain sense indeed revelation, but it is not *historia revelationis*, as is indeed the case with Biblical History. Instruction in this Biblical History to small children ought to commence with simple Bible stories without entering into the deeper significance of this history, which the small child cannot comprehend, and without bothering about the historical connection, whether causal, geographic, or chronological. At a later age one can connect the different Biblical narrations according to the order of time, and point out the progressive character of sacred history. Abraham, for instance, is not only a later but also a higher figure from the viewpoint of *historia revelationis* than Noah; Moses than Abraham. And in still a later age the catechete can explain the significance of Biblical History from a spiritual and typological point of view. One take care, however, that in the discussion of Biblical History he does not lose sight of the proper perspective. All facts, dates, persons, and institutions are not of equal significance. One therefore must not place all things in history on the same level, must not demand of a child to commit to memory an accumulation and mixture of all kinds of facts. Main facts must remain main facts, and must appear on the foreground in the treatment of history. And the total impression which the scholar receives of sacred history must remain that God establishes His covenant and kingdom and that He realizes His counsel of salvation and reveals it to His people in Christ Jesus.

"Next in order is instruction in doctrine, that is, in the principals of the Reformed truth as they are founded on Holy Writ. And in this instruction we must not lose sight of the proper purpose of catechetical instruction. The main purpose must always be to lead the seed of the covenant to conscious confession of faith, or by continued instruction for those

that have already made confession to enrich and establish them in this confession. Catechism, therefore, is not the same as a class in dogmatics. The instruction must indeed be thoroughly doctrinal, but also, and no less, spiritual and practical. It must be calculated to place the catechumen before the question whether and in how far they have a spiritual part in the benefits of salvation, and must encourage them in the assurance of faith and be a means to teach them to understand their own spiritual life in the light of Scripture as well as their calling to walk as children of light in the midst of the world.

"Further, it must be said that this instruction ought to be complete. The catechete take care that he does not waste his time. At the time when he makes confession of faith the catechumen ought to have a total view of all the main tenets of the Reformed truth. And for this he has very little time at his disposal, that is, one hour a week, and that only for a certain part of the year. Let him therefore not waste his time by keeping himself and the class busy with detailed questions, and rather emphasize that which must weigh heaviest. For this it is not improper to treat at least once the complete system of the truth from a practical-spiritual viewpoint, and once from a dogmatic point of view: the first according to the order of the Heidelberg Catechism, the second according to the order of the Netherland Confession. It is not advisable, however, to use in this instruction the text of the Confession or of the Catechism itself. It is, indeed, very excellent that the scholars learn these parts of the confession. But usually the catechete will have no success in trying to get all his catechumens along in memorizing and studying the Confession and the Catechism. This does not mean, however, that by the treatment of the doctrinal material the Confession must be ignored, even though all the catechumens will not be able to commit it to memory. It is very proper in connection with the doctrine that is being treated to fix the attention on our confessions.

"Also with respect to the instruction in doctrine it must be emphasized that Holy Writ may never be forgotten. The catechete must indeed cause his catechumens to feel that his instruction is in agreement with the confession, but no less that it is founded on Holy Writ. It is therefore to be recommended that he occasionally assigns some work to his scholars, as the reading of a certain part of Scripture in connection with the lesson, the answering of certain questions with indication of the passages of Scripture where the answer may be found, and the learning of certain main passages of Scripture as proof texts with the material that is treated.

"Finally, it may be remarked that in the common catechism class, that is, in the class of those that have

not as yet made confession of faith, not too much time must be wasted in polemics. Of course, some time must be devoted to this, especially where it concerns some of the main points of doctrine. The catechumen will, of course, come into contact with those that do not agree with our Reformed truth, with Baptists and Methodists and Chiliasts, etc. And the catechism must certainly enable him to defend himself over against them. But in this respect the catechete must use discretion and wisdom. It is certainly not to be recommended that in the common catechism class much time be wasted to discuss all kinds of erroneous views. If there is an opportunity to continue catechism work with those that have already made confession of faith, there then will be time and opportunity to enter into a more detailed discussion of the views of others."

(to be continued)

H. H.

As To Correspondence With The Churches In The Netherlands

Prof. C. Veenhof was so kind as to send me by airmail the decisions reached by the Synod of the Reformed Churches under Art. 31 of the Netherlands concerning correspondence with our Churches.

These decisions were as follows:

"First: in reply to and in accord with the proposition of the Protestant Reformed Churches, to empower the deputies for correspondence with foreign churches to get into contact with these churches in order to prepare a relationship of corresponding churches.

"Two: that these deputies in respect to this case will have to serve the next general synod with advice.

"Third: that while awaiting the establishment of a definite rule the decision whether ministers of the Protestant Reformed Churches shall be permitted to speak an edifying word in the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands shall be left to the individual churches."

I wish to thank Prof. Veenhof for his kind information.

From an accompanying letter of his I receive the impression that there was quite a lively discussion on the floor of the synod in the Netherlands about this matter, *pro* and *con*. But the final outcome was that these propositions of the committee *ad hoc* were accepted by a large majority.

We will look forward eagerly to an interesting discussion with the deputies for correspondence concerning the questions of the covenant and baptism.

H. H.

Van Boeken

De Boeken Van Samuël, door Dr. C. J. Goslinga.

Uitgever J. H. Kok, Kampen, Nederland.

Dit boek is een commentaar op I Samuël, en behoort tot de series "Korte Verklaring der Heilige Schrift". In eene "Inleiding" behandelt de schrijver: 1. Naam en inhoud; 2. Eenheid en samenstelling; 3. Tekst; en 4. De Chronologie van I Samuël. Onder 2 wil de schrijver blijkbaar de beteekenis van I Samuël in het geheel van de Heilige Schrift aanduiden. Hij schrijft: "Wanneer we nu de leidende gedachte van het geheele geschiedwerk aldus omschrijven, dat het ons wil doen zien de wording en instelling van het ware, theocratische koningschap in het volk Israel, dan meenen we daarmede ook den draad te hebben aangegeven, die de onderscheidene zoo uiteenlopende deelen verbindt".

De verklaring zelf is grondig en degelijk uitgewerkt. De stijl is zeer helder, en het boek is gemakkelijk te volgen voor ieder, die onder ons nog Hollandsch lezen kan.

Bij des schrijvers verklaring van de waarzegster te Endor zet ik een vraagteken.

Gaarne beveel ik deze populaire, en toch degelijk uitgewerkte verklaring bij ons Hollandsch lezend publiek aan. Het geheel beslaat 356 paginas.

H. H.

* * * *

Hoofdpijnen In De Kerkgeschiedenis,

door Ds. S. S. De Graaf.

Uitgever J. H. Kok, Kampen, Nederland.

Dit boek, dat we gaarne in stempelband (prijs: f. 2.75), inplaats van ingenaaid (prijs: f. 1.75) zouden hebben willen ontvangen, is een beknopt overzicht van heel de kerkgeschiedenis vanaf de eerste eeuwen tot op heden. Het boek beslaat slechts 134 bladzijden, en is dus zeer beknopt.

Dit neemt echter niet weg, dat het ons een tamelijk volledig overzicht geeft van heel de geschiedenis. Het heeft mij verwonderd, dat ds. de Graaf in zoo beknopte vorm de kerkgeschiedenis kan beschrijven in haar hoofdpijnen, en toch interessant kan blijven.

Ook dit boek is gemakkelijk te lezen, en verdient warme aanbeveling bij al ons Hollandsch lezend publiek.

H. H.

* * * *

Wijsbegeerte En Levenspraktijk, onder redactie van Dss. H. J. Spier en J. M. Spier.

Uitgever J. H. Kok, Kampen, Nederland.

(Prijs: f. 4.90; ingenaaid f. 3.90)

Dit boek, dat bestaat uit verschillende opstellen van verschillende schrijvers heeft ten doel om de be-

teekenis der "Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee" voor de levenspraktijk aan te toonen. Over de "Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee" hebben we jaren geleden reeds geschreven. Thans trachten de schrijvers van dit boek de beteekenis van deze filosofie voor de verschillende levenssferen aan te toonen.

In een inleidend hoofdstuk door ds. J. W. Tunderman (in Dachau door de Nazi's vermoord) wordt de lezer eenigszins op de hoogte gebracht, met het streven der Wijsbegeerte in het algemeen, met het bijzonder karakter en standpunt der "Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee," om eindelijk de vraag te beantwoorden, wat bedoeld wordt met levenspraktijk. En in de volgende hoofdstukken gaat het dan over de beteekenis van deze nieuwe Wijsbegeerte voor de verschillende kringen: Kerk, Prediking, Huwelijk, Staat, Kunst, etc.

Wie zich interesseert (zooals ondergeteekende) in de "Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee" schaffe zich dit boek aan.

H. H.

THE TRIPLE KNOWLEDGE

An Exposition Of The Heidelberg Catechism

PART TWO

LORD'S DAY 25

4.

Preaching In The Sphere Of The Covenant.

That regeneration in the narrowest sense of the word is immediate and is not effected by the preaching of the Word but is precedent to the latter we have, I think, abundantly proved to be the true presentation of this truth in the Bible.

But the same truth appears also to be presupposed by the fact of the regeneration of small children, of little infants.

Those who insist that regeneration is always effected through the preaching of the Word really do not have an explanation of the salvation of little children. According to some, they are not regenerated, for regeneration presupposes conscious faith, which cannot be present in infants. And therefore they claim that they must be saved in some other way. Some even suggest that after death, in heaven, they are no more infants and are regenerated in glory. Others, however, who also hold that regeneration is mediate,

that is, takes place through the preaching of the Word, allow an exception in the case of infants: these are regenerated immediately. However, let us note that either this is true only with those infants that die in early infancy, or the seed of regeneration is implanted in all the children that are reborn in early childhood. In the former case it would seem rather strange that God would make an exception only in respect to the children that are taken away in infancy. What possible reason can there be, if God is able to regenerate some children, why He should wait in the case of others until they can understand the preaching of the Word to implant in them the seed of regeneration? But if, on the other hand, it is maintained that the seed of regeneration is implanted in all the children that are reborn in infancy, it may well be regarded as an established rule that infants in the line of the covenant are regenerated before they are able to hear the preaching of the Word; and in that case there is very little room left for a mediate regeneration.

And this is indeed our view.

We believe that in the line of the covenant, in the Church, the seed of regeneration is implanted in the hearts of the children of the covenant in very infancy. There are, of course, exceptions. God remains free to work His grace in the hearts of His people either in infancy or in later years; but as a rule their rebirth takes place in earliest childhood.

As we said, we do not base our view of immediate regeneration on the presupposition that children are regenerated. On the contrary, the conception that regeneration is an immediate work of the Holy Spirit, independent of the preaching of the Word, is directly founded on Scripture. But just because Scripture teaches this truth and presents the rebirth of His people in the narrowest sense of the word, that is, in the sense of the implanting of the seed of regeneration, as an immediate work by the Holy Spirit, therefore it is evident that also the littlest infants can receive the grace of regeneration. And again, because we believe on the basis of Scripture that regeneration must be conceived of as an immediate work of the Spirit, and because for that very reason the regeneration of infants is possible, therefore we regard it as a common rule that in the line of the covenant children are reborn from infancy.

Then we can understand the real significance and operation of the preaching of the Word in the sphere of the Church and in the line of the covenant as a means of grace. Means require conscious reaction. They are elements which God uses but which we also use. Bread is used by God to nourish our bodies, but we eat it. Thus the Holy Spirit uses the preaching of the Word to work faith and to strengthen it, but we also use it and are even responsible for the use of the Word of God. Now, it is only the living that can use

means. The dead can neither eat nor drink. And the spiritually dead do, indeed, react upon the preaching of the Word, but only to reject it. They never come to repentance and faith. To them it is a savour of death unto death. But just as the physically living are able to use the means God provides for the sustenance of their earthly life, so the spiritually living are capable to use the means which the Holy Spirit provides for the working of faith and the development and upbuilding of the same.

Hence, life is first. Regeneration precedes all other work of the Holy Spirit in the heart of the sinner. And in regeneration the Holy Spirit implants the power or the faculty of faith, so that potentially the regenerated is a believer, even before he comes to the conscious activity of faith. And that this work of regeneration and the implanting of the faculty of faith is usually done in infancy, that is, in the line of the covenant, is the common view of the Reformed theologians. Thus, Ursinus in his *Schatboek* writes on page 369 (translation by the Rev. G. W. Williard) in answer to an objection raised by those who oppose the truth of infant baptism as follows: "Faith is, indeed, necessary to the use of baptism with this distinction. Actual faith is required in adults, and an inclination to faith in infants. There are, therefore, four terms in this syllogism, or there is a fallacy in understanding that as spoken particularly, which must be understood generally. Those who do not believe, that is, who have no faith at all, neither by profession nor by inclination, are not to be baptized. But infants born of believing parents have faith as to inclination." And again he writes: "We also deny the minor proposition; for infants do believe after their manner, or according to the condition of their age; they have an inclination to faith. Faith is in infants potentially and by inclination, although not actually as in adults. For, as infants born of ungodly parents who are without the church, have no actual wickedness, but only an inclination thereto, so those who are born of godly parents have no actual holiness, but only an inclination to it; not according to nature, but according to the grace of the covenant. And still further: infants have the Holy Ghost, and are regenerated by him. John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb, and Jeremiah is said to have been sanctified before he came out of the womb. (Luke 1:15; Jer. 1:5). If infants now have the Holy Ghost, he certainly works in them regeneration, good inclinations, new desires, and such other things as are necessary for their salvation, or he at least supplies them with everything that is requisite for their baptism, according to the declaration of Peter, 'Can any man forbid water to them who have received the Holy Ghost as well as we.' It is for this reason that Christ enumerates little children amongst those that believe,

saying, 'Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me'. (Matt. 18:6). In as much now as infants are fit subjects for baptism, they do not profane it as the Anabaptists wickedly affirm."

Now, in the sphere of the covenant conscious faith and repentance are wrought gradually in little children through the influence of the preaching of the Word.

The influence of this preaching and its sphere is, of course, not limited to the official ministry in the church on Sunday and on the mission field. In the wider sense it includes many different spheres of labor. There is, for instance, the work of the theological school, where young men are trained for the ministry of the Word, where they are taught to exegete Holy Writ and to understand the doctrine of the Church, and where the truth is developed and maintained and defended over against all errors. There is the labor of preserving and translating as well as of interpreting the Bible, a labor that shows its fruit not only in many works on textual criticism, but also in hundreds of commentaries. There is the calling of the Church to establish and formulate the truth of the Word of God in her confessions, not only to defend it over against opponents and gainsayers, but also to preserve it in generations. Of all these labors the Church, which is the pillar and ground of the truth, and to which the Word of God has been entrusted, is the subject. And of them all the preaching of the Word as a means of grace is the very heart.

In the sphere of that Church God in His infinite wisdom and mercy causes the covenant child to be born, and under the influence of the preaching of the Word in this wider sense the child is placed from very infancy.

This begins already in the administration of baptism, of which we must speak later in detail. But in Baptism the Church already exercises the influence of the preaching of the Word by exacting from the parents the promise that they will bring up their children "in the aforesaid doctrine, or help or cause them to be instructed therein, to the utmost of their power." And of this doctrine in which the children must be instructed the parents are asked to acknowledge that it "is contained in the Old and New Testament, and in the Articles of the Christian Faith, and which is taught here in this Christian Church, to be the true and perfect doctrine of salvation." Hence, in accord with this pledge of the parents it is in the covenant home that the influence of the Word of God is exerted upon the child first of all. This is continued in Sunday School, and presently, through the ministry of the Word directly in catechism, and in the midst of the congregation through the preaching. And further, the influence of the preaching of the Word in the sphere of the Church is felt in many other ways, as the reading of the Bible in the home, the conversa-

tion of the saints among one another, and the study of Scripture in the various societies that are organized within the church. And once more it must be emphasized that the very heart of this sphere and influence is the preaching of the Word as a means of grace, together with the administration of the sacraments.

Now, who shall say at how early an age the Holy Spirit is able to quicken the seed of regeneration and bring the faculty of faith to a more or less conscious activity?

Worldly educators realize rather clearly that from earliest infancy, yea, from very birth the whole outside world streams in upon the consciousness of the child and makes its impression upon that consciousness. Hence, modern educators stress the importance of surrounding the child, even in the cradle, with objects, sounds, shapes, and colors and smells that are calculated to make the most favorable impression upon the little infant. Why cannot the Holy Spirit impress the little child with all the influence of a truly covenant home, the singing of psalms or hymns, the playing of sacred music, the simple prayer uttered by the parent at the cradle, the folding of the little hands of the infant in prayer at the table in the high-chair, and many other influences of the Christian home, to bring the faculty of faith into some sort of conscious activity?

At any rate, it must be admitted that we know very little of the life of an infant, and it is certain that long before what is usually considered the age of discretion there can be a decided influence of the Word of God upon our covenant children.

H. H.

OUR DOCTRINE

The Attributes Of God

(INCOMMUNICABLE)

We concluded our previous article with the remark that, negatively, the Eternity of God signifies that He is not limited by the laws of time, and that this truth is emphasized in the passages which we quoted in that article. We also made the observation, however, that this attribute of the Lord must not be identified with time, that it is not merely time as indefinitely prolonged, forwards and backwards. Even as the Infinity of God means more than mere "non-finiteness", so also the Eternity of God is not to be identified with endless time.

That Eternity is more than "endless time" is surely supported by the Word of God. Fact is, this is already true of the passages we quoted in our preceding article, namely: Ps. 90:2, John 8:58, and 2 Pet. 3:8. We quote Ps. 90:2 again: "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever Thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God." Notice the words: Thou *art* God. The same expression occurs in John 8:58: "Jesus saith unto them, Verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was *I am*." And in 2 Pet. 3:8 we read these remarkable words: "But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." This last passage from the Scriptures simply emphasizes the thought that the laws of time do not apply to the Lord. With Him a thousand years are as one day and a day is as a thousand years, i.e.: with the Lord there is no time. However, as we remarked in our preceding article, the Scriptures also employ other language. I refer particularly to the revelation of the name, Jehovah. God, we read in Holy Writ, is the I AM. He is, as the Holland expresses it, the "Zijnde". He is the Rock, everlastingly the same. He knows no increase or decrease, no progress or development. He lives in an everlasting present, Who knows no past or future, Who "from moment unto moment" lives on in an everlasting present, Who knows no past or future, Who "from moment unto moment" lives an infinity of life and perfection. Time, therefore, is not applicable to the Lord. And this lies in the nature of the case. He is the Creator, is He not? As such, He is also the Creator of time. He made the moments, seconds, minutes, hours, days, weeks, months; years. etc. He is the Almighty Maker of time and therefore stands infinitely above that creature which He has made.

What is the creature we call "time"? It is a creature. The Lord created it. Yet we cannot see it, touch it, handle it, feel it. Yet, it is there, all around us, in a very realistic sense of the word. Time we would define as the necessary mode of existence for the ever becoming and developing creature. We cannot notice Time in its progress; yet, if we look at ourselves a year or a few years hence, we can readily discern the effects of it upon our features. "Time marches on" is a well-known saying. We were infants, became children, young men and women, men and women, and are soon replaced by others who take our place in the changing drama of this world. This is the inevitable operation of what we call Time. It is the necessary mode of existence for the ever becoming and developing creature. "Change" is its watch-word. God, however, is eternal. This means, negatively, that He is not limited by time. Eternity has been defined as the virtue of God whereby He possesses the whole

of His existence in one indivisible moment or present. Positively, however, the eternity of the Lord means much more. That the Lord is eternal also implies that He continuously lives His infinite and perfect life with perfect and complete consciousness. God's infinite life is lived by the Lord perfectly and completely. There is in Him no succession of events or moments, no yesterday and today and tomorrow, no past and present and future. All His life and thoughts and emotions and purposes and acts are without succession, one and inseparable, the same even forever.

If then the acts of the Lord are mentioned in Scripture as past, present, and future (God Who is and Who was and Who is to come—Rev. 1:4), this cannot and does not mean that the acts of God are past, present, or future in God Himself, but only in respect to His revelation, as they are revealed unto the creature, and realized in time. In God everything is eternal; the event, as revealed unto us, takes place in time, and is thus past, present, or future, to our observation.

God's Omnipresence.

God's Omnipresence we define as that virtue or attribute of God whereby He is exalted above all space and laws of space and nevertheless completely fills with His Being as well as His power that space, the entire universe. It is evident from this definition that the Omnipresence of God consists of two parts: God's Transcendancy, that He is above all, and His Immanency, that He is in all things.

The Lord is, first of all, the Transcendent One. This truth is taught throughout the Word of God and especially in passages such as I Kings 8:27, Isaiah 66:1-2, Acts 7:48, 49, and II Chron. 2:4-6. We read in I Kings 8:27: "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee; how much less this house that I have builded?" In Isaiah 66:1-2 we read: "Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool: where is the house that ye build unto Me? and where is the place of My rest? For all those things hath Mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord: but to this man will I look, even to Him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My word." In II Chronicles 2:4-6 this same thought is expressed: "Behold, I build an house to the Name of the Lord my God, to dedicate it to Him, and to burn before Him sweet incense, and for the continual shewbread, and for the burnt-offerings morning and evening, on the sabbaths, and on the new moons, and on the solemn feasts of the Lord our God. This is an ordinance for ever to Israel. And the house which I build is great: for great is our God above all gods. But who is able to build Him an house, seeing the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain Him? who am I then, that I should build Him an

house, save only to burn sacrifice before Him? And in Acts 7:48-49 we read these words of Stephen: "Howbeit the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet, Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool: what house will ye build Me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of My rest?"

What do we mean by the Transcendancy of God? God's Transcendancy or Immensity must not be understood in the local sense of the word. He is not the transcendent God in the sense that He is physically, locally above us. That God is exalted above us would signify, then, that *between* Him and us is this world, the universe, that somehow the Lord "begins" where this world ends. God's Transcendancy is understood, then, in a physical, local, material sense of the word. This conception of God's Transcendancy, we understand, is impossible. The Lord *is* the Transcendent One. And He will ever remain the Transcendent One. Also in the eternal realization of the Kingdom of Heaven, when all things shall have been gathered together in one and the distinction between heaven and earth shall have fallen away, God will remain highly exalted.

The Lord is the Transcendent God within and as He is in Himself. If His Omnipresence in the sense of Immanency refers to God from the aspect of His relation to His creatures, His Transcendancy or Immensity refers to God as He is His own Being. The Transcendancy of God implies that He is not subject to the laws of space or time, is never to be identified with the creature, anything that He has made, is not merely locally above us but essentially and absolutely to be distinguished from all the works of His hands, is God and He alone, the highly exalted and absolute God, the Incomparable One.

This Transcendancy of God has been zealously maintained by the Church of all ages, particularly in refutation of the error of Pantheism. Pantheism (the word itself means literally: All is God) would have us believe that God is all things. It identifies the Lord with the creature. This heresy, we can easily understand, is the deathblow to all true religion. If God be the world and the world be God the inevitable conclusion must be that we have no God. All we have then is a world. And without God there can be no religion. If there be no God, then there is necessarily no sin; there is none against whom we can sin. And, for the same reason, the consciousness of sin and a life of prayer will be impossible. In other words, religion is simply impossible. We, therefore maintain and confess the Transcendancy of God, that He is God alone, infinitely and absolutely exalted above the creature, and distinguished from all the works of His hands.

The Omnipresence of God does not only teach us, however, that the Lord is the Transcendent One, but

also that He is Immanent, in all things. This, too, is taught throughout the Word of God and especially in passages such as Psalm 139:7-10, Jer. 23-24, Acts 17:24-28. We read in Ps. 139:7-10: "Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend up into 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." In Jeremiah 23:23-24 the prophet writes: "Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off? Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord." And in Acts 17:24-28 we read: "God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that He is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though He needed any thing, seeing He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bonds of their habitation: That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us: For in Him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also His offspring."

The Immanency of God is of great importance to the Church of God. We must not have a Deistic conception of God as if He beholds the world from afar, is, therefore, in remote control, or even that He created all things but then has left and still leaves the world to itself. The world may, then, be likened to an alarm clock. God wound it up in creation-week and it has been running ever since. We must maintain the Immanency of God, that He is constantly in all things, and in every minutest part of everything. This does not mean, of course, that the Lord is all things. Space and time are not merely matters which exist in our minds, so that we cannot possibly know what the actual reality is (Kant did not deny the reality of things but the possibility of our knowledge of them); space and time themselves are creatures; it lies, therefore, in the nature of the case that God, Who is the Creator of all things, is also the Creator of time and space, stands therefore absolutely above them and is not to be identified with them.

Confessing this attribute of the Lord we do maintain however that all things move and live in God and have their being in Him. There is essential distinction between God and the world, but no separation between Him and His creation or any part of that creation. God fills the universe, yet is essentially distinguished from it. He is not as a captain of his ship or a king in his kingdom who rules his kingdom

from a certain vantage point; He is in heaven and also in hell, in the godly but also in the ungodly, in the places of purity but also in the places of impurity. To be sure, this does not mean that He is equally present and present in the same sense in all His creatures. The nature of His indwelling is in harmony with the nature of His creatures. He does not dwell on earth as He does in heaven, in animals as He does in man, in the inorganic as He does in the organic creation, in the ungodly as He does in the godly, in the world as He does in the Church, in an angel as He does in man or an animal, in a tree as He does in a flower. Hence, separation from the Lord is strictly impossible. God is also in hell. It is true that to be apart from the Lord is death, but one can be separated from Him only in an ethical sense of the word; this ethical separation implies that one is the object of His wrath and indignation, has been separated from His love and communion and fellowship. Local separation from God, however, is impossible. The Lord constitutes hell as well as heaven. God is in heaven; the Lord is also in hell. Without God there would be no heaven; without Him there would be no hell. The very presence of God, the awful nearness of the Most High, the seeing of Him, face to face only as a consuming Fire, will constitute hell for the wicked. While in this life and in this world the ungodly is able to clench his fist, can say in his heart that there is no God, is able to deny the living Lord and teach the theory of evolution, and makes full use of the opportunity to persecute the people of the living God and to destroy His Cause and Church. In hell, however, he will be eternally confronted by the living Lord as a consuming Fire, and experience forever and ever the awfulness of his unspeakable misery, that he is forever separated from the love and fellowship of the Lord Whom to know is life eternal. To be sure, this separation from the Lord's love and communion does not begin for the ungodly in hell; already in this life the Lord is angry with the wicked every day, His eye is upon the godly, and He is far from those who do iniquity. But whereas in this world the ungodly pursue after the things of sin and evil, have the opportunity to seek the lusts of the flesh and of the eyes, in hell their opportunity to sin will forever be a thing of the past and they will know no other experience than the conscious tasting of the wrath and indignation of the Lord. Local separation from God is impossible; God, we understand, will constitute hell as well as heaven.

God's Immutability.

God's Immutability or Unchangeableness is that Divine perfection whereby He is the Eternally Perfect One, in His own Being or Essence, and in all His works, and, therefore, is and remains the same con-

tinuously supremely exalted above all things without increase or decrease, growth or diminution.

The virtue of the Lord's Immutability follows necessarily from the fact that God is God and eternally independent and Self-sufficient. Any change, we understand, is necessarily a change for the better or the worse. In either case, the Lord is unchangeable. He cannot increase or decrease. He cannot increase because He is the God of infinite perfections; and He cannot decrease or diminish because He is the overflowing Fount of all good.

The truth of God's Immutability is Scriptural. We read in Malachi 3:6: "For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." And in James 1:17 we read: "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights with Whom is no variability, neither shadow of turning." Besides these oft-quoted passages are several others. We read in Ex. 3:14: "And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and He said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you." Or, in Ps. 102:26-28: "They shall perish, but Thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt Thou change them, and they shall be changed: But Thou art the same, and Thy years shall have no end. The children of Thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before Thee." And in Isaiah 41:4 the prophet writes: "Who hath wrought and done it, calling the generations from the beginning? I am the Lord, the first, and with the last; I am He." In Romans 1:23 we read: "And changed the glory of the *incorruptible* (the undersigned underscores) God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things." And the text of Ps. 102:26-28 is quoted by the apostle in the epistle to the Hebrews, chapter 1, verses 11-12.

However, are there not several passages in the Word of God which seem to ascribe change to the Lord? Did not the Lord in the beginning create the heavens and the earth? Did He not therefore change from non-creating to creating, from a God Who was no Creator unto a God Who becomes the Maker of all things? And is it not true that, from the beginning of this world, He lives, as it were, the life of the world and associates, particularly, with His people, Israel? He comes and He goes, He reveals Himself and hides Himself, He turns away His face and reveals His face unto us. *He repents Himself of an action taken* (Gen. 6:6: "And it repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth and it grieved Him at His heart"; I Samuel 15:11: "It repenteth Me that I have set up Saul to be king: for he is turned back from following Me, and hath not performed My commandments. And it grieved Samuel; and he cried unto the Lord all

night"); *changes His purpose* (Ex. 32:10-14: "Now therefore let Me alone, that My wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation. And Moses besought the Lord his God, and said, Lord, why doth Thy wrath wax hot against Thy people, which Thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did He bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from Thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against Thy people. Remember, Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Thy servants, to whom Thou swarest by Thine own Self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever. And the Lord repented of the evil which He thought to do unto His people."; Jonah 3:10: "And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that He had said that He would do unto them; and He did it not."), *becomes angry* (Numbers 11:1, 10: "And when the people complained, it displeased the Lord: and the Lord heard it; and His anger was kindled; and the fire of the Lord burnt among them, and consumed them that were in the uttermost parts of the camp. Then Moses heard the people weep throughout their families, every man in the door of his tent: and the anger of the Lord was kindled greatly; Moses also was displeased."; Psalm 106:40: "Therefore was the wrath of the Lord kindled against His people, insomuch that He abhorred His own inheritance."), *lays aside His wrath* (Deut. 13:17: "And there shall cleave nought of the cursed thing to thine hand: that the Lord may turn from the fierceness of His anger, and shew thee mercy, and have compassion upon thee, and multiply thee, as He hath sworn unto thy fathers"; II Chron. 12:12: "And when he humbled himself, the wrath of the Lord turned from him, that He would not destroy him altogether: and also in Judah things went well.", Jer. 18:8, 10: "If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto thee. . . . If it do evil in My sight, that it obey not My voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them."). The Lord differs in His attitude toward and dealings with the godly from His attitude toward and dealings with the ungodly.

(to be continued)

H. Veldman.

* * * *

Quite often when a man thinks his mind is getting broader, it is only his conscience stretching.—Quoted in The Banner.

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

Abner's Break With Saul's House

The last article dealt with Abner's opposition to David. He established Ishbosheth in Mahanaim as king over all Israel with the exception of Judah. From Mahanaim he advanced with an army to Gibeon in the south-western part of Benjamin as purposing through conflict against David to subject Judah also to Ishbosheth. As we saw, the plan did not materialize. Anticipating the attack, David opposed a force under Joab. There was a sore battle in which Abner and his army were beaten. A truce was agreed on, but the house of Saul remained hostile. The war continued, though we read of no more pitched battles. In this prolonged war "David waxed stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker. Ishbosheth was a weak man devoid of capacity for rule. His power diminished. He steadily lost consideration. David on the other hand grew in prestige. Long ago the popular voice had decided in favor of him.

So was the house of Saul rapidly sinking and disappearing. But Abner would not have it so. "And it came to pass, while there was war between the house of Saul and the house of David, that Abner made himself strong for the house of Saul." As king, Ishbosheth was Abner's creation. The people had not asked for him, and the text leaves no doubt that he was little wanted. He was accepted for Abner's sake. The only strong and influential member of Ishbosheth's party was Abner. And he was bending all his efforts to hold the northern tribes to Ishbosheth. He strengthened himself for Saul's house. Whether his activity was connected with love of Saul's house or with ambition makes little difference. In either case it was carnal. But though carnal, it was activity for Saul's house nevertheless; and Abner wanted it recognized and appreciated. He wanted himself acknowledged especially by Ishbosheth as the virtual ruler with all the rights of the actual ruler of the eleven tribes. So he stood out in his own mind. This explains what he now did. Saul had a concubine, Mizpah, the daughter of Aiah. Abner cohabitated with the woman. Whether he used her as a harlot or made her his wife, the text does not make clear. But be this as it may, Ishbosheth was incensed. To him Abner's doing was indicative of a scheme to capture for himself the throne. Whether Abner's deed did have this significance the text again does not make clear. Perhaps it must be regarded as an example of his strengthening himself for Saul's house. This view is not without support in the text. The statement, "And Abner made himself strong for

the house of Saul," is immediately followed by the notice to the effect that "Saul had a concubine whose name was Rizpah. . . ." and by Ishbosheth's reproachful question. At the same time Abner's doing might at once have been connected with far reaching plans for himself. But it is also possible that he acted solely from pride and lust as stemming from the imagining that he had a right to the woman on the ground that he was the virtual ruler. The Lord, who alone knows the heart, does not lay bare Abner's motives, His sole purpose being to describe for our instruction the wonder of David's elevation to the throne over all Israel and the agencies by which this was accomplished. It was a wonder, was David's elevation to the throne. Why it was this and how as a wonder it foreshadowed the exaltation of Christ whose type David was, are matters that will be dealt with at the proper juncture in connection with the subject "David, the Type of Christ".

Ishbosheth gave expression to his suspicion by a question which he put to Abner, "Wherefore hast thou gone in into my father's concubine?" It can be explained that Abner's wrath kindled and that he was moved to the core at hearing himself rebuked by Ishbosheth. That of all men Ishbosheth should be commanding him to answer for his deed and answer to him, Ishbosheth, the very man whom he had placed on the throne and who ruled by his power and grace! It was more than Abner could endure. This was his reply, "The head of a dog am I who belongs to Judah?" Doubtless, the sense of this is, "Do I belong to thy opponents, to the party of the house of Judah,, seeking thy fall? Am I a man that despicable, a dog's head? Even today," Abner continues, "I do kindness unto the house of Saul thy father, to his brethren and to his friends, and have not delivered thee into the hands of David, and yet today thou layest upon me a sin concerning this woman! So do God to Abner, and more also, except, as the Lord hath sworn to David, even so I do to him; to cause the kingdom to pass from the house of Saul, and to set up the throne of David over Israel and over Judah, from Dan even to Beer-sheba." (So throughout reads the original text of Abner's reply). And Ishbosheth "could not answer Abner a word again, because he feared him." For every word of what he said was true. Where would the house of Saul be that very day were it not for Abner's sustaining hand? But Ishbosheth might still ask him to show that his kindness toward Saul's house justified his cohabitating with Rizpah, Saul's concubine. But Ishbosheth was silent. He feared Abner—feared that he might carry out his threat should he withstand him to his face.

But the damage had already been done. Abner was resolved. And he had sworn. He could not, therefore, reconsider. As the Lord had done to David, even

so would he do to him. Without a doubt the resolve to break with Saul's house had been present in his soul for some time as connected with the growing conviction that he championed a lost cause, so that now, as enraged by Ishbosheth's reproachful question, he of a sudden flung into his teeth what he had been wanting to tell him long ago. But if Ishbosheth had suspected him of seeking the throne for himself, he now learned that he was mistaken. Abner will go over to David. He will do to him what the Lord had sworn. He was thoroughly acquainted with the Lord's choice of David as king. This is clear especially from his communications to the elders of Israel a short time later. The source of his knowledge of the Lord's revelations to David, must have been Samuel. As was said, though David's private anointing had not been followed by public election by lot, as it had been in the case of Saul, though Samuel had given no publicity to the transaction in Bethlehem and to Saul's rejection, it soon must have become a matter of common knowledge that the Lord had rejected Saul and had sworn truth to David. For, as was stated, Samuel would not fail fully to inform all such who came to him to hear the word of God. The seer would not fail to communicate his revelations to the "sons of the prophets", the prophetic circles. It must be assumed that through these circles the promises of God to David were widely extended.

Abner straightway carried out his threat against Ishbosheth. He "sent messengers to David on his behalf, saying, Whose land? saying also, Make thy league with me, and behold, my hand shall be with thee, to bring about all Israel unto thee." There are two explanations of Abner's question, "Whose land?" 1) "The land belongs to thee, David". This interpretation agrees with Abner's affirmation in verse 9, "As the Lord hath sworn to David, even so do I to him." 2) "The land belongs to me, Abner." This would seem to be in keeping with the fact that the whole land except Judah still was subject to Abner as the virtual ruler. Only as one who controlled the land could he invite David to make a covenant with him and give him the promise, "My hand will be with thee to turn all Israel to thee." This is the better explanation.

David's reply, "And he said, Good, I will make a covenant with thee; only one thing I ask of thee, that is, thou shalt not see my face except thou comest to me with Michal, the daughter of Saul, when thou comest to see my face." Abner shall not see David's face except he bring Michal when he comes. It is not stated that Abner accepted the condition, but this is implied in verses 14-16. David, too, took a hand in the matter. He sent messengers to Ishbosheth, Saul's son, saying, "Deliver my wife Michal, which I espoused to me for an hundred foreskins of the Philistines." David's request was just; Michal belonged to him,

since he had lawfully won her as his wife. David was in duty bound to assert his rights to her. She was his wife. Her cohabiting with another man—one Phaltiel the son of Laish—was unrighteous action; it was a heinous sin punishable by death. David must refuse to have ought to do with Abner should he appear unwilling to break up that illicit relation. Besides, how could Abner be trusted should he refuse to return Michal to David, her lawful husband? Thus the request also served to put to a test Abner's sincerity and integrity in the matter of his overtures to David. Abner stood the test. "And Ishbosheth sent—he sent Abner—and took her from the man, even from Phaltiel the son of Laish." That Ishbosheth did not dare refuse was revealing. It showed David that he had actually been threatened by Abner; it indicated a quarrel and a falling out between the two. This doubtless was one of the reasons that David requested also Ishbosheth to restore to him Michal, the other reason being that after all he was the king. Phaltiel found it difficult to part with Michal. He "went with her along weeping behind her to Bahurim, where Abner commanded him to return." And he returned.

The matter of Michal's restoration having been attended to, Abner pursued his aims with unabated vigor and zeal. First he communicated with the elders of Israel. This was his message, "Ye sought for David saying, By the hand of my servant David I will save my people Israel out of the hand of the Philistines, and out of the hand of all their enemies." The significance of these words has already been pointed out. They form a striking testimony to the fact that outside of Judah the popular voice had long ago decided in favor of David and that Abner all along had turned a deaf ear to that voice. That the Lord by the hand of David would save His people is nowhere mentioned as having been spoken to David. But it was implied in his anointment as king—a fact with which Abner was well acquainted.

There now followed a separate negotiation with Benjamin, "And Abner also spake in the ears of Benjamin." The statement, "Ye sought for David in times past to be king over you," is here lacking. The Benjamites were Saul's fellow tribesmen. Interest for Ishbosheth's throne and corresponding resentment to David would be strongest in this tribe. Hence, the tribe had to be separately dealt with.

With these preparatory negotiations with the tribes completed, Abner reported to David in Hebron. He came with a good message. All the tribes had expressed their willingness to acknowledge David as their king. Such is the import of the notice, "And Abner went also to speak in the ears of David in Hebron *all that seemed good to Israel and that seemed good to the whole house of Benjamin.*" Confirming Abner's overture by their presence were twenty men,

representatives of all Israel, who accompanied Abner to David and for whom he prepared a feast which partook of the nature of a league. But the task to which Abner was addressed had been brought only to its initial stages of accomplishment. Much had still to be done. Abner presented to David his plans in words that betokened a spirit animated by the same quickness, decision, and determination that had thus far characterized all his procedure. Said he to David, "I will arise and go, and will gather all Israel unto my lord the king, that they may make a league with thee, and that thou mayest reign over all that thine heart desirest." He now was as zealous for David as formerly he had been determined in his opposition to him. He will arise and go—go at once. He wanted David installed as king over Israel as soon as possible. He will assemble *all Israel* (i.e. in its elders and other representatives) to David, whom he now calls his lord, "that they may make a covenant with thee." They are to solemnly affirm that they receive and will obey thee as their king given them of God, thou vowing to rule them as the anointed of the Lord through whom as His instrument the Lord Himself will rule over His people. "And that thou mayest be king over all that thy heart desirest," that is, over the whole people and land. Such was the desire of David's heart, which he had also revealed in his message to the men of Jabesh. "David sent Abner away; and he went in peace," from David's presence and from the presence of his servants. The notice indicates that Abner was now regarded as a trusted friend by all, so that no one molested him in his going. And they did well. For he had proved himself worthy of their confidence.

Was Abner essentially a good man despite his former antagonism to David? He was, if his change of attitude toward David was fruit worthy of a true repentance. It can be shown that nothing of what is related of him proves absolutely that his change of attitude was not that kind of fruit. First to be considered is Abner's previous antagonism and opposition to David. It is not stating the matter correctly to say that he "knew David's divine call to be Saul's successor, and therefore stood in conscious opposition to the known will of God. What Abner knew is the *report* of David's call. For he nor any one else had witnessed David's anointing. Abner did not believe this report. That was his sin. For, as was stated, David's success in arms in his wars with the heathen together with his integrity fully confirmed what was being reported of him. But this sin did not put Abner in a class with those men of whom it is written that it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance, seeing that they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to open shame.—Heb. 6:4. Abner's conscious opposition to God was conscious opposition to the report of God's will concerning David.

Attention is called to the fact "that it was only after his defeat in battle with Joab, and his gradually confirmed recognition of the fact that Ishbosheth was wholly unfit for kingly rule and its maintenance in the house of Saul, and in truth the personal insult now offered him by Ishbosheth—that he suddenly decided to break with the house of Saul and go over to David." But from this it does not necessarily follow that he was motivated by carnal ambition; that his whole aim was to gain a high and influential position with David. It is also possible that, taking notice of Ishbosheth's unfitness for kingly rule, he became fully convinced that he was pursuing a wrong and sinful course and that the great energy he showed in gaining over all Israel to David, as is afterward related, was indeed indicative of true sorrow of heart for his previous unbelief. And that the decision to break with Saul's house was made in a moment of great rage caused by Ishbosheth's reproach does not exclude the possibility that the decision was pure as to its core.

Much is made of Abner's pride. His saying to David, "To whom belongs the land? make a covenant with me to turn all Israel to thee," is said to be in keeping with his proud and haughty nature, as hitherto manifested in his words and conduct. But the fact is that the whole land except Judah *was* subject to Abner. It was only on this account that he could promise David to turn all Israel to him. When his proposal had once been accepted, he called David his lord.

In fine, it shall have to be conceded that nothing of what is revealed of Abner renders the view or conjecture that he truly repented untenable. But it is another question whether the narrative reveals elements of conduct of his that lend support to the view that he did truly repent of his unbelief. We believe that it does. First to be mentioned is his break with Saul's house; it was complete. Then there was the energy that he showed in gaining over all Israel to David. Why may it not have been the expression of a desire to serve by deeds the true king of Israel? And why may he not be credited with yielding obedience unto God in turning from his false course of opposition to David? Also to be mentioned is his humble submission to David—he calls him his lord—and the gracious words that he spake to him on the feast. "And that thou mayest reign over all that thine heart desireth. . . ." Thus he spake. May not love for his new lord have constrained Abner to utter these words? Beholding David, savoring the true goodness of his heart and spirit, Jonathan loved him as his own soul. May this not have been the experience of Abner on that feast? For David had forgiven him and taken him into his confidence and, it seems, to his bosom. For when he received tidings of Abner's assassination, his grief knew no bounds.

G. M. Ophoff.

SION'S ZANGEN

Liefdevol, Schoon Zwaar Getergd

(Psalm 106; Vierde Deel)

“Schoon zwaar getergd!”

Als dat ergens uitkwam dan zeker wel in de geschiedenis die we nu moeten behandelen.

Mozes was op den berg geklommen om met de God-spraak raad te plegen.

En toen is het gebeurd:

“Zij maakten een kalf bij Horeb en zij bogen zich voor een gegoten beeld, en zij veranderden hunne eer in de gedaante van eenen os die gras eet. Zij vergaten God, hunnen Heiland, die groote dingen gedaan had in Egypte, wonderdaden in het land Chams, vreeselijke dingen aan de Schelfzee.”

Men heeft beweerd, dat Israel hier niet gedacht heeft aan afgoderij, doch dat zij met dit kalf Jehovah wilden afbeelden, zoo ongeveer als de Roomsche-Catholiken die plaatjes en beelden gebruiken om Jezus, Maria en alle de heiligen af te malen.

Evenwel, die bewering gaat niet op, want in de verzen die we afschreven staat, dat Israel in het maken van dit kalf “God, hun Heiland vergat”!

Dat maken van het kalf was een vreeselijke zonde, en de Heere werd grootelijks vertoornd over Zijn volk.

Hoe kwamen zij er toch bij om een kalf te maken ter aanbedding?

Wel, zij hadden genoeg van die dingen gezien in Egypte. De os is een afgod der Egyptenaren, Serapis genaamd. En de Egyptenaren bogen zich neder en vereerden dien os.

Dat evenwel de Egyptenaren zulks deden is tot daar-aan-toe. Dat volk was verblind, verhard, van God verlaten. Later, veel later, zou Paulus zeggen, dat God hen had laten wandelen in hunne wegen. Hetzelfde is waar van de millioenen van Indiërs, Chineezen en Japaneezen, die niets weten van den Bijbel.

Maar Israel had den eersten Bijbel-Schrijver in hun midden, en dat was Mozes. En zij hadden immers de wonderdaden van hun God gezien? Was die God niet een Heiland geworden?

Dat woord beteekent dat God hun tot een Redder, een Zaligmaker geworden was. Hij had hen lieflijk bij de hand genomen, en uit het diensthuis uitgeleid. Hij had inderdaad “groote dingen gedaan in Egypte, wonderdaden in het land van Cham.”

En op dien achtergrond van groote liefde Gods spreekt hun afgoderij zooveel te vreeselijker. Zij vergaten God hun Heiland!

Wat zouden we nu verwachten?

Dit: de Heere ontsteekt in grooten toorn en verwerpt het geheele volk.

Maar, laat ons het nooit vergeten: God is hun Heiland! Hij is Jehovah, de Zijnde, die nimmer verandert. Hij had dit volk lief van eeuwigheid en zal hen minnen tot in alle eeuwigheid. God kan Zich-zelfen niet verloochenen.

Alleen zoo, en niet anders moet ge het volgende vers lezen.

Doet ge dat niet, dan wordt Mozes een Heiland, een Redder. En dat zij verre!

Hier is dat volgende vers: “Dies Hij zeide dat Hij ze verdelgen zoude, ten ware Mozes, Zijn uitverkorene, in de scheur voor Zijn aangezicht gestaan had, om Zijne grimmigheid af te keeren dat Hij ze niet verdierf.”

Ziet ge niet, dat als ge den tekst oppervlakkiglijk leest, zonder Uw oog open te hebben voor het overige der Heilige Schrift, Mozes de redder van Israel wordt in plaats van Jehovah? Staat niet letterlijk in den tekst: 1. Dat God Israel verdelgen wilde vanwege hunne zonde; 2. Dat Mozes in de scheur voor Gods aangezicht ging staan, met het vooropgezette doel om Zijn grimmigheid af te keeren; en dat 3. God hen toen niet verdierf?

Gaat naar Exodus 32:31, 32 en die gedachte wordt versterkt, want daar staat: “Zoo keerde Mozes weder tot den Heere en zeide: Och, dit volk heeft eene groote zonde gezondigd, dat zij zich gouden goden gemaakt hebben: nu dan, indien Gij hunne zonden vergeven zult! doch zoo niet, zoo delg mij nu uit Uw boek, hetwelk Gij geschreven hebt.”

Mozes, de redder van Israel uit de handen van den toornigen Jehovah!

Maar zoo is het niet!

Toen ik zoeven het vers in kwestie in drie punten weergeef, toen heb ik één phrase weggelaten. En die eene phrase is “Mozes, Zijn uitverkorene”. En in die phrase zit de sleutel tot een goede verklaring van die afkeering van Zijn toorn.

Mozes met zijn pleitgebed is de uitverkorene Gods. Zijn groote liefde voor Israel, zijn zachtmoedige wijsheid, zijn pleiten voor Israel, zijn afkeering van den toorn Gods zijn alle te zamen een uitvloeijsel van de uitverkiezing Gods. God verloor hem om zoo voor Zijn aangezicht te gaan staan en zoo te pleiten. Zij zijn alle te zamen een openbaring van de eigen liefde Gods in Mozes! Ge kunt het ook zóó zeggen: Mozes die voor Gods aangezicht staat te pleiten is de openbaring van Gods Eigen Hart dat aan Zijn eeuwig verbond denkt.

Dat wordt nog duidelijker, als ge gedenkt hoe Mozes, vooral in dit tafereel, de type is bij uitnemendheid van den beteren Mozes, Jezus Christus, den Heere. Jezus heeft Mozes in zijn smeekbede *vervuld!* Israel, het Israel der uitverkiezing, moest eigenlijk verdelgd

worden, naar Gods eigen recht en gerechtigheid. Maar Jezus staat in de scheur die gescheurd is, en wordt Zelf gescheurd. Mozes zegt: indien niet, delg mij uit! Maar zóó kon het niet. Mozes is een zondig mensch en kan geen lam Gods zijn. Maar Jezus zegt: Delg Mij uit! En Hij werd uitgedelgd met een eeuwige uitdelging. Hij is gescheurd met de scheur der eeuwige verdoemenis. Hij is vanwege de afgoderij van het verkoren Israel verlaten met een eeuwige verlating. (Ik kan het niet helpen, dat wij deze dingen niet kunnen begrijpen, dat, namelijk, Christus een eeuwigen dood kan sterven, en toch er mee klaar komen. Maar verdoemd, verdelgd, verlaten is Hij.)

En nu kom ik tot het punt.

Gij allen die dit leest weet, dat Jezus Christus, als het Lam Gods, hangende aan het hout, lijdende stervende voor het zondige Israel het Eigen Hart van God is. Het is niet zóó, dat God Zijn volk haat vanwege hun zonde; dat Jezus toen kwam om dien toornigen God te verzoenen, zoodat Hij Israel niet verdierf. Maar het is zooals Paulus zegt, als hij over deze dingen schrijft in II Cor. 5, zeggende: "En alle deze dingen zijn *uit God*, die ons met Zichzelven verzoend heeft door Jezus Christus, en ons de bediening der verzoening gegeven heeft. Want God was in Christus de wereld met Zichzelven verzoenende. . . ." Let er op: En alle deze dingen zijn *uit God*! Welke dingen? Leest ze in de voorgaande verzen. Die zingen zijn: 1. Jezus Christus; 2. Die sterft aan het kruis; 3. Voor ons, dat is voor de uitverkorenen. Welnu, die dingen zijn *uit God*. Die dingen zijn een openbaring van Zijn Goddelijk, liefhebbend Hart!

En nu begrijpt ge wel, dat als dit zoo is met Jezus die voor het aangezicht van Jehovah in de scheur staat, neen, hangt, op Golgotha opdat Hij sterve voor Gods volk dit zekerlijk waar is van Mozes die als de Oud-Testamentische middelaar voor Israel staat te pleiten.

We concludeeren dus: Mozes, de zachtmoedige, liefhebbende Mozes, die voor God staat te pleiten ten overstaan van Israel, is niets minder dan een openbaring van God die Zichzelven herinnert aan Zijn eeuwig verbond.

En nu moet er nog één ding bij gezegd worden.

De verworpenen onder Israel worden verdoemd; en de uitverkorenen worden getuchtigd. Levi moet zijn vader en zijn moeder vergeten en slachtende door het leger gaan. En duizenden sterven.

En wat heeft deze geschiedenis tot ons te zeggen?

Dit: als ge den Heere aanroept, dan moet ge Hem aanroepen in Geest en in waarheid. Ge moogt geen kalveren maken. God haat het als ge U buigt voor hetgeen geen God is. Hij is een jaloersch God op Zijn eer. Hoevele malen staat er niet in den Bijbel: Jero-beam die Israel zondigen deed, En wat was de zonde van dien goddeloozen man? Hij maakte gouden kalveren en leerde Israel om voor hen te knielen.

Het Evangelie roept ons toe: God is een Geest. Aanbidt Hem dan in Geest en waarheid! Laat het toch uit zijn om het creatuur te aanbidden in plaats van den Schepper die alle deze dingen gemaakt heeft. Knielt allen voor *Hem* neer!

Dat mag Hij gaarne zien. Als Hij die lieflijke reuke der liefde Gods riekt, dan verlustigt Hij Zich in Uw godsdienst.

Verder:

"Zij versmaadden ook het gewenschte land; zij geloofden Zijn Woord niet."

Wat vreeselijke zonde ligt in dit korte vers ons geboekstaafd!

Want dat land is een type van den hemel der hemelen. Kanaan is een plaatje van hemel en aarde die vereenigd zullen zijn tot in alle eeuwigheid.

God had gesproken aangaande dat land. Hij had hun beloofd, dat het hun een land zou zijn vloeiende van melk en honing. En dat Hij voor hen zou strijden, en dat zij stille zouden zijn. God zou het *alleen* doen.

Maar zij geloofden zijn Woord niet.

Zij waren bang gemaakt door de verspieders. Die verspieders, dat wil zeggen, allen behalve Kaleb en Jozua, brachten een kwaad gerucht van dat land en zijn inwoners. Het kwam hierop neer, dat zij zeiden: Wij kunnen dat land nooit bezitten als onze erfenis, want het volk is ons te sterk. Het zijn reuzen, en wij gevoelen ons als sprinkhanen tegenover die sterke mannen. Wij zullen hen nooit kunnen overwinnen in de strijd.

Wat was hun zonde?

Dit: zij kenden den Heere niet.

Niemand die God kent zal zoo dwaas spreken.

Stelt het U voor: De Enakskinderen zijn ons te sterk! Maar, och arme, woonde God niet in hun midden? En wat is een Enakskind tegenover God? Ge moogt niet eens het geheele heelal vergelijken bij God. (Jesaja 40:15, 17, 18). Hoeveel te minder dan een zoodje reuzen? Slechts ééne Engel God komt naar omneer en hij slaat in één nacht 185,000 strijdbare helden. Wat zullen dan die reuzen doen?

De oorzaak van die dwaasheid is dat zij God niet kennen.

Kaleb en Jozua kenden Hem. En ge kunt het uit hun kalm antwoord lezen. Zij zeiden: Laat ons vrijmoediglijk optrekken, en dat (land) erfelijk bezitten, want wij zullen dat voorzeker overweldigen.

Wat kracht lag in die belijdenis! De Heilige Schrift zegt van zijn rede: Toen stilde Kaleb het volk voor Mozes.

Het eenige verschil tusschen Jozua en Kaleb ter eener zijde, en de andere verspieders ter anderzijde is dit: De eerstgenoemden kenden God. Luistert maar later, als zij hunne kleederen scheuren bij het zien en hooren van groote zonde. Dan zeggen zij: De Heere is met ons: vreest hen (die reuzen) niet! G. Vos.

IN HIS FEAR

Training For Life's Calling

Training in the Geography Class.

We now come to that important subject of Geography which must also receive a distinctive treatment in the schools where God's covenant children are instructed. There only can this subject be treated as it should be presented. There only can the royal priesthood of God's children be trained as citizens of the kingdom of heaven whose calling is, while still here on earth, to live that heavenly citizenship in every sphere of this life.

This subject in some respects is quite different from that of history, and yet a close relationship between the turn of historical events and geography cannot escape our attention. Wars are fought, and history is made in that way, because of the rich resources to be found in certain sections of this earth. The wide ocean between us and Europe—which is also a geographical fact—explains how we escaped the devastation of the last world war in our land and how we now become the nation best fit materially to lead the world and to be the most powerful nation this earth has ever seen. Wars are fought for coal and iron reserves, for rivers and warm water outlets to the sea. The outcome of battles, the frontiers of nations, under God's decree are determined by the geographical features of the land where God causes these battles to be fought and these nations to settle. In many other ways geography and history go hand in hand. We cannot refrain from pointing out, in addition to the above, the geographical position of the land of Canaan, the place where God chose to have His Son born and to have his Spirit poured out, on the eastern side of the vast Mediterranean Sea. How this furthered the missionary activities of Paul, and made travel westward so feasible and furthered the spread of the Church, we can plainly see.

When teaching geography instead of history we do not suddenly cease to consider the works of men. We will still be dealing with man. He is the chiefest of God's earthly creatures. This earth was created for him, its gold, silver, iron, coal, fertile soil and even the "heavy water" from which the atomic energy is created are all made for man to use to the glory of God's name. Man's calling as a heavenly citizen *on this earth* requires that man be considered in the treatment of geography.

Now we will not be dealing with God's works as He works through man, as we did in the history class. Indirectly this may even need to be stressed now and

then, but chiefly in the geography class we deal with God's work in creation as He performed it the first six days of this earth's existence and changed it at the flood and at the tower of Babel. And we view these not only to show the greatness of God and His goodness, but chiefly to bring out that fundamental principle of Christian Stewardship.

We will have to call attention to God's covenant child that this earth is only temporary, that an end comes and a new heavens and earth shall appear. We will then, even as in the history class, call the child's attention to God's purpose with these things as well as with events. But chiefly do we deal in the geography class with that which God demands of us with the tremendous treasure He has given us to employ in His service.

Geography then becomes a tremendously important subject. In creation, in all the things which are treated in the geography class God reveals Himself. The heavens declare His glory, and the firmament showeth forth His handiwork. The lily in the field speaks of His beauty, the sun of His might and wisdom. And under the guidance then of a regenerated instructor who has also seen God in His Word, geography becomes a fascinating and very valuable subject.

Before we go any further, we wish to publish that which the Rev. Gritters has drawn up in these principles according to which the subject ought to be taught in the Christian school. And in the next issue of the Standard Bearer we hope to write a few more lines concerning geography and thereby underscore certain remarks which appear in these principles. That which the Rev. Gritters presents appears below.

Geography

1. Geography is a study of the earth, its disposition and its fulness as it belongs to God the Lord (Psalm 24:1) but as it has been given to the children of men. (Psalm 115:16).

2. In the study of Geography we are to remember the following: (a) That great sovereignty of God in dividing the earth among the peoples of the earth (1 Chron. 1:19,—Peleg meaning 'divided'; Deut. 32:8; Acts 17:26). Sin has brought confusion and envy, and in the judgment God sometimes has the land "spew out its inhabitants" (Lev. 18:28); also that there are thefts and conquests when each seizes as much of that earth as he can, but the earth's disposition and array shows us that the hand of the Sovereign God as He originally divided to the nations their habitation. In this distribution we see infinite wisdom and mastery (Lordship). (b) Above all we are to remember that God has given this earth to the children of men *for* their use and as means wherewith to serve Him.

(1) The central viewpoint therefore is *man* as he under God is the responsible Head and King of creation. This was evident already in Paradise.

(2) God presents man with an earth full of God's riches (Psalm 104:24). Above all there is an abundance of good (Ps. 104:14) wherein we see God providing wisely and abundantly. North, South, East and West co-ordinate to feed and clothe man. The earth brings him gold and silver (Job 28:1, 2) coal, metals, goods and wood. The earth, the sea and what is under the sea is one mighty vault of riches. A testimony we have here of God's abundant supply.

(3) But with all these things God demands of man wholehearted service. The earth's furnishings impress man with the tremendous responsibility he bears to be Friend-Servant and Steward to God. Man must subdue and have dominion over the earth according to Genesis 1. This must take place in love to God. As head and king of the earthly creation he must serve God and serve God's cause with all the earth's riches and abundance. Man however has fallen, and he has through sin become a thief, a rebel, an exploiter, etc. He refuses to serve God although he does lay his hands upon the earth's furnishings. Along this way of abuse he stores up his accursed wealth in his Babylon of world-love (Rev. 18:10-17), lays up for himself treasures of wrath (Romans 2:5) and fills the measure of iniquity until God burns up His earth and works. (2 Peter 3:10)

(4) Regenerated man is by God's grace in Christ once again made king and priest of the Most High God and stands right toward God and the earth which he studies. Once again he knows his calling how to use that earth, with things receives earth's bounties, seeks the things above, uses it to God's glory and the welfare of his human fellowmen.

c. Lastly, we must not forget that this earth is man's temporal abode. This earth will finally be destroyed by fire, when the history of this earth is done, and God will shake the wicked out of the earth and give it to His elect according to His promise: "The meek shall inherit the earth."

J. A. Heys.

CLASSIS EAST

will meet in regular session on January 5, 1949 at the Second Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan, at 9 o'clock A. M. Subsidy requests should be brought to this meeting.

D. JONKER, *Stated Clerk.*

FROM HOLY WRIT

The Hope Of The Covenant Mother In The Old Dispensation

(cont. from page 119)

In our former article we noticed that the hope of the believing women in the Old Dispensation centered on the promised Christ. When sin entered into the world God promised salvation through the Seed that would be born. Fallen mankind lay in the midst of death, sold under sin, with no escape except for that promised Seed, the Christ. Out of the natural, carnal seed that would be born to our first parents God would take unto Himself a spiritual seed, an elect generation, the Church. And in the line of generations of this spiritual seed the Christ would be born. Thus the hope of the believing mother was fixed upon that promised Christ. She longed to have a part in bringing Him forth and thus see her promise realized. She was blessed in bearing children, for therein lay the hope of her salvation.

We traced that hope as it lived in the hearts of some of the believing women, particularly in Eve, Sarah, Rebekah and Hannah.

But we cannot fail to note that this hope was always accompanied by an intense struggle. Without a bitter, life-long struggle that hope could never be realized, even according to the divine purpose.

The Lord Himself occasions that struggle. He creates a twofold seed in the line of the generations of the human race. He establishes enmity between them, and by the way of struggle causes the Christ-Child to be born, Who destroys the power of Satan and gives His people the eternal victory.

We should not fail to note, first of all, that even within the church there is always a reprobate, carnal seed as well as an elect, spiritual seed. There are always dead branches in the true Vine as it manifests itself here on earth. There are still good and bad fishes in the net of God's covenant as it sweeps through the sea of this world. There is chaff as well as wheat in the harvest as long as it still stands upon the field. There is scaffolding as well as the building proper as long as God's Temple is under construction. It is not all Israel that is called Israel.

Secondly, it is worthy of note that the natural seed is always first and serves to bring forth the spiritual. Even in nature the straw serves to produce the kernel of wheat, so that finally the chaff and the straw are burned, but the wheat is gathered into the granary. So also God gathers His Church from the

natural seed that is born in the line of the continued generations of believers. And finally we must note that the natural, carnal seed is always in the majority and is always stronger than the spiritual seed, when viewed from the earthly aspect. The carnal element holds the position of power even within the church as it manifests itself here on earth. It always oppresses the spiritual element and seeks to destroy it. It persecutes the believers, crucifies the Christ, and in every way proudly exalts itself against the Lord and His Anointed. The heathen rage furiously and the peoples imagine vain things even in the domain of the covenant. For the Lord has placed enmity between the devil and the woman, between the seed of the devil and the seed of the woman, until finally the seed of the woman crushes the head of the devil to powder, even while he is busy bruising its heel.

That is quite evident from the examples we referred to in our previous article.

Notice again the exultant cry of the mother of all living when she took up her firstborn son and said, "I have gotten a man of the Lord." We could well imagine that she was bitterly disillusioned when later she realized that this son was simply a product of her own sinful flesh, the seed of the serpent. Cain was the firstborn, and therefore Eve readily built her hopes upon that child. Moreover, he was evidently the picture of strength and comeliness. When Abel was born she calls him 'breath', 'vanity', for he must have been a puny child, upon whom was plainly written the sad results of their fall. Yet according to the will and purpose of God, Cain was the reprobate seed. That became evident as he grew up under the covenant training of his God-fearing parents. Cain revealed only animosity overagainst all the evidences of God's grace in the life of Abel. Even Cain's sacrifice was a wicked product of His own abominable self-righteousness. Until finally Cain reveals His true nature by killing Abel in a vain desire to wipe out God's Church. But Cain does serve his purpose. He was the firstborn son, and therefore proof of the fact that God would give them a seed. And at the same time he opened the way for that true seed as it was represented in Abel. Therefore the exuberant joy of Eve at the birth of her firstborn was certainly not in vain. It did express her hope of the fulfillment of the promise of God, even though she had still to learn by sad experience that this hope would be realized only by way of struggle.

Then we have the history of Sarah in connection with the birth of Ishmael from Hagar. Many have regarded Hagar as a victim of the capricious whims of Sarah. In fact, Sarah is often condemned for her bitterness toward Ishmael, for demanding that he be sent out of the house, and for insisting that he be dis-

owned as Abraham's heir. For that is what happens. After the Lord makes plain to Sarah that she herself shall have a son in her old age, and that Isaac shall be the promised seed, Sarah becomes increasingly more determined that Hagar and her son shall not abide under their roof. The day even arrives that Abraham is forced to send the bondwoman and her son away emptyhanded.

But before we criticize Sarah we must bear in mind that Scripture takes her side in the matter. God demands of Abraham that he comply with her wishes, for the son of the bondwomen must not inherit with the son of the free. (Gal. 4). The facts in the case are these: When Hagar realized that she would bear Abraham a son she proudly despised her mistress. According to her estimation, not Sarah, but she was the covenant mother, the real wife of Abraham. Had not God privileged her above Sarah? Therefore she was also determined to claim her own child. She would never give it up to her mistress. That accounts for her insubordination to Sarah and her fleeing away. And that also takes into account the fact that the Lord insists that she must return to her mistress and submit to her until the child is born, for the Lord will see to it that in due time she may claim her own child. Later Hagar even impresses upon Ishmael's mind that he is the firstborn, and therefore the rightful heir. That is the reason why Ishmael mocks with Isaac, over whom they make such an undue fuss. The son of the bondwoman, Abraham's natural seed, proudly exalts and maintains himself overagainst the child of the promise. With the result that God Himself requires that the haughty rebel be cast out of the house in which he has no rightful claim. After a bitter struggle it becomes evident to all that the purpose according to election must stand, for "in Isaac shall thy seed be called".

We can pass over the struggle in Isaac's family with but a few words. Before the twins were ever born, Isaac and Rebekah were informed that the knife of divine election and reprobation had cut sharply between them. They were even given to understand that the firstborn, Esau, would have no part in the covenant whatsoever. Sovereign election centered upon Jacob; reprobation rested on Esau. Rebekah proves to be able to adjust herself to this awful revelation more readily than Isaac. He favors the firstborn and even plays with the idea that he might still be the covenant seed. From a purely natural point of view it is not difficult for us to place ourselves in his position, since Esau was his own flesh and blood and had a natural appeal besides, so that Isaac did not like to see him perish. Yet Isaac is wrong, and learned to realize it only after failing in a final desperate attempt to place the blessing upon him. But then he is also ready to declare blessed him whom God will bless.

This throws light on the history of Hannah. She also experienced the struggle within her own household. Hannah was barren, so that her husband Elkanah foolishly devised the plot to take Peninnah to wife, in order that she might serve to bring the joys of the covenant mother into Hannah's life. In this attempt Elkanah fails miserably. For Peninnah is carnal, even as Hannah is deeply spiritual. She readily usurps Hannah's place as Elkanah's wife, and scornfully mocks with Hannah particularly because she is able to present Elkanah with children. That drove Hannah to a point where she pours out her soul in prayer to the Lord at Shiloh. It was an ominous time. These were the days when there was no king in Israel and every man did that which was right in his own eyes. The carnal seed had the upper hand, not only in Hannah's home, but even in all Israel, so that corruption was rampant even to the tabernacle at Shiloh. The spiritual seed was being oppressed, even threatened with destruction. Therefore she prays, not merely for a child, especially not more carnal seed, but for one who can be a Samuel, and "answered of the Lord", to cleanse the sanctuary and to preserve God's church upon the earth. She wants a son whom she may dedicate as a devoted servant to the Lord all the days of his life, that Israel may thus be preserved and that the Christ may come.

Hannah and the whole church of the old dispensation saw their hope fulfilled in Mary, the most blessed among women. With her they lift up their voice in triumph saying, "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulders: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."

By way of struggle the hope of the believer is realized. How could it be otherwise? For God's promise never fails. By a wonder of grace He gathers His own in the continued line of believers. He transforms natural, carnal, even depraved sons of wrath into spiritual children of the kingdom of heaven. And He sends His own Son into the flesh, conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the virgin Mary. He is God's Son, yet born in our likeness, son of Eve, son of Sarah, son of Rebekah, son of Ruth son of Mary; Immanuel, God with us! God proves that nothing is impossible with Jehovah our covenant God.

These things are written for our example.

This same hope still lives in the hearts of the believers in the new dispensation. Believing mothers still exaltingly say with the mother of all living, "I have gotten a man of the Lord." We can readily understand that a world steeped in iniquity refuses to be burdened with the anxieties of child-birth and the trouble of rearing a family. And why bring more children into the misery of this world? It is even an

evidence of unbelief within the church that many will follow the same reasonings as the world and resort to the same practices to satisfy the lusts of the flesh without becoming involved in a family. The carnal element within the church is a friend of the world even in that respect. But the true covenant mother counts herself blessed in receiving children from the Lord. In her own small way she is instrumental in bringing forth God's church and establishing His kingdom. She considers it only a wonder of divine grace that she herself may know the Lord. That wonder is only enriched by the fact that she is privileged to have children who fear the Lord and walk in His ways. She sees even in that the answer to her prayer "Thy kingdom come."

But this hope is never realized without a struggle, also today. The carnal seed is still always in the majority and lords it over the spiritual seed. It still seeks to destroy God's church. Therefore we are called to wage an untiring battle. We must be spiritually strong, arraying ourselves as the party of the living God against the powers of darkness. We must be ready at all times to give account of the hope that is within us. We must hold firmly to the truth entrusted unto us, that no man may take our crown. It is our calling to pass on to the generations to come the glorious heritage of truth which was delivered over to us from the fathers. That calls for covenant training in the home, in the church, and in the school, based entirely upon the Word of God. And that, I may add, requires our own school.

The outcome is always safe with God. For we shall finally appear before Him with the church of all ages, saying, "Behold us, Lord and the children which Thou hast given us, for they are Thine."

May that hope never grow dim among us.

C. Hanko.

NOTICE

We have a number of orders for binding Volume 24 of the Standard Bearer. Anyone desiring to have this Volume or any other Volume bound, please notify Mr. John Bouwman, 1131 Sigsbee St., S. E., Grand Rapids 6, Michigan, immediately, and return your copies of the Standard Bearer.

The Board of the R. F. P. A.

Where shall we today find the Word of God? Our answer is very simple. We find it in the Bible. We do not say in Modernist fashion, that the Bible contains the Word of God. No, we say in Christian Fashion, that the Bible is the Word of God.—J. G. Machen, quoted in the Southern Presbyterian Journal.

PERISCOPE

Lynden, Washington,
December 13, 1948

Rev. H. Hoeksema,
Dear Brother:

There are two matters which I would like to discuss in this communication. The first concerns our activity and progress in this field of our Mission endeavors. Since the work of the extension of our Truth has always been dear to you, I felt you might like to hear from us. But I also believe our people are interested and, therefore, take this opportunity of serving both purposes in a single letter.

Since you were here, almost 20 years ago, many physical and spiritual changes have taken place. It is true the same "eternal" hills surround us on every side. And as always they are majestic in their grandeur and instructive in their steadfastness. But even they are not exactly the same, for much of their protective covering of fir and pine has been felled before the woodman's axe to supply the lumber needs of our modern world. Much more of the valley land had also been cleared to make room for the thousands who have moved into this area from everywhere East; notably the mid-western states. Almost all of the older generation whom you met and who enjoyed your messages from the Word are departed; only a lingering few remain.

Especially that last factor indicates, and accounts for, the spiritual change. An entirely new generation has appeared which knows us not. Having been trained and taught in that which was adopted as Reformed and Calvinistic in 1924 many are no longer able to discern the truth. The pleasing aspects of "common grace" with its convenient practical implications have created lethargy and self-satisfaction. There is little desire to study and discuss when it is discovered that one must live antithetically. What a great responsibility lies at the door of the Church as well as the individual!

All of these factors have made our work slow and visible progress small. After having become acquainted with the field, we sought to establish our selves as Scripturally and Confessionally historically Reformed. This was accomplished through the distribution of literature, letters and public advertising expressing our position. In this connection we made wide use of many of your excellent pamphlets and found them well-suited to our purpose; notably such as "Jesus Saviour and the Evil of Hawking Him"; "The Gospel", etc. In all our literature we have also

called attention to the Reformed Witness Hour and your present series which very nicely ties in with our work. It is difficult to determine the extent of the listening audience, but at times there is indication that it is rather large. Personally, we enjoy the program and your messages a great deal since it serves as a real and living connection with "home". We especially appreciated your lecture of yesterday, "Who Art Thou O Man?", as being filled with instruction for us all and a true testimony to the Reformed truth which is so lacking.

We have also been holding worship services each Sunday evening in a small Community church building near Lynden. Thus far, the response has been somewhat disappointing. Apart from the families who have moved here from our other churches there has been very little interest. Although we appreciate this nucleus to work with, we feel that the first purpose of our labor is not to follow those who have left our churches or to encourage others to do so, but to instruct and witness to those who are without.

At present we are busy discussing the "three points" in our weekly letters; pointing out their errors and unscriptural conceptions. These letters reach a large majority of all the Reformed people in this community. During the month of January we hope, the Lord willing, to supplement these letters with lectures on the various points. We plan to hold these lectures here in Lynden and the surrounding towns. Though as I stated above, the results have been rather discouraging as far as the flesh is concerned, we rest in the knowledge that our labor is never in vain in the Lord.

The second matter of comment concerns the discussion regarding catechism and methods of instruction. First of all, I would like to substantiate your contention, that catechism as it is being conducted in our churches generally, reveals a tendency to individualism. In fact I would like to add a few thoughts in support of your contention. In my very limited experience, I have already heard several parents complain of the lack of unity in respect to method and material. They deplored the fact that with every change of minister the current system was discarded and new individual ideas were instituted. I also recall that when this was discussed recently on the floor of Classis East and it was suggested that a committee be appointed to bring a report, it was dropped. And the primary arguments revealed the same individualistic tendency of freedom for one's own method and course. I, too, find this a sad situation.

My purpose, then, is to raise a few questions and ask for some needed light. Since I hope, the Lord willing, to teach for many years to come, I would appreciate any suggestions you may have. I realize full well that you cannot begin to write a series on Cate-

chetics but hope you may be able, in your criticism and comment on what follows, to lay down a few general principles.

In the first place, would it be advisable and proper for some Consistory to suggest a course of study and ask Classis and Synod to approve it as a guide for all of our Churches? It should be something more definite than has been expressed so that all of our catechumens of a given age group are busy with the same material. Further, that this be planned throughout the years so that there would be regularity and unity; eliminating the changes which come with new ministers or removal to other of our congregations. In this way all pupils and parents as well as ministers and consistories would have a regular guide.

If such a course is feasible and possible would it be advisable to suggest instruction in doctrine at an early age? And now I would like to argue a bit. I know you always chided us in school for asking a question with an argument, but I hope you'll bear with me. You will concede, I think, that it has been some time since you have instructed younger children, at least formally. As I recall I never had the privilege of your instruction in my early years. If memory serves correctly, Mr. B. Sevensma taught us in Eastern Ave., and later in the store building on Wealthy St. we had the elders or early students. Though I'm sorry never to have had your instruction in my youth I appreciate full well that your various and almost insurmountable labors of those days were of more lasting benefit than any catechism you could have taught me. But at least it indicates that it must be at least 25 or 30 years since you have formally instructed children.

I think you will also agree, that during that time many developments have been made in child training, especially in the Christian School in the field of Bible study. At times it almost amazes one what even first graders are taught in this field. Though our own children do not yet attend school this has been brought to my attention through investigation of the work of my nieces and just recently at an open house sponsored by the local P. T. A. here in Lynden. I'm sorry I don't have definite examples at hand, but remember seeing the work of a seven year old in which the doctrines of the Atonement, Trinity and Predestination were brought out in the Bible History instruction she received in school. Now apart from the question whether that is the school's business and whether it is the sphere in which they are called to develop, the fact remains that they have and that our children are receiving that instruction. If we add to this the instruction the child receives in the home and Sunday School, both predominantly historical, we begin to see its scope. Besides, by this age, the child is able to read and its parents provide it with adequate books for personal

Bible study, e.g., the excellent works by Marion School-land and Catherine Vos. Now I realize that your contention is not for dead history but for a living history that reveals doctrine. However, I would ask in view of the preceding, whether it wouldn't be well for the expression to be reversed? Instead of historical doctrine teach doctrine with historical support.

Merely by way of elucidation I would like to suggest something like the following: for ages 6-8 follow what is now contained in Old and New Testament for Juniors, with, perhaps, some simplification of language. Certainly on the background sketched above the material is not too difficult. For ages 8-10 use the Old and New Testament for Seniors, again with a bit of grammatical simplification. Thus the catechumens would go through the entire Old and New Testament course twice and would be receiving something beyond that he gains elsewhere; there would be development. At 11 years of age begin with a primary course in systematic doctrine followed by a primary course on the Heidelberg Catechism and then through the other Confessions. In the later 'teens an advanced course in the Heidelberg and your "Essentials". If there is still time left it could be used for special study, e.g., a course using your history of our Churches as text. This later could serve admirably not only for instruction in our history and truth, but also take in briefly, significant points of Church Order, which is so sadly neglected. By the way, wouldn't early instruction in the Heidelberg Catechism create greater interest in our regular Catechism preaching?

Finally, in order to bring out one more point, I too must confess some guilt in respect to the individualism you suggest. In my former charge we began teaching doctrine to the 10-12 year class. I found I was able to maintain better interest by teaching something relatively new. Perhaps, this reveals a deficiency on my part in respect to the teaching of history but just for that reason I would appreciate a few suggestions. We have also found, in our present work, that the greatest lack does not lie in a knowledge of Biblical facts but in a clear conception and line of truth; as well as almost complete ignorance of the contents of the Reformed Confessions.

Would you also offer some information regarding instruction in the Netherlands. I have often heard of and also seen, e.g. the little book by Hellenbroek. Was this used at an early age?

We are happy to hear you are continuing to improve while our prayers continue with yours for added blessing.

Yours in the Lord Jesus Christ;

W. Hofman.