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MEDITATION

Vorst En Zaligmaker

“Dezen heeft God door Zijne rechterhand verhoogd tot eenen Vorst en Zaligmaker, om Israel te geven bekeering en vergeving der zonden.”

Hand. 5:31.

Ge kunt hiervan lezen in het vijfde hoofdstuk der Handelingen der Apostelen. Petrus en de Apostelen waren gevangen genomen door het Sanhedrin. Zij moesten immers waken tegen de wolven die de schaapskooi van God altijd bedrijven? En hoe hadden zij geijverd tegen deze vreemde leer! Eerst tegenover dien Vreemdeling van Galilea. Het had groote moeite gekost en heel wat ellende, maar dien Vreemdeling hadden zij geknecht.

Maar nog was de ellende niet bezworen. Hier kwamen eerst een dikke honderd discipelen die steeds van dien Naam spraken. Maar van honderd waren het duizenden geworden die den Naam huldigen. Dat was geschied op den Pinksterdag. Men bleef maar van dien gehaten Vreemdeling getuigen.

Wel, men had hen ontboden, gehaald door de die-naren.

En Petrus, staande met de andere Apostelen, geeft moedig getuigenis van dien Vreemdeling, van Jezus van Nazareth.

Hij is toegekomen aan die wondere opstanding van Jezus uit de dooden.

En van dien opgestanen Heiland zegt hij nu: Dezen is door God verhoogd en dan wel zoo ontzaglijk hoog, dat zijn naam nu is Vorst en Zaligmaker!

En die Vorst en Zaligmaker is zoo sterk, dat Hij Israel zal geven bekeering en vergeving der zonden!

Heerlijke verhooging!

Zwanger van gaven en heerlijkheden voor het Volk!
Zegeningen der Hemelvaart.

Jezus is Vorst en Zaligmaker!

* * * *

Jezus Christus is door God verhoogd.

Daar zit zoo veel in. Ziet ge, Jezus Christus is de Vertegenwoordiger van Gods volk. En dat volk was wonderlijk omlaag gedaald. Jeremia was daarvan aan 't weenen gegaan.

Eerst was dat volk tamelijk hoog. Tamelijk hoog, want het eerste Paradijs was een heerlijk oord. Men lachte daar en was vrolijk met een gedurige vroolijheid.

Maar er was een nare schaduw gekomen vanuit de hel, en die schaduw had het eerste Paradijs omhuld met een dikke duisternis. En het volk was zondaar geworden. Het volk had geluisterd naar den vijand Gods, Satan genaamd. En toen was het van kwaad tot erger gekomen.

De volgende eeuwen hebben het ons verteld. Zes-tien eeuwen later was dat kwaad zoo vreeselijk ge-worden, dat God een grooten vloed zond. En die vloed had de eerste wereld opgeslokt. Er waren maar acht zielen gered. En keer op keer werd het benauwd voor het volk. En de oorzaak van hun benauwing was altijd maar weer aan de zonde en de zonde-schuld.

Al het volk van God was zondig en van nature waren zij kinderen des toorns.

Enos zuchtte ervan, Lamech snikte bij het geboren worden van Noach. Abram werd verschrikt met een groote verschrikking; Izak beefde toen hij zijn zonde gewaar werd in de stem van Ezau; Jakob vreesde met een groote vreeze bij het ontwaken in Bethel.

En de tijd zou mij ontbreken in het verhalen van al de ellende van het volk. Men wordt moede bij het lezen van de Richteren, men vraagt zich af bij het lezen der Koning en Kronieken: hoe kon God al die ongehoorzaamheid van Israel toch staan? Alles en allen zijn zoo zondig, zoo ontrouw, zoo vreeselijk leelijk: wat moet dat worden.

Maar deze Vreemdeling van Galilea is de Vertegenwoordiger van dat volk dat in duisternis zat en in de schaduw des doods. (Zoo sprak Jesaja van de eerder

genoemde ellende.) Die Jezus is de Wortel van een nieuw geslacht, het Hoofd van een ander lichaam. Hij gaat staan in de plaats waar Zijn volk stond, en dat wil zeggen, dat Hij gaat staan op de plaats waar het Recht Gods zijn eischen doet. En daar wordt het heet. Van de hitte die Jezus moest verduren had David al vooruit gezongen: Wat hitte doet Mij branden!

O ja, Jezus is de Vertegenwoordiger van het volk.

* * * *

Jezus Christus was de Vertegenwoordiger van het volk naar het raadsbesluit van den DrieEenigen God. Voor de aarde neerzonk op hare grondvesten had God al Zijn volk aan Jezus Christus gegeven. En toen Hij Hem in de wereld zond gaf Hij Hem een gebod, en van dat gebod zei Jezus dit: Ik mag er niet één verliezen!

En daar stond Hij! Op de plaats van de gekenden van voor de grondlegging der wereld. In de brandende hitte van de vragende, eischende gerechtigheid Gods. Toen werd Hij vreeselijk, want eeuwig, verdrukt. De plaats was Hoofdschedelplaats. En het einde was de dood.

Maar Petrus zegt in het verband, dat God Hem opwekte. En God wekte Hem omdat Hij den prijs had betaald uit het motief van pure liefde. Tot op den bodem der hel had Jezus Zijn Vader bemind, ook toen die Vader Hem sloeg met eeuwige slagen.

En na die opwekking had God Hem verhoofd.

Johannes op Patmos noemt het een *wegrukken* van het kindeken.

En die verhooging is wonderlijk.

Die verhooging staat tegenover onze laagheid. Het peil waar wij gekomen waren was de eeuwige dood. En van uit dien eeuwigen dood wordt Jezus verhoofd.

Nu dan, van die verhooging was al getuigd aan den vroegen morgen der historie. Elken keer als een patriarch een altaar bouwde had ge een beeld van de verhooging van Jezus. Het altaar zegt: de aarde zal verhoofd worden. En de aarde met haar menschen wordt in Jezus verhoofd tot in den hemel toe. En voor vier duizend jaren waren er beelden, typen en symbolen geweest van die verhooging. Daarom moest Jeruzalem op een berg gebouwd zijn. Daarom zagen de weenende kinderen Gods in het Oude Testament naar de bergen vanwaar zij alle bijstand verwachtten.

En de vervulling van al die beelden, typen en symbolen was toen Jezus opgenomen werd naar den hemel. Paulus zegt dat Hij alle hemelen doorgedaan is. En toen Hij voor den troon aankwam, toen heeft de DrieEenige God Hem opgenomen en gezet aan Zijne rechterhand. Uw Jezus is zeer verhoofd geworden.

* * * *

En die verhooging geschiedde door Gods rechterhand.

Daar zit tweeërlei in.

Eerst, dat dit geschiedde naar het recht Gods.

Jezus had het verdiend.

Toen God op Hem schouwde en vanuit het Hart van Jezus al den arbeid zag die Hij volbracht in de ruim dertig jaren van Zijn omwandeling op aarde, toen zag God dat Hij alle gerechtigheid vervuld had. Al wat God tegen ons had vanwege onze zonde was betaald door Jezus. Ge kunt nog verder gaan. Zijn betaling is zoo schoon en lieflijk geweest vanuit het motief der pure liefde, dat Hij voor U verworven heeft datgene wat Adam U nooit kon geven. Hij brengt U maar niet terug tot het eerste Paradijs, maar Hij verwierf voor U het laatste Paradijs, en dat is het verkeerden in den hemel daar boven bij God.

Alles wat Jezus deed beantwoordde aan het heiligst recht. Dat zit in die uitdrukking, dat Gods *rechterhand* Hem verhoogde.

Tweedens, dat dit geschiedde door de almachtige kracht des Heeren Heeren, zit ook in die uitdrukking.

Leest Efeze 1:19, 20. Daar hebt ge een opeenstapeling van kracht-termen om toch uit te drukken wat vreeselijke kracht Gods het genomen heeft om Jezus uit de dooden te verhoogen: “. . . en welke de uitnemende grootheid Zijner kracht zij aan ons die gelooven, naar de werking der sterkte Zijner macht, die Hij gewrocht heeft in Christus, als Hij Hem uit de dooden heeft opgewekt en Hem heeft gezet tot Zijne rechterhand in den hemel. . . .”

Ziet ge wel, hoe de Heilige Geest kracht-term naast kracht-term plaatst om ons toch ietwat te laten zien van wat God deed in het verhoogen van Jezus? Laat mij vergelijkenderwijs spreken mogen van de scheping en van de opstanding en verhooging van Jezus. En dan was de laatste een veel grooter werk dan de eerste, want om het nu eens heel eenvoudig te zeggen: de wereld die in den beginne geschapen werd stond God niet tegen. Maar de tweede wereld wordt herschapen uit den vreeselijken dood. En dood is rebellie tegen God. Om Gods volk van uit de hel op te trekken in Jezus Christus tot in den hemel van het Nieuwe Jeruzalem, is grooter werk dan het scheppen van de eerste wereld in zes dagen.

O die verhooging van den Christus! Wonderwerk Gods. Het wonder van Zijn sterke rechterhand!

Om er nog wat van te zeggen: leest Psalm 24. En heeft bij het hooren van Gods stemme: Heft U op gij eeuwige deuren!

Toen Jezus opvoer naar den hemel zijn de eeuwige deuren van het eeuwig nachtslot gedaan, wijd open gezet. En Jezus is binnen getreden.

En wij zullen Hem volgen. Dat is het Evangelie. En daarvan spreekt de tekst ook.

Maar Jezus is door Gods rechterhand verhoofd.

En gij zingt ervan: “des Heeren sterke rechterhand!”

Toen Jezus naar den Hemel opvoer toen is Hij gemaakt tot een Vorst en tot een Zaligmaker.

En dat is Uw zaligheid.

Hij werd tot een Vorst gemaakt.

Hij had daar al van gesproken nog op aarde zijnde. Zeide Hij niet: Mij is gegeven alle macht in den hemel en op de aarde?

Zekerlijk, alle macht en kracht die van den drieëenigen God uitgaat, gaat eerst tot Jezus Christus. Hij is de Vorst van het geheele heelal.

Hij heeft het Boek van Gods Raad genomen van Zijn rechterhand, en Hij is het die door alle eeuwen heen de zegels verbreekt, de bazuinen blaast en de violen van Gods toorn op de aarde uitwerpt. En door al de eeuwen heen geschieden de dingen zeer haastelijk. Hij brak een zegel van het boek, Hij blies een bazuin, en Hij wierp de inhoud van een viool des toorns Gods op de aarde, en, ziet, er waren Hitler, Mussolini en Hirohito, en de wereld kromde zich in grooten smart van den tweeden wereldoorlog. De Vorst Gods doet die dingen. En dat is ons tot troost, tot grooten troost.

Hij is de Vorst Gods en straks doet Hij de geheele wereld opgaan in de vlammen van Gods toorn. Om dan het gericht te zetten. O die oordeelsdag! Die groote Vorst van God! Wie zou U niet vreezen?

En Zijn tweede naam is Zaligmaker.

Dat zat ook al in dien eersten naam. Want als Vorst Gods zal Hij zijn volk verlossen. Zijn machtige arm beschermt de vromen en redt hun zielen van den dood. Hij zal hun immers nooit om doen komen in duren tijd en hongersnood?

Hij is de Zaligmaker. En Hij is dat gemaakt door God bij Zijn verhooging.

Zaligmaker is volmaken. Men wordt dan vol van datgene wat men behoeft volgens zijn wezen en natuur.

En het eenigste wat wij werkelijk behoeven is God te hebben tot onzen Vader.

En daarvan zingen de groote menigte zielen voor Gods troon. Wij hebben hun gezang van der jeugd aan gehoord: Gij hebt ons Gode gekocht. . . . God heeft ons door Jezus Zichzelf geschonken. Dat is de Zaligmaking der kinderen Gods.

Groote zegen der verhooging van Jezus!

* * * *

“Om Israel te geven bekeering en vergeving der zonden.”

Die twee zegeningen, namelijk, bekeering en vergeving der zonden, zitten ook vast aan die twee namen van Jezus: Vorst en Zaligmaker.

Jezus is onze Vorst, en als zoodanig geeft Hij ons bekeering.

Dat is zoo noodig. Want niemand van ons kan zichzelf bekeeren. Het wordt wel beweerd, en het is beweerd in de eeuwen die achter ons liggen, maar ten onrechte. Het vleesch van alle menschen is vijand-

schap tegen God en het onderwerpt zich der wille Gods niet en het kan ook niet. Bovendien, het is immers niet desgenen die wil, noch desgenen die loopt, maar des ontfermenden Gods. God moet ons bekeeren, en God doet het door Jezus Christus wien Hij tot een Vorst maakte.

Bekeering hier is zekerlijk de algeheele omzetting des menschen vanuit den dood tot in het leven. En als zoodanig sluit het de wedergeboorte in. De Vorst komt in het diepste hart des menschen des welbehagens en daar doodt Hij principieel de vijandschap, slaat het harde hart aan stukken, en stort in zulk een hart Zijn Eigen leven naar de mate van het creatuur. En dan blijft Hij dat harte bewerken totdat de bekeering er is in het bewuste leven.

En dan is het geheel anders met zulk een mensch. Dan haat hij wat hij eerst beminde en dan bemint hij wat hij eertijds haatte. Dan leert men te wandelen op de paden des rechts. Men gaat dan wandelen in de goede werken. En ook die werken heeft God voorbereid van eeuwigheid, dat wij in dezelve zouden wandelen.

Maar Hij is ook gemaakt tot een Zaligmaker.

Hij bewerkt dat U de zonden vergeven worden.

Als dat niet geschiedt kunt ge nimmer gemeenschap met God hebben. God is Liefde en de liefde is de band die de volmaakten tezamen bindt. Ge moet volmaakt zijn om met God gemeenschap te hebben. En daarom zaligt Jezus U van Uwe zonden. Hij is gemaakt tot een Zaligmaker.

O, gezegende Hemelvaartsdag!

Het brengt mij tot in den boezem Gods.

Door den Vorst en den Zaligmaker!

* * * *

“Om Israel te geven. . . .”

Nee, het is niet voor elk en een ieder.

Het is voor Israel. De Engel zeide tot Maria: Gij zult Zijn Naam heeten Jezus want Hij zal Zijn volk zalig maken van hunne zonden.

Het is voor Israel.

En wie is Israel?

De tijd en de ruimte ontbreken mij om een volledig antwoord te geven, maar ik zal U een wenk geven. Leest Matth. 5:1-16. Daar hebt ge een beschrijving van Israel.

Ik zal het nog duidelijker maken. Gaat staan vlak bij den tollenaar, en luistert naar dien stakkerd: O God! wees mij den zondaar genadig!

Luistert goed! Hij vertolkt de spraken van den waren Israeliet!

Dat volk is zalig, want zij hebben den opgevaren Heiland tot een Vorst en Zaligmaker!

Gezegende Hemelvaartsdag!

G. Vos.

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EDITORIALS

Church Weddings and Bridal Parties

It is high time that we reply to the article of the Reverend De Boer concerning the question of bridal parties and church weddings.

The reader will remember that this question was first broached by means of an inquiry by a member of Edgerton's church. The question was whether the consistory had the right to refuse a church wedding to a bridal party that included best men and bride's maids. At that time I answered that I could see nothing wrong in having bridesmaids at any wedding, including church weddings, at which the ministry of the Word occurred. And I expressed the opinion that the burden of proof to the contrary rested with the consistory in the matter.

Then appeared the article of the Rev. De Boer, in which he expressed preference for church weddings and suggested that he, too, would prefer simple wedding parties, without best men and bridesmaids at such occasions.

Now I agree with him that church weddings are essentially proper. And by church weddings I mean not merely a wedding in a church building, but a marriage ceremony that is publicly solemnized with the consistory and the congregation present, and therefore including the ministry of the Word.

But nevertheless I am still of the opinion that bridal parties including best men and bridesmaids are perfectly proper, whether at a private wedding or at a wedding in church where the Word of God is preached. Nor is it my experience that the presence of a complete bridal party detracts from the seriousness of the preaching of the Word at all. And I still think that if the consistory has principal objections against such church weddings, it is up to them to sustain those objections with proof from Scripture.

And I am afraid that they will have a hard time to furnish such proofs.

The consistory probably objects that the bridal parties are too much of a show. But to this I would reply first that this holds true for all bridal parties and not only for church weddings; and, secondly, that Scripture does not condemn but rather approves of a rather elaborate form at weddings and sustains the idea of wedding feasts and bridal parties.

To begin with, the bride in Scripture is everywhere presented as adorned for her husband. In Psalm 45: 13-15 we read: "The king's daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold. She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needle-

work: the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee. With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the king's palace." In Isaiah 49:18 we read: "Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold: all these gather themselves together, and come to thee. As I live, saith the Lord, thou shalt surely clothe thee with them all, as with an ornament, and bind them on thee, as a bride doeth." In Jeremiah 2:32 we read: "Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? yet my people have forgotten me days without number." Once more, in Isaiah 61:10 we read: "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels." And to quote no more, in Rev. 19:7, 8 we read: "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints." And in 21:2: "And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." It is plain from all this that the bride according to Scripture was usually and ought to be beautifully arrayed.

Then, too, it is plain from Scripture that wedding feasts were usually elaborately celebrated. They often lasted seven days, Gen. 29:27, Judges 14:12. And from one of the parables of Jesus we learn that even special garments were provided for the wedding guests. Cf. Matt. 22:12.

The bridegroom, too, was specially arrayed, Isa. 61:10, and was usually attended by many friends. Of these friends of the bridegroom we read, for instance, in John 3:29: "He that hath the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled."

In this connection it is interesting to note a vivid description of marriage and marriage feasts by Ederheim in "The Life and Times of Jesus," Vol. I, pp. 354-355: "On the evening of the actual marriage (*Nissuin, Chathnuth*), the bride was led from her paternal home to that of her husband. First came the merry sounds of music; then they who distribute among the people wine and oil, and nuts among the children; next the bride, covered with the bridal veil, her long hair flowing, surrounded by her companions, and led by 'the friends of the bridegroom,' and 'the children of the bride-chamber.' All around were in festive array; some carried torches, or lamps on poles;

those nearest had myrtle-branches and chaplets of flowers. Everyone rose to salute the procession, or join it; and it was deemed almost a religious duty to break into praise of the beauty, the modesty, or the virtues of the bride. Arrived at her new home, she was led to her husband. Some such formula as 'Take her according to the Law of Moses and of Israel,' would be spoken, and bride and bridegroom crowned with garlands. Then a formal legal instrument, called the *Kethubah*, was signed, which set forth that the bridegroom undertook to work for her, to honour, keep, and care for her, as is the manner of men of Israel; that he promised to give his maiden-wife at least two hundred *Zuz* (or more as might be), and to increase her own dowry (which, in the case of a poor orphan, the authorities supplied) by at least one half, and that he also undertook to lay it out for her to the best advantage, all his own possessions being guarantee for it. Then, after the prescribed washing of hands and benediction, the marriage-supper began—the cup being filled, and the solemn prayer of bridal benediction being spoken over it. And so the feast lasted—it might be more than one day—while each sought to contribute, sometimes coarsely, sometimes wisely, to the general enjoyment, till at last 'the friends of the bridegroom' led the bridal pair to the *Cheder* and the *Chuppah*, or the bridal chamber and bed."

And that bridesmaids have a rather important place at wedding ceremonies may be gathered from the parable of the ten virgins. Here too we will quote a passage from Ederheim's "The Life and Times of Jesus," Vol. II, pp. 454-455: "It is late at even—the world's long day seems past, and the Coming of the Bridegroom must be near. The day and the hour we know not, for the Bridegroom has been far away. Only this we know, that it is the Evening of the Marriage which the Bridegroom has fixed, and that His word of promise may be relied upon. Therefore all has been made ready within the bridal house, and is in waiting there; and therefore the Virgins prepare to go forth to meet Him on His Arrival. The Parable proceeds on the assumption that the Bridegroom is not in the town, but somewhere far away; so that it cannot be known at what precise hour He may arrive. But it is known that He will come that night; and the Virgins who are to meet Him have gathered—presumably in the house where the Marriage is to take place—waiting for the summons to go forth and welcome the Bridegroom. The common mistake, that the Virgins are presented in verse 1 as having gone forth *on the road* to meet the Bridegroom, is not only irrational—since it is scarcely credible that they would all have fallen asleep by the wayside, and with lamps in their hands—but incompatible with the circumstances, that at midnight the cry is suddenly raised to go forth and meet Him. In these circumstances, no precise parallel can

be derived from the ordinary Jewish marriage-processions, where the bridegroom, accompanied by his groomsmen and friends, went to the bride's house and thence conducted the bride with her attendant maidens and friends, into his own or his parents' home. But in the Parable, the Bridegroom comes from a distance and goes to the bridal house. Accordingly, the bridal procession is to meet Him on His Arrival, and escort Him to the bridal place. No mention is made of the Bride, either in this Parable or in that of the Marriage of the King's Son. This, for reasons connected with their application: since in the one case the Wedding Guests, in the other the Virgins, occupy the place of the Bride. And here we must remind ourselves of the general canon, that, in the interpretation of a Parable, details must not be too closely pressed. The Parables illustrate the Sayings of Christ, as the Miracles His Doings; and alike the Parables and the Miracles present only one or another, not all the aspects of the truth."

All this goes to show that wedding feasts and bridal parties, both friends of the bridegroom and virgin-maidens of the bride, are certainly approved in Scripture.

And I cannot see that the presence of best men and bridesmaids detracts from the seriousness of the ministry of the Word in church weddings.

H. H.

ATTENTION!

MINISTERS & CONSISTORIES

Due to the anticipated pulpit supply problem this summer, we request all consistories of Classis East to send in their requests for pulpit supply, whether for vacations or for your ministers' classical appointments, as soon as possible, preferably by June 15. We will then try to arrange supply for you.

We also ask all the ministers of Classis East and Classis West to inform us immediately whether they will be available for preaching either in Michigan or Illinois at any time during the summer and to state the time of their availability.

Direct all your correspondence to either:

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Van Boeken

Christus In Zijn Lijden, door Dr. K. Schilder. Deel I (Christus Aan Den Ingang Van Zijn Lijden), 2de druk.

Uitgever J. H. Kok, Kampen, Nederland.

De eerste druk van dit werk is onder ons bijna zoo algemeen bekend als de schrijver, Dr. K. Schilder zelf, vooral ook doordat het in het Engelsch vertaald is. Ik durf beweren, dat vele predikanten zelfs een tamelijk vrij gebruik maken van dit werk in het vervaardigen van hun lijdenspredikaties. En de drie deelen van "Christus in Zijn Lijden", waarvan het eerste deel thans opnieuw in druk verscheen, bieden overvloedig stof. Ik zou dit werk van Dr. Schilder willen beschrijven als gekenmerkt door een diep geestelijk inzicht in het lijden van Christus, door een levendige fantasie en door eens soms bijna poëtische vlucht, waaraan mag worden toegevoegd, dat ik persoonlijk het niet altijd eens ben met zijn exegese.

De tweede druk van het eerste deel is aanmerkelijk uitgebreid, de titels der verschillende hoofdstukken zijn veranderd, de "gemeene-gratie-passages" zijn geëlimineerd of veranderd, en hier en daar meen ik ook de "vrijgemaakte" beschouwingen te bemerken.

Van het laatste een enkel voorbeeld.

Op pag. 237 (cf. pag. 176 eerste druk) lees ik: "hem (Judas) ontbrak de *wedergeboorte*, wijl het *geloof*, dat Christus aanneemt *naar de Schriften*." En nog eens op pag. 238 (cf. pag. 177 eerste druk): "Dus was het niet de *wedergeboorte*; want er was niet het door de liefde werkende geloof."

Dit schijnt "de *wedergeboorte* door het geloof" te leeren. In de eerste druk lezen we daarvan niets. Daar lezen we eenvoudig: "Aan Judas ontbrak één ding, en dat was nu juist dat eene ding, waar het op aankomt, hem ontbrak de *wedergeboorte*." p. 176. En op p. 177: "Aan Judas ontbrak één ding, maar dat was juist het noodige: hem ontbrak de *wedergeboorte*."

In hetzelfde verband hebben we ook een treffend voorbeeld van Schilder's verbeterd inzicht inzake de "gemeene gratie." In de eerste druk kon hij nog schrijven: "dat 'betere' is geen geestelijk goed, doch slechts een *natuurlijke* zieleadel; vrucht van gemeene gratie" (dit over Judas).

Maar in de tweede druk schrijft hij als volgt:

"Wie het kwaad verdringt, in dien is het niet *gedood*. Hij blijft de 'natuurlijke mensch', die weliswaar 'betoont eenige betrachting tot de deugd en tot uiterlijke tucht', maar die niettemin 'ook in natuurlijke en burgerlijke zaken' het licht, dat op zijn pad nog schijnt, 'niet recht gebruikt, ja veel meer ditzelve, hoedanig het ook zij, op onderscheidene wijze geheel bezoedelt en in ongerechtigheid ten onder houdt'."

De stijl is schoon, en hoewel soms een beetje zwaar, gemakkelijk te lezen voor wie het Hollandsch nog machtig is. De prijs bedraagt f. 13.25.

H. H.

* * * *

Geloof en Rechtvaardiging, door Prof. Dr. G. C. Berkhouwer. Uitgever J. H. Kok, Kampen, Nederland.

Dit boek van Prof. Berkhouwer is meer dan een dogmatische studie over geloof en rechtvaardigmaking. Het is eigenlijk een historisch-kritisch-vergelijkende studie over het onderwerp. Tegenover allerlei aanvallen op de leer van het "sola fide", de waarheid van het gerechtvaardigd worden door het geloof alleen, handhaaft en verdedigt de schrijver dit geloofstuk. Dat de rechtvaardiging of rechtvaardigmaking van den zondaar een forensische daad is van soevereine genade, en dat het geloof geen grond of oorzaak is van deze rechtvaardiging, maar "instrument" en gave Gods, wordt van alle zijden belicht.

Met des schrijvers kritiek op Kuyper's idee van het genadeloon zijn we het natuurlijk eens. Maar we hadden toch gaarne een duidelijker uiteenzetting gezien des schrijvers eigen conceptie van het begrip "genadeloon-naar-werken."

De stijl is helder en, naar het mij voorkomt, niet zoo zwaar als in "conflict met Rome". Een leerzaam boek voor ieder, die Hollandsch lezen kan, en niet aarzelt om zijn "thinking cap" op te zetten.

Prijs gebonden in stempelband f. 4.95.

H. H.

THE TRIPLE KNOWLEDGE

An Exposition Of The Heidelberg Catechism

PART TWO
Of Man's Redemption
LORD'S DAY 26

3.

The Meaning Of Holy Baptism. (cont.)

In general, of course, we may say that as a *sacrament* baptism serves to declare more fully and seals "the promise of the gospel". Cf. Qu. 66. That is, it declares the promise of the gospel to us more fully: not, of course, *than* the Word, but more fully with the

Word. The Word is always the chief means of grace; and without the Word the sacraments mean nothing. But they are supplementing that Word by obsignating what the Word declares. And in that sense also the sacrament of baptism declares more fully unto us the promise of the gospel.

Of this promise we wrote rather fully in Vol II, pp. 53, ff., of this same work. And therefore for a complete explanation of the Scriptural idea of the promise we may refer the reader to that.

In this connection it is sufficient to emphasize once more a few elements implied in the Scriptural idea of that promise.

Once more we wish to remind ourselves that the promise of the gospel is the same as the gospel of the promise. *The epangelion tou euangeliou* is the *euangelion tou epangeliou*: the gospel is essentially the promise.

This promise of the gospel is *one* and is centrally always the promise of Christ. Nevertheless it is distinguished into many individual promises according to Scripture. It is the promise of the Holy Ghost, Acts 2:23; the promise of "the life that now is, and of that which is to come," I Tim. 4:8; the promise of eternal life, I John 2:25; the promise of His coming, II Peter 3:4; the promise to enter into His rest, Heb. 4:1; the promise to be heir of the world, Rom. 4:13. Besides, the Bible speaks of the Holy Spirit of promise, Eph. 1:13; of "the children of the promise", Rom. 9:8; of the heirs of the promise, Heb. 6:17 and 11:9. The one promise of God in Christ is individualized into many distinct promises. Yet the promise is always one and the same essentially.

This promise of God is absolutely unconditional and can never fail to be realized. It is not to be confused with a certain so-called "well-meaning offer of grace and salvation to all" that is contingent on the will of man for its realization. The promise rests in God alone, in the truth and faithfulness of the eternal and unchangeable Jehovah. It is God alone that realizes His promise both objectively and subjectively. In the objective sense He realizes it through Jesus Christ, His cross and His resurrection and exaltation at the right hand of God; and subjectively He fulfills His promise in the hearts of all the elect by the Spirit of grace. Powerfully and efficaciously He realizes His promise within us. He raises us from death and regenerates us, calls us with an almighty calling from darkness into light, strikes us down in true repentance and makes us cry out for Him, implants into our hearts the saving faith and makes us one with Christ, justifies us and gives us peace with God, sanctifies us and gives us a new delight in His precepts, causes us to persevere even unto the end and glorifies us, and ultimately raises our body from the dead and with all the saints gives us a place in the eternal tabernacle

of our covenant God that will be with men. Thus the promise of God is certain and is in no wise contingent upon the will of man as a condition of its fulfillment.

For the same reason the promise is only for the elect. It is true that in the historical line of the covenant all the children of believers are under the administration of the promise. They all receive the outward sign of the promise in baptism, are instructed in the truth of the promise, are under the preaching of the gospel, and are all "by God through baptism, admonished of, and obliged unto new obedience, namely, that we cleave to this one God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; that we trust in him, and love him with all our souls, and with all our mind, and with all our strength; that we forsake the world, crucify our old nature, and walk in a new and holy life." But this does not alter the fact that not all the children of the flesh are children of the promise; and the heirs of the promise are, according to Hebrews 6:13-18, only the elect.

That all this is included in the promise of the gospel and that baptism as a sacrament serves to declare to us and seal that promise is also beautifully expounded in the first part of the Baptism Form, where we read: "Holy Baptism witnesseth and sealeth unto us the washing away of our sins through Jesus Christ. Therefore we are baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. For when we are baptized in the name of the Father, God the Father witnesseth and sealeth unto us, that he doth make an eternal covenant of grace with us, and adopts us for his children and heirs, and therefore will provide us with every good thing, and avert all evil or turn it to our profit. And when we are baptized in the name of the Son, the Son sealeth unto us, that he doth wash us in his blood from all our sins, incorporating us into the fellowship of his death and resurrection, so that we are freed from all our sins, and accounted righteous before God. In like manner, when we are baptized in the name of the Holy Ghost, the Holy Ghost assures us, by this holy sacrament, that he will dwell in us, and sanctify us to be members of Christ, applying unto us, that which we have in Christ, namely, the washing away of our sins, and the daily renewing of our lives, till we shall finally be presented without spot or wrinkle among the assembly of the elect in life eternal."

And so baptism, also according to the passages of of Scripture which we quoted above, has a rich significance. For the water of baptism signifies the death of Christ into which we submerge and from the which we arise again unto newness of life. The water in baptism symbolizes the blood of Christ; and that blood means that He voluntarily laid down His life and satisfied God's righteousness, made an atonement for sin. Hence, in that blood we have both the remission of sins,

the removal of the guilt of sin, and the cleansing from all defilement and pollution of sin. Through that death of Christ we pass through baptism. On this side of that water of baptism there is the guilt of sin and the pollution of corruption, damnation, the world, and death. But as we pass through the water of baptism we find on the other side righteousness with God and peace, perfect freedom, and the favor and friendship of God in life eternal.

And thus baptism has a rich practical significance for the believer. Through it God seals unto us His promise and assures us that we are as certainly washed by the blood and Spirit from all the pollution of our soul, that is, from all our sins, as we are washed externally with water, by which the filthiness of the body is commonly washed away. And thus baptism serves to strengthen our faith in Christ Jesus our Lord. For faith and baptism are inseparable. The unbeliever cannot lay hold on the promise in baptism. He must needs despise this sacrament, reveal himself as profane, and aggravate his punishment. But to the believer baptism is a means of grace through which the Spirit works for the strengthening of his faith and by which he becomes assured that he is passed from sin into righteousness and from death into life.

On the other hand, baptism also implies a very serious calling. For our part of the covenant is that we love the Lord our God with our whole heart and our whole being, that we cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit, that we walk in newness of life, fight the good fight, and thus reveal ourselves as those that are of the party of the living God in the midst of the world.

LORD'S DAY XXVII.

"Qu. 72. Is then the external baptism with water the washing away of sin itself?

"A. Not at all: for the blood of Jesus Christ only, and the Holy Ghost cleanse us from all sin.

"Qu. 73. Why then doth the Holy Ghost call baptism 'the washing away of regeneration,' and 'the washing away of sins'?

"A. God speaks thus not without great cause, to-wit, not only thereby to teach us, that as the filth of the body is purged away by water, so our sins are removed by the blood and Spirit of Jesus Christ; but especially that by this divine pledge and sign he may assure us, that we are spiritually cleansed from our sins as really, as we are externally washed with water.

"Qu. 74. Are infants also to be baptized?

"A. Yes: for since they, as well as the adult, are included in the covenant and church of God; and since redemption from sin by the blood of Christ, and the Holy Ghost, the author of faith, is promised to them no less than to the adult; they must therefore by

baptism, as a sign of the covenant, be also admitted into the christian church; and be distinguished from the children of unbelievers as was done in the old covenant or testament by circumcision, instead of which baptism is instituted in the new covenant."

1.

The Sign and Its Meaning.

In regard to the first two questions and answers of this Lord's Day we can be brief.

Ursinus in his *Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism* has the following exposition of question and answer 72: "The same division which we made when speaking of the sacraments in general, is also true of baptism, that there are some forms of speech which are proper, and others which are improper. These forms of speech are called sacramental. It is a proper form of speech when those who receive the sign are said to receive the thing signified, as 'he that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved.' The same is true when the sign is said to signify the thing, as when it is said, 'baptism is the sign of the washing away of sin'. 'He gave unto them circumcision to be a sign of the covenant.' *Improper* or figurative forms of speech are when the sign is said to be the thing itself, as 'Baptism is the washing of regeneration;' and when the sacrament is said to confer the thing, or things pertaining to that which is signified, as when baptism is said to save us. All these forms of speech may be said to have this one signification: Baptism is a certain sign of the remission of sin, and of everlasting life to them that believe: for the figurative speeches which are used in reference to the sacraments are to be interpreted in the same manner as the figurative speeches in reference to the sacrifices. Sacrifices are often called expiations for sin, and yet the apostle Paul affirms that the blood of bulls, and of goats, cannot take away sin. So when it is said, 'Baptism saves us,' is 'the washing of regeneration,' and 'the washing away of sin;' it is the same thing as to say, Baptism is the sign of all these things."

And his exposition of question and answer 73 reads as follows: "There are three reasons which may be assigned why the Scriptures thus speak, interchanging the names of the signs, and the things signified. The *first* is on account of the analogy which there is between the sign, and the thing signified. The thing signified is according to its own nature, such as the sign is according to its nature, the opposite of which is also true: for as water which is the sign, washes away the filthiness of the body, so the blood and Spirit of Christ, which are the things signified, wash away the pollution of the soul: and as the minister applies the sign outwardly, so God by virtue of his Spirit applies inwardly the thing signified to all those who receive the sign with true faith. *Secondly*, the Holy

Ghost thus speaks for the confirmation of our faith through the use of the signs: for the signs used in the sacraments testify the will of God to us on account of the promise annexed thereto: 'He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved.' But why does the Holy Ghost thus speak for the confirmation of our faith? Because in the proper use of the sacraments the exhibition and reception of the signs, and things signified, are inseparably connected. And hence the Holy Ghost interchanges the terms, attributing what belongs to the thing signified to the sign, and what belongs to the sign to the thing, to teach us what he gives, and to assure us that he does really give it. The *third* reason, therefore, why such language is employed is because the exhibition of the things signified, is inseparably connected with the signs used in the sacraments."

You may notice, however, that in this twenty-seventh Lord's Day two subjects are treated that seem to be rather wide apart and separate in their significance. The one subject is that of true spiritual baptism in relation to the outward sign of the washing with water; the other subject is that of infant baptism, the question whether infants are also to be baptized. And yet these two apparently so different subjects can very well be properly grouped together: for there is indeed a connection between the two, the connection being that especially with regard to the baptism of infants it is easy for carnal and idolatrous and superstitious minds to consider the outward washing of the water the real, spiritual baptism. A child that is baptized has, as far as we know, no active faith, and at least it has no conscious activity of faith with respect to the signs of baptism that is administered to it. It is at the moment of baptism apparently utterly passive: baptism is administered to the child, but it does not know it, far less appropriates consciously the spiritual significance of the sacrament which it receives. Hence, the question might perhaps be asked, why do you really baptize children: what does it mean when children who have not the consciousness of the living faith, who cannot possibly receive consciously that which is signified by baptism, the washing away of sins through the blood and Spirit of Christ, are baptized? What in their case is the significance of baptism? Is it possible that without any activity on the part of the child the sins of that particular child are washed away, so that really the outward sign, the outward rite, the outward form of baptism, is the washing away of sin itself? You see that the two questions are after all rather closely related.

For this reason it is expedient that we enter a little more broadly into the exposition of questions and answers 72 and 73.

The Catechism asks the question "Is then the external baptism with water the washing away of sin itself?" Now if you look at that question as it stands

there and superficially, you might perhaps feel somewhat insulted and think that the question is rather silly and puerile. Does the Catechism indeed proceed from the idea that in the midst of an intelligent, new dispensational congregation there would be those that actually think that the outward washing with water could cleanse away sin? It might be perfectly all right to ask such questions of little children, but to propose a question of that kind in the midst of the congregation seems to be somewhat insulting. There is no one in the Church of Christ that ever entertained the notion that the washing with water effects a spiritual washing away of our sins, of the guilt and of the corruption of sin, and the cleansing of the soul.

However, we must remember that the Catechism is not exactly speaking of such washing with water. It does not simply propose the question whether any water and any washing with water cleanses the soul from sin. The Catechism is speaking of the outward washing of baptism. The question is not, therefore, whether if you take a bath at home your sins are washed away in the bath-tub: that would seem to be sufficiently absurd. But the question is, whether if you are baptized with the water that has been instituted and separated by God Himself, the water of baptism, your sins are not washed away by that outward rite. If you receive on your face, or if you submerge your body into the water, to which God has divinely attached the promise that as surely as you are outwardly washed with water so surely He will wash away your sins, does not then, perhaps, that external reception of the sign actually carry with it the fact that you receive the forgiveness of sins spiritually? Is not that water of baptism, the outward rite, the forgiveness of sin itself? Or, to put the question in a slightly different form: if the Church, the Church as an institute of God, upon the command of God and in harmony with His will baptizes you with water, are not your sins forgiven? That is the question.

H. H.

CALL TO SYNOD

The Consistory of the Second Prot. Ref. Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan being designated the calling church by the last Synod, hereby notifies the churches that Synod will convene on June 1, 1949. The pre-synodical prayer service will be held in the auditorium of our church on May 31, beginning at 7:45 P. M., with the Rev. H. De Wolf, vice-president of the 1948 Synod conducting the service. Requests for lodging will kindly be forwarded to the undersigned.

Consistory of the Second Prot. Ref. Church
Henry Lotterman, Sec'y
653 Lynch St., S. W.
Grand Rapids, Michigan.

OUR DOCTRINE

The Grace Of God

This Grace of God, According to Prof. Berkhof.

As one might expect, Prof. Berkhof, in his "Reformed Dogmatics", also treats this communicable attribute of God. On pages 71-72 he writes as follows: "*The grace of God.* The significant word "grace" is a translation of the Hebrew "chanan" and of the Greek "charis". According to Scripture it is manifested not only by God, but also by men, and then denotes the favor which one man shows another, Gen. 33:8, 10, 18; 39:4; 47:25; Ruth 2:2; I Sam. 1:18; 16:22. In such cases it is not necessarily implied that the favor is undeserved. In general it can be said, however, that grace is the free bestowal of kindness on one who has no claim to it. This is particularly the case where the grace referred to is the grace of God. His love to man is always unmerited, and when shown to sinners, is even forfeited. The Bible generally uses the word to denote the *unmerited goodness or love of God to those who have forfeited it, and are by nature under a sentence of condemnation.* The grace of God is the source of all spiritual blessings that are bestowed upon sinners. As such we read of it in Eph. 1:6, 7; 2:7-9; Titus 2:11; 3:4-7. While the Bible often speaks of the grace of God as saving grace, it also makes mention of it in a broader sense, as in Isa. 26:10, Jer. 16:13. The grace of God is of the greatest practical significance for sinful men. It was by grace that the way of redemption was opened for them, Rom. 3:24, II Cor. 8:9, and that the message of redemption went out into the world, Acts 14:3. By grace sinners receive the gift of God in Jesus Christ, Acts 18:27; Eph. 2:8. By grace they are justified, Rom. 3:24; 4:16; Titus 3:7, they are enriched with spiritual blessings, John 1:16, II Cor. 8:9; II Thess. 2:16, and they finally inherit salvation, Eph. 2:8; Titus 2:11. Seeing they have absolutely no merits of their own, they are altogether dependent on the grace of God in Christ. In modern theology, with its belief in the inherent goodness of man and his ability to help himself, the doctrine of salvation by grace has practically become a "lost chord", and even the word "grace" was emptied of all spiritual meaning and vanished from religious discourses. It was retained only in the sense of "graciousness", something that is quite external. Happily, there are some evidences of a renewed emphasis on sin, and of a newly awakened consciousness of the need of divine grace."—thus far Prof. Berkhof.

We may note, in the first place, that also Prof. Berkhof proceeds from the common definition of grace

as the free bestowal of kindness on one who has no claim to it, yea, who has forfeited all claim to it. And, secondly, he also writes that although the Bible often speaks of the grace of God as saving grace (is this so strange?—H.V.) it also makes mention of it in a broader sense, as in Isaiah 26:10 and Jeremiah 16:13. The professor, therefore, first quotes Isa. 26:10. That text reads: "Let favour be shewed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness: in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord." In connection with this particular passage we would note the following. The explanation of this text by Prof. Hepp of the Netherlands (this text, by the way, is the only proof which Prof. Hepp quotes in support of his contention that the word "grace" appears in Holy Writ as applicable to the reprobate wicked) is probably known to many of our readers, namely, that an over-dose of common grace will not cause the wicked to learn righteousness. When Prof. Hepp quotes only Is. 26:10 in support of a general goodness of God, this must not be understood in the sense that, according to him, Is. 26:10 is the only Scriptural proof for "Common Grace", but that the word "grace" appears but once in Holy Writ with the wicked as beneficiaries. He would, of course, maintain that God's general goodness or grace is taught in many passages of the Word of God, but that other terms are used in the Word of God besides that of "grace". As we have seen, also Prof. Berkhof quotes this text in support of a grace that is common.

First of all, in connection with Is. 26:10, we would remark that if the word "grace" in this text refers to "Common Grace", and if this text were to teach that this "Common Grace" is shown to the wicked, then this passage would teach us the very opposite of that which was always understood by the teaching of "Common Grace". For the "Common Grace" theory has always taught that God's common grace teaches the wicked righteousness. Did not the late Dr. A. Kuyper develop the conception that God by His operation of His common grace checks the process of sin and corruption within the individual sinner, yea, enables him to perform much good in the midst of the world? Is it not exactly the characteristic of this theory that the wicked learn righteousness in the civil sense of the word, that the process of corruption is restrained by the Lord so that the sinner is not wholly corrupt, and that he is enabled to lead a good, exemplary life in the midst of this world, yea, to such an extent that the wicked often put many children of God to shame? But now we are told, by Prof. Hepp, that a sinner can also receive an overdose of this general grace of God. And if he receives too much of this checking, restraining operation of the Lord he will not learn righteousness. And, secondly, as far as the true interpretation of this text is concerned, we would note the following. In the

context of this word of God the church of God prays for the judgments of the Lord, that the Lord may come in the way of His judgments—see verses 8 and 9 of this chapter, where we read: "Yea, in the way of Thy judgments, O Lord, have we waited for Thee; the desire of our soul is to Thy Name, and to the remembrance of Thee. With my soul have I desired Thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek Thee early: for when Thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." And why does the Church of God long for these judgments? The answer is that these judgments, as far as the wicked are concerned, are the only way whereby they will learn righteousness, acknowledge that God is righteous (and this the wicked will do everlastingly). Fact is, when favour (grace) is shown to the wicked he will not learn righteousness; yea, in the land of uprightness he will deal unjustly and will not behold the majesty of the Lord. We must remember: the grace of God is continually shown to the wicked. In our interpretation of Is. 26:10 we proceed from the thought that this grace or favour is shown to the wicked. The ungodly, because they are organically in the covenant and therefore, due to the development of God's covenant in the line of continued generations, are or constitute one people with the people of God according to election, come into contact with this grace of the Lord which is bestowed only upon the elect. They, too, hear the preaching of the gospel, taste, in a *natural sense*, those things which are a blessing only for the people of the living God. This applied also to the Old Dispensation. The covenants and the promises of the Lord, whereof we read in Rom. 9:4-5, were shared, organically, by all the people of Israel. But, the wicked never learns righteousness. Never will he acknowledge the living God. And therefore the Church of the living God prays that the Lord may come in the way of His judgments in order that, also as far as the wicked are concerned, every knee may bow and confess that God is God alone. Hence, it is clear that Isaiah 26:10 cannot be quoted in support of a "Common Grace".

In addition to Is. 26:10 Prof. Berkhof also quotes Jer. 26:13: "Therefore will I cast you out of this land into a land that ye know not, neither ye nor your fathers; and there shall ye serve other gods day and night; where I will not shew you favour." In the first place we would observe the rather obvious fact that the text declares literally that the Lord will *not* shew any favour unto them. Is it not strange that a text quoted in support of a general favour which declares that no favour will be shown them? One is surely struck with the thought that anyone, who quotes texts such as Jer. 16:13, must be desperate in his search for Scriptural proof of the theory of a general favour of God. Secondly, the exponents of such a general

grace of God appeal to this text, I presume, because it presupposes that, whereas the Lord will not shew them favour in a strange land, He had shown them favour in the past, the land of Canaan. And to this we have no objection. However, let us please note the following. If favour had been shown them in the past, what right do the exponents of "Common Grace" have to interpret this favour or grace of Jer. 16:13 as a common, general, non-saving favour of God? For, it is indeed true that this people had been shown the favour of God in the land from which the Lord had driven them. The land of Canaan was the land of promise, the land of the temple and of the sacrifices and shadows and types and symbols—in that land the grace of God had been shown them abundantly, revealed to them, had surrounded them in abundance. Every day they had come into contact with this grace of the living God. The daily sacrifices at the temple were a continuous testimony of the amazing grace and pity of the Lord Who blots out all our sins in the blood of Jesus Christ, our Lord. But, does this mean that, while all that grace of God was revealed unto them, each one had individually been a personal recipient of the favour or grace of the Lord? To see the sacrifices day in and day out was surely no guarantee in itself that one's sins were actually blotted out by the living God. If this outpouring of the grace of God throughout the Old Testament be considered a token of the general love or grace of God, but one conclusion is warranted: the blood of the Lamb of Calvary was intended by God to be for all men. And this is arminianism. Hence, Jer. 16:13 acquainted us with the fact that the Lord had driven the people of Israel out of this land of the promise, and that, in a strange land, this favour of the Lord would not be shown unto them. And, surely, this does not imply that these ungodly, while in the land of Canaan, had personally been the objects of the love and favour of God. In this connection, I would like to refer the readers to Deut. 28 and Leviticus 23 and let them judge for themselves whether his presence in the land of Canaan assured every Israelite personally of the mercy and favour of the Lord.

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The Grace Of God, According to H. Bavinck.

Dr. H. Bavinck, discussing the "grace" of God as one of the aspects of God's goodness, writes in his *Reformed Dogmatics*, Vol. II, pages 181-183, as follows, and we translate: "Much richer is the goodness of God when manifested unto them, who have not deserved any good, but all evil; then it bears the name of grace, 'chen, techinnah, a.v. chanan', to be inclined towards, 'charis, charidzomai'". This word also expresses the favour which one person finds with another or which is given unto another, Gen. 30:27; 33:8, 10; 47:29;

50:4, etc.; Luke 2:52. *Used of God, it never has the creatures in general nor the Heathen but only His people for its object*, (we underscore—H.V.). It is shown to Noah, Gen. 6:8, Moses, Ex. 33:12, 17; 34:9; Job 8:5; 9:15; Daniel 1:9, the meek and miserable; Prov. 3:34; Dan. 4:27 and then especially unto Israel as a people. His election and guidance, deliverance and redemption and all the blessings which it received in distinction from other peoples, are to be ascribed to God's grace alone, Ex. 15:13, 16; 19:4; 33:19; 34:6, 7; Deut. 4:37; 7:8:14, 17; 9:5, 27; 10:14 f.f.; 33:3; Is. 35:10; 42:21; 43:1, 15, 21; 54:5; 63:9; Jer. 3:4, 19; 31:9, 20; Ezek. 16; Hos. 8:14; 11:1, etc. In history and in the law, in psalms and in prophecy the key-note is always: Not unto us, O Lord, but unto Thy Name give glory, Ps. 115:1. He does all things for His Name's sake, Num. 14:13 f.f.; Is. 43:21, 25 f.f.; 48:9, 11; Ezek. 36:22, etc. And therefore that grace is also repeatedly praised and magnified, Ex. 34:6; II Chron. 30:9; Neh. 9:17; Ps. 86:15; 103:8; 111:4; 116:5; Jonah 4:2; Joel 2:13; Zach. 12:10. In the New Testament that grace appears richer and deeper in content. "Charis" signifies, objectively, beauty, attractiveness, "gratie", Luke 4:22 Col. 4:6; Eph. 4:29, and subjectively favour, inclination from the side of the giver and thanks, adoration from the side of him who receives. In God it expresses His free, sovereign, unmerited inclination, which is shown unto guilty sinners and which bestows upon them "diksaioosunee" and "dzooee" instead of the sentence of death (diksaioosunee and dzooee are righteousness and life respectively, H.V.). As such it is a virtue and attribute of God, Rom. 5:15; I Pet. 5:10, which reveals itself in the sending of Christ, Who is full of grace, John 1:14 f.f.; I Pet. 1:13, and also in the bestowal of all manner of spiritual and bodily blessings, which are all gifts of grace and in themselves grace, Rom. 5:20; 6:1; Eph. 1:7; 2:5, 8; Phil. 1:2; Col. 1:2; Titus 3:7, etc., and which, once and for all, exclude all merits of man, John 1:17; Rom. 4:4, 16; 6:14, 23; 11:5 f.f.; Eph. 2:8; Gal. 5:3, 4. The doctrine of grace was developed in the Christian Church first by Augustus, but it did not usually denote a virtue of God, but all the blessings which are given of God out of grace in Christ unto the church. Grace was not usually treated under the attributes of God."—thus far Bavinck.

We would note, briefly, the following in connection with this quotation of the late Dr. Bavinck. In the first place, Prof. Bavinck remarks that the concept, "grace", was not usually treated under the attributes of God, but then when the doctrine of the salvation of the church was discussed. However, we do well to bear in mind that "grace" is an attribute of God. God did not become "gracious" because of or in relation to His people. "Grace" does not merely denote a relation or attitude of the living God toward His people: it also

denotes an attribute, a perfection of the living God Himself. God did not become "gracious", but He Himself is grace. In fact, we do well to bear this in mind in connection with all the attributes of the Lord. His relation or attitude toward man, or His people, is surely determined by what He is in Himself. Secondly, it is also worthy of note that this eminent theologian declares that the word "grace" never applies in Scripture to the creature in general or the heathens. This is something which the exponents of "Common Grace" may well bear in mind—they may well ponder, deliberate upon the phenomenon that, if the "grace" of God be common, at least the word "grace", as such is not used in that sense in the Word of God. However, in connection with this observation of Dr. Bavinck, this does not mean that that theologian denied the theory of "Common Grace". In the first place, we understand, this applies only to the word "grace"—this statement of Dr. Bavinck does not rule out the possibility that words such as mercy, compassion, etc., do appear as applicable to all. And, in the second place, the expression, "creatures in general" refers, we should bear in mind to creation, or the creature in distinction from men, people, moral-rational creatures. Another item worthy of note in this quotation of Dr. Bavinck is that there is nothing in it which suggests any kind of "Common Grace". This is probably due to the fact that he proceeds from the thought the word nowhere occurs in the Word as applicable to the creatures in general or the heathens. And, finally, although he does declare that "grace" means beauty, attractiveness, he, too, proceeds from the common definition of grace as unmerited favour.

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Meaning Of The Word: Grace.

The word, "grace", ("Chen" in the Hebrew and "Charis" in the Greek) does not mean fundamentally: unmerited favour. Fact is, this is simply not the fundamental meaning of the word. We, too, for example, speak of a "graceful" animal, or of someone as having a gracious attitude, and we do not refer to unmerited favour, although the word, "gracious", is fundamentally the same as "grace". Besides, if "grace" were merely unmerited favour, could not the same be said of all the other virtues of God? What, then, would be the difference between God's grace and His pity or longsuffering or kindness? To say that the grace of God is the Lord's attitude of undeserving kindness (undeserving on our part) would not be saying anything about this particular attribute of the Lord.

The Hebrew word for "grace" is "chen". The root idea of this word is: to incline, to bow, to form a curve. From this root idea the word also developed the derivative idea: to be graceful in form. And so the word obtained the meaning: beauty, attractiveness.

This idea of grace (beauty, attractiveness) is surely expressed in Prov. 22: 11: "He that loveth pureness of heart, for the grace of his lips the king shall be his friend." The idea of this text is that he that loveth purity of heart shall be characterized by such beauty and pleasantness of speech, that even kings shall seek his fellowship. The meaning is, of course, that from the root motive of love or inner purity proceeds speech that is truly graceful, truly beautiful, and therefore pleasant.

The same significance applies to the Greek "charis". This word, too, means fundamentally: beauty, charm, attractiveness. "Charis" is that which affords joy because of its beauty, pleasantness. This meaning of the word is evident in Luke 4:22, which reads: "And all bare Him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph's son?" The expression, "gracious words", reads literally: words of grace. Some would interpret this expression in the sense that His speaking was with grace and charm, that His manner was gracious, that, while speaking with power and authority, He spoke also with tenderness and love. They declare that not only the form but also the content of Jesus' message here was full of love and tenderness and mercy; it was not a message of judgment and doom, but a word of hope and cheer, and this in the general sense of the word. However, this interpretation of Luke 4:22 is surely erroneous. Luke 4:22 certainly refers to Is. 61:1-2, and in this latter passage the inspired prophet, Isaiah, speaks, not only of the "acceptable year of the Lord," but also of this day as "the day of vengeance of our God." To declare, therefore, that Jesus' message was not a message of judgment is a direct denial of Is. 61:1-2. Besides, if the message of the Christ in Luke 4 is so gracious, so full of tenderness and pity and compassion in the general sense of the word, how must we account for the reaction among His listeners upon this message which He proclaims there in the synagogue of Nazareth? Why is it that they violently lay their hands upon Him, take Him unto the edge of the city with the purpose to cast Him down to destruction? There was evidently something in the words of the Christ which they did not relish. Christ condemned them as blind, prisoners, etc.; they resented this preaching of the Christ; hence, this day was for them a day of vengeance and judgment and surely Divinely intended to be such.

That Jesus' words were words of grace means that His words were words of beauty and charm. Christ must have been a charming speaker. It is obvious that the word "grace" in Luke 4:22 must retain its proper meaning of beauty, charm, attractiveness. This is the original meaning of the word and also its significance in Luke 4:22. (to be continued) H. Veldman.

Rev. Petter Replies

I—G.M.O.—will reproduce Rev. Petter's article, paragraph by paragraph, and write down my remarks as I go along. Rev. Petter writes:

"In the Standard Bearer of May 1 there appears an open letter addressed to me by the Rev. Ophoff upon which I will make a few remarks before I continue with the discussion that I had begun about Dr. Schilder's view. And although we may look for the continuation of this open letter in a further issue, yet I believe the general nature of the remarks that I shall make do not demand that we wait until the Rev. Ophoff is finished. The Editor tells me that if I make haste I can still have it in time for printing."

Remark. I deduce from these words of yours that what I have just received from your pen in the way of reply to my letter is all that I can expect. You speak of the *few remarks* that you will make before you continue with the discussion that you had begun about Dr. Schilder's view. So that is your method of dealing with the issue that I set before you—the method of evasion. Your few remarks are of a negative character even. Certainly, what we have in your reply is not the fruit of study and reflection. You admit that much by the statement that you made haste in order that you could still have "it in time for printing". Evidently, you don't want discussion for some reason. It is plain from your whole article that your sole purpose was to neutralize as soon as possible the effect that my writing may have had on our people.

Your next paragraph. The first sentence of it reads, "My first remark is that I wish the writer had paid more attention to the connection in which I brought up the discussion of conditions."

Reply: I did pay strict attention to that connection and to every other connection in your articles. Fact is that I have devoted many hours of solid thought to your theology which is that of Schilder; and it has become my settled conviction that this theology—the teaching that there are conditions in the covenant—the teaching that "God does not give the enjoyment of life to His people except under condition of faith and conversion,"—is thoroughly heretical. And until you or anyone else can show me that I am in error I shall have to continue to oppose it publicly.

You write next, "I plainly expressed the idea that when Dr. Schilder speaks of the promise of the covenant he does not mean a positive benefit but a conditional promise." Reply: I can't see what bearing this has on the issue which is precisely whether or no that expression of Dr. Schilder "conditional promise" is heretical. You next write, "But this condition must again be seen in the light of the fact that for him—Schilder—the covenant is not the friendship of Jehovah

with His people in Christ, but a frame of converse that is conditioned by promise and threat." You are wrong, brother. This "condition" must be seen solely in the light of the Scriptures and the Christian creeds that we subscribed when we as office-bearers in the church signed the Formula of Subscription. And if that "condition", if your proposition, is heretical, it will simply mean that Schilder's conception according to which the covenant is a *frame of converse that is conditioned by promise and threat* is heretical. You next write, "It depends upon the question at which phase in the unfolding of the covenant the "condition" enters in." You are wrong again, brother. What difference does it make where the "condition" enters in if the whole idea is heretical?

Your next paragraph:

"And, secondly, that we need not condemn the use of conditions per se I base on the fact that Scripture itself speaks of conditions. The texts that may be considered in this connection are the following: Lev. 26:3ff, 21; Deut. 28: 15, 58; I Chron. 28:9-10; Ps. 71:10; Isa. 1:19-20; 7:9; 55:3; Jer. 29:13; Matt. 6:12, 14, 15; 7:7; 17:19-21; 18:35; 21:22; Mark 9:23; 11:23; Luke 10:6-12; 13:9; John 5:40; 9:31; 11:40; 14:12-14; 15:4; Rom. 4:24-25; 10:9; Hebr. 4:23; 11:6; I John 1:7, 9; 2:24-25, 28; 3:22; 4:15; 5:5, 14; Rev. 2:5, 7, 16, 25-29; 3:5, 11, 19-22.

Again I may end this list by saying that we need not quote more for there are more that could be gathered by a little systematic search.

Remark. Here you again take recourse to your method of simply referring your readers to texts, and telling them that there are more that could be gathered. Hasn't it once dawned on you, brother, that to prove from the Scriptures that God saves His people *on the condition* that they believe, it won't do simply to refer to scripture passages containing the word "if"? The meaning of that "if" must be ascertained by careful and painstaking exegesis. And, as I stated in my previous article, that, precisely is what you fail to do. You come with no exegesis. You simply refer us to texts, quote Dr. Schilder, dangle before my eyes imposing names of a number of Reformed theologians—in other words, make yourself strong by an appeal to tradition—and leave it go at that. You must come with exegesis, brother. Don't you realize that if these texts actually taught—*on the surface as you imagine*—what you claim they teach, there wouldn't even be any argument?

Your next paragraph.

"The Reformed fathers also were not averse to speaking of conditions. Calvin spoke of conditions in the plan of salvation. And if we may trust the statement of scholars about such historical data, then both Ursinus and Olevianus, the authors of our Heidelberg Catechism, maintain the terms: conditional promise.

"But it is still more interesting that the theologians who carried on the battle with the remonstrants do not hesitate themselves to teach that there are conditions in the covenant even when they were engaged in fighting the doctrine of conditions

as the remonstrants held it. Prominent among these were the famous Contra-remonstrants Gomarus, and Walaëus, co-authors of the standard "Synopsis of Purer Theology". And even the monumental Staten Vertaling of that day has a forward to the New Testament which informs us that this New Testament means that covenant which God made with man whereby He gives him eternal life **under certain conditions**, (bold type Petter's). A half century later the prominent theologian Turretin gives a long discussion on the conditions without thinking of denying them. Also from the editorial in the same Standard Bearer of May 1, in which the "open letter" is found, it appears that the Netherland Theologians, Dordrecht, 1618-19, spoke of conditions of the covenant.

"And now coming to our own day we may mention Bavinck, Geerhardt, Vos, Berkhof, whose judgments are that there are conditions in connection with the covenant even though we must be careful in our presentation of them.

"On the basis of this historical picture and on the basis of Scriptural teaching of conditions I am not at all ready to condemn anyone who holds that there are conditions in the covenant without my giving careful attention to what phase in the covenant he places them."

Remark. I suppose you expect me to fold up and go home now as shamed into silence by that cloud of doubtful witnesses by which you encompass me about. But I am staying, brother, also for your sake. True, that paragraph of yours is representative of a master-stroke of controversial tactic. Imposing names always do make an astounding impression on a certain type of people. What type I am not pausing to explain. I would say that it would have been more profitable for yourself and everybody concerned had you kept that paragraph in your pen and filled the space left vacant with the fruit of some real study of the issue.

So you stand in awe at the master-minds among reformed dogmaticians of the past? Their statements that there are conditions in the covenant prevent you from condemning that proposition? I find, however, that ordinarily your attitude toward these masters and their speculations is severely critical. Bavinck, you write in one of your pieces (The Covenant XXXIII) "was a great theologian and produced a masterful dogmatic. Yet you "surely must conclude", quoting your own words, "that Bavinck was wrong" and that the Catechism is right respecting the matter of the covenant of Paradise. And according to your judgment, "the Fathers following the Reformation (I am again quoting your own words) suffer from the wrong approach to the question. Also in the quotations from them (you go on to say) the question is altogether too dominating, namely, what is promised to the children." (The Covenant XVI). In this same piece one comes upon the statement from your pen, "It is here that the understanding has very often, and in a great sector of the Christian Church, gone astray. It is here that the humanitarian conception takes the place of the theological view-point of the Bible and the whole conception goes awry. *This is even true of Reformed authors.*" (italics supplied). This is a severe indictment, brother,

as is also the following from your pen, "When therefore some theologians teach that the covenant is a channel through which election is realized and carried out, we believe *they have turned the relation of the Scriptures exactly around* (italics supplied). To these examples of devastating criticism of the Reformed Fathers, others could be added. You cut, dissect, cleave, shave, skin, flay, rind, peel the Fathers to your very heart's content. You take them apart limb for limb. And your knife—a two-edged sword, I would say—turns every way. But, wonderful to say, your attitude toward these same Fathers, as associated in your mind with the teaching that there are conditions in the covenant, is strictly uncritical. Then your sword is in its scabbard and you are meekness, mildness, and submission personified. And in your hand is a hymn-book of praise to the Fathers. And its praise is in your heart; and it fills your mouth and also managed to find its way in your reply to me.

Now what do your contrary attitudes toward the Fathers indicate? Precisely this: Your lack of readiness to condemn anyone—including yourself, of course, and your self first of all—who holds that there are conditions in the covenant, is not ascribable to any reverential awe on your part for the master-minds among our Reformed Fathers, but is to be explained solely from your love of that doctrine. You love the Fathers only in so far as their teachings agree with the doctrines that have the love of your own heart. It means that fundamentally you don't care a snap of your finger about what the Fathers taught. Now this is not meant as criticism but as praise. The Fathers are no authorities for you. And it is well that they are not. You are not living by the tradition of the Fathers. Nor are we. You understand right well what would be the result. The stream of life in our communion of churches would run dry; and soon we would be comparable to a stagnant, stinking pool, as far as progress in the development of the truth is concerned. So as a good reformed man, you allow yourself to be binded in your thinking only by the Scriptures and the Christian creeds that you subscribed when as an office-bearer in the church you signed the Formula of Subscription. Being a well-read man, you well know that historical reformed theology is shot through with philosophy. Hence, your critical attitude, your habit of testing the teachings of the Fathers by the Scriptures. When the question be put: How about the teaching of the Fathers that there are conditions in the covenant? The answer also of your heart is: It doesn't mean a thing. Such is the answer of your *heart*. This is proved by your critical attitude.

So I have a question. Why don't you write as your heart speaks, brother? Why do you bring the Fathers into our debate? Why in this one single instance do you pose as a man filled with awe for the Fathers.

So you do, even while your heart is telling you: The sole issue is: "What sayeth the Scriptures," and not, "What sayeth the Fathers." If you, yourself, care absolutely nothing about the Fathers as authorities—and you don't as is proved by your critical attitude—stop dangling their names before my eyes, will you, please? The Roman theologians did that with Martin Luther, too, as you no doubt know. He kept on telling them, "I care nothing about the Fathers. Come to me with the Scriptures." But they wouldn't stop their monkeyshines.

However, the Roman theologians were consistent at least in this one respect, that they, too, were letting the Fathers do their thinking for them, that is, they were themselves, too, living by tradition. But you aren't brother. Yet you expect it of me. That makes it all the worse. If the theory that there are conditions in the covenant did not have the love of your heart you would oppose the Fathers, and Schilder with them, on this point as vigorously as I am doing. I say again, you care nothing about the Fathers as authorities. Yet you very actually tell your readers that the reason you are not ready to repudiate your doctrine is that the Fathers held it. Here is your statement black on white, "On the basis of this historical picture and on the basis of Scripture teaching (this latter is not true. You come with no exegesis) I am not at all ready to condemn anyone who holds that there are conditions in the covenant." You should make it possible for yourself to say this: "By a thorough study of the Scriptures and our *Confessions* it has become my settled conviction that there are conditions in the covenant, and therefore I shall defend with all the vigor that is mine anyone and everybody holding that doctrine." Realize the absurdity of your statement, brother. You say, "On the basis of the teachings of the Scriptures I am not ready to condemn anyone, etc." Your expression "on the basis of the teachings of the Scriptures," means, should mean as uttered by you, "I am convinced that the doctrine is thoroughly Scriptural". How can such a conviction go hand in hand with the statement, "I am not ready to condemn anyone holding that teaching *without giving careful attention to what phase of the covenant he places them.*" I ask you, brother, what difference can it possibly make to what phase Schilder places the "condition", if the idea, according to your convictions, is thoroughly Scriptural? If the doctrine is thoroughly Scriptural, as you really say it is, how can your condemning or not condemning that doctrine be dependent on the phase of the covenant to which Schilder places it? If the doctrine according to your conviction is thoroughly Scriptural, how can you at all allow that it is still probable for you to condemn the doctrine? And that is what you do. Can it be that this absurd statement from you is indicative of an awareness or at any rate a strong suspicion on your

part that your doctrine hasn't a leg to stand on as far as the Scriptures are concerned, all the Fathers notwithstanding?

These Reformed fathers were excellent men, and we love them. But you agree, as your critical attitude indicates, that they were fallible men capable of the strangest intellectual blunders, as are we all. Therefore we need one another. I find examples of their capacities in that direction in your very disclosures of these men. You write, "But it is still more interesting that the theologians who carried on the battle with the Remonstrants do not hesitate themselves to teach that there are conditions in the covenant *even when they were engaged in fighting the doctrine of conditions as the Remonstrants held it.*" (Italics supplied). This is interesting indeed. Mark you, fighting the doctrine of conditions while at the same time teaching that there are conditions in the covenant, as if it is possible to do both without violating every law of logic. You say, "Of course it is possible to do both, possible to teach that there are conditions in the covenant without falling in the error of the Remonstrants." I deny that, brother. Won't you please refrain from bringing my definition of the term "condition" under a cloud and debate the issue with me? Of what are you afraid if you are so sure of your ground? My definition of that term "condition" is absolutely correct. I will return to this in the sequel.

You provide us with still another example of the fallibility of the Fathers. You write, "And now coming to our own day we may mention Bavinck (Bavinck, the great Bavinck, whom you dismiss with a mere gesture of the hand, when you don't like what he says) Geerhardt, Vos, Berkhof, whose judgments are that there are conditions in connection with the covenant *even though we must be careful in our presentation of them*" (Italics supplied). The clause in italics sounds a familiar note. The leaders in the communion of Christian Reformed Churches give an identical warning with respect to the theory of common grace that they hatched out together one of their synods some years ago. The doctrine that there are conditions in the covenant must be presented with care. Such, you say, was the advice of those theologians (Bavinck, Geerhardt, Vos, etc.). Could it be that they realized, be it dimly, that the doctrine is pregnant with potential heresy? You also mention Berkhof as one of the theologians addicted to that teaching. It doesn't surprise me a bit, seeing that he is the Father of the famous three points. The teaching is right in line with these points. I am rather astonished that you seek support for your views also with Berkhof. What weight do his pronouncements have with us? Besides, it was he who in collaboration with his colleagues ejected us from the communion of Christian Reformed Churches. Have you forgotten that?

Your next paragraph.

"In the third place, I cannot agree with the way the Rev. Ophoff uses a definition in his discussion of my remarks. When I read his statement that he was using a 10-volume dictionary of microscopic print and then saw the little paragraph of definition, I looked into my little desk dictionary and found almost as much material. It is evident that in comparison his great work should have at least several pages on the word. But the explanation is, of course, that Rev. Ophoff had taken only one of the separate meanings of the word and omitted all the rest. Now in some connections it might be permissible to use the mischievous device of showing what possible absurdities could be drawn out of my use of the word condition. But that was not true in the present case. For there are several elements in my writing that definitely limit the scope of the word. I repudiated the Arminian and Pelagian conception, also stating that God Himself provided for their fulfilling, working salvation Himself from beginning to end, and that these conditions enter in after God has set man on the way of salvation. This should have limited his choice of connotation.

"But this error is aggravated by the fact that in his search and choice he takes one that has the element of **contingency** in it. And this must be a very border-line meaning because it does not appear even in the unabridged dictionary that I was able to consult. Yet Rev. Ophoff takes the element of **contingency** out of this border-line meaning, finds the **definition of contingency** and uses that definition. But contingency introduces an altogether different element, namely that of chance, uncertainty, accident, caprice. And now he takes this new definition with all these alien implications and uses it in testing my presentation."

Remark. So you find fault with me for not reproducing all the material that I found in my dictionary on the term *condition*. Your reply in the section with which we are now occupied contains some foul thrusts such as, "The Rev. Ophoff had taken only one of the separate meanings of the word and omitted all the rest. Now in some connection it might be permissible to use the *mischievous device* of showing what possible absurdities could be drawn out of the use of the word condition (*italics supplied*)." I would like to know, brother, how it can ever be *permissible* to use a mischievous device in any connection. Such is your contention. To my mind that is never permissible. And of this impermissible, unethical doing you accuse me. Then you go on to show that it was no small sin that I committed. You write, "But this error is aggravated by the fact that in his search and choice he takes one—one definition—that has the element of contingency in it. And this must be a very borderline meaning because it does not appear even in the unabridged dictionary that I consulted." You come close to accusing me, brother, of having fabricated that definition. I contacted a brother yesterday who accused me of the same thing, when he said, "you certainly have a good dictionary". Such, then, is the sin of which you accuse me in public. And you are so polite about it, even going so far as to say that in some cases the sin may be permissible. Didn't it dawn upon you, brother, that your thus accusing me placed you under the moral necessity of proving your charge? How

easy that would have been. All you would have had to do is to publish the definitions of the terms in question contained in your dictionary. But the trouble is, that had you done so, it would have appeared that so far from the truth it is that my definition is border-lined as to its character that it would have become plain to all that it is the only truly correct definition of the term as a sentence element of your proposition in the whole universe. Your unabridged dictionary contains my definition not, it may be, as to the form of its words but as to its idea. And your dictionary as well as mine brings out that it is the only truly correct definition in the universe. That is what my dictionary shows. I shall give proof by reproducing here the entire exposition, all the definitions of which there are 9. You will see that I have nothing to hide, and that your accusations are groundless.

Condition:

1. The particular mode of being of a person or thing; situation, with reference either to external or internal circumstances; existing state or case; plight, circumstance.
2. Quality, property, attribute; characteristic.
3. State of characteristic of the mind; a habit, collectively, ways, disposition, tempor.
4. Rank, state, with respect to orders or grades of society or to property; used absolutely in the sense of high rank; as a person of condition.
5. A requisite; something the non-concurrence or non-fulfilment of which would prevent a result from taking place; a prerequisite.
6. Hence—A restricting or limiting circumstance; a restriction or limitation.
7. A stipulation; a statement of terms; as an agreement or consideration demanded or offered in return for something granted or done, as in a bargain, treaty, or other engagement.
8. In law:
 - a) A statement that a thing is or shall be, which constitutes the essential part of the basis of a contract or grant; a future and uncertain act or event not belonging to the very nature of the transaction, on the performance or happening of which the legal consequences of the transaction are made to depend.
 - b. In civil law, a restriction incorporated with an act, the consequences of which is to make the effect of the violation or intention depend wholly or in part upon an external circumstance. Strictly speaking, there is a condition in the meaning of civil law only when the effect of a legal act is suspended until the accomplishment or non-accomplishment of a future and uncertain event.
9. In a college or school: a) the requirement made of a student upon failure to reach a certain standard of scholarship, as an examination, that a new examination be passed before he can be advanced in a given course or study, or can receive a degree, as a condition in mathematics.

Examining this material, we perceive that the definitions under 1 to 4 inclusive do not apply. They are no definitions of the term *condition* as a sentence-element in your proposition, "God saves His people

on the condition that they believe and repent." Hence, the aforesaid definitions must be eliminated. They do not enter in here. Second, we also perceive that the definitions under 7 to 9 inclusive are but so many applications to concrete things of the definitions under 5 and 6. Hence, there are only two of the nine definitions that directly apply and on which we must concentrate. But let us take notice that these two definitions—5 and 6 are logically one, that is, they obtain to each other the relation of premise and conclusion. This is indicated by the conjunctive *hence* which appears before the definition under 6. The reasoning is: *A requisite; something the non-concurrence or non-fulfilment of which would prevent a result from taking place; a pre-requisite; hence, a restricting or limiting circumstance.* Here you have the only definition that the dictionary gives of the term *condition* as a sentence-element in your proposition. But you say to me, "That is not the definition that you quoted. But it is the definition that I quoted not, it is true, as to the form of the words but as to logical idea. Where did I get that definition? Right out of my dictionary. The reason that I have not yet quoted it is that it appears in small print between the definitions under 5 and 6 which are printed in large type. Between these two definitions appears the following material:

a) That a cause efficient be a cause of itself two conditions are requisite. . . if either of these are wanting the cause is said to be accident. *Burgersdicius, tr. by a Gentleman*, 1. XVII. 16.

b) The diffusion of a thorough scientific education is an absolutely essential condition of industrial progress. *Huxly, Science and Culture*.

c) According to the best notion I can form of the meaning of 'condition', either as a term of philosophy or of common life, it means that on which something else is contingent, or (more definitely) which being given, something else exists or takes place. I promise to do something on condition that you do something else: that is, if you do this, I will do that; if not, I will do as I please. *J. S. Mill, Exam. of Hamilton*, IV.

Now is this material, definitely, the definition that I quoted, border-lined as to its character? It is not, certainly. For take notice, it illustrates the definition under 5 and together with this definition serves as a logical basis for the definition under 6. The definition that I quoted forms an integral part of the whole definition constituted, as it is, of the definitions under 5 and 6 together with the material appearing between these two definitions. The word *hence* has reference to the definition that I quoted as well as to the definition under 5. It cannot therefore possibly be a border-line definition. To say that a condition (as a sentence-element in your proposition) is that on which something is contingent is to say all that appears under

5 and 6, the reason being that all this material is radically related logically. Together it forms the one definition.

Why did I quote the definition in fine print and not quote the one in large print? For the following reason: The definition in small print is *properly a definition*. It sets forth the very essence of the type of conditions of which your proposition is representative. But the material under 6 is not properly a definition; what it does is to set forth the *characteristics* of conditions of the type of which your proposition is representative. Therefore I used the definition in fine print.

But you don't like that definition. You say it doesn't apply. But it does apply. Let me give the proof by using the definition under 6. According to this definition a condition—such as those with which we are now occupied—is a restricting or limiting circumstance; it restricts; it limits. Let us apply this definition to your proposition: God saves His people on the condition of their faith and repentance. You understand, of course, that faith, actual existing faith, spells a believing saint. Hence, your proposition must be made to read, "God saves His people on the condition that they believe and repent." Now actual faith, as you must well understand further, involves the will and the mind of the believer. To believe is *to will to believe* with all our heart and mind and will and strength. Hence, the idea of your proposition is, must be, verily this: God saves His people *on the condition* that they *will to believe*. *The human will to believe* is the condition in this case. What does it mean? Precisely this: The human will restricts and limits God. If this isn't dualism of the purest wool, words have absolutely no meaning,—I mean, of course, words according to the meaning that they have in the dictionary. In a following article I shall enlarge on this matter. It will become as plain as the sun in the heavens that my criticism, my whole argument, is true. It will also become plain that where we come out is exactly at the definition that I first used.

Really, brother, the definition that I now use brings out even more glaringly the corruption contained in your proposition. So I was not really hiding anything. And the definition that I here use is also contained in your dictionary, certainly. Just consult that dictionary of yours once more. It means that also the definition I first used is found in your dictionary as to its idea. And it's not a border-line definition either.

Fraternally yours,
G. M. Ophoff.

* * * *

Prayer is the most important thing in my life. If I should neglect prayer for a single day, I should lose a great deal of the fire of faith. — Martin Luther.

SION'S ZANGEN

Een Lied Der Harten

(Psalm 108; Eerste Deel)

Dit lied bestaat uit twee stukken van twee andere psalmen die we al behandelden. Van vers 1 tot 6 vindt ge terug in Psalm 57:8-12; en van vers 7 tot het einde vindt ge in Psalm 60:7-14.

Nu is het eigenaardig, dat deze twee stukken die hier in éénen psalm gemaakt zijn door den Heiligen Geest, in die twee andere psalmen dienen tot het hoogtepunt van dank en lof. In Psalm 57 is het de dank van David na de verlossingen uit de hand van Saul die hem joeg als een veldhoen op de bergen, en in Psalm 60 is het een uiting van grooten dank en lof vanwege de overwinning op de vijanden van Israel.

Ik denk, dat we hiermede ook het bijzondere doel zien van Psalm 108. Het is een psalm van lof en dank voor de groote daden Gods.

Een lied, een psalm Davids.

Ja, als we denken aan David, dan denken we ook spoedig aan het feit, dat hij de zoete zanger Israels geheeten wordt in Gods Woord. Dat is misschien het heerlijkste en grootste feit in zijn leven geweest, dat hij, namelijk, de Kerk van Christus voor mocht gaan in het zingen, loven, treuren, klagen, verlangen, en hongeren van, tot, en naar God.

“O God! mijn hart is bereid, ik zal zingen en psalmzingen, ook mijne eer.”

Gelukkige mensch die zóó mag zingen!

Stelt het U voor: zijn hart is bereid!

O, als ons hart bereid is, dan is het goed. Dan gaat dat hart doen wat het moet doen naar Gods ordonantiën. Let er maar op: dan gaat zulk een hart aan het psalmzingen, aan het loven van God in zang en dank.

Let er ook op, dat zingen en psalmzingen van harte moet geschieden. Veel later zal Paulus daar ook op wijzen, als hij de gemeente aanprijst om een melodie tot Gods lof te zingen in het hart.

Mijn hart is bereid!

Wat houdt dat in?

Dat houdt in, dat er een wonder, een groot wonder geschied is met David.

Alle harten van alle menschenkinderen zijn vreeselijk zondig. De Heilige Schrift zegt van het hart des menschen: “Arglistig is het hart, meer dan enig ding, ja doodelijk is het, wie zal het kennen?” Jer. 17:9. Bedenkt daar nu bij, dat het hart des menschen het diepste is in zijn wezen, zoodat al de uitgangen van zijn leven vanuit dat hart zijn, en ge zult zien hoe vreeselijk het er bij staat met een natuurlijk mensch.

Er moet een groot wonder geschieden vooraleer een mensch zal zeggen en doen: Ik ga den Heere zingen en psalmzingen, zooals David hier doet.

Dan moet zijn hart “bereid” zijn.

En dat houdt in, dat zijn hart veranderd is. Ezechiël zegt ons, dat de Heere het steenen hart verwisselt met een vleeschen hart. En als Jezus dat “vleeschen” hart van Zijn volk ziet, noemt Hij hen: “Reinen van hart!”

Een veranderd hart is een hart dat recht staat in verband met God en alle dingen.

Zulk een veranderd, bereid, vleeschen hart ziet God. En God ziende, ziet het ook Zijn deugden. En zoo komt zulk een bereid hart er toe om den Heere te zingen en te psalmzingen.

Wilt ge dogmatisch spreken, dan noemt ge zulk een bereid hart een wedergeboren en bekeerd hart. Paulus noemt het een nieuw hart of vernieuwd hart.

En zoo zult ge ook verstaan, wat David bedoelt met Zijn “eer”. Hij zegt dat ook zijne eer den Heere zal zingen en psalmzingen. De eer van een wedergeboren mensch zijn de zielekrachten en geestesgaven die door de kracht des Heiligen Geestes gesteld worden tot den dienst van God.

En zoo zien we David, met zijn bereid hart en met de eer van zijn ziel en geest, grijpende naar de luit en de harp.

Luistert slechts: “Waak op gij luit en harp, ik zal in den dageraad opwaken.”

De luit en de harp zijn muziekinstrumenten. Het zijn middelen om schoone klanken te doen hooren bij het gezang des menschen. De muziek is schoon en lieflijk indien zoo bestemd tot lof van God. Zoo wil God het. Maakt dan maar muziek. Dan staat ge in de juiste relatie tot God. God zal straks dan ook harpen geven aan een ieder die uit de groote verdrukking komt, zoodat ze muziek kunnen maken bij hun zingen in het groote gezang den Heere in den hemel.

Ik zal in den dageraad opwaken.

De Talmud zegt van David, dat hij een sort citer ophing bij zijn bed, en als de Noordenwind opstak, heel vroeg in den morgen, en de sterke windvlagen door de snaren van die citer bliezen, dan ontwaakte David, zeer vroeg in den morgen, en dan overdacht hij de Wet zijns Gods.

De dageraad wekt ons. Dat is regel. Hier zegt David dat hij den dageraad zal opwekken.

Het toont ons hoe David een “bereid” man was. Een man naar Gods hart.

Het toont ons ook, hoe David een type was van Jezus Christus.

Jezus was ook “bereid”. En Jezus heeft ook vaak de dageraad opgewekt. We lezen ervan hoe Hij opstond als het nog donker was. En hoe Hij door de straten van het dorpje ging om het woeste en het wilde op te zoeken om te bidden, te bidden.

We mogen zeggen, dat David met zijn “bereid” hart

door God voorbereid is, zoodat hij een type mocht zijn van Jezus, den beteren David. Denkt er aan dat David beteekent "Bemінде". Zie vers 7. En denkt dan ook aan die stem van den Vader toen Hij zeide: Deze is Mijn geliefde Zoon, in Wien al Mijn welbehagen is.

"Ik zal U loven onder de volken, O Heere! en ik zal U psalmzingen onder de natiën."

Hier kunnen we duidelijk zien, dat David vooruit de heerlijkheden van den Messias bezong. O, we stemmen toe, dat David zekerlijk onder de natiën den Naam zijns Gods bezongen heeft. Maar hoe gebrekkig als ge naast David Jezus ziet staan in de wereld van Gods gunstbewijzen, als ge Jezus ziet staan tusschen de ontelbare schare uit alle geslachten, talen, natiën en tongen.

We hebben er al eerder van gehoord. Let op Psalm 22:26, waar we lezen: "Van U zal Mijn lof zijn in eene groote gemeente; Ik zal Mijne geloften betalen in tegenwoordigheid dergenen die Hem vreezen." En daarvan is David hier type. Hij mag die groote heerlijkheid vooruit leven en beleven. En zoo zien we David die zingt onder de volken.

En waarom zingt David en psalmzingt Jezus?

Het antwoord vinden we in het volgende vers: "want Uwe goedertierenheid is groot tot boven de hemelen, en Uwe waarheid tot aan de bovenste wolken."

We hebben keer op keer geschreven van die wondere goedertierenheid des Heeren. Beide in Psalm 106 en psalm 107 ging het keer op keer over de goedertierenheid des Heeren.

Maar wat geeft het? We worden nooit moede of mat om te vertellen van die wondere deugd Gods. Want wonderlijk is die deugd.

De goedertierenheid Gods is die liefdevolle deugd van God, waardoor alles in Hem gedrongen wordt om U goed te doen en goed te zijn. God tiert van goedheid over Zijn volk. Daarom is dan ook alles tot Uw eeuwig wel. Ook de dingen die tegen ons schijnen te zijn. Alle dingen werken U ten goede omdat God U goedertieren is.

Wilt ge nu eens duidelijk en onomwonden die goedertierenheid zien, dan moet ge sterk op Jezus zien, zooals Hij klaagt, zucht, brult aan het kruis. Dat is des Heeren goedertierenheid over U.

Zoo kunnen we erbij, dat de Heilige Geest van die deugd zegt, dat zij tot boven de hemelen is. Dat wil zeggen, dat het onze bevassing te boven gaat. Ergens elders staat er, dat Zijne goedertierenheid geweldig is over die Hem vreezen. En dat geeft ons dezelfde idee.

En Uwe waarheid tot aan de bovenste wolken.

De waarheid is de juiste relatie tusschen God en Zijn schepsel. De waarheid is de rechte lijn. De leugen is de kronkelende slang. Jezus is de Waarheid. En de waarheid maakt ons vrij. Van nature zijn wij krom en verdraaid. Doch als Jezus, de waarheid Gods,

ons verlost, dan staan wij weer in de juiste relatie tot God.

En die waarheid Gods is tot aan de bovenste wolken.

Dat is: we kunnen er niet bij. We kunnen het niet bevatten. Ja, we zullen er van zingen en psalmsingen, en we zullen dit blijven doen totdat geen maan meer schijnt, maar verstaan? Neen, we zullen het nooit kunnen peilen en doorzien. Daar zijn de deugden Gods in Christus Jezus te diep voor. Ge zult den lof nooit uitputten, tot in alle eeuwigheid niet.

"Verhef U, O God! boven de hemel, en Uwe eer over de gansche aarde."

Hebt ge bemerkt, dat het kind van God gaarne den Heere verhoogt? Zoo ook hier weer: Verhef U, O God! Als God maar verhoogd mag worden, dan is het goed voor Gods kind.

Let er op, dat dit de taal is van een "bereid" hart.

Een "onbereid" hart verhoogt zichzelf, het menschedom, en de wereld van creaturen. Maar God? Nooit. Men haat God in de wereld. Let op hunne uitingen. Het is alles de lof des menschen.

Maar het bereide hart onderwijst hem, en dan ziet men, dat God God moet zijn, en dat wil zeggen, dat Hij verhoogd moet worden. En daar men weet, dat alle kracht en macht in den Almachtige woont, roept men Hem toe: Verhef U, O God! En, Heere, zorg er voor, dat Uwe heerlijke deugden gezien worden over de gansche aarde. En als dat geschiedt, en het geschiedt ook, dan is het goed voor de kerk. Dan zullen zij psalm 19 zingen: De hemelen vertellen Gods eer. . . .

"Opdat Uwe beminden bevrijd worden, geef heil door Uwe rechterhand en verhoor ons."

Zooals het vaker gebeurt, hier hebt ge het evangelie in het klein. Er zit bijna alles in.

Uwe beminden! Ziedaar het woord voor de uitverkorenen. Bemind van voor de grondlegging der wereld. Ik heb U liefgehad met een eeuwige liefde, roept God die beminden toe.

En die beminden zijn gegroepeerd rondom een Bemінде die den hemel zal doen zingen tot in alle eeuwigheid. En die Bemінде is Jezus, de Zone Gods.

Die beminden moeten bevrijd worden.

Zij zijn in de gevangenis. En het is het gevang der zonde en der schuld en des doods.

En zij zijn in dat gevang naar het recht Gods.

Zij moeten van dit alles bevrijd worden.

En het gevangen zijn is het ergste in hun diepe hart. Daar zijn ze zoo vreeselijk gevangen, dat zij slaven van de zonde zijn.

Om die beminden te bevrijden gaat de groote Bemінде naar het gevang van die uitverkorenen. En in het gevang der schuld en der zonde betaalt Hij voor alle zonde en schuld van de gekenden.

Leest het vers nog eens: "opdat Uwe beminden bevrijd worden, geef heil door Uwe rechterhand en verhoor ons."

Ik zeide zooeven, dat we hier het evangelie in het klein hebben. En terecht. Geef heil door Uwe rechterhand! Dat is immers Jezus. Dat is zelfs de letterlijke beteekenis van Jezus' naam. Hij is het heil des Heeren. Of Hij is de Heiland die heil werkt.

En gaat door des Heeren rechterhand.

En dat beteekent, eerst, dat het heil rust op de gerechtigheid Gods. Daar kunt ge van lezen op duizend bladzijden van Gods Woord. Dat komt heel duidelijk uit in de Evangeliën. Jesaja profeteerde er al van. Sion zal door recht verlost worden. Al de uitverkorenen zijn van nature kinderen des toorns gelijk ook de anderen. En aan het recht Gods moet genoeg gedaan worden. Welnu, Jezus Christus is het heil des Heeren, dat rust op recht en waarheid, want Hij gaat staan in het gericht op de plaats van al Zijn volk, en betaalt den prijs in Zijn dierbaar bloed. Gedurende Zijn leven zuchtte Hij er immers van: Hoe word Ik geperst tot dat het alles volbracht zij!

En, tweedens, dat het gaat door de groote kracht en mogendheid des Heeren. Dat zit ook in die idee van de rechterhand des Heeren. Het neemt een almachtige God om Zijn volk, tezamen met Zijn Zoon, uit den eeuwiggen dood te roepen. Leest Ef. 1:19, 20.

En Hij heeft dezen naam: Hoorder der gebeden!

G. Vos.

IN HIS FEAR

Labeled Or Unlabeled

If one reads again "Van Zonde En Genade" (alas that this book was not translated into the English), one feels that at the bottom of the Three Points of Nineteen-Twenty-Four there lay a certain world-and-life view. That our leaders at that time had to fight again for the truths of unconditional salvation, absolute sovereignty of God, and the total depravity of man, was due, in no small part, to the prevailing false world-and-life view. In nineteen-twenty-four the error root was there and it shot forth Three Points above the ecclesiastical ground. Now another World War has come and gone, a new world order presses for attention and the world-and-life view which first appeared in nineteen-twenty-four is still there and the Three Points are gradually reaching their fruition.

The world-and-life view which is common grace is there as much today if not more than it ever was (for things develop do they not?), but there is this difference that it is not always labeled. And therefore the more dangerous.

Thee Three Points were three gross errors. The world-and-life view which lay at the bottom of them, which produced them and since has sustained them is the greatest error of all. It is the ground-error. The events of nineteen-twenty-four point not only to doctrinal differences, they point to something ethical no less. The doctrinal differences which came out in the Three Points point to ethical issues.

We do well therefore to keep these things clearly before the minds of our people and especially before the minds of the coming generation.

We are about twenty-five years removed from nineteen-twenty-four.

We must not forget what the Christian Reformed Churches expressed in their Three Points about a generation ago. Neither must we forget the Common Grace world-and-life view which gendered them. That world-and-life view is there today as much and even more than it ever was. Our people, and especially our coming generation must acquaint themselves and keep themselves acquainted with the issues which are so vital to the service of God and His truth in this world.

Now and then, here and there, Common Grace is mentioned by name. Very seldom do they mention the Three Points. In fact it seems to be their policy not to mention these things very much. But their world-and-life view expresses itself everywhere and all the time. Therefore we must constantly be on our guard. There is a way of presenting the unscriptural world-and-life view without notifying you that they are really developing Common Grace. Common Grace can be preached and taught very well without mentioning it by name. In other words, not everything which is radically Common Grace is labeled as such.

In the early years during the heat of the conflict the things were wont to be mentioned by name; confessions were supposedly cited and texts were adduced to bolster the Three Points. Everybody knew what was going on and everyone could be on his guard. But now, by and large, the things go unlabeled. Men present Common Grace in all its forms of error yet seldom is it identified for what it is. Worse yet, that which should really be labeled as Common Grace is marked as being the reformed philosophy of life to which no one would object—unless you want to be an Anabaptist.

It is our calling therefore to teach ourselves and especially the coming generation to identify the Common Grace world-and-life view wherever it presents itself. We have to label it. Labeling it we must reject it and instead of it embrace the view which Scripture presents us and which God has graciously preserved for us as Protestant Reformed Churches.

We want to cite a few examples of this unlabeled Common Grace.

The "Back to God" radio program of the Christian

Reformed Churches is a consistent exposition and a diligent development of the pernicious theory of Common Grace, yet, strangely enough, it is never mentioned by name. This program is public, everyone can listen to it and printed copies are always available. We have listened to it often and we have printed copies which are a cross section of what is presented over several years of work.

Several things arrest your attention.

One of these is that the listeners are constantly induced to make this earth, if not this world, the center of their attention. Naturally we as christians are in the world and have our labor in the midst of that world and in the midst of America, but that is something else than to set our hopes upon that world. During the last War our enemies were said to be Hitler and his Nazism, now it is Communism and the communistic idealologies. To be sure Nazism and Communism present idealologies which are anti-christian, and therefore it is our duty to contend against them. That could not be different. But the error is that the "Back to God Hour" wants to put Nazism and Communism out of the way in order to obtain a world of peace and security. Read sermon after sermon of their air-program and you ever remain only in this world. It never reaches higher than what is under the sun. When the "amen" comes your horizons are the natural horizons of things visible with perhaps an occasional hope for something better for America. But we remain on this ground. The "better country" of which Abraham was such a proponent, you seldom hear of it.

Scripture teaches us that the church has no world-program in that sense of the word. Neither can the church take sides with existing world-programs. For the church is not an organization which exists alongside of myriads other organizations, neither is it an institution which can be listed alongside of other institutions. For Paul tells us that we have received not the spirit of the world but the spirit which is of God; and John says: we are of God and the whole world lieth in wickedness. How then shall these two, so opposite and so contrary work together on some world-program?

But above that, how dangerous to send the church off on a mission of capturing the world and possessing this earth. The only result will be that it loses itself in the world. Whether men do this under the guise of the "sovereign claims of a sovereign God" (as they are wont to say) or whether men do this under no guise at all, but merely because they love carnal things, ultimately it makes little difference. Both are seeking the things which are below. And that was Common Grace.

Just to cite one concrete illustration of this, let me refer you to the "Back to God" radio speech of March

6, 1949, page 2. The speaker tells us that "God is the absolute sovereign. And because man was made in the likeness of God, the creator has ordained that man must share His ownership. It is the expression of our spiritual kinship to God that we are to inherit the earth, possess it, develop it and explore its powers". Then follows a speech in which Communism is condemned (which is all right of course) and in which Capitalism, in its ideal state, is championed, and it ends with a prayer that "our world . . . be blessed with a new birth of freedom . . ." And so we remain on earth. And this was Common Grace. It links the church with the world, regenerate with unregenerate. But it stirs up the church also to seek to inherit this earth. That we shall inherit the earth means something vastly different than that the children of God shall stake their claims finally on American soil or any other. This philosophy, intended perhaps to make the world churchly, actually will make the church worldly. And that after all was the meaning of Common Grace back in 1924. It means that today in increased measure.

Another thing which strikes one's attention is that the coming back of Christ, especially as the book of Revelation presents it, is very seldom presented. The exceptions, I think, will establish the rule that the Back to God Hour presents no eschatology. Certainly the Christian Reformed world-and-life view as it is presented over the air does not stem from nor center around the coming back of Christ with all that this parousia implies.

One can read sermon after sermon and never even find it hinted at that our world order is bound for the chaos of the judgment of God, and for the purging of fire of which Peter speaks. Little about the chaos which will come, little about the Christ Who will make His appearance in this chaos to redeem His Church. It seems that the parousia of Christ does not fit into the philosophy of America back to God.

Common Grace no doubt commits the advocates thereof to a world-and-life view which is actually Post-millennial, at least in theory. One can easily see that a world-and-life view which centers our attention on gaining America for God does not agree very well with the eschatology which the book of Revelation presents us.

This same world-and-life view glares at you from almost every page of the Course of Study which the Union of Christian Schools has prepared and which it hopes the teachers will teach in our christian schools. It too is in theory post-millennial. It has no room at all for the Scriptural idea of the antithesis. It wallows in Common Grace, but without labeling it.

There then you have a world-and-life view, carefully developed, permeated with Common Grace, but not labeled and therefore the more dangerous.

Over against this we do well to be well founded in Scripture, well posted in the errors of Common Grace and equipped with a world-and-life view which is given us of God Himself. We are twenty-five years away from nineteen-twenty-four. Know how to label things.

More about this in a future article, D. V.

M. Gritters.

PERISCOPE

What Is Coming To Our Synod? ? ?

From the Synodical Agenda we point out the following:

1. A request from Classis West that our Synod once again formulate a testimony to the Christian Reformed Churches, calling them to repentance and pointing out that gradually we are growing farther apart even in such fields as Education, Economics, Social Activity, etc.

2. Also from Classis West an overture that "Synod put forth every effort to obtain a Holland-speaking missionary to labor among the Holland immigrants." In this connection our entire denominational mission work will be reviewed, the question of English and Holland speaking missionaries, the question of Canada as a field of labor and, in connection with a protest and appeal, the question of the co-laboring of our missionaries, all will undoubtedly be reviewed and decided. It is to be hoped that some concrete action will be taken regarding the mission work in Canada rather than the vague and indefinite "Synod advises that we continue our mission endeavour in Canada and make provision to do so" and "Synod decides to leave the matter of provisions for Canadian Missionary endeavour in the hands of the Consistory and the Mission Committee."

3. Besides the protest mentioned above the only other item from Classis East is an overture asking Synod to consider ways and means of establishing our own normal schools for the training of teachers.

4. Besides this Synod of course considers the routine reports of the mission committee, the theological school committee and especially with a view to the future of our school we may expect some discussion and decisions.

5. Finally there is the matter of the subsidies for needy churches, the elections of various committee

members and such other routine matters that usually accompany the work of Synod.

God bless our Synod and give those delegated the spiritual ability to discuss and decide all things impartially and objectively in harmony with God's Word and the welfare of the Churches.

* * * *

Christian Reformed Statistics:

From the 1949 Yearbook of the Christian Reformed Churches we take over the follow statistics:

Families—33,880.

Individual members—142,818.

Ministers—390.

And from the Wachter we take over the following breakdown of the last mentioned figure.

Regular congregations—	266
Home Missions—	22
Foreign and Indian Missions—	21
Education (Calvin College and Seminary, High Schools, Ann Arbor)	22
Miscellaneous (Banner, C.P.H., R.B.I., Chaplains, Radio, Mission Secretary, and No Congregation)	9
Emeritus Ministers	45
Total Ministers—	390

* * * *

Controversy May Be a Duty!

"Controversy in religion is a hateful thing. It is hard enough to fight the devil, the world, and the flesh, without private differences in our own camp. But there is one thing which is even worse than controversy, and that is false doctrine tolerated, allowed and permitted, without protest or molestation. It was controversy that won the battle of the Protestant Reformation. If the views that some men hold were correct, it is plain we never ought to have had any Reformation at all! For the sake of peace, we ought to have gone on worshipping the Virgin and bowing down to images and relics to this very day! Away with such trifling. There are times when controversy is not only a duty but a benefit. Give me the mighty thunderstorm rather than the pestilential malaria. The one walks in darkness and poisons us in silence, and we are never safe. The other frightens and alarms for a little season. But it soon clears and it clears the air. It is plain Scriptural duty to 'contend earnestly for the

faith once delivered to the saints.' (Jude 2)" This by J. C. Ryle in the *Southern Presbyterian Journal*.

* * * *

Pictures Of Christ. . . .

Recently an attempt was made to portray the distinctiveness of Calvinism in Art. To this attempt in itself together with its supporting writers and critics we do not call attention particularly, referring those who might be interested to the recent issues of the "Presbyterian Guardian".

But in connection with the debate on this subject our attention was particularly drawn to part of the criticism offered by Prof. John Murray which applies not alone to the above subject but to the whole field of pictures of Christ, to which, by the way, we are being subjected more and more. Especially is this true of our children, with their Bible Storybooks, Bible ABC's etc. We quote the following:

"It is supremely imperative that every conception we frame respecting our Lord should be true and every emotion we entertain pure and holy. If we hold that pictures of Christ are legitimate then it is because we consider that to some extent they minister to the framing of a proper conception of Him and to the cultivation of devotion to Him, in a word, that intelligent devotion is in some way promoted thereby.

"We must also avow that our knowledge of Christ and of the devotion owing to Him is derived from the Scripture. Now it so happens that the Scripture does not provide us with data respecting the physical appearance of our Lord. No one today knows what His appearance or likeness was. Any picture, therefore, is the work of the artist's imagination and there is no norm or test by which we may determine its correspondence with the reality. This is an exceedingly serious matter. We all know how our conception of a person may be influenced by that person's physical appearance. The same holds true with reference to pictures purporting to represent the Saviour. Particularly is this true in the case of children and also of adults with certain types of mentality. In certain instances we may be sure that the conception entertained is very deeply affected by the picture or pictures. The conclusion is surely apparent. By pictures of Christ we are laying ourselves open to the influence exerted by something that has no warrant in the only source we possess from which our conceptions of Christ are to be derived and the only norm by which they are to be determined and corrected. It is surely criminal to subject ourselves or others to such an influence. Deflection from truth in our conception of mere men is bad enough. But deflection from truth in the con-

ception we entertain regarding our Lord is the sin that lies close to idolatry."

Certainly we agree with Prof. Murray and well may we as parents (and perhaps also as individuals?) be on guard against the ever-increasing trend to present Christ visually in pictures.

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From an article in *Moody Monthly* entitled "What shall we do with Television", we quote the following:

"Taking the offerings of radio and television as they now are, let us look to the responsibilities which Christian parents should face in training their children to meet these forms of technical progress. It is just as well to introduce the problem of movies, comic magazines, cartoon strips, and the field of children's 'literature', as no family can successfully ignore them entirely. What is the Christian parent to do to equip his child to meet the world? There are positive approaches to be made here. A negative program, or the refusal to face it entirely, merely hands the youngster over to the other side that much sooner.

"First of all, the parent must see that the child has so many wholesome interests and such definite Christian experiences that he has little time for the trivial and worldly pursuits. To be concrete, although our two older children are ready for school, they have practically no interest in cartoons, as we have never bothered to introduce the funny page of the newspaper. We read instead from chosen and lovely books, especially the Bible, and they would rather turn the pages of these books than the less attractive and undesirable comics.

"We purchased a small inexpensive victrola for them when they were just old enough to operate it, and have stocked a library of lovely and educational records which they play whenever they choose. The radio, they understand, is our instrument, and they listen only to the things we choose, which happens to be largely news, classical music, plus story hours and other programs from WMBI.

"We have a projector and screen for our own colored slides, and the occasional motion pictures they view are travelogues or the educational pictures they see in school. They simply do not know there is anything else so far.

"As they grow older, we plan to introduce family games, travel, hikes, bike trips, and also to familiarize them with all the attractive opportunities for young people to have a good time in our church. . . ."

Certainly we may well take a lesson from this activity, also with regard to the radio and television (when it comes) so that our homes may remain free from that spirit of evil which is everywhere surrounding us today.

J. Howerzyl.