

# THE STANDARD

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## MEDITATION

### De Behoudenis Des Levens

“Want zoo wie zijn leven zal willen behouden, die zal hetzelfde verliezen; naar zoo wie zijn leven verliezen zal om mijnentwil, die zal hetzelfde vinden. Want wat baat het een mensch, zoo hij de geheele wereld gewint, en lijdt schade zijner ziel? Of wat zal een mensch geven tot lossing van zijne ziel?”

—Matt. 15:25, 26

Onze tekst wordt ook gevonden in Lucas 17:33, en in Johannes 12:25. In Lucas staat onze tekst in verband met de geschiedenis van Lot in Sodom, welke geschiedenis de Heere Jezus aanhaalt in verband met zijn waarschuwing aangaande het einde der wereld, welke Hij beëindigt door te zeggen: Gedenkt aan de vrouw van Lot, en dan komt onze tekst, en hij wordt ons gegeven als een reden om toch niet de aarde en het genieten van den zonde te verkiezen boven het goede dat blijven zal tot in der eeuwigheid toe. In Johannes 12:25 staat mijn tekst in verband met het vragen der Grieken om Jezus toch te mogen zien. Die vraag bewoog Jezus om te spreken van Zijn sterven. Hij ziet in dat vragen van die Grieken een vooruitgrijpen naar de zaligheid die komen zal voor de Heidenen, en in verband daarmee zegt Jezus van Zichzelve: voorwaar zeg Ik u, indien het tarwegraan in de aarde niet valt en sterft, zoo blijft het aléén, maar indien het sterft, zoo brengt het veel vrucht voort. Ook hier hebt ge weer dezelfde gedachte: Jezus verkoor het verliezen van Zijn leven tot ontvangen van de geheele wereld van Gods welbehagen. En dan past de Heere die wet des Koninkrijks toe voor Zijne volgelingen, zooals dat ook gevonden wordt in mijn tekst. En in de derde plaats, het verband van den tekst in mijn teksthoofdstuk wordt gevonden in het voorgaande vers, waar we de vereischten van het discipelschap beluisteren, als

Jezus zegt: Zoo iemand achter Mij wil komen, die verloochene zichzelf, en neme zijn kruis op, en volg Mij. Dus weer dezelfde gedachte: men zal niet de aarde en de zonde verkiezen, maar alle die dingen willen verliezen, om toch maar vat te mogen hebben aan de dingen die blijven tot in alle eeuwigheid. Vooral het tweede lid van mijn tekst legt daar nadruk op, door te zeggen: Zeg nu eens, dat men de geheele tegenwoordige wereld zou kunnen bemachtigen, wat zou men dan nog hebben? Op zijn best een honderd jaar, en dan? Dan komt de oordeelsdag en de eeuwige verdoemenis. Daartegenover komt weer de boodschap van onzen tekst in een waarschuwing: Zoekt toch niet om Uw aardse leven te behouden, maar verliest het, om daartegenover vat te mogen hebben aan het ware leven, het zalige leven van Gods Verbond.

★ ★ ★ ★

Het is duidelijk, dat de Heere Jezus het oog heeft op ons natuurlijk leven hier op aarde, het leven, dat we bij onze natuurlijke geboorte ontvingen, en dat ten einde loopt bij onzen laatsten snik, met alle aardse banden en betrekkingen. En dat leven is zoet voor ons als natuurlijk menschen. En we mogen er ook wel bij voegen dat zulk gevoelen natuurlijk is. Het is onnatuurlijk om zelfmoord te plegen. Evenwel, Gods Woord en onze ondervinding leeren ons ook, dat dit natuurlijke leven zeer vuil en zondig is. Dat natuurlijke leven ligt onder den vloek van God. En dat ervaren we van dag tot dag. Sindsdien we in Adam in arren moede onze vuisten balden tegen God en het Hem aanzeiden, dat we niet wilden, dat Hij Koning over ons zou zijn, is alles tegen ons, en overal hooren en ervaren we den vloek Gods. Stervende zult gij sterven, zeide God, en zoo is het. Ons geheele leven hier op aarde is een gestadige dood. We zijn gewillige slaven van den duivel en van de zonde die woelt in ons verstand en hart. En zoo zien we de vreeselijke wereld der zondige menschenkinderen, een wereld waarvan Jezus zegt dat zij gekarakteriseerd wordt door de be-

geerlijkheid der oogen, de begeerlijkheid des vleesch en de grootschheid des levens. Ons geheele natuurlijke leven is verdorven en wordt steeds meer verdorven, totdat de gruwelijke mensch der zonde in den Tempel Gods zal zitten, en zeggen, dat hij God is. Dat is het leven waar Jezus het over heeft in mijn tekst, in de eerste instantie. En nu zegt Jezus, dat zoo wie dat leven behouden wil, hetzelfde zal verliezen. Bij den eersten oogopslag zouden we zeggen: Wel, wie is er die zijn leven niet wenscht te behouden? Zelfmoord is toch zonde? En we haasten ons om te poneeren, dat in zekeren zin we ons leven moeten behouden. Zelfmoord is zonde. Maar let wel, Jezus bedoelt geen zelfmoord. Hij heeft het over onze geestelijk houding tegenover ons zondig bestaan hier op aarde. Het is zonde om onszelven en ons vuile zondige leven te willen handhaven tegenover God. Om dat leven te willen handhaven ten koste van Gods eer en glorie. Om dat leven te verdedigen al maakt het ons waardig om tot in alle eeuwigheid verdoemd te worden door een rechtvaardig God. Als we dat doen dan zullen we ons bestaan tot in der eeuwigheid verliezen. Als we ons vereenzelvigen met ons doemwaardige bestaan voor God, dan komen we om, en zullen stervan, tot in de hel toe, in den eeuwigden dood. En dat komt vanwege de aanbiddelijke deugd van Gods onkreukbare gerechtigheid. En het is openbaar, dat de natuurlijke mensch juist dit doet. De geheele wereld handhaaft zichzelf tegenover God. Hoe meer God van den hemel toornt over alle goddeloosheid en ongerechtigheid van het leven der menschen, hoe meer men zijn vuist balt in den haat tegen God en Zijn gezalfde. Zoo was het met Adam en Eva, en zoo is het gesteld met hunne kinderen. Men zal het wagen met zichzelf, al staat dan ook alles op 't spel. En als Gods oordeelen op de aarde zijn in oorlogen, pestilentiën, aardbevingen, en allerlei andere vreeselijke dingen, dan belegt men vergaderingen, neemt men raad, gaat verbonden aan, enz. Maar één ding zal men nooit doen, en dat is, men zal nooit tot God gaan en zeggen: Heere, we geven ons geheel en al over en werpen ons op Uwe barmhartigheid. Men handhaaft zijn goddeloosheid en goddelooze leven tot den laatsten snik. Dat is het leven dat verloren gaat.

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En nu het leven dat behouden werd.

Dat leven openbaart zich allereerst als hatende het leven, dat verloren gaat. Het leven, dat behouden wordt is het nieuwe, hemelsche, wederomgeborene leven. Welnu, zoo spoedig dat nieuwe leven tot bewustzijn komt in de bekeering, zoo spoedig begint ge ook Uw natuurlijke leven te haten. Dat wil zeggen, het zondige leven, het vuile en goddelooze leven dat ons

eigen is vanaf den eersten schreeuw bij onze natuurlijke geboorte. En daarom niet in den zin, dat een Christen ooit geneigd zou zijn om een einde te maken aan zijn natuurlijke bestaan, en alzoo zelfmoord bedrijven. Maar in den zin, dat de Christen beseft, dat dit natuurlijke leven zijn eigenlijke leven niet is. En, in de tweede plaats, beseft Christen, dat dit zijn natuurlijke leven vuil en zondig is, zoodat hij zich elken dag schaamt voor zijn natuurlijke leven, en het dan ook gedurig voor God belijdt, en met den tollenaar uitroept: O God, wees mij den zondaar genadig! En dat bedoelt Jezus als Hij zegt, dat men zijn leven zal verliezen, om hetzelfde weer te vinden. Maar dan verheerlijkt, geheiligt, vereeuwigt tot oneindige glorie voor Gods aangezicht. En soms verliest men zijn natuurlijke leven ook geheel en al in den meest concreten zin des woords. Zooals b.v. in dagen van vervolging, zooals Uwe en mijne vaders bewezen hebben toen zij hun leven om Gods wil op den brandstapel lieten. En dat eerste leven gaven ze om hetzelfde verheerlijkt weer te ontvangen. En God alleen weet hooven van ons dat zullen hebben te doen in den dag van den Antichrist die haastig aan 't komen is. En zoo zien we wat Jezus bedoelt als Hij zegt, dat men door het eene leven te verliezen een ander leven ontvangt. En nu zegt Paulus in Coll. 3, dat dit nieuwe, heerlijke leven, dat men gewinnen zal eigenlijk Christus is. Christus die ons leven is, zegt Paulus daar. Daar zit veel in. Eerst, dat dit leven het leven is, dat Christus zelf leeft in hart en ziel en al zijne geneugten. Dat is het leven, dat Jezus ontving bij Zijne verrijzenis in den hof van Jozef van Arimathea. In de tweede plaats is het het leven van Christus, omdat Hij het verdiende voor Zichzelf en voor al degenen die Hem geschonken zijn van den Vader. En derdens is het het leven van Christus, want ge ontvangt het door Zijn Heiligen Geest en Woord. En zooals we zooeven al gezegd hebben in een ander verband, het is het leven der wedergeboorte en der bekeering en des geloofs en der heiligmaking, dat nu in beginsel ons geschonken is, en volmaakt zal worden in den dag van Jezus Christus. Dat leven hetwelk behouden wordt door het verlies van het zondige leven is hetzelfde als wanneer de Heilige Schrift spreekt van het eeuwige leven. Het is het burgerschap van den hemel, het is het verbondsleven van God, het is het leven des vredes van Gods vreeverbond. Het is het leven van Gods gerechtigheid, de gerechtigheid die volmaakt in Christus woont, zóo volmaakt, dat de Schrift tot driemaal Hem noemt: de Heere onze gerechtigheid. En dat leven maakt U tot krijgsknechten van Jezus vanuit het oogpunt van den drie-voudigen vijand: Satan, de wereld en ons eigen zondige vleesch. En vanuit het oogpunt der nieuwe aarde en des nieuwen hemels maakt dat

leven U tot een pelgrim die met zijn staf en zijn kroes als vreemdeling en bijwoner verkeert, doch die verlangt en hunkert en dorst en hongert om dat leven volmaakt te leven in het nieuwe Koninkrijk bij God in Christus.

Dat is het leven, dat behouden wierd.

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En nu nog wat over datzelfde leven vanuit het oogpunt van zijn dierbaarheid.

Die dierbaarheid zullen we zien op den achtergrond van de namelooze armoede van het leven dat verloren ging.

Van die gedachte zegt Jezus: Want wat baat het een mensch, zoo hij de geheele wereld gewint, en lijdt schade zijner ziel? Of wat zal een mensch geven tot lossing van zijn ziel? In beide leden van dezen tekst hebt ge eigenlijk dezelfde gedachte, doch uit twee verschillende oogpunten. In het eerste lid stelt de Heere ons voor de gunstigste gesteldheid. Zeg nu, zegt Jezus, dat een mensch hemel en aarde werkelijk kon bemachtigen en dat dat dan zijn leven mocht zijn. Alle menschen, dieren, engelen en duivelen waren dan van hem. Zou hij daardoor gelukkig kunnen zijn? Zou hij zijn ziel daarmee kunnen voeden? En zou hij door de geheele wereld te bezitten den Heere kunnen verzoenen? Op al die vragen en meer andere is het antwoord: Neen! Al die rijkdom zou hem niets baten. Het zou hem zelfs nog ellendiger maken dan wanneer hij als een bedelaar rondwandelde op aarde voor zijn geschonken span des levens. Want hoe meer men van deze wereld ontvangt, hoe meer men het verzondigt. Als men een arme man die goddeloos is veel geld geeft, dan gaat hij met dat geld zondigen. Het baat ons niet om veel te hebben van dit leven. En in het tweede lid hebt ge dezelfde gedachte: Wat zal een mensch geven tot lossing van zijn ziel? Zeg dat een goddeloos mensch hemel en aarde bezat: zou God dien rijkdom aanvaarden tot losprijs van zijn zondige ziel? Neen toch. Er is een eeuwige schuld vanwege het zondigen tegen de Majesteit Gods, en zij eischt een eeuwige straf en dat is straflijden in de hel. Dus er is geen dierbaarheid in het bezit van aardsche, wereldsche dingen op zichzelf. Mag men ze hebben in Gods gunst: wel en goed. Want dan werken zij mede ten goede. Doch op zichzelf, als de bezittingen vermeerderen vermeerderen ook de zonden en de schulden tot verdorpenis.

Hoe geheel anders met het geestelijke, het eeuwige leven dat behouden wierd. Dat is alreede zoo, als ge maar een klein beginsel er van hebt op deze door de zonde gevloekte aarde. Want zijn karakter is goed,

genadig, barmhartig, gaarne vergevend, goedertieren. Ik geef in die woorden een beschrijving van den Christen die dit leven der behoudenis in zich om draagt. En zijn strekking is ook dierbaar, want dat leven springt op in U tot de Bron van hetzelfde, en dat is God. Dan zingt gij: 't Hijgend hert der jacht ontkomen; schreeuwt niet sterker naar 't genot, van de frissche waterstroomen, dan mijn ziel verlangt naar God. Ja, mijn ziel dorst naar den Heer. God des levens, ach, wanneer zal ik naderen voor Uw oog, in Uw Huis Uw Naam verhoogen!

En zijn omvang is breed. Men mag nogal eens gaarne zeggen van den Christen en van de Kerk van Christus, dat zij enghartig zijn. Och arme, het is juist andersom. Het leven van beneden, van het stof, van de wereld is juist enghartig. Men is tevreden met wat stof, wat geld, wat aarde en met veel zonde en vuilheid. Hoe vreeselijk eng! Maar den Christen is alles breed. Zijn hart en ziel omvangt hemel en aarde met alle schepselen. Veel meerder nog: hij omvangt den oneindigen God in Jezus Christus, zijn Verlosser en Zaligmaker. En hij zal niet rusten totdat hij aanligt aan de rivier Gods in het nieuwe Koninkrijk. Wilt ge nu eens luisteren naar iemand die zijn natuurlijke leven verloor om het weer te vinden in oneindige mate? Luistert dan: Wien heb ik nevens U in den hemel? Nevens U lust mij ook niets op de aarde.

G. Vos.



#### IN MEMORIAM

On the 23rd of January, 1953, it pleased the Lord to transfer from this earthly tabernacle into the realm of perfection our beloved father, grandfather, and great-grandfather,

GEORGE J. BOERSMA

at the age of 75 years.

It is a joy to us to know that our father has entered into the eternal rest of those whose only comfort in life and death is in Jesus Christ their Saviour. May we, the children, also strive to enter into that rest.

#### The Children:

Mr. and Mrs. Peter Clement  
Mr. and Mrs. Louis De Vries  
Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Boersma  
Mr. and Mrs. Herman Boersma  
Mr. and Mrs. George Boersma  
Mr. Bernard Boersma  
Mr. and Mrs. Henry Vander Wal  
Mr. and Mrs. Richard Groenhout  
Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Den Hollander  
36 Grandchildren  
12 Great-grandchildren

Grand Rapids, Michigan

### THE STANDARD BEARER

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## EDITORIALS

### Reorganization

In recent meetings of the staff of the *Standard Bearer* it was decided to inject some new blood both into the editorial staff and into the contents of our magazine.

New rubrics were added. And for those new rubrics it was decided to add new members to the editorial staff of the *Standard Bearer*.

From the 1st of March our paper, the Lord willing, will offer the following rubrics:

1. Meditation,—Rev. G. Vos.
2. Editorials,—Rev. H. H.
3. Our Doctrine,—Rev. H. H.
4. The Day of Shadows,—Rev. G. M. Ophoff
5. Through the Ages,—Rev. G. M. Ophoff
6. In His Fear,—Rev. J. Heys
7. From Holy Writ,—Rev. G. Lubbers
8. The Voice of our Fathers,—Rev. H. C. Hoeksema
9. Contending for the Faith,—Rev. H. Veldman
10. Decency and Order,—Rev. G. Vanden Berg
11. All Around Us,—Rev. M. Schipper

As to the titles of these rubrics, by the *Voice of our Fathers* is meant our confessions. And the editor of that rubric will start by explaining the Canons of Dordrecht. By *Contending for the Faith* we mean to cover the history of doctrine. The title is based upon Philippians 1:27: "Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, *with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.*" The history of doctrine, as is well known, is characterized by constant strife, by a continual battle for the truth. By the title *Decency and Order* we refer to the subject of Church Polity. And also this title is based upon Scripture, in I Cor. 14:40: "Let all things be done decently and in order." And seeing that henceforth all the rubrics will have English titles, we thought it fitting to bring the title of *Periscope* in harmony with the rest. *Periscope*, as you probably know, is a Greek title, meaning "viewing around". And instead of this we have now chosen "All around Us".

These rubrics will fill the *Standard Bearer* completely. This, however, does not mean that no room will be provided for contributions. It is left to the discretion of the editor to make such room. Only, the staff decided to remind contributors that contributions

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must not consist in long articles. They are limited, say, to from three to five hundred words. The readers will kindly bear this in mind. Of course, the editor is at liberty to provide space occasionally, and as an exception, for longer articles. But as a rule this limitation will be strictly maintained.

Finally, it was also decided to drop the Holland language, and to publish the entire *Standard Bearer* in English, so that even the book reviews which occasionally appear in the *Standard Bearer*, as well as the meditations, will all be in the English language from now on.

We hope that with God's blessing this will be an improvement in the *Standard Bearer*, and provide the reader with different and more interesting material.

H.H.

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## The Promise According to the Confessions

There is still more in our Baptism Form that points to the fact that according to our fathers the promise in baptism was not for all the children, head for head, but only for the elect, even though all the children must receive the sign and seal of baptism according to the rule that God establishes His covenant in the line of continued generations.

We may omit the sentence that "baptism is come in the place of circumcision, therefore infants are to be baptized as *heirs of the kingdom of God, and of his covenant*."

But we wish to call attention to the first question of baptism: "Whether you acknowledge, that although our children are conceived and born in sin, and therefore are subject to all miseries, yea, to condemnation itself; yet that they are sanctified in Christ, and therefore, as members of his Church ought to be baptized?"

Especially to the clause, "they are sanctified in Christ," we wish to call your attention.

This clause has been the subject of discussion and strife in the Reformed churches very frequently. Especially as the membership of the church increased and discipline was more and more neglected, it stands to reason that this clause could not be maintained in its proper meaning. Everybody was baptized. And it certainly was not possible to declare of all the children that were baptized that they were sanctified in Christ. There were many parents that did not walk in the way of the covenant themselves, yet they were never disciplined. The children were not instructed in the truth of the gospel and of the covenant. And thus it became more and more impossible to confess

with the Baptism Form that the children of the covenant were sanctified in Christ. It wasn't very long before preachers began to change that clause, each in his own way. Some read that the children "may be sanctified in Christ." Others, that "they can be sanctified in Christ." Others, that "probably they were sanctified in Christ." Others, that "they ought to be sanctified in Christ." Still others, finally, "if they were sanctified in Christ."

Yet, the meaning of this clause certainly cannot be dubious, either in the light of the rest of our confessions and Scripture, or in the light of the historical origin of our Baptism Form.

Heyns and the Liberated maintain that this clause has reference to a certain objective holiness or objective sanctification that has nothing to do with regeneration and spiritual sanctification. It simply means that children are included in the church and are separated from the world, and in that sense they are sanctified. But this is certainly not the meaning which the fathers themselves, at the time when the Baptism Form was composed, attached to the clause. Biesterveld writes in "Het Gereformeerde Kerkboek" (I quote and translate):

"The Reformed people have always taught that the sacraments, and therefore also baptism, are instituted for believers. Now the blessings of salvation, which are sealed by baptism, both by the baptism of children and of adults, are the same. And these are regeneration and remission of sins. These blessings of salvation are not bestowed upon them through baptism, but they are already by faith in the possession of him who receives baptism properly. Thus the expression 'sanctified in Christ' can mean nothing else than a real being implanted into Christ, and therefore being sanctified in that real sense of the word."

That Scripture knows of no other sanctification in Christ than this real sanctification, which has its principle in regeneration, I hardly have to show. In I Cor. 1:2 the apostle writes: "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours." In Phil 1:1 the apostle writes: "Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons: Grace be unto you and peace, etc." Saints in Christ Jesus means, of course, the same thing as sanctified in Christ. Other expressions have evidently the same meaning. Thus, we read in I Cor. 6:11: "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of God."



Certainly this expression does not mean that our fathers taught that every baptized child was regenerated and sanctified, nor did they teach a presumptive regeneration in the sense that we may presuppose that all the baptized children are regenerated, until, perhaps, when they come to years of discretion, the opposite appears.

But it certainly means that the entire Baptism Form, in its doctrine, in its confession, in its prayer, and in its thanksgiving, views the church organically as the elect saints in Christ Jesus. The church confesses, prays, and gives thanks for the believers and their spiritual seed. And of course, this implies that the promise is not for all, head for head and soul for soul, but only for the elect, for the believers, for them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus.

H.H.

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#### IN MEMORIAM

On Tuesday afternoon, January 20, 1953, God in His infinite wisdom suddenly called unto Himself, our beloved father, grandfather and great-grandfather

SAMUEL DOUMA

at the age of 78 years.

Our loss is his gain. Of him we know that "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing".—II Tim. 4:8.

The family:

Mr. and Mrs. Geo. Douma  
Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Newhof  
Miss Theresa Douma  
Mr. and Mrs. Wm. Douma  
Grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Grand Rapids, Michigan

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#### IN MEMORIAM

The Consistory of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan, hereby expresses its loss of a faithful brother and fellow Consistory member in the passing of

MR. O. VAN ELLEN

on January 22, 1953.

May our God abundantly comfort the bereaved by His Word and Spirit and powerfully strengthen them in the hope of the saints.

The Consistory,  
Rev. H. De Wolf, Pres.  
Mr. G. H. Stadt, Clerk

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## THE TRIPLE KNOWLEDGE

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### An Exposition Of The Heidelberg Catechism

PART III  
OF THANKFULNESS

LORD'S DAY 35

Q. 96. What doth God require in the second commandment?

A. That we in no wise represent God by images, nor worship him in any other way than he has commanded in his word.

Q. 97. Are images then not at all to be made?

A. God neither can, nor may be represented by any means: but as to creatures; though they may be represented, yet God forbids to make, or have any resemblance of them, either in order to worship them or to serve God by them.

Q. 98. But may not images be tolerated in the churches, as books to the laity?

A. No: for we must not pretend to be wiser than God, who will have his people taught, not by dumb images, but by the lively preaching of his word.

#### CHAPTER 1

#### GOD IS GLORIOUS

The second commandment reads: "Thou shalt not make unto thyself any graven image, nor the likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them; for I, the Lord thy God, am a Jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me, and show mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments."

The text in Deuteronomy 5:8-10 is virtually the same as in Exodus 20. In Deuteronomy 4:15-18 we have what may be regarded as a commentary on this second commandment: "Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves: for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the Lord spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire: Lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female, the likeness of any beast that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged fowl that flieth in the air, the likeness of any thing that creepeth on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the waters beneath the earth."

The first and second commandments are, of course, closely related. In fact, as we have said before, many combine them and look upon them as one commandment. However, we believe that this is an error, and

that there is a plain distinction between the two. The first commandment speaks of idolatry, the second of image worship. And although it is certainly true that image worship and idolatry are closely related, so that image worship is also idolatry, yet the two are very plainly to be distinguished. The first commandment answers the question: *who* is God? The second commandment is rather in its positive sense an answer to the question: *how* is God? The first commandment forbids to contrive or to put any imaginary God next to or instead of the true God. The second commandment emphasizes the truth that God is One, and that there is no God beside Him. The second commandment is based upon the truth that God is a Spirit and is infinitely glorious.

From this basic idea and positive notion we must proceed in our interpretation of the second commandment.

That this is indeed the underlying principle of the second commandment is evident from the whole commandment itself, but also especially from the fact that it is in this commandment that we are told that God is a jealous God, which means that He will not allow the creature to trample His infinite glory under foot, and that He will not give His glory unto another.

The infinite glory of God is expressed in what in theology is known as His incommunicable attributes. God, to use a term which is peculiarly Barthian, is the "wholly other". By this term Barth means especially to emphasize the transcendence of God. And although we cannot agree with Barth in his exclusive emphasis on God's transcendence but must also maintain His immanence in all things, yet it is very important that the transcendence of God be emphasized. In theology the term *transcendence* is used to denote the supereminence of God above the creature, a supereminence which is not relative, but absolute. Just as God's immanence means that He is in the world, and that He is related to the world, so God's transcendence signifies that in Himself He is infinitely exalted above the world, that there is an impassable gulf between the world and His infinitely glorious Being. He is God. He is Absolute. He transcends all the existence and all the relations of the creature.

What really is meant by the transcendence of God?

It is, perhaps, not superfluous to warn against the false idea of transcendence that represents God as outside of the kosmos, outside of the world, in distinction from His immanence, according to which He is in the universe, either from the viewpoint of space or of time. By terms such as these we only extend the universe *ad infinitum* and give God a place in that extended universe. Applied to space, we then conceive of God as being in part within the limited space of our

world and in part outside of that space in an endlessly extended space. The fundamental error of such a presentation of the relation between God's immanence and His transcendence is evidently that we apply the concept *space* to God. And this is impossible. Space itself is a creation. And God is not merely outside of our space: He is transcendent with relation to the very essence of space, which means that the idea of space is not applicable to Him at all. He is the infinite One. Even as we may not conceive of the immanence of God as meaning that part of His Being which is within the scope of the universe, so we may not think of His transcendence as the infinite extension in endless space of His immanence. Even as His immanence signifies that He is wholly, that is, with His infinite Being in the universe, and in every part and relation and moment of the universe, so His transcendence implies that He is essentially, that is, with His whole Essence, above the world and above all its moments and relations. God's transcendence, therefore, does not mean that we merely think of Him as outside of the world.

The same is true with regard to God's relation to the universe in time. We are inclined to conceive of our time as being only a part of all time, that is, of time infinitely extended both in the past and in the future. God's immanence then means that He is in part in time, in time extending from the alpha of Genesis 1 to the omega of the day of Christ, while His transcendence then signifies that He also exists in time before the world was. But here again it must be remarked that time itself is a creature, and that it may not be applied to God in any sense. His immanence does not mean that part of His Being is in time, for He is the Immutable, but that with His whole Being He is present in every moment of time; while His transcendence denotes that He is essentially, that is, with all His Being, exalted above all time and above every moment of time. God is eternal. He is the infinite God. He is glorious in all His attributes. And in His whole Being and in all His attributes He is transcendent. This refers to both the incommunicable and the communicable attributes of God. It is true, no doubt, that when theology referred to the transcendence of God, it had in mind especially the incommunicable attributes. This is no doubt also the idea in the *Confessio Belgica* Art. 1: "We believe with the heart, and confess with the mouth, that there is one only simple and spiritual Being, which we call God; and that he is eternal, incomprehensible, invisible, immutable, infinite, almighty, perfectly wise, just, good, and the overflowing fountain of all good." But the so-called incommunicable attributes cannot be separated from the communicable. Or rather, in God the

incommunicable virtues, or perfections, may be said to be attributes also of the communicable attributes. There are no attributes in God which are eternal, incomprehensible, invisible, infinite, almighty, while other attributes are temporal, comprehensible, finite, etc. Also the virtues of His mind, will, and power are characterized by the same infinitude and absoluteness as the incommunicable perfections. God's transcendence, then, signifies that He is absolutely supereminent in Himself, in all His perfections; that He is the absolute in distinction from all existence; the timeless and spaceless One in distinction from all limited being; the pure, Self-existent Being in distinction from all dependent existence; the immutable One in distinction from the ever-changing creature; the one simple Being in distinction from all the multifariousness of the universe. Though being very near us in His immanence, He is far above us in His transcendence. Though standing by an act of His own will in immediate relationship to all creation, He remains in Himself the absolute. Though being like us, He is the wholly other. He is God. He is infinitely glorious. And this infinite glory of God is the basic principle upon which the second commandment rests.

God's glory is the radiation of His infinite virtues revealed unto us. God only is glorious. And whatever glory there may ever be in the creature is only the glory of God. His glory is the radiation of His infinite perfections. His name is Jehovah, the I am, the absolutely independent One, that exists in and by Himself and has the ground of His existence in His own Being. As such He is distinct from every creature, and therefore infinitely glorious as God. He is the eternal One, Who is not limited by time, but from eternity to eternity is and lives all that He is in His infinite perfections. And He is in His eternity distinct from the creature, and therefore absolutely glorious. He is the omnipresent One, the immense, the immeasurable God, that is not and cannot be comprehended within the limitation of space. And as the omnipresent One He is distinct from the creature, and therefore glorious in all His perfections. He is the unchangeable God, with Whom there is no change or shadow of turning, Who is from eternity to eternity the same. And also in this attribute He is distinct from every creature, and therefore infinitely glorious. He is the omnipotent One, Who is in the heavens and performs all His good pleasure. His is all the power, the power which He has in Himself and all the power that is in the creature. And as the omnipotent God He is absolutely distinct from the creature, and therefore glorious. And thus it is with all the rest of the attributes of God. For this infiniteness and eternity applies not only to the so-called incommunicable attributes, but also to the communicable. For He is

also infinite in His holiness, wholly consecrated to Himself; infinite in righteousness, His will always being in harmony with His infinitely perfect Being; infinite in love, for as the Triune God He loves Himself in infinite perfection. He is infinite in knowledge, in wisdom, in truth, in mercy, in grace. In one word, He is infinite in all His perfections. And as such He is infinitely glorious.

Closely related to this infinite glory of God, which is the basic principle of the second commandment, is the truth that God is a Spirit, and as such invisible. Image worship also tramples under foot this spirituality and the invisibility of God, and therefore is prohibited in the second commandment. That God is a Spirit is taught in more than one way in the Holy Scriptures. Negatively this is expressed already in the second commandment, which implies, of course, that it is impossible to make a visible image of the spiritual God. It is also expressed in Deut. 4:12, "And the Lord spake unto you out of the midst of the fire: ye heard the voice of the words, but ye saw no similitude; only ye heard a voice." Cf. Deut. 4:15-18, 23. That God and His perfections are invisible is also plainly taught in Rom. 1:20, "For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead." And by implication also in Rom. 1:23, "And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things." Besides, that God is a Spirit and invisible is also positively expressed in more than one passage of Holy Writ. In John 4:24 we read the well-known words: God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." In John 1:18: "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." In Col. 1:15 the apostle Paul writes: "Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature." And in I Tim. 1:17: "Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen." The same thought is expressed in I Tim. 6:16: "Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honor and power everlasting. Amen."

Everywhere, therefore, the Scriptures emphasize the spirituality and invisibility of God. This spirituality of God must of course be distinguished from the personal subsistence in God of the Third Person of the Holy Trinity. When we say that God is a Spirit, we mean that His Essence is spiritual. Negatively this means that God is not material, like the visible



creation, and that therefore He is not and may not be represented as limited by form or extent. It means too that He is absolutely invisible, and in this respect even distinguished from the angels. Even though the latter are invisible in relation to our earthly and material vision, they are not such absolutely. Positively this spirituality of God is closely related to His simplicity. For that God is pure Spirit means that His perfections do not subsist in another substance, by which they are sustained and in which they rest. God is His attributes. With us this is quite different. All our attributes have their substratum in and are limited by the psychic, spiritual substance of which we are made. And even of the angels, though God made them spirits, this is true. They are created spiritual substances, and all their virtues and powers are rooted in this created substance. But God is a pure and absolute Being. He is light and love and life. He is wisdom and knowledge and understanding. He is justice and righteousness and holiness. He is grace and mercy and truth. He is absolute power and absolute action. God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. He is the absolutely invisible One, and therefore may not and cannot be represented by material images. Even when the Scriptures teach us that we shall see God, this can never mean that we shall see Him as He is, that is, in His Essence, without the medium of revelation, but that we shall see Him in the face of Jesus Christ our Lord. In Himself He is the invisible, spiritual Essence that is infinite and glorious in all His perfections.

This is the underlying principle of the second commandment.

And this infinite glory of the invisible God is trampled under foot by those that make and worship images, whatever form these may assume. For "our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased. Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not: They have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not: They have hands, but they handle not: feet have they but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat. They that make them are like unto them; so is everyone that trusteth in them."

The invisible God is a jealous God, Who will not give His glory to another.

H.H.

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## OF BOOKS

CHRISTUS IN ZIJN LIJDEN (Christ In His Suffering), Dr. K. Schilder. Published by J. H. Kok, Kampen, The Netherlands. Price f. 13.75.

This work is already so well known among us, both in its original language and its translation into English, that it hardly needs to be reviewed. I am sure that several of our readers already have it in their possession and read it. To those that do not have it and are not acquainted with it, I gladly recommend it. The present volume, which bears the subtitle "Christus bij den uitgaang van Zijn lijden" (Christ at the exit of His suffering), is the third and last part of the work. It is a work, I would say, that is, under the influence of Holy Writ, struck from the poetic soul of the now deceased author, full of lively and spiritual imagination, but not always strong in exegesis, so that sometimes we put a question mark behind some of his interpretations.

I deplore the fact that Dr. Schilder could not himself revise this third volume, because he departed from the earthly house of this tabernacle into the house of God, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. But could not some friend of his, that lived close to him and his way of thinking and of expressing himself, have revised the work for him? I feel confident that he himself would have wished this. As it stands now, there is, in some respects, a conflict between the first two volumes and the last one. I have reference to the fact that in this last volume as it is now published Dr. Schilder still speaks, very freely and with hearty agreement, of "common grace." Similar passages in the first two volumes he changed or deleted. And I feel sure that he would have the same with the last volume, had not the Lord taken him away.

I gladly recommend this work with the above mentioned reservations. —H.H.

OVER DE LAATSTE DINGEN. HET EINDE DER EEUWEN (The Last Things. The End of the Ages), Dr. K. Dijk. Published by J. H. Kok, N.V. Kampen, The Netherlands. Price f. 6.90.

This is the second volume of a trilogy. In this book Dr. Dijk treats the following subjects: The last hour, Millennialism, The Millennium, The future of Israel, The signs of the times, The great apostacy, The antichrist, The church in the wilderness.

The author writes a very clear style, so that the book is easy to read for anyone that is able to read the Holland language. The subject is always important, and of course, especially in the days in which we live. And Dr. Dijk is master of his subject, and, besides, is well known among us as a Reformed writer. He must have nothing of chiliastic excesses and vagaries.

The chapter on "The future of Israel" is important. On the whole I agree with it, especially with the exegesis of Rom. 11. Repeatedly I exegeted and preached on this chapter, and my final conclusion is virtually the same as that of Dr. Dijk. See my "God's Eternal Good Pleasure."

I would have liked a little more about American Millennialism and Dispensationalism. —H.H.

GEREFORMEERDE, WAT NU? (Reformed People, What Now?) Rev. G. Toornvliet and Dr. H. J. Westerink. Published by J. H. Kok, Kampen, The Netherlands. Price f. 5.90.

This book is a continuation of a discussion in the Netherlands about the conditions in the Reformed churches there. The discussion was started by the book of Booy and Bouwman, "Gereformeerden, waarheen?" (Reformed people, whither?), it was continued by the book written by Dr. Zuidema and others "Gereformeerden, waarom?" (Reformed people, why?) which was a sharp and condemning criticism of the book by Booy and Bouwman. And now we have the third book of the series which contains a criticism of both the former books, and offers, at the same time, some positive suggestions.

This is not a book of any value for the American reader, unless he is very much interested in the peculiar problems and conditions in the Reformed churches in the Netherlands. One thing I will say: I did not like the book of Booy and Bouwman, and the criticism of their book in the present volume is too favorable and sympathetic. —H.H.

DE WEDERGEBOORTE (Regeneration), Dr. J. D. De Groot, Published by J. H. Kok, N.V., Kampen, The Netherlands. Price f. 9.75.

This I consider a very worthwhile book, not because new thoughts are developed in it about regeneration but because it is thoroughly solid, Scriptural and Reformed.

In it the author develops the truth of regeneration, first as having its eternal ground in the counsel of God, and the historical ground in the redemptive work of the Son of God, in order then to turn to the Holy Spirit as the author of regeneration. He further emphasizes that regeneration is a real and principal change of the heart, and describes the different stages of regeneration.

Interesting is what the author writes about Kohlbrugge's conception of the incarnation, his conception of the image of God, and of regeneration. I say this is interesting, because in our country we occasionally meet with certain Neo-Kohlbruggians that rather strongly emphasize the same ideas. Also the author's evaluation of the connection between Kohlbrugge and Barth is interesting and, in my estimation, correct.

I agree with what the author writes about so-called "sluimerende wedergeboorte" (slumbering regeneration).

The style is clear. Anyone that can read Dutch should be able to read this book. —H.H.

HET EIGENDOM DES HEEREN (The Lord's Property), by the Rev. J. G. Feenstra. Publisher J. H. Kok, N.V. Kampen, The Netherlands. Price f. 5.95.

This is the second print of an exposition of the Heidelberg Catechism. The title of the book is, evidently, derived from the answer to the first question: "That I with body and soul, both in life and death, am not my own, but belong unto my faithful Saviour, Jesus Christ."

The exposition is very clear and simple. It is also very brief and positive. It does not enter deeply into all kinds of controversial questions. If anyone is interested in a brief, and at the same time, good explanation of the Heidelberg Catechism, he will do well to purchase this book, provided, of course, he can read the Holland language. —H.H.

PRINCIPLES OF PERSONALITY BUILDING FOR CHRISTIAN PARENTS, by C. B. Eavy. Published by the Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich. Price \$3.75.

In a preface to his book, the author warns: "Personality, being most complex, may be viewed from many angles. As the reader follows through these pages, he will find the word used with various shades of meaning, as is always the case in a treatise that makes frequent use of a term referring to something as complex as human personality." This is, no doubt, true.

When the author, however, refers to personality, he would define it as "nothing more or less than a person in action, living as an individual, richly, fully, and completely or miserably and wretchedly, functioning as a member of society, well or poorly, being a blessing or a curse to his fellows, and bringing glory or dishonor to the name of his Creator." We would say: "living from the principle of sin or of regeneration, in disharmony or in harmony with the word of God."

The book is written from a Christian viewpoint, and is, first of all, designed for Christian parents, although it may very well serve many other purposes. Even the editor of "In His Fear" in our *Standard Bearer*, may well benefit from it.

I have the impression that the author made a rather thorough study of his subject, and although I would not subscribe to every statement, I recommend it to the reader's study. When I say that I cannot subscribe to every statement, I refer to such as the following: "Acceptance of Him as Saviour by faith results in a new birth from incorruptible seed." —H.H.

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## OUR DOCTRINE

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### God's Providence

(10)

#### GOD'S PROVIDENCE AND THE MIRACLE

##### *Its Significance*

In this concluding article on the Providence of God we wish to call attention to the significance of the miracle. We have already noticed that a common interpretation of this phenomenon views it as a supernatural work of the Lord. Attention has also been called to the words which appear in Holy Writ to designate these mighty works of our God. And we concluded our previous article with the observation that the essential significance of the miracle is expressed by the word "sign". Before we proceed with the discussion of the true significance of the miracle, let us note first what it is not.

##### *What it is not.*

First, miracles must not be viewed as supernatural works of the Lord. The question, then, has been asked whether a miracle is a natural or supernatural work of the Lord. One thing, however, should be plain: either everything is a natural work of the Lord or everything is a supernatural work of God. The Lord is directly operative in all the works of His hands. Of importance in this connection is what we read in Ps. 107:23-31 in which passage the most natural and ordinary things are called wonders or wonderful works, and we quote: "They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; These see the works of the Lord, and His wonders in the deep. For He commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof. They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths: their soul is melted because of trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wit's end. Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and He bringeth them out of their distresses. He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad because they be quiet; so He bringeth them unto their desired haven. Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men." End of quote. The distinction between the natural and supernatural works of the Lord is fundamentally deistic. The so-called laws of nature simply denote the Lord's orderly and constant control over the world and all things, and we do well to bear

in mind that these laws of nature are never to be separated from Jehovah's constant control of all things. To make this separation is deistic inasmuch as this conception divorces the Lord from His constant government of the world and all the things that are therein.

Secondly, miracles are not to be regarded as immediate works of God. An immediate work of the Lord, in distinction from a mediate work of God, refers to a work of God which He performs without means. The objection which was voiced against the distinction between natural and supernatural works of God can also be lodged against this distinction. What, in the final analysis, is not an immediate work of the Lord? Does the Lord not do all things immediately? Is it not His almighty and omnipresent power which is constantly directing the world and all its affairs? It is certainly true, is it not, that the Lord is constantly in touch with the entire universe and every part thereof. Never may the world or any part of the world be likened unto an alarm clock which, having been wound, now proceeds to run of itself. All the works of the Lord are necessarily immediate, the fruits of the Lord's direct operation.

Thirdly, the miracles of Holy Writ are not to be defined as the unfathomable works of God. The miracles, then, are those works of Jehovah which defy all human understanding. However, this is surely quite impossible. Strictly speaking, there is nothing we understand, and this also applies to the most ordinary and common things. We follow the Lord in the course of His earthly sojourn and behold Him as He feeds the five thousand (not counting the women and children) with but five loaves and two fishes, and are amazed because of the tremendousness of the miracle. Moreover, our amazement increases when we notice at the conclusion of the miracle that the amount of bread is greater than at its beginning. But it also defies human understanding, does it not, how a seed can die in the bosom of the earth and bring forth fruit? We follow the Saviour to the tomb of Lazarus and wonder because that disciple of the Lord has been dead four days already. And we look on in all astonishment when, upon the word of the Christ, he who had been dead four days steps forth from his rocky tomb. This we cannot understand. But we are also completely at a loss to understand the birth of a child. The only reason why the latter does not excite our amazement is because we have grown accustomed to these mighty works of the Lord. At the wedding in Cana of Galilee, the Lord changes water into wine, and we take note especially of the fact that, according to the governor of the feast, the wine which Jesus had made was far superior to that which had appear-

ed first at the feast. This, we say, is wonderful. And it is wonderful. But is this more wonderful than that work of God whereby He produces every year clusters of grapes and thereby calls into existence a fruit which can become wine? We look on in amazement when the Lord causes the deaf to hear and have become altogether too accustomed to that wonder of the Lord whereby He causes every day children to be born with the marvellous ability to hear. We think it wonderful when the sun, upon the word of Joshua, stands still for twenty-four hours, and think nothing of that wonderful phenomenon of the rising of the sun every morning. It really makes very little difference, as far as the wonderful works of the Lord are concerned, whether the Lord does things in a way which excites our attention or according to what we call the "laws of nature." Whatever the Lord does is wonderful; and the Lord does all things.

*John 2:11 is certainly important.*

We read in this text: "This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory; and His disciples believed on Him." The Holland translation reads as follows: "Dit beginsel der teekenen heeft Jezus gedaan te Kana in Galilea, en heeft Zijne heerlijkheid geopenbaard." Hence, this miracle is not merely the first, the beginning of Jesus' miracles, but also the principle out of which all subsequent miracles must be explained. This miracle is, therefore, a principle miracle, a sign which explains all subsequent signs and miracles of our Lord.

The Holland translation certainly gives us the true interpretation of this passage. To be sure, the changing of water into wine at Cana of Galilee was the beginning of Christ's miracles, His first miracle. However, why should Jesus begin with this particular miracle? We believe, do we not, that nothing happens by chance? In fact, it is exactly characteristic of the apostle John to call attention to apparently insignificant but very important details. It is John, for example, who calls our attention to the fact that this miracle at Cana of Galilee occurred the third day, and also that, when the soldier pierced the wound in Jesus' side at the cross, blood and water came forth. Why, then, should this apostle call our attention to the importance of this mighty work of our Saviour? Is it merely to acquaint us with the fact that Christ began His long series of miracles in Cana of Galilee? We understand, I am sure, that the Lord Jesus performed this miracle first for a very definite reason. Indeed, the Holland translation of the text is correct. This is not merely the first miracle; it is not merely the beginning of miracles; it is the principle of miracles. It expresses, fully and completely, the pur-

pose of the coming of the Son of Man and it reveals His glory. Water, we understand, serves to maintain our earthly existence. Hence, water in this miracle may surely be considered as symbolic of the earthly. Wine, on the other hand, symbolises the heavenly. Wine not only rejoices the heart, causes one to be happy and to rejoice, but it is something extra, above our needs. Besides, wine is the product of what we have at the end of the entire process of fermentation, and it is the complete product, cannot be developed anymore, is aged, perfected. Hence, wine symbolises the heavenly, the highest and the greatest glory of God's Name in the new heavens and upon the new earth. This also enables us to understand the significance of this miracle. This miracle speaks to us of the Christ, even as He, through His death and resurrection and as the exalted Lord, now in principle in our hearts and soon in the day of His coming upon the clouds of heaven, changes the earthly into the heavenly, lifts His bride, the Church, and with her all things, out of this night of sin and death into the glory of His eternal and heavenly covenant. And inasmuch as this work of redemption is the mission of our Lord Jesus Christ, Jesus performs this miracle first. All subsequent miracles must be explained in the light of this work of the Lord. And, this also enables us to understand that the chief significance of miracles lies in the fact that they are signs or symbols.

*Miracles are signs of the power of the grace of God.*

What must we understand by the concept: grace of God? Grace has been commonly defined as God's unmerited favor which He bestows upon sinners. The grace of God, then, emphasizes the Lord's unmerited or undeserved goodness to men. We object to this definition of the word "grace." In the first place, it is not difficult to understand how the theory of a common grace could be concluded from this definition. God, we know, bestows various gifts upon the children of men. He bestows upon man the ability to think and will, to eat and sleep; He gives him food and drink, sunshine and rain, health and all good things. Besides, all these gifts are surely undeserved. This none will dispute. We can certainly not lay claim to the least of the Lord's good things which He bestows upon us. We certainly do not have the right to anyone of them. Hence, the grace of God is common. The Lord gives good things to men. These good things are undeserved. Conclusion: the Lord is kind and favorably inclined to all men. The fallacy of this reasoning is that it assumes what must be proved. It assumes that these good gifts are necessarily grace. Now we need not at this time enter into a detailed refutation of this conception of common grace. This we have done in the past, and particularly when discus-

sing the attributes of the Lord. But, is it not an amazing thing that, if the grace of the Lord were common, the word as such does not appear on Holy Writ in that universal sense of the word? The only passage which the late Dr. Hepp quoted in his brochure on Common Grace was Isaiah 26:10 (and we quote: "Let favor be showed 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"), and this passage certainly does not substantiate the theory of Common Grace. For grace to be shown to the wicked is surely not the same as to be bestowed upon them, is it? Christ, too, is shown, presented to the wicked in the gospel, is held up before them. This does not necessarily mean that Christ loves them and would save them. The grace of the Lord which is bestowed only upon the people of the Lord is certainly shown, exhibited to others besides the elect. This does not necessarily mean that it is also given to them. But, how strange, is it not, that, if the grace of the Lord were common, it does not appear in that universal sense in Holy Writ!

However, apart from this unfortunate connection with the theory of Common Grace, we object to this definition of grace (unmerited or undeserved favor) also for another reason. If the grace of the Lord be unmerited favor what, then, distinguishes it from mercy and compassion and longsuffering and goodness, etc.? Are they not all unmerited favors of God? Hence, to define the grace of God as the Lord's unmerited favor upon men does not define the concept as such inasmuch as this definition is also applicable to all the virtues and blessings of the Lord which He bestows upon His people. That the grace of the Lord is undeserved is not because of the fundamental significance of the word but because of the sinner who is the recipient of this goodness of the Lord.

The word: grace, means fundamentally: beauty, attractiveness. Much has been written on this subject in the past. The grace of God is that operation of the love of God by which the Lord delivers His people and Church out of sin and darkness and this present curse of the valley of the shadow of death into the life and glory of His eternal and heavenly covenant. It has sovereignly pleased the Lord to call His people and church and all things as they shall appear in glory out of darkness into light, out of death into life, to erect His eternal and heavenly tabernacle upon and out of the ruins of sin and death. And the grace of God is that power of the living God whereby this amazing deliverance is effected.

Christ Himself is the Wonder of Grace. He is centrally the Wonder of Grace. This implies, in the first place, that Christ Himself is the Wonder of Grace.

For He is Immanuel, God with us. Grace is that power of the Lord even as it breaks through our night of sin and darkness and death, and lifts the world of God's everlasting love into heavenly life and glory and perfection. Hence, the Lord Jesus Christ is surely Himself the Wonder of grace because He is Immanuel, God with us. Christ is God, united in the second Person, out of the First Person and through the Third Person, with our flesh and blood. Christ is God, even as He, in our human nature, stands in our relation to the law. Christ is God underneath our guilt and shame and death. Our Saviour is Jehovah even as He Himself enters into and breaks through our curse to appear in our world as the living God Who enters our sin and guilt and appears as bearing all our sin and guilt.

That Christ is centrally the Wonder of grace implies, in the second place, that our Lord Jesus Christ is Himself the realization of the grace of God upon His people. He is this in the way of His death and resurrection and glorification. Indeed, He is the realization of our salvation already in His being Immanuel. Christ's birth is surely the mystery of godliness and the key to our salvation. Seeing the living God underneath our burden of sin and guilt and death and appearing in our relation to the law so that He places His everlasting "shoulders" under the enormous burden of our guilt, we surely have no doubt, have we, as to the question whether He will be able to vanquish the powers of hell and sin and death and merit life and glory everlasting for us? Besides, Jesus is the realization of this grace of God in His suffering and death. He redeems His people out of all the power of the devil, satisfied for them and in their stead the awful justice and righteousness of God, merits for them life and glory everlasting, and lays the foundation for the eternal renewal of all things in heavenly perfection. Moreover, Christ is certainly this Wonder of grace also in His ascension and glorification at the Father's right hand, He is not merely glorified Himself, receiving all power and honour and wisdom and glory, but He also receives as our Head the life-giving Spirit, the Spirit beyond measure, to bestow upon the elect the life and grace He merited for them. In His glorification our eternal and heavenly life has historically been realized. For His life is our life, having been merited for us. And, our receiving of this life is surely assured by the exaltation of our Lord. For the Church of God confesses that the Christ, Who suffered and died for her, is now exalted at the right hand of Divine power, is the King of kings and the Lord of lords, all things being subject unto Him.

Thirdly, Christ is centrally the Wonder of grace because all miracles point to Him, have been per-



formed by Him, and have significance only because of Him. He it is Who, as the Son of God to become flesh, performs the miracles throughout the Old Dispensation by His Spirit. Apart from Him the miracles of Holy Writ have no significance. Of what importance would the passage through the Red Sea be if Christ were not our Red Sea, and of what importance would the flood be except for the truth that in and because of Christ the Sun of righteousness breaks through the night of our sin and guilt and the judgment of God? Without the Lord Jesus Christ the miracles of Holy Writ simply have no meaning whatsoever. And when He comes into our world of sin and death He Himself performs many miracles, signs and symbols of the work of grace whereof He is the Divine realization. Indeed, the Lord Jesus Christ is Himself the Wonder of grace, God's power to lead us out of sin and death into heavenly life and glory.

Hence, the miracles of Holy Writ are therefore signs and symbols of the grace of God in Christ Jesus. Whenever we behold the power of God breaking through our accursed world (a passage *through* the sea, water out of a rock, sight out of blindness, etc.), we see a symbol of that power of God whereby He accomplishes the same in the spiritual sense of the word. This also explains the peculiar nature of the various diseases mentioned in Holy Writ: blindness, deafness, lameness, death, leprosy, etc. And this is particularly applicable to the time when the Lord Jesus was among us. These sicknesses are symbols of the dreadful power of sin. We are spiritually blind, deaf, dumb, lame, unable to see and hear and speak and walk. What a picture of the curse of God upon sin! And, finally, through the miracle of Divine grace in Jesus Christ our Lord, God will erect out of this present darkness and death new heavens and a new earth, unto the glory and praise of His everlasting grace in Jesus Christ, our Lord.

H. Veldman



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## IN HIS FEAR

### Journalistic Ethics

The above topic describes a subject which pertains to a life "in His fear", about which we desire to say a few words and to issue a warning to our readers.

When we speak in this connection of "journalistic ethics", we refer not to the ethics of individual writers and contributors to a paper or magazine. About this, too, much could be written. He who appears in print must observe the simple and plain rules of ethical behaviour which govern all our life. But I refer rather to the moral obligation(s) which devolve upon any society or organization which publishes a paper or magazine, and which devolve especially upon those directly responsible for the contents of such a publication, the editors and the editorial staff. And more particularly do I have in mind the ethical code which should govern a religious periodical. And still more particularly, I refer to our own religious periodicals. That anyone or any group that breaks out into print assumes a tremendous responsibility with respect to the readers who will peruse that which is published is self-evident. Those who publish anything arrogate to themselves the position of leaders, of teachers, of instructors. And they make use of one of the most powerful means of influencing men's minds, the printed word. In some respects it is even more powerful than the spoken word.

Often the aim, or the claimed intention,—and therefore, at the same time, its moral obligation,—of a paper is proclaimed in its very name. Thus, for example, the name *Standard Bearer* immediately tells its readers that this is a paper which claims to bear the standard, the flag, of the truth. The name *Beacon Lights* depicts that this magazine intends to focus the light-rays of God's Word upon various aspects of life for our Protestant Reformed Young People. And the name *Concordia* sets forth that this paper aims to foster concord, harmony, agreement, unity. Thus we find that the latter paper has also adopted a Scriptural motto: "Behold, how good and pleasant for brethren to dwell together in unity." Ps. 133:1. When, therefore, papers such as these violate the announced very spiritual aims presented in their respective names, they become guilty of a gross breach of journalistic ethics, namely, *deceit, false pretense*. If the *Standard Bearer*, for example, prints on its own responsibility the lie, under the flag of the truth, it is no longer actually the bearer of the standard, though it still claims the name: it is guilty of one of the worst

forms of lying, deceit. If the *Beacon Lights* no longer focuses the light rays of God's Word, as maintained in our Protestant Reformed Churches, upon the path of our covenant youth's life, it is guilty of the same sin. And if *Concordia*, claiming to foster unity and Christian brotherhood in our Protestant Reformed circles, no longer does so, but fosters discord in place of concord, it has fallen into the same error.

This breach of ethics may be committed in more than one way. On the one hand, this may be done by openly publishing the lie, whether through the medium of its regular editors, or through contributions which are allowed in its columns without comment. On the other hand, a paper may publish neither the truth nor the lie on any given count, but maintain silence. This is equally unethical. Or still another form this breach of ethics may assume, namely, that of opening its columns to one side in any controversy, but closing them to those who wish to reply.

Of this breach the Christian Reformed *Banner* made itself guilty in 1923-24.

But in recent months one of our own papers, *Concordia*, has committed the same breach of journalistic ethics in more than one form. This grieves me, because it is contrary to the fear of the Lord. And I do not like to see Protestant Reformed brethren walk contrary to the fear of the Lord. And therefore, I shall try to point out the error and admonish them in the love of Christ to forsake it. But since from the very nature of the case I could not do this in *Concordia's* columns, I shall do it, quite properly, in my last article as editor of "In His Fear". For the references in this case you may turn to the editorial columns of *Concordia* for Oct. 9 and Dec. 18, 1952.

I ask not merely our readers in general, but *Concordia*, to consider these undeniable facts.

In the first place, *Concordia*, through one of its regular departmental editors, the Rev. A. Petter, in the rubric, ironically, "Among Our Treasures," began to foster not concord, but discord, by presenting a conditional theology. Indeed it was maintained that only on the basis of "conditions" could the responsibility of man be maintained. And it was claimed that if we failed to maintain conditions, we could not proclaim a "full-orbed gospel". Being one of those who insist on an unconditional theology as of the very essence in our Protestant Reformed doctrine (and I am only one among many who still rally 'round that standard!) I claim that seeds of discord, not concord, were sown by a paper which had as its avowed intention to foster *concordia*. This is in my opinion the fundamental breach of ethics which *Concordia* committed. And if only, which may God graciously grant, these brethren would recant their conditional theology

and return to the old paths, real harmony would once more reign. Until that happens, or until we come to a parting of ways, I am convinced that there will never be harmony, *concordia*, in our churches again. There is no room in Protestant Reformed doctrine for conditions.

However, this latter claim we can no longer discuss with *Concordia*. They have closed their columns to the condition debate. They refuse to discuss the matter publicly, the matter which they themselves publicly introduced. Until, of course, that cloture is removed, the fundamental issue is beyond discussion. Of course, the *Standard Bearer*, true to its calling, is still open; and yet more true to its calling, it does and will bear the standard, and continue to maintain an unconditional gospel, and will discuss it and debate it with any and all. You may depend on that.

But let us view the matter from *Concordia's* viewpoint. This matter of conditions was not only important to us who opposed it. It was admittedly a matter of extreme importance to those who maintained conditions. Was it not claimed that conditions constituted an indispensable element in a full-orbed gospel? If a man in good faith makes such a claim, and if a paper in the name of harmony allows such a claim, what then is the obligation incumbent upon the claimant? Does the time ever arrive when he must cease striving with all that is in him to convince those who deny that claim of their error? Might *Concordia*, viewing the matter from their own viewpoint, ever keep silence about this indispensable element in a full-orbed gospel? Would they not be keeping silence about the truth? And worse yet, would they not be committing a gross breach of Christian love by no more attempting to convince the "erring" brethren?

But what has happened? First the Rev. Petter, who championed conditions, dropped the matter. He of all men should be busy even today trying to convince our ministers and people, the entire readership of *Concordia*, that if they deny conditions, they deny an important element of the gospel. But he has turned his attention to eschatology, rather than to this precious treasure of conditions. Others continued to write about the matter for a time. But now the ban has been imposed! No more of the condition debate is allowed in *Concordia's* columns.

*Concordia* has said in effect: "Conditions are an indispensable element in a full-orbed gospel. But in spite of the fact that there are many who deny this, and who therefore seriously err, we shall henceforth keep silence about it. We will not even mention it. We will not even allow it to be discussed."

Brethren, even on your basis, such action can never foster harmony, concord. You are not true to the

name emblazoned on the front page of your paper. If your original stand was wrong, acknowledge it. If it is still right today, defend it. But silence is absolutely wrong. For remember! the goodness and pleasantness of brethren dwelling together in unity can be experienced only upon the basis of the truth, and where there is truth too in the inward parts! Elsewhere there is no real harmony.

However, *Concordia* attempted an explanation of its action. And in that explanation too there are some very wrong elements. First of all, while it is true that *Concordia* closed its columns to both sides of the debate, it is not at all true that this was done impartially. Fact is, that this action took place *before* one of those whose teachings and writings were attacked and placed in a wrong light was given opportunity to defend himself. I refer to *Concordia's* refusal to place the Rev. H. Hoeksema's reply to the Rev. Kok. By no stretch of the imagination can this be called impartial.

More sinister, however, do I find one of the motivations for this action, that it is psychologically tiring and that our people weary of this continued debate. That it is tiring, I do not deny. In fact, I would go one step further, and say that it is also *spiritually* tiring. But that this is a reason to break off a debate, and refuse all discussion about an issue that is admittedly an important one, an issue that concerns the pure preaching of the Word,—that I deny. Supposing such an attitude were assumed all along the line, where would we end? Would there ever be any healthy controversy? Would our people ever be instructed concerning truth and error? Is *Concordia's* obligation to be considered as this, that it must furnish at all times what is pleasing to the people, without regard to the question what is right or wrong, true or false? If a minister would take that course in his pulpit, there would soon be no pure preaching of the Word left.

And therefore I would admonish *Concordia* to retract its action. Do not hamper the freedom of the press. Seek the truth without qualification or limitation. In such a course you will have the confidence of all our people. But if you continue in your present course, your paper does not merit any confidence. You may have outward peace and harmony. But it will be the peace of the grave. And your paper will lose all vitality.

H. C. Hoeksema

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## THE DAY OF SHADOWS

### The Defeat of Ahithophel's Counsel

(II Samuel 16:15-17:14)

Leaving David and his followers to refresh themselves in the plain of Jordan, let us return to Jerusalem and observe the progress of the rebellion there. In the meantime, Absalom with Ahithophel and the whole band of his adherents had removed from Hebron to the Holy City. Coming to him, Hushai with feigned enthusiasm and with considerable gusto, it may be imagined, uttered his greeting:

May the king live! May the king live!

Such exuberant well-wishing could mean but one thing. Hushai was offering Absalom his allegiance. The usurper was not a little surprised. He had not dared to count on the support of Hushai. For he and David had always been close friends. Besides, the man stood high in integrity and fidelity. So scarcely knowing what to make of this homage, Absalom said to him, partly in good-natured welcome and partly in suspicion:

*Is this thy kindness to thy friend? Why wentest thou not with thy friend?*

Hushai was ready with his reply:

*Nay, but whom the Lord and this people, and all the men of Israel choose, his will I be, and with him will I abide. What is more, whom should I serve? Should I not serve in the presence of his son? As I have served in thy father's presence, so will I be in thy presence.*

Hushai's argument is clear. The Lord has chosen Absalom. For the voice of the people is the voice of God. In submission to God's will, he must now attach himself to him and serve him as devotedly as he had formerly served the father, which he is also resolved to do, readily and cheerfully, the more so, seeing that Absalom is a son of his dear friends, and thus perpetrates the Davidic dynasty.

Certainly, God in His wrath had sovereignly predestined Absalom to the dreadful doings to which he by his own free choice and in his wickedness had committed himself. And accordingly, Absalom, as usurper, was the product of a sovereign Providence. In this sense, he was chosen of the Lord. It is also true that Hushai would be with Absalom, as he said, but solely with the purpose of working for his defeat.

But Hushai's words could also and easily be taken to mean that, in the attempt to free the land of David, Absalom, as the Lord's anointed, and as the object of His favor and with His blessing, was working a

work of the Lord and could look forward to being established in his father's throne permanently. And the obvious meaning of Hushai's saying that he would be with Absalom, as he had been with his father, is that he was purposed to be just as helpful to Absalom.

This, to be sure, is the sense that Absalom gave to Hushai's words. And so they were music to his ears. Hushai had spoken according to his heart. He had sanctioned his insurrection, even he, in the belief that Absalom was chosen of the people and therefore of God Himself for that very purpose. And in that belief he had identified himself with Absalom's cause. So thought Absalom. And so pleased was he with Hushai, so confident that he could be trusted and relied on, that he not only received him into the rank of his followers but even included him among his chief privy counsellors. Figuratively speaking, he took him to his very bosom on the spot and without any further argument or questioning.

Already the insurrection would have been a complete success had it not been for one thing. David with a small army had escaped. How to proceed against him was now Absalom's problem, which he laid first before Ahithophel and his colleagues—fellow counsellors—not including Hushai.

*Then said Absalom to Ahithophel, Give ye counsel among you what we shall do.*

Ahithophel, it is plain, had already given the matter much thought. For there was present to his mind a well worked out plan, the first part of which he now laid before Absalom.

*And Ahithophel said unto Absalom, Go in unto thy father's concubines, which he hath left to keep the house, and all Israel shall hear that thou art abhorred of thy father: then shall the hands of all that are with thee be strengthened.*

This was wisdom. But it was wisdom "that descendeth not from above, but was earthly, natural, devilish." Adding insult to injury, Absalom must commit an offence so vile, so unspeakably insulting to David, as would render him permanently irreconcilable toward his son. He must do a thing in plain sight of all the people that could only be construed as a proclamation of war to the bitter end. He must do a thing that would cause the people to conclude that there could be no danger of his ever surrendering as he would be well aware that all he could expect from the hand of the adversary was destruction. In a word, he must do a thing in public that would make all to see that he must be resolved to pursue the course on which he had set out to the death. The people would be mightily encouraged. They would know that they need have no fear that, when the going be-

came hard, he would forsake them to make his peace with his father.

It is not hard to see what motivated Ahithophel. Without this encouragement the people would certainly turn back from following Absalom after the first wild enthusiasm had subsided. When all was quiet again, Absalom would be forgiven and David's wrath would descend on him, Ahithophel, especially on him of all the leaders in the revolt. This, he felt assured, would happen. For he was well aware of David's fondness for this prifligate son. Hence, he must see to it that it be made impossible for both David and Absalom ever to want to become reconciled to each other.

It is also worthy of note that his counsel went unchallenged. No one among Absalom's adherents ventured to question its wisdom. For, as the text in this connection asserts, "the counsel of Ahithophel, which he counselled in those days, was as if a man had enquired at the oracle of God: so was all the counsel of Ahithophel both with David and with Absalom." Nor did anyone openly condemn the proposed procedure on account of its abominableness. This alone condemned the whole movement as conceived in hell. For "by their fruits ye shall know them."

The result was that the counsel was adopted and immediately put into execution.

*So they spread Absalom a tent upon the top of the house; and Absalom went in unto his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel.*

So did Absalom take possession of his father's harem in public in fulfilment of Nathan's prophecy: "Thus saith the Lord, Behold I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbor, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of the sun." II Sam. 12:11.

Let us take notice, "I will raise up . . . I will take thy wives . . ." It was God's work, this doing of Absalom. For he is creature, who lives and moves and has his being in God. Yet God is not the author of sin. He is light and in Him there is no darkness at all. And so the sinfulness of the vile doing was solely out of Absalom. Yet at the same time God sovereignly willed it. But it was Absalom's own vile doing nevertheless. He was its willing subject as God's free agent and on this account responsible. How true it is then that, as the Scriptures teach, God works all things according to the counsel of His will. How true it is that also this doing of the usurper was a stroke laid upon David by the Lord on account of his past sins.

But there was more to Ahithophel's plans.

*Moreover Ahithophel said unto Absalom. Let me now choose twelve thousand men, and I will arise and pursue after David this night: and I will come upon him while he is weary and weak handed, and will make him afraid: and all the people that are with him shall flee; and I will smite the king only: and I will bring back all the people unto thee: the man whom thou seekest (is) as if all returned: so all the people shall be in peace.*

With David out of the way, such is here the argument, all his followers, loosing heart, would immediately lay down their arms and hail Absalom king. There could be so little doubt about this that, such was Ahithophel's imagining, in the moment that David fell by his sword, in that same moment it would be as if all the followers had already returned to Absalom and made their peace with him. This counsel, too, was superb wisdom of a natural, devilish sort. But it had one flaw. It took no account of God. True, David was weary, he and his people with him. They had been underway perhaps from early dawn till deep in the night. It was also true that David was weak handed. His army numbered at the most but fifteen hundred men able to bear arms. As compared with the size of the host that Ahithophel had asked for, it was but a handful. But even though this advice had been followed, David would still have nothing to fear. For God was on His side. The hosts of the Lord were encamped about him. Hence, those that were for him were more than those that were against him. The Lord, who doeth wonders, would have saved his ill-deserving servant out of the hand of the adversary. David could not perish. The promises were his. Hence, rightly considered, Ahithophel's wisdom was foolishness. It was foolishness with God. Had David stood in this faith just a little more firmly at the time, he would not have taken recourse to that forbidden stratagem. For was it not forbidden? Might Hushai, as directed by David, direct to Absalom a kind of speech calculated to impose upon him the delusion that his insurrection had the Lord's sanction? Being at heart his enemy might he pose as his friend dedicated to his cause? It cannot be a question whether this was honest, for it is too obvious that it wasn't. The only question is whether it was right for David to practice such dishonesty considering his plight. There can be but one answer. And this answer a negative.

But this, of course, is not saying that Absalom was an innocent victim of Hushai's guile. That he could be deceived by Hushai's reasoning was only because he was willingly ignorant of the true nature of his doing. What he read into Hushai's sentences he had been saying to himself all along in the vain effort to

ease the torment of his conscience and to persuade himself that his way was right with God.

As was just said, Ahithophel's counsel was wisdom of a natural sort. He had correctly perceived what ought to be done in the present circumstances. This was apparent to Absalom and all the elders of Israel.

*And the saying was right in the eyes of Absalom and in the eyes of all the elders of Israel.*

And yet, Absalom still had need of hearing Hushai on the matter.

*Then said Absalom, Call now Hushai the Archite also, and let us hear likewise what he saith.*

Literally: *And said Absalom (to Ahithophel), Call thou by all means also Hushai, the Archite, indeed even him, that we may hear what is in his mouth.*

Ahithophel was famed as a counsellor. And Absalom doubted not the wisdom of his counsel. Yet he was determined to hear also Hushai. Perhaps the reason was his high regard for Hushai's person. Ahithophel was a traitor and a scoundral. Absalom must have really despised him in his heart. But Hushai, as was said, stood high in integrity with all. They imagined that he had gone over to Absalom's side from principle. Had he not expressed it as his conviction (so they thought) that Absalom was chosen of the Lord.

Be this as it may, Hushai was called and appeared.

*And when Hushai was come to Absalom, Absalom spake unto him saying, Ahithophel hath spoken after this manner: shall we do after his saying (Heb. shall we do his word)? If not, speak thou.*

The first part of Hushai's counsel is negative. Literally it reads as follows.

*And said Hushai unto Absalom, Not good is the counsel that Ahithophel counsels at this time.*

It was not like his former advice, which was good. Hushai chose his words with care. He must not be critical, more than was necessary, of Ahithophel's ability as counsellor.

*For, said Hushai, thou knowest thy father and his men, that mighty men they be, and that embittered in spirit they be as a bear bereaved of her whelps in the field. And thy father is a man of war, and not will he lodge with the people.*

*Behold now, he is hid in one of the ravines or in one of the places. And it will come to pass when some of them be fallen at the first that all who hear will say, There is a slaughter among the people that follows Absalom.*

The "ravines" were hiding places. The "places" were strong positions difficult of approach and from where a surprise attack could easily be launched against the adversary.



*And he also that is valient, whose heart is as the heart of a lion, shall utterly melt: for all Israel knoweth that thy father is a mighty man, and valiant men they that be with him.*

It was certain, such is the point to Hushai's reasoning, that David and his men were on the alert either as hid in one of the ravines of that region or as having betaken themselves to one or the other of the "places". For being an experienced and seasoned soldier, David would know better than to abide with the people, the defenceless members of his company, women and children, and old men disqualified for combat by their age. Knowing that the adversary would not want to harm the "people", David had withdrawn from them and was poised for attack in another place. Absalom must consider, further, that David and his men were famed for their courage in battle. How dangerous they must then be in their present mood. They would fight with the ferocity of a wild beast in the field robbed of her young. Hence, following Ahithophel's advice would be fatal. For this was what would happen. Rushing forth with his men from his cavern or strong position, David would fall upon the enemy's advanced guard and cut it in pieces. The rest of the fourteen thousand soldiers of Absalom would, as a result, be seized by a terror as that of a panic. And they all would take to flight. Hearing of it, the hearts of the bravest among the people of Israel in general would melt with fear. The will to continue the struggle would be gone. And that would be the end as far as Absalom's cause was concerned.

Of course, Hushai didn't believe a word of what he said. For he was filled with profoundest respect for Ahithophel's counsel. He was just as convinced that it would have spelled disaster for David, if followed. Therefore he laid before Absalom a different counsel.

*But I counsel that, by all means, all Israel be gathered unto thee from Dan unto Beersheba, as the sand that is by the sea for multitude, and that thy presence go in their midst. So shall we come upon him in one of the places where he may be found; and we shall light upon him as falleth the dew upon the ground: and not one will be left of him and of all the men that are with him not so much as one.*

*And if he be gathered into a city, then shall all Israel carry ropes to that city, and we shall draw it into the river, until there be not one small stone found there.*

This has reference not only to the walls of the city but also to every dwelling in it. The whole city must be drawn into the river, that is, the ditch that surrounds it.

Here again Hushai did not believe what he said. His conviction was that if this course be followed Absalom would come to ruin. Yet, as inspired by his love of David, he must have spoken with glowing conviction. And as he had received no revelation from Heaven that the Lord would use his counsel to destroy Absalom, he had to rely on his judgment. Viewed on the surface it would spell certain disaster for David just as well as that of Ahithophel, even though it would give David time to flee across the Jordan. What could David with a handful of soldiers hope to achieve against an army that for size was meant to be numberless "as the sand that is by the sea." What sense could there be in risking a battle with a force thus overwhelming. Yet the advice was good for two reasons.

1) God was purposed to defeat Absalom in the way that Hushai in his heart had conceived. The sacred writer expresses the same idea this way: "For the Lord had commanded to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, to the intent that the Lord might bring evil upon Absalom." The text does not state that the Lord had commanded Hushai or David to defeat that counsel. Hushai had acted on his own initiative as activated by his awareness of David's great peril. But the Lord had appointed, ordained, to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel.

2) The counsel of Hushai was good because it was good judgment on the part of Hushai to advise Absalom not to attack David immediately but to wait until he had raised a large army. Good judgment dictated that this could work to David's interest considering all the circumstances. First, David would have time to cross the Jordan and raise a sizable army numbering several thousands. That David was successful in this is clear from the text at 18:1, where it is stated that David numbered the people that were with him, and set captains of thousands and captains of hundreds over them. It shows that no small portion of the people had remained true to David and that perhaps another part, for the moment fallen away, had returned to him. So Absalom's following was after all rather small. At any rate it was not large enough to make it possible for him to raise the kind of army that Hushai suggested. Also his advice that Absalom go to battle in his own person was sound in the sense just explained.

True, all depended on whether the Lord would bless David's arms. And that He would. Yet certainly this did not free Hushai from the obligation to using his best judgment. And he did so. And his counsel was good.

But the sacred text calls also Ahithophel's counsel good (see above), meaning that it was good in the

sense that it was to Absalom's interest that David be attacked immediately.

*And Absalom and all the men of Israel said, The counsel of Hushai the Archite is better than the counsel of Ahithophel.*

Absalom deceived himself with the belief that his insurrection had the support of all the people or nearly so. The idea of his going forth to battle as heading an army thus formidable would appeal to his vanity. And it could also be expected that he would put his confidence in numbers and make flesh his arm. But certainly the plan was far inferior to Ahithophel's.

*And when Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not done, he saddled his ass, and arose, and gat him home to his house, to his city, and gave charge concerning his house, and hanged himself, and died, and was buried in the sepulchre of his father.*

After his advice regarding the harem, he knew that he had permanently fallen from David's grace. Neither could he any longer take pleasure in the service of Absalom. He was too convinced that his counsel was right. And he was a proud man. What then of honor and pleasure had life still in store for him? Nothing at all. So he gat him home and hanged himself.

G. M. Ophoff

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O God, be merciful to me,  
For men no mercy show;  
With constant warfare pressing me  
They seek my overthrow.

When foes invade, I safely rest,  
Confiding in Thy word;  
I will not dread what man can do,  
My trust is in the Lord.

I take Thy vows upon me now,  
O God, Who savest me;  
The sacrifice of praise I bring  
In gratitude to Thee.

My feet from falling and my soul  
From death Thou hast restored,  
And ever in the light of life  
I walk before the Lord.

## FROM HOLY WRIT

### Exposition of I Peter 1:8, 9

Once more we return to our exposition of the first Epistle of Peter. In doing so it is important to bear in mind, that in these verses of the first Chapter of Peter our attention is called to our new and exalted *Status Quo* before God, our new relationship to God by virtue of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We have passed from death unto life in Him; a transition has taken place whereby we have been taken from the power of darkness and set in the Kingdom of God's Son in the flesh, our Lord Jesus Christ.

And by the virtue of this change wrought by God objectively for us in the death and resurrection of Christ, and subjectively by His Spirit in our hearts, we have now a living hope, which reaches out to the final revelation of Jesus in the new creation in the ages to come. In this hope we rejoice; we are saved in hope. We rejoice seeing from afar, even as Abraham, the father of all believers, saw afar, and rejoiced. Old things have, indeed, passed away; all things are become new. The next great act of the wonder of God's grace is, that Christ comes upon the clouds of heaven to be revealed as the Lord of glory, and as the Heir of all things together with His co-heirs, the redeemed saints.

Mighty perspectives we are shown in this first Chapter of I Peter.

And wonderful things Peter tells us concerning the deepest yearnings and aspirations of our redeemed souls.

We read: "*Whom having not seen ye love; on whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice greatly with a joy unspeakable and full of glory; receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.*"

In this wonderful passage of Holy Writ there is discovered to our believing eyes the secret of the joy of the hoping Christian. We notice that mention is here made of a joy, of exceedingly great rejoicing, and that, too, in a world where the Christian must suffer manifold trials and temptations. And yet these temptations cannot dim the joy of the Christian. Then too mention is made of a joy that is "full of glory". It is world conquering joy. Pray, what may be its secret?

We notice the following concerning this remarkable joy in the text.

In the first place, we notice that this joy can only be explained because of what Christ Jesus is and means to us. All our joy is based upon and flows to us from Him. Apart from Him we can do nothing; without Him we cannot rejoice in glad triumph. The Apostle intimated in the foregoing verses, that all our attention is focused upon the revelation of the Son of God in the final coming. Then we shall be glorified with Him, since we now suffer with Him for righteousness sake. Then shall the preciousness of our faith be to the praise and honor and glory of God in Christ. O, what a marvelous revelation that will be when history is shown to be what it is, in the revelation of the righteous judgment of God. All the tears collected in God's bottle of the saints shall then be correctly, publicly and irrefutably evaluated. The just shall have their recompence, and wisdom shall be justified of her children!

But that is all "not yet". And what is more we see nothing of it; in fact, we seem to behold the very opposite. The wicked seem to prosper, while the chastisement of God's children is new every morning in the never ending chain of manifold temptations and trials.

And, yet, we rejoice with so great a joy.

Says Peter "rejoicing with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

We should bear in mind in attempting to understand these words, that "joy" is not at all to be confused with hilarious fun, and silly, empty pleasures. In all the laughter of the wicked their is not an infinitesimal speck of joy; their laughter is wearisome. The themes of their songs and laughter always is the tragic; they feed upon the husks of life: corn and plenty they do not even behold. Singing of the "sweet mystery of life" they have never understood the "mystery of faith and godliness". They are God-less. Here joy is unknown. Only weeping and woe.

But what is joy?

It is the great salvation of God and the knowledge of the same as the wind of the Holy Spirit blows upon the lyre of our souls; it is the satisfaction of the heart, which can only be filled with the knowledge of God, and by being partaker of the Divine nature. It is the joy which the Holy Spirit works in our hearts, while He testifies with our Spirit that we are the children of God and heirs of eternal life. It is to taste fellowship with the ever blessed God; to walk with Him and to dwell with Him and He with us in Christ through the Spirit of sanctification.

Have I told you now what this joy is?

Listen: this joy is "unspeakable and full of glory!"

Words must needs fail to express this joy. The word "unspeakable" indicates that this joy is beyond description. It is called the "fruit of the Spirit". (Gal. 5) Jesus says repeatedly: I tell you these things, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. John 16:24; 15:11. This joy is heaven's gift; gift of grace it is. The Psalmist prays from out of the depths: Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation, and uphold me by Thy free Spirit. (Ps. 51). When the "free Spirit upholds us" then the "joy of salvation" is our portion. We will have more to say of this presently. But this joy, although we can speak of it, it nevertheless excels our words? The term "unspeakable" suggests *immensity*. Why? Because this is not a joy which simply is given us from God, but it is a joy in which God *gives Himself* to us, and God is immense! The finite cannot comprehend the infinite; and finite words cannot utter fully infinite joy. Don't we sing "God, my God, my boundless joy"? In this joy we sing: "My God how wonderful Thou art; Thy majesty how great". The entire psalmist of Scripture only touches the hem of this garment and garlands of joy. Our God in Christ is immense, unspeakably rich in Divine depths. The mighty Augustine says: Our thoughts of God are richer than our words, but God is greater than both.

But we must proceed.

This joy is also "full of glory". The term in the original Greek can also be translated "glorified up to the present moment".

That this joy is "glorified", full of glory does not simply mean that it is we, the saints, who glorify God. That is true in itself. But that is not the entire matter here referred to by the Apostle. It means too, and that first of all, that our joy is in its very nature full of the glory of God's grace in the saints. This glory is an ever present reality now. The Church on Sunday morning is full of the glory of God; so very really this is true as it shall be true in the day when we shall rejoice in perfection before the great white throne. And this glory of God of which all men "fall short" by nature, is the very quality of the joy of the saints. What a glory of God in the joy of the dying patriarchs, who see Christ's day afar. Can human tongue express it fully? Thank God, it cannot. O the blessedness of serving such a God, whose praises can never fully be sung, and whose joys in the saints can never fully be expressed; they are the length and breadth, the height and depth of the love of God, and being filled with all the *pleroma* (fulness) of God, prepared for the saints.

But we do not yet see this God in the face of Je-

sus Christ; fact is, no one has ever seen Jesus as He will be the Lord of glory over all things unto the Church.

The immensity and glory of our "joy" cannot be explained from the present earthly senses of sight, touch, tasting and hearing. Peter tells us: "Whom having not seen ye love". This means that our loving and adoring God with unspeakable joy needs another explanation than that of mere physical sight of our Lord. Our connection with the living Lord, with our Covenant God in Christ Jesus, is a different one than sight. It is the contact, the living fellowship of faith. Says Peter "though now ye see Him not, yet *believing*".

What is faith?

Certainly we must say that this faith is the gift of God, the creative gift of God. Faith is a gift of God in its inception in our hearts as well as in every activity of faith, and in all of its duration. And certainly faith is Mystery. It is something which we only know because God Himself tells us in His Word what it is, and gives us to taste it by the application and efficacious calling of the Spirit. By it we eat and drink Christ.

Its elements are certainly a certain knowledge of all that God has revealed in the Scriptures, but it is also a hearty and joyful confidence that all that Christ has done on the Cross was in my behalf. Faith is joy, true joy in God. Without this faith then is no joy possible. For all joy is in God through Christ to us and we only receive that joy from God through the Spirit.

Also this faith is an unspeakable gift!

It is immense because it lays hold on the immensity of the love of Christ that passeth knowledge.

Yes, unless we have this faith, the joys of salvation are not ours. Unto this faith and trust we are kept by the power of God through the preaching of the Gospel and the use of the Sacraments. And here too our wondering gaze of faith sees deepest Mysteries of godliness. By faith we see God our God, our boundless joys.

Finally, we must say of this faith that it is really a faith that reaches *into* Christ. We grow in knowledge and confidence, and in boundless joy. The more we grow in grace and knowledge, the more we see the wonder of faith. In love and devotion we then cling to Christ, keep His commandments which are not grievous. And for the love that we then have for Christ, resting upon His mighty labors, the time of our sojourn is not long.

The morning beckons; presently we shall see Him face to face in that revelation of Jesus Christ. Then we shall receive an eye to see, and an ear to hear, and a mouth to sing the praises of God weariless in His temple day and night. But, O wonder, it will still be "joy unspeakable". It will be then "full of glory"! The immensity of God will be greater than all the redeemed saints and redeemed creation.

Here the fount of joy does not go dry; the fountains of living water flow forever; we shall drink with Christ out of the brook. God shall be the light of the City of God, the heavenly Jerusalem. For, behold, He creates Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. God says: And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people!

G. C. Lubbers

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To the hills I lift my eyes;  
Whence shall help for me arise?  
From the Lord shall come my aid,  
Who the heaven and earth has made.  
He will guide through dangers all,  
Will not suffer thee to fall;  
He Who safe His people keeps  
Slumbers not and never sleeps.

Thy protector is the Lord,  
Shade for thee He will afford;  
Neither sun nor moon shall smite,  
God shall guard by day and night.  
He will ever keep thy soul,  
What would harm He will control;  
In the home and by the way  
He will keep thee day by day.

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My soul for Thy salvation faints,  
But still I hope in Thee;  
I long to see Thy promised help,  
When Thou shalt comfort me.

Thy statutes I do not forget,  
Though wasting grief I know;  
Thy servants' days are few, O Lord;  
When wilt Thou judge my foe?

Almost consumed, yet from Thy law  
I have not turned away;  
In loving-kindness give me strength,  
That I may still obey.

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## PERISCOPE

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### THE AGE OF THE EARTH

The problem of the age of the earth appears to awaken new interest among scientists that confess to be Christians and to believe in the testimony of Holy Writ. Another question is whether, in their scientific research and in their attempt to solve the problems of the age of the earth, they really take Scripture into account or ignore it completely.

Thus, recently I received a book in which are offered different papers delivered at a conference of several such Christian scientists, discussing the age of the earth, not only, but of the entire kosmos. All confess to believe the Bible. At the same time, however, they present the results of their investigations entirely on the basis of science and according to scientific methods. They do not even make an attempt to harmonize their scientific conclusions with Scripture. The result is that, on the basis of their research of others, they conclude that the earth is millions of years old. Such a method is, to my mind not only dangerous but also positively un-Christian.

Besides, even from a scientific viewpoint such conclusions can by no means be considered established, apart from the evident fact that they bring us into inevitable conflict with the Word of God.

Recently, I read a couple of articles in *Signs of the Times* that are interesting in this respect, and from which I will clip a few paragraphs. Writes the author, George McCready Price:

In a previous article I showed how extraordinary it would be in modern times for a vertebrate land animal, such as a horse or a cow or an elephant, to be buried and thus prepared for fossilization intact, or with the bones together as in life. The same must necessarily have been true in the case of the ancient dinosaur. Hence every dinosaur skeleton found with a considerable part of the skeleton intact or in place would be evidence of uncommon conditions. It might not be proof that the animal was buried alive, but it would be evidence that it was buried before the body had been washed about very much. In other words, if the creature was not entombed alive, it must have been speedily buried after death; and when large numbers of such examples occur together in the same general area, we have good proof of abnormal conditions.

He further argues that these phenomena, rather than proving anything in favor of a great age of the earth, point to some disaster that probably occurred a comparatively recent past:

But the fossil elephants of the arctic are objective proofs of a world disaster which can be appreciated by even a child. Geologists have long followed the wretched custom of giving a new name to every kind of plant or animal found in the fossil state, that is, a name different from that of the living one, no matter how closely the fossil may resemble the living. The fact that these fossil elephants in the arctic are called *mammoths* tends greatly to disguise the fact that they are identical with the living Indian elephant *Elephas indicus*. The textbooks sometimes dwell on the fact that the ancient ones had a fairly good coat of hair, while the moderns have only scanty coverings. But many dogs and pigs and other mammals living in the tropics are as hairless as are the elephants. By far the most scientific marks of identification in the case of land mammals is the pattern of the molar teeth; and, judged on this method, the fossils of the arctic are identical with the living ones in India and Malaya.

In a subsequent article I plan to deal with the change of climate indicated by the finding of uncounted thousands of elephants away beyond the Arctic Circle. In this present paper we are considering in the light of available facts how these ancient mammals perished. Do the ice mummies of the arctic have anything to tell us on this point?

The author thinks they do. And he points to the following rather amazing facts:

If an intact skeleton of any large animal in the fossil state is strong evidence of speedy burial after death, so as to avoid the inescapable agents of disintegration, what are we to say of elephants still in the flesh, that is, with all the soft parts intact, or at least sufficiently well preserved to afford good eating for dogs and wolves? More than one scientific man has tried a slice of the meat and has pronounced it fairly good as elephant steaks go.

It is sometimes mistakenly thought that elephants are the only large animals thus found embalmed in the frosty ice and sediments of the earth. This is not true; for





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many other animals, such as bison and rhinoceroses, also occur, though not in the prodigious numbers of the elephants.

Some light on the problem may be had when we consider the singular buoyancy of a dead elephant as compared with the dead body of any other mammal. All other land animals, so far as I know, always sink in the water when dead, though after a few days the gases generated by decomposition distend the abdomen, and the body then rises to the surface. On the contrary, an elephant's body floats from the first; African travelers say that it has a buoyancy capable of supporting two or three men. This may help us to understand some of the astonishing facts regarding these arctic fossils; though of course it has nothing to do with solving the chief problem: What was it that killed these animals by the tens of thousands, perhaps almost by the millions? One observer says he himself counted two thousand tusks ready for the market in one season, and this trade in fossil elephant tusks has been going on for many centuries.

Is our intellectual honesty being offered a bribe when we are approached with offers to "explain" these facts according to the theories of Charles Lyell?

In a subsequent article, the same author argues that in the comparatively recent past, the entire earth enjoyed a rather moderate climate, even in the regions within the arctic circle. And for this he points to indubitable evidence: the elephants mentioned above, fossil corals, reptiles that once lived in the arctic regions, plants and trees that were found in the lands around the North Pole.

How to explain this change in climate? When, years ago, I preached on Gen. 6-9, I suggested that, at the time of the flood, the axis of the earth was tipped at an angle of twenty-three and a half degrees. At the time, I thought that this was only my explanation. But now the writer of these articles makes mention of the same interpretation! Only, he repudiates the idea. Still, he also is of the opinion that the change must have occurred at the time of the flood. And he concludes:

It seems almost certain that this sudden change in the earth's climate was part of the cosmic change which the Bible describes in the sixth to the ninth chapters of Genesis. The Apostle Peter tells it all in one sentence:

"The world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished." 2 Peter 3:6. The burial of the fossils and the complete change in the earth's climate are only different aspects of the same event; and the objective proofs of what then occurred can be examined and studied by all who wish to understand God's ways of dealing with sin and sinners. Peter in this same epistle goes on to declare that the next time God deals with the world in judgment, it will be by fire instead of water. Water effected only partial changes; the results of the fire will be complete and eternal.

I am glad that there are still Christian scientists that refuse to take for granted all the conclusions of unbelieving scientists, and who attempt to compare their scientific results with Holy Writ.

H.H.



#### IN MEMORIAM

The following organizations of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Kalamazoo, Michigan wish to express their deepest sympathy to Miss Jennie Weessies, and the Weessies family, in the loss of their mother,

MRS. JENNIE WEESSIES

whom the Lord called, out of her suffering, unto Himself on January 28.

Her confession:

When I in righteousness at last  
Thy glorious face shall see,  
When all the weary night is past,  
And I awake with Thee  
To view the glories that abide,  
Then, then I shall be satisfied. . . .

is comfort for the bereaved.

Ladies' Aid  
Young People's Society  
The Sunday School



Praise ye the Lord; all creatures, sing  
The praises of your God and King;  
Let all that breathe, His praise proclaim  
And glorify His holy Name.