

THE STANDARD

Bearer

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

VOLUME XXIX

JANUARY 15, 1953 — GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN

NUMBER 8

MEDITATION

De Belofte Van Zekere Bevredeging

"Bidt en u zal gegeven worden; zoekt en gij zult vinden; klopt, en u zal opengedaan worden. Want een iegelijk die bidt, die ontvangt; en die zoekt, die vindt; en die klopt, dien zal opengedaan worden. Of wat mensch is er onder U, zoo zijn zoon hem zoude bidden om brood, die hem eenen steen zal geven, en zoo hij hem om eenen visch zoude bidden, die hem eene slang zal geven? Indien dan gij, die boos zijt, weet uwen kinderen goede gaven te geven, hoeveel te meer zal uw Vader Die in de hemelen is, goede gaven geven dengenen die ze van Hem bidden.

—Matth. 7:7-11

Ik heb al vaak menschen hooren zeggen: Ik bad den Heere, doch Hij heeft mijne bede niet verhoord. Ik heb het ook vaak gelezen. Al zulk zeggen, echter, gaat lijnrecht in tegen Gods Woord. Het is eenvoudig niet waar, dat er onverhoorde gebeden zijn. Die idee druicht zeker in tegen wat in mijn tekst geleerd wordt. Tot tweemaal toe wordt de serie van gezegden dienaangaande herhaald. Met nadruk leert de Heere hier, dat de gebeden, dat alle gebeden vervuld worden en verhoord. Jezus zegt eenvoudig: Want een iegelijk die bidt, die ontvangt. Kan het soms nog positiever gezegd worden dan dit? Hoe komt het dan dat vele van Gods Kinderen spreken van onverhoorde gebeden? Om het antwoord te vinden op die vraag moet ge luisteren naar Jakobus. In zijn brief verklaart hij deze kwestie. Hij zegt immers: Gij bidt, en gij ontvangt niet, omdat gij kwalijk bidt, opdat gij het in uwe wellusten doorbrengen zoudt. Daar wringt hem de schoen. Als men onverhoorde gebeden ervaart komt het enkel en alleen van het feit, dat men kwalijk, dat is, verkeerd bidt. Alle ware bidden wordt altijd verhoord, zegt Jezus in mijn tekst.

☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

Bij het eerste lezen van mijn tekst doen deze woor-

den ons vreemd aan. En zijn we geneigd om verwonderend te vragen: in wat toestand en voor wat volk hebben deze woorden hun beteekenis? Toch zeker niet in ons wereldje? Want het tegenovergestelde schijnt meer waarheid te bevatten. Bidt, en ge zult zeker niet ontvangen; zoekt, en ge zult het gezochte toch niet vinden; klopt, en men werpt de deur voor Uw aangezicht toe. De orde in deze wereld schijnt te zijn: Neemt, indien ge iets wenscht te bezitten; steelt, indien ge rijkdommen wenscht; breekt open de deuren die U buitensluiten van het begeerde. De algemeene ondervinding des levens zijn bittere teleurstellingen, geweigerde smeekbeden, en een gedurig zoeken naar schimmen die ons ontvliesen. En alle zulke worstelingen en pogingen maken ons oud voor onzen tijd en stemmen tot groote droefheid. En de avond van ons leven vindt ons ledig en ijdel. Deze tekst past zeker niet in de wereld van den natuurlijken mensch. Door alle eeuwen heen hoort ge het schreeuwend vragen: Geeft, o geeft ons toch! Er is één groote toestemming: we missen zooveel, zoo ontzaglijk veel! Onze harten zijn verlangend en hunkerend naar allerlei schatten, doch wij feilen en wij kunnen onze idealen niet verwerkelijken. Ge kunt daarom boven de historie der wereld schrijven: IJdelheid der ijdelheden het is al ijdelheid. Het schijnt ook al niet te passen bij de wereld der Christenen. Lazarus ligt aan den poort des rijken vol zweeren. De rechtvaardigen zijn vaak gesteengd geworden, in stukken gezaagd, verzocht, door het zwaard ter dood gebracht, hebben gewandeld in schaapsvellen en geitenvellen, verlaten, verdrukt, kwalijk behandeld zijnde... hebben in woestijnen gedood en op bergen en in spelonken en in de holen der aarde. In mijn gedachten hoor ik het spotten der goddeloozen: Komaan dan, gij Christenen, hier hebt ge uw kans: vraagt slechts en zoekt, klopt aan de deur van God. Er schijnen geen grenzen te zijn voor uw bevredeging. Jezus zegt het immers? Evenwel, we zien dat het een schertsen van God en van Jezus is om zoo te spreken tot U. Het is een

schimmenbeeld, dat voor Uw arme oogen opgehangen wordt, want ge hebt niet en ge vergaat hier op aarde. Voor eeuwen lang zijt ge vertrappt door ons, en er is geen helper. Zoo hoor ik het spotten der goddeloozen. En ons bedenken des vleesches, het woelen van de bewegingen der zonde die nog in ons overig zijn, zijn geneigd om het deze spotters toe te stemmen. Denkt hier aan Asaf die in psalm 73 zoo klaagde. Hij zag de voorspoed der goddeloozen en de armoede en smart der rechtvaardigen. En hij riep eindelijk in vertwijfeling uit: Zou er wel wetenschap zijn bij den Allerhoogste? Tevergeefs heb ik mijn handen in onschuld gewasschen. Ja, ons vleesch zou het toe willen stemmen. En de woorden van Jezus klinken heel vreemd. Die bidt ontvangt? Altijd? Ja, Jezus zegt het. Men kan, men mag daar niet mede knoeien. Een iegelijk die bidt, die ontvangt; en die zoekt, die vindt; en die klopt, dien zal opengedaan worden. Dat zullen we laten staan, want die het sprak heeft den naam van Waarheid. Maar we stemmen toe: het schijnt vreemd. Het doet ons vreemd aan om het te hooren betuigen: een iegelijk gebed wordt verhoord! Om het goede antwoord te zoeken op de vragen die zich aan ons opdringen zullen we nu letten op het feit, dat dit een bijzondere belofte is.

★ ★ ★ ★

En dan is het overduidelijk, dat dit een bijzondere belofte is vanuit het oogpunt der voorwerpen der belofte. En nu weet ge allen, dat er veel contrabande is op het Gereformeerde erf dienaangaande. Er zijn er die deze belofte algemeen maken. Dan is de gedachte, dat Jezus deze belofte deed aan alle menschen, hoofd voor hoofd. Of ook, dat Jezus deze belofte geeft aan alle menschen die onder het Verbond der genade geboren en getogen zijn, aan beide de verworpenen en verkorenen. Het geheele gedoopte Christendom wordt dan toegeroepen: De Heere is Zijn Woord aan U kwijt: Hij heeft het aan U allen beloofd: Die bidt, ontvangt! Het wordt brutaal weg gezegd: alle gedoopte kinderen zijn kinderen der belofte. En men vergeet, dat de kinderen der belofte de kinderen Gods zijn, de uitverkorenen en niemand meer. Let op Rom. 9:6-8. Daar staat dit: "Doch ik zeg dit niet alsof het Woord Gods ware uitgevallen. Want die zijn niet allen Israel die uit Israel zijn; noch omdat zij Abrahams zaad zijn, zijn zij allen kinderen, maar: In Isaak zal U het zaad genoemd worden: dat is, niet de kinderen des vleesches, die zijn kinderen Gods; maar de kinderen der belofte worden voor het zaad gerekend." Hier wordt toch immers duidelijk geleerd, dat de kinderen die *wij* kweeken geen kinderen Gods zijn, doch dat de kinderen der belofte voor het zaad, voor kin-

deren Gods gerekend worden. En wat beduidt nu die term: kinderen der belofte? Het antwoord op die vraag beluisteren we in Gal. 4:23. Daar staat dit: "Maar gene die uit de dienstmaagd was, is naar het vleesch geboren geweest; doch deze die uit de vrije was, door de belofte." Dus de belofte is de moeder der ware kinderen Gods. En dat is geheel en al naar wat de doorlopende lijn is der Heilige Schrift. Overal wordt geleerd, dat de ware kinderen Gods geboren worden door het almachtige Woord van God. Het is de onwederstandelijke genade die elk kind Gods zijn tweede, zijn geestelijke geboorte schenkt. En tot hen richt Jezus Zijn belofte van mijn tekst. Dat is overduidelijk uit het huidige verband. Immers, mijn tekst is genomen uit de bergrede. En die bergrede is de wet van het Koninkrijk Gods. En de Heere Jezus heeft tot in bijzonderheden de burgers van dat hemelsche, geestelijke Koninkrijk beschreven, en dat wel bij het begin van de bergrede. Die deze belofte ontvangen van zekere bevrediging zijn de armen van geest, degenen die treuren met de droefheid naar God, de zachtmoedigen van harte, die hongeren en dorsten naar de gerechtigheid, de barmhartigen, de reinen van hart en de vredemakers. Die worden hier toegesproken, en niemand meer. Het Evangelie wordt tot allen gepredikt, insluitende ook vele verworpenen, doch de inhoud van het Evangelie is altijd particulier, d.w.z., het betreft alleen de uitverkorenen. Let er maar op, dat overal die uitverkorenen beschreven worden: het komt tot die *willen*, en dan weet gij allen die den geheelen Bijbel gelooven, dat die wil, die gewilligheid geschonken wordt aan Gods volk, aan de dorstigen, de geloovigen, de treurenden over hunne zonden, enz. En zoo is het immers hier ook in het verband? Noemde ik U niet die lijst op uit de zeven zaligsprekingen? Is er iemand onder U die zou durven beweren, dat in die zaligsprekingen ook de verworpenen ingesloten worden die onder het verbond geboren en getogen zijn? Wel neen toch? Maar ook de tekst zelfs geeft duidelijk bewijs dat dit een particuliere belofte is. Staat er niet in vers 11: "hoeveel te meer zal uw Vader die in de hemelen is, goede gaven geven dengenen die ze van Hem bidden?" Is het nu niet duidelijk, dat de voorwerpen van deze belofte uitsluitend de kinderen Gods zijn? Er is toch geen Gereformeerd mensch onder U die gelooft aan een algemeen Vaderschap Gods? Want dat is de vuile leuze der Modernen. Neen, deze belofte is een bijzondere belofte, en raakt alleen Gods ware volk. Bovendien is deze belofte bijzonder ook uit nog een ander opzicht. Het gaat in deze belofte van zekere bevrediging niet over alle soort dingen, maar alleen over goede gaven. Straks daar meer over. Ik wil alleen hier maar duidelijk maken, dat men als kinderen Gods niet maar bidden kan om allerlei dingen,

wat dan ook. O neen. En Gods kind weet dat ook. Ze hebben geleerd, dat het ware bidden de hoogste en de lieflijkste openbaring van dankbaarheid is. En dat bidden het moeilijkste werk is voor een Christen. Want, en hier valt allen nadruk op: men moet steeds bidden naar Gods wil, overeenkomstig Gods wil. En een rechtgeaard Christen wil niet anders bidden. Hij heeft immers Zijn Vader lief boven alles? En de tekst zelf brengt hem op weg. Want hij spreekt van goede gaven. En als we dan niet weten wat goed voor ons is, en dat geschiedt vaak, dan zeggen we aan het einde van onze bede: Heere, wij weten niet wat wij bidden zullen gelijk het behoort, en daarom, niet mijn wil, doch Uwe wil geschiede. Als ik gebeden heb, Heere, om dingen die niet goed voor mij zijn, onthoud ze dan van mij, doch geef mij wat Gij Heere, weet dat goed voor mij is. Ziedaar, het duidelijkst bewijs voor de stelling, dat we hier een bijzondere belofte hebben.

☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

Doch die belofte is ook rijk. We ontvangen goede gaven op ons gebed. Zoo zegt het Jezus. Doch nu komt deze vraag ons tegen: wie zal beslissen wat goede gaven zijn? Wie zal daarover beslissen? Datgene wat ons goed toelijkt? Datgene wat goed lijkt vanuit ons aardse oogpunt? O, de verzoeking zal er wel altijd blijven om zoo te bidden. Maar wie zijn Bijbel kent, en zoo God heeft leeren kennen weet dat men dan alzo niet meer aan het bidden is. Dan wordt ons gebed ijdel. Zeg, dat Uw lieve vrouw doodziek ter neder ligt. En ge hebt haar zoo hartstochtelijk lief. Ge kunt haar niet missen. O God, maak toch mijn vrouw beter! Zoo krijgt Uw bloedende hart. Maar is dat bidden? Ge weet beter. Als ge zoo bidt, dan is Uw bede goddeloos. Stelt het U voor: God is een plaats klaarmaken voor Uw vrouw. Haar tijd is naar Zijn wijs Goddelijk bestel klaar. En God komt tot U en haar, en Hij zegt tot U beiden van haar: Bereid Uw huis, mijn kind, want gij moet sterven. Uw plaats hier bij Mij is gereed gemaakt. Ik weet wel, dat God zoo niet letterlijk spreekt, zooals tot Hiskia. Maar feitelijk maakt dat geen verschil. God zegt die woorden, b.v., door Uw vrouw een ongeneeslijke kwaal te geven. Zult gij dan den Heere smeecken en zeggen: Heere, ik kan haar niet missen? Neen toch. In dit geval zegt ge: Heere, ik dank U, dat ik haar zoolang mocht hebben, en nu Gij haar van mij weg neemt, bid ik U: open wijd Uwe armen van liefde, en neem haar tot U. Uw wil geschiede. En: des Heeren naam zij geloofd. Goede gaven. Leest deze zelfde rede van Jezus in Lucas, en dan zult ge zien, dat Lucas een commentaar gegeven heeft over deze goede gaven. Want hij zegt in zijn editie van de Bergrede: hoeveel te meer

zal de hemelsche Vader den Heiligen Geest geven den-genen die Hem bidden! Daar ziet ge duidelijk waarom het is dat deze ware bidders altijd verhoord worden. De goede gaven van mijn tekst zitten vast aan den Heiligen Geest. Bidt gerust om genade en deugd, vergeving van zonden en goedheid. Bidt om de juwelen van Gods trouwverbond, om wijsheid en verstand, en God zal Uw bede altijd verhooren. Zegt Jakobus dat ook niet? Indien iemand wijsheid ontbreke, dat hij ze van God begeere die mildelijk geeft en niet verwijt! En Jezus zeide elders: Zijt niet bezorgd voor uw leven, wat gij eten en wat gij drinken zult, noch voor uw lichaam waarmede gij u kleeden zult, enz. Neen, ook daar zijn het de goede gaven die verband houden met den Heiligen Geest, waar we om moeten vragen en waarnaar we moeten hongeren. En dat is rijk. En de belofte is rijk. Hebt ge die goede gaven, dan behoeft ge eigenlijk niets anders. Dan zijt ge gelukkig hier op aarde, en zult ge eeuwig gelukkig zijn daarboven bij God.

G. Vos.

— : — : —

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On Monday, January 19 our dear parents,
MR. AND MRS. HENRY BRANDS
hope to celebrate their 30th Wedding Anniversary.

We are indeed thankful to our God for having spared them for each other and us.

Our prayer is that God may bless them in the way that lies ahead. And that in all their experiences they may enjoy the peace which alone can be found in Him.

Their Grateful Children:

Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Schuiteman
Mr. and Mrs. Henry Brands
Mr. and Mrs. Peter Vande Vegte
and 4 grandchildren

2146 Kalamazoo Ave., S.E.
Grand Rapids, Michigan

— : — : —

IN MEMORIAM

De Hollandsche Mannenvereniging van de First Prot. Ref. Church betreurt het verlies van een zeer geliefd en getrouw lid, haar vice-president, broeder,

G. KOSTER

en betuigt bij dezen hare innige deelneming aan de bedroefde weduwe en familie.

Wij zijn verzekerd, dat hij nu boven alle strijd verheven uit de strijdende kerk verlost is.

Moge de Heere rijkelijk bolsem gieten in de geslagene wonde.

N. Dijkstra, Pres.
G. Borduin, Sec'y.

THE STANDARD BEARER

Semi-monthly, except monthly in July and August

Published by the Reformed Free Publishing Association
Box 124, Station C., Grand Rapids 6, Michigan

EDITOR — Rev. Herman Hoeksema

Communications relative to contents should be addressed to Rev. H. Hoeksema, 1139 Franklin St., S. E., Grand Rapids 7, Michigan.

All matter relative to subscription should be addressed to Mr. J. Bouwman, 1350 Giddings Ave., S. E., Grand Rapids 6, Michigan. Announcements and Obituaries must be mailed to the above address and will be published at a fee of \$1.00 for each notice.

Renewals:— Unless a definite request for discontinuance is received, it is assumed that the subscriber wishes the subscription to continue without the formality of a renewal order.

Subscription price: \$4.00 per year

Entered as Second Class mail at Grand Rapids, Michigan

EDITORIALS**The Deposition of An Officebearer**

The way in which an officebearer, whether he be minister, elder, or deacon, may be and must be suspended, and ultimately deposed, from his office, is in itself perfectly plain from the Church Order, as also from the Formula of Subscription.

The articles of the Church Order that are applicable to this matter are Articles 79 and 80. They read as follows:

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

“Furthermore, among the gross sins, which are worthy of being punished with suspension or deposition from office, these are the principal ones: false doctrine or heresy, public schism, public blasphemy, simony, faithless desertion of office or intrusion upon that of another, perjury, adultery, fornication, theft, acts of violence, habitual drunkenness, brawling, filthy lucre; in short, all sins and gross offenses, as render the perpetrators infamous before the world, and which in any private member of the church would be considered worthy of excommunication.”

However, it must not be forgotten that this is not the only way in which a minister, elder, or deacon, may at least be suspended from office. He certainly may also be suspended *de facto*, without the advice of the consistory of the nearest church, when he violates the oath of office as it is recorded in the Formula of Subscription, which we here quote:

“We, the undersigned, professors of the Protestant Reformed Churches, ministers of the Gospel, elders and deacons of the Protestant Reformed congregation of, of Classis do hereby sincerely and in good conscience before the Lord, declare by this, our subscription, that we heartily believe and are persuaded that all the articles and points of doctrine contained in the Confession and Catechism of the Reformed Churches, together with the explanation of some points of the aforesaid doctrine, made by the Na-

C O N T E N T S**MEDITATION—**

- De Belofte van Zekere Bevrediging 169
Rev. G. Vos

EDITORIALS—

- The Deposition of An Officebearer 172
Rev. H. Hoeksema

THE TRIPLE KNOWLEDGE—

- An Exposition of the Heidelberg Catechism 175
Rev. H. Hoeksema

OUR DOCTRINE—

- God's Providence 179
Rev. H. Veldman

IN HIS FEAR—

- Looking to the Future 183
Rev. H. C. Hoeksema

FROM HOLY WRIT—

- Exposition of I John 2:15-17 185
Rev. G. C. Lubbers

THE DAY OF SHADOWS—

- David's Flight 187
God's Love of Zion 189
Rev. G. M. Ophoff

PERISCOPE—

- The Off-scouring of All Things 191
Choosing the Right Church 192
Rev. H. Hoeksema

tional Synod of Dordrecht, 1618-'19, do fully agree with the Word of God

"We promise therefore diligently to teach and faithfully to defend the aforesaid doctrine, without either directly or indirectly contradicting the same, by our public preaching or writing.

"We declare, moreover, that we not only reject all errors that militate against this doctrine and particularly those which were condemned by the above mentioned synod, but that we are disposed to refute and contradict these, and to exert ourselves in keeping the church free from such errors. And if hereafter any difficulties of different sentiments respecting the aforesaid doctrines should arise in our minds, we promise that we will neither publicly nor privately propose, teach, or defend the same, either by preaching or writing, until we have first revealed such sentiments to the consistory, classis and synod, that the same may be there examined, being ready always cheerfully to submit to the judgment of the consistory, classis and synod, under the penalty in case of refusal to be, by that very fact, suspended from our office.

"And further, if at any time the consistory, classis or synod, upon sufficient grounds of suspicion and to preserve the uniformity and purity of doctrine, may deem it proper to require of us a further explanation of our sentiments respecting any particular article of the Confession of Faith, the Catechism, or the explanation of the National Synod, we do hereby promise to be always willing and ready to comply with such requisition, under the penalty above mentioned, reserving for ourselves, however, the right of an appeal, whenever we shall believe ourselves aggrieved by the sentence of the consistory, the classis or the synod, and until a decision is made upon such an appeal, we will acquiesce in the determination and judgment already passed."

From the articles of the Church Order quoted above, it is evident that an officebearer cannot be suspended or deposed on the basis of any minor offense. The suspension or deposition must take place upon the basis of "any public, gross sin, which is a disgrace to the church, or worthy of punishment by the authorities." And some of the gross sins that are worthy of suspension or deposition, or both, are enumerated in Article 80. Moreover, it is clear from Art. 79 that a distinction is made between ministers, on the one hand, and elders and deacons, on the other. The latter may be deposed immediately by the consistory and that of the nearest church. The former may only be suspended, while their deposition rests with the judgment of the classis and the advice of the delegates of synod mentioned in Art. 11 of the Church Order, that

is, therefore, the deputies that must be present at the examination of a candidate.

About this no more need be said. It is plain in itself.

However, we would like to add a few words about the last clauses of Article 80: "in short, all sins and gross offenses, as render the perpetrators infamous before the world, and which in any private member of the church would be considered worthy of excommunication."

It is, therefore, a very pertinent question: when is a common member of the church considered worthy of excommunication?

The question is often asked: when may an officebearer, and especially a minister of the gospel, be deemed worthy of deposition? And the answer, according to Art. 80 of the Church Order, is evidently: only when he committed a sin that is worthy of excommunication in any common member.

Suppose, then, that a minister makes one or two false statements from the pulpit, that are evidently not in harmony with our confessions. Must he then immediately be suspended or deposed?

Of course not.

If his attention is called to it, or if protests are lodged against such statements, the minister, if he really loves the truth, will be glad to apologize and retract such false statements, wherever they have been made, whether from the pulpit or in another public meeting, or even in private conversation. If this is done, no further action need be taken.

But suppose that a minister repeatedly reveals Arminian tendencies, or preaches Arminian doctrines. Suppose, moreover, that his attention is repeatedly called to the errors in his preaching, and that he does not voluntarily retract or apologize. Suppose that the consistory officially condemns such errors and demands a public apology. Then, if the minister does not repent and stubbornly refuses to retract and apologize, is he not worthy of deposition, and at the same time of excommunication?

He certainly is.

When is a common member finally excommunicated? Is it because of the fact itself, that he committed a gross sin, whether it be false doctrine, theft, fornication, adultery, or even murder?

He never is.

The church does not have the sword power, but the key power. And that key power implies that no matter how heinous the offense may be, if the sinner repents, the church forgives in the name of Jesus Christ

and declares him to be a free citizen of the kingdom of heaven.

Ultimately, therefore, it is the sin of impenitence which is worthy of excommunication.

The same is true of a minister.

It is not because of one or two or even several erroneous statements which a minister may make from the pulpit that he is either deposed or excommunicated.

But if he refuses to apologize and repent, and therefore leaves the impression that he insists on continuing to preach erroneous doctrine, he no doubt is worthy not only of deposition from office, but for the same reason also of excommunication from the church of Christ.

But as I remarked above, there is still another cause and another way of suspension of a minister, elder, or deacon.

That is the way of the Formula of Subscription, which may be called the oath of office.

Notice how carefully and forcefully this Formula is worded.

In this formula "We promise therefore *diligently to teach* and *faithfully to defend* the aforesaid doctrine, without either *directly or indirectly contradicting* the same, by our public preaching and writing." (Underscoring is mine, H.H.)

We would probably deem this pledge quite sufficient. But our fathers thought differently. To the above they add:

"We declare, moreover, that we not only reject all errors that militate against this doctrine and particularly those which were condemned by the above mentioned synod, but that we are disposed to refute and contradict these, and to exert ourselves in keeping the Church free from such errors."

How dreadfully afraid our fathers were of false doctrine, and especially of the error of Arminianism. The ministers promise that they shall diligently teach and faithfully defend the doctrine expressed in the confessions, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Netherlands Confession, and the Canons of Dordrecht. They promise that they will never contradict these, either directly or indirectly. But even this is not sufficient. We also promise not only that we reject the Arminian errors which are referred to in the clause "particularly those which were condemned by the above mentioned synod," but also that we are disposed, positively, to refute and contradict these errors, and that we do all that is possible to keep the church pure from such errors.

It is very evident, therefore, that our fathers considered the "heart of the church", that is, the doctrine of election, extremely important, and that they were dreadfully afraid of the Arminian errors.

And no wonder! For not only had they discovered by experience how easily the church is corrupted and in what subtle ways Arminianism creeps into the church of Christ, but they also understood quite correctly that it is exactly this error by which the church is most readily and easily deceived.

Therefore the Formula continues, to exact from the officebearers the pledge that they will "neither publicly nor privately propose, teach, or defend the same, either by preaching or writing," until they first have revealed their deviating sentiments by way of gravamen to consistory, classis and synod.

But there is still more.

The officebearers, and especially the ministers, also promise that they will be always ready and willing to submit to an examination, or to the requirement of a further explanation respecting any particular article of the confessions above named. Such a requirement can be made upon the officebearer "upon sufficient grounds of suspicion and to preserve the uniformity and purity of doctrine." And if the officebearer, minister, elder, or deacon, should ever refuse to submit to such an examination upon the grounds of suspicion, he would by that very act (*de facto*) be suspended from his office.

Of course, he may appeal to the broader gathering. But in the meantime he will remain suspended.

This, therefore, is another way in which a minister, elder, or deacon may be suspended from his office.

And it is a very important way, because it concerns purely the matter of doctrine.

H.H.

CLASSIS WEST

Classis West meets in the Protestant Reformed at Sioux Center, Iowa, on Wednesday, March 1, 1953.

M. Gritters, S.C.

Let children learn God's righteous ways
And on Him stay their heart,
That they may not forget His works
Nor from His ways depart.

THE TRIPLE KNOWLEDGE

An Exposition Of The Heidelberg Catechism

PART III
OF THANKFULNESS

Lord's Day 34

1.

The Law and the Christian (con't.)

Secondly, there are those who in general are known as Antinomians, who would lay all emphasis on justification in Christ. They are afraid that the preaching of the law may have the effect of inducing the Christian to seek his salvation in the way of fulfilling the law of God. The only effect of the preaching of the law as a rule of life, they say, is and must be that we become pharisees, that once more we seek our salvation in the way of our own righteousness, the righteousness of good works, and that thus we deny the atoning blood and the perfect obedience of Christ. And seeing that it is quite impossible that we keep the law of God perfectly, it can never be a ground, or part of the ground, of our salvation. Christ fulfilled the whole law in our stead, and in Him alone we have a perfect righteousness and eternal life. Let us, therefore, not attempt to add to the work of Christ, Who fulfilled the law, but trust in His perfect work alone.

What shall we say to this?

In the first place, I would reply by admitting every one of the arguments advanced. The Christian certainly stands in relation of freedom to the law. And he certainly has all his righteousness in Christ only, Who redeemed him from the curse of the law.

Nevertheless, I would also answer that I cannot agree with the conclusion that is supposed to be deduced from these arguments, namely, that it is a mistake or unprofitable for the believer to be instructed in the law of God.

To be sure, the believer is not under the law, but under grace. He is free. His position is not at Mt. Sinai, the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, but on Mt. Zion, and in the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. He is in Christ. And in Christ he is a new creature. He certainly must stand in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made him free. This means, first of all, that he is free from the curse of the law, because Christ is become a curse for him. The law can never curse him anymore. Even if the Christian falls into sin,

or discovers, as he does, that he cannot keep the law of God perfectly, it cannot curse him. If the law should begin to curse him, he takes it by faith to Calvary, always again to find redemption in the blood of Christ. Secondly, from this it also follows that the believer is free in the sense that the law can never be a way of salvation to him. He is saved. All the work necessary to clothe him with perfect righteousness, and to make him heir of eternal life, is perfectly finished. To this perfect work of Christ unto his salvation he need not, and cannot possibly add even a tittle or iota by his keeping of the law and by walking in all good works. Finally, he is also free in the sense that in principle he has the law written in his heart, so that he does not need the law as a code of precepts to direct his external deportment. He is not under the law, but under grace.

From all this, however, it does not follow that he is free to trample the law of God under foot. Nor is it true that the law cannot be and is not a safe and necessary guide to direct his way according to the will of God. On the contrary, his freedom means that exactly as a redeemed Christian, who does not have to work for his salvation, who has eternal righteousness and life to begin with, he is in a position freely to walk according to the will of God from loving gratitude. His freedom means, in the second place, that he has been liberated from the law of sin and death, and that now it is his inmost desire to know the will of God and to keep His testimonies and His statutes for the whole of his life in the world. It is exactly because he is free that he exclaims with the psalmist: "O, how love I thy law; it is my meditation all the day." And to this I would add, finally, that the Christian is still in the flesh, that he has but a small beginning of the new obedience, and that the motions of sin are still in his members. Well may he daily take the law for his companion, to instruct him, enlighten him, and warn him from the way of sin.

Never dare the law lord it over him: for he is free indeed. Never may the law curse him: for Christ has redeemed him from the curse of the law. Never can the law be to him a way to merit righteousness and life: he has it all in the Lord Jesus Christ. But as a loving companion and infallible guide the believer takes the law to his bosom, with the prayer in his heart: "Teach me the way that I should go."

Thus the instruction of the law, sanctified to the believing heart, will ever have a three-fold effect, and bear a three-fold fruit upon the believing Christian. This three-fold effect of the law upon the Christian we must further treat when we discuss Lord's Day 45. But briefly we must mention this effect even now. First of all, it will discover to the eyes of the Christian an ever deeper horror of sin in his old nature.

In the light of the law, as a teacher of sin, he ever gains a clearer and more profound knowledge of the nature of sin and of the corruption of his sinful flesh. And thus the law will lead him to daily and ever more hearty repentance. Secondly, through the instruction of the law he will come to a deeper and ever clearer knowledge of the preciousness of Christ, of his need of His atoning blood and of the forgiveness of sin. And to the cross of Christ he will flee for refuge. And finally, through the instruction of the law of his God he will increase in the knowledge of His will, in the desire to walk worthy of God, and in the earnest endeavor to put off the old man and to put on the new, to the glory of God his Redeemer.

2

God Is One

Before we enter upon the discussion of the Ten Commandments, a word may be said about the significance of the introductory sentence by which the Lord made Himself known to His people from Mt. Sinai: "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage."

By these words Jehovah introduces Himself to His people Israel. They are a Self-revelation of God to His covenant people. The people were encamped at Mt. Sinai. The mountain was altogether on smoke. There were lightnings and thunders and a thick cloud, and the whole mountain quaked greatly. And from the mount, out of the darkness, the people heard a mighty voice of a trumpet. Whose voice was it? From the introductory sentence it became known that it was Jehovah, their God. Just as the radio speaker, invisible to his audience, introduces himself by announcing his name, or by having his name announced, so the Lord introduced Himself to His people by the words: "I am Jehovah thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." The words, therefore, are a Self-revelation of the living God, Jehovah, the God of the covenant, to His people Israel.

Secondly, in these words Jehovah reveals His peculiar covenant relation to His people Israel, to the church. He is Jehovah, *their God*. It is true: He is the God of heaven and earth, of all nations and all men. For He is their Creator and their Lord. But He is the God of His people in an altogether unique sense of the word. He is their covenant God. He stands revealed to them in the promise: "I will be your God, and ye shall be my people." He owns them in His love, as His peculiar treasure. And thus they are His property. He will bless them in His favor, reveal Himself to them, take them to His bosom, re-

ceive them into His fellowship, and give them eternal life. And, on the other hand, they are His servants, called to love Him with all their heart and mind and soul and strength, and to show forth the praises of Him that called them out of darkness into His marvelous light. It is the covenant-relation as it is referred to in Hosea 2:16ff.: "And it shall be at that day, saith the Lord, that thou shalt call me Ishi; and shalt call me no more Baali... And in that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground: and I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely. And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the Lord... And I will sow her unto me in the earth; and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God."

Thirdly, and in close connection with the foregoing, the introductory words reveal God as the Redeemer of His people. He brought them out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage with a mighty arm. The Lord that is speaking to them from the smoking and quaking mount is the same that became known to them in the wonders of salvation, accomplished in the land of their oppression. It is therefore the God of our salvation in Christ, Who redeemed and delivered us from the bondage of sin and death, to lead us into the Canaan of His everlasting rest, that is addressing us in the law of the ten words. His promise to us is that He will enrich us with all the blessings of salvation. And only thus, as our Redeemer and Deliverer from sin and death, does He approach us with His law, in order that it may be a rule for us in working out our salvation, and in order to exhort us to keep our part of the covenant, that is, to love the Lord our God with all our heart and mind and soul and strength, to put all our confidence in Him only, to forsake the world, crucify our old nature, and walk in a new and holy life.

The first commandment is evidently basic for all the rest.

We may perhaps compare the law of God to a beautiful, holy temple, with a hall, or vestibule, above the entrance to which we find the inscription, "I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." It is through that vestibule, and therefore, as God's redeemed, covenant people, that we now enter into this holy temple of our God. This temple has ten apartments. Over

the entrance of each of these apartments we find the inscription of each of the ten commandments. And if we would understand the beauty and the rich significance of the law as a guide for the life of the believer in the world, we certainly must not be satisfied with merely reading the inscription over the entrance of each apartment. But we must enter and contemplate the interior of every room. To abandon the figure for a moment, we must study every one of the commandments in the light of the whole of Scripture with relation to all of our life as believers in the midst of the world that lieth in darkness.

To this, however, must be added that the first commandment of the ten is fundamental with relation to the rest. Turning to the figure of the temple once more, the ten apartments of this temple of the law are not to be conceived as all of equal size and without mutual relation to one another. Rather must we imagine that in this first room into which we enter we find the entrances to all the other apartments of this temple. The first commandment is basic. Keep it, and you keep the entire law, for the simple reason that our relation to God is the fundamental relation of all our life.

Let us ask, first of all, what this commandment teaches us concerning God. The law, you understand, is not arbitrary, but is based upon the truth about God and His virtues. Hence, it is expedient and fruitful to attempt from each commandment to learn something about our God, and to discover the basic principle upon which it is founded.

That fundamental principle in the first commandment is evidently that God is one. He is God alone, and there is no God beside Him.

We must remember that this first commandment leaves room for but two alternatives: we either worship God, or we serve idols. We are inclined to imagine three possibilities. The one is that man serves the true God, worships and adores Him, puts all his confidence in Him, and consecrates himself and all things to Him. Such is evidently the demand of the first commandment. The second possibility is that man serves false gods, or idols. Perhaps to this class we relegate all the heathen nations, that worship the powers of nature, the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, graven images, and live in the darkness of paganism. But perhaps we also imagine a third possibility, and that is that we serve no god at all. There is a large class of men that do not serve the true God, neither are idolaters, but are strictly godless. They serve no god at all. God, they imagine, leaves them alone; and so they leave God alone.

We may note, however, that this is a fundamental error, and is not in harmony with reality. This is evi-

dent from the first commandment. It leaves room for only two alternatives. We either worship God, or we serve other Gods. A third possibility, that man should be altogether without God, is inconceivable and impossible. For it the first commandment leaves no room. In deepest reality there are no atheists. This does not mean that sinful man cannot philosophize until he imagines that from his life he ruled out the last trace of any belief in a god. Surely, the fool saith in his heart, "There is no god." But in this he only reveals the wilful attempt to rid himself of God. And in this attempt he will never succeed. Although for a time he may suppress the consciousness which is indelibly written upon his heart that God is, in actual life every man serves his god. He who turns away from the living God surely puts his confidence in vanities and becomes an idolater. This may not be the worship of sun and moon and stars or four-footed beasts and creeping things, of wood and stone. It may be the superstitious worship of fate. Or it may be the worship of and trust in money and possessions, in his own strength, or in man or humanity. But whatever his god may be, every man seeks some object, some being, some power, in whom he puts his trust, which he adores and worships. The man that turns away from the true God is necessarily an idolater.

Hence, the first commandment is antithetical. The positive significance of this commandment is, of course: Thou shalt serve the Lord thy God, and Him alone. Nevertheless, this is expressed in the negative way: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." The implication is, naturally: if you do not serve other gods, you serve the true God; and if you refuse to serve the true God, and Him alone, you necessarily must serve idols. A third possibility there is not.

The reason for this is not difficult to discover. In the first place, it must be remembered that man originally was created after the image of God. In his very nature he was adapted to God. And on his consciousness it is indelibly inscribed that he needs God. It is true that the image of God was not only lost through sin, but that it was subverted into its very opposite. His knowledge of God was changed into the lie. His righteousness was changed into iniquity. And His holiness became impurity in all his inclinations and desires. But sin did not change his being. He still needs a god, both objectively and subjectively. Without a god he cannot be. And when he rejects the true God, he will seek after some other object of worship and adoration. Secondly, this also implies that man is a servant. In the covenant-relation he was God's friend-servant. Also this was radically subverted by sin, so that he refuses to serve the true God.

But essentially he is still a servant. The sinner is a slave of sin. In sinful imagination he may exalt himself as God; but the fact remains that his being a servant, and no god, is indelibly impressed upon his consciousness. And by virtue of his very nature he will seek some god to serve, and in whom he can put his trust, and upon whom he may rely. Besides, in the third place, all things proclaim to him that he is dependent. He has no existence in himself. For the very origin of his being he is dependent. He did not create the world. Nor does he sustain it. He does not bring the rain and the sunshine, the fruit of the trees and the herb of the field. On literally all things, over which he has no control, man is dependent. Dependent he is on the very air which he breathes, on the water he drinks, on the food he eats. Everything proclaims his dependence. All things loudly preach to him that there is a power outside of him. And therefore he seeks a god on whom he can rely, and in whom he can trust. Finally, we must not forget that he lives in a world upon which God has placed the curse, and that testifies to him that all things are vanity. God put the curse of death upon the world in which man lives. In that world the very powers over which man has no control turn themselves against the sinner. In fire and water, in the wild beasts of the field, in the destructive powers of nature, in sickness and death and famine and pestilence, things turn against man. And when he turns himself away from the true God, he even seeks to pacify and overcome this evil power that turns against him for destruction. Man that originally was made after the image of God, man that is and remains a servant in his very nature, man that is dependent on everything round about him and who stands in a cursed domain, when he turns away from the true God, must of necessity serve some god in whom he may trust. He becomes inevitably an idolater.

The practical implications of this are very important. On the surface we may probably imagine that this negative form of the commandment, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me," does not apply to us. As long as we have an eye only for that coarser form of idolatry found among the nations of heathendom, bowing themselves before idols of gold and silver, of wood and stone, worshipping the powers of nature, the beasts of the field and creeping things, we may say that we are no idolaters. The first commandment in its negative form has lost its significance for us. Its positive implication may perhaps be still of value. It may serve to remind us that we must always and with all our heart and mind and soul and strength serve the living God. But idolaters, servers of other gods, we surely are not. About this, however, we will change our mind as soon as we understand that we al-

ways serve some god. Hence, in as far as we are not delivered from sin, from the inclination of our sinful nature, we are exactly inclined to idolatry; that is, we are inclined to rule out the true God and to place something next to Him in which we trust and on which we rely. Nor is it difficult to discover this tendency to idolatry in our practical life as believers in the world. How often in prosperity do we not place our own strength and ingenuity, conditions and circumstances, next to the living God, or instead of Him. Or, how frequently in distress or difficulty, in trouble or adversity, in sickness and suffering, do we fix our eye on men, on things, on means, next to the Lord of life and death. All this, according to the Catechism, is idolatry. Next to the Lord there is nothing. He is God, and God alone. Beside Him there is no Saviour. All things and every creature are but means in His hand. And therefore, to place our trust in things or creatures is to rob the living God of His glory and is to serve idols.

We may notice too that emphatically the first commandment reveals God to us as a personal Being. He is a Being with intellect and will. He confronts us not as a vague, impersonal power, but as a Person, that speaks to you, that reveals His will to you, that demands that you shall love Him. And in relation to Him you stand as a rational and moral being, Whose Word you hear, Whose will you are obliged to obey, to Whom you must devote yourselves with all your heart and mind and soul and strength. He is a God Whom you may know, to Whom you may speak, to Whom you may make your needs known, before Whom you may pour out your hearts, in Whom you may trust, and with Whom you may have fellowship. He speaks of *thou* and *me*: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." He is, therefore, not a vague, impersonal power, such as the wind, or the power of electricity. Nor should you ever speak of Him as "a kind Providence," or in similar terms. Neither should we confuse or identify Him with the world, as Pantheism does, and say that God is all, and the world is God. He is an Ego, a Person, a distinct Being. He is the Lord your God.

But the basic principle of the first commandment, in distinction from all the others, is that it reveals to us that God is *One*, and that He is God alone. There is no god beside Him. And this means, in the first place, that God is a simple Being: He is not composed of parts. You cannot divide Him. All His virtues are essentially one in Him. In fact, He is His virtues. God is infinite in virtues and perfections, such as power and wisdom, righteousness and mercy, justice and grace, love and truth. But all these perfections are in God essentially the same. You cannot present

them as being in conflict one with another. You dare not say, for instance, that God is just, *but* that He is also merciful. On the contrary, you should say that God's mercy is always a just mercy, and His justice is ever a merciful justice. You may not say that God is filled with wrath against the wicked, *but* that He is also a God of love. You should say: God is love: therefore, He is filled with holy wrath against all the workers of iniquity. Nor is it possible to divide and separate the virtues of God. If you should argue thus: "I like a God of love and mercy, but I must have nothing of a God that is righteous and just, that damns sinners into everlasting perdition," you do not love God at all. You make your own god and worship an idol. God is one. His love is also His wrath. His grace is also His righteousness. His mercy is inseparable from His justice.

But that God is One also signifies that He is God alone. There is no God beside Him. God does not belong to a class or a category of beings. There are no gods. God is not a god; He is God. We say that a rose is a flower. There are many flowers, and the rose is one of them. We say that Mr. Jones is a man. There are many men, and Mr. Jones is one of them. But you cannot say: the Lord is a god; there are many gods, and Jehovah is one of them. This is the implication of the first commandment, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." This commandment cannot mean that there are indeed other gods, but that you shall not offer them worship or put your confidence in them. It does not even mean that among all gods the Lord is supreme, that He is the highest above all gods. Such indeed was and still is the philosophy of the heathen, whether cultured or uncivilized. They say indeed: "We all have our gods. You have your god, and so have we. And we prefer our own." This is not the language of Scripture. Nor will the believing Christian ever speak thus. The believer is intolerant. He claims: "God is GOD. He is God alone. There is nothing beside, above, or next to Him, or even under Him, that can be called or may be worshipped as God. The idol is nothing. It is a figment of man's own evil imagination." Such is the implication of the first commandment.

H.H.

— : — : —
O Lord, our Saviour, help,
And glorify Thy Name;
Deliver us from all our sins
And take away our shame.

OUR DOCTRINE

God's Providence

(8)

GOD'S PROVIDENCE AND THE MIRACLE

A COMMON INTERPRETATION OF THE SIGNIFICANCE OF MIRACLES

Discussing the *miracle* as revealed to us in Holy Writ, we concluded our preceding article by calling attention to the wide and varied character of the miracles of Holy Writ. This varied character of the miracles need not surprise us. Sin is characterized by this same widely divergent characteristic. Hence, the widely divergent character of these miracles simply emphasizes the total and complete dominion of sin over us and, of course, the marvellous character and scope of the grace of the living God. Before proceeding to the true significance of the miracle we would first call attention to the common interpretation of this Scriptural phenomenon.

Berkhof.

We quote the following from his "Reformed Dogmatics," pages 176-178, under the heading: "Extraordinary Providences or Miracles."

1. *The Nature of Miracles.* A distinction is usually made between *providentia ordinaria* and *providentia extraordinaria*. In the former God works through second causes in strict accordance with the laws of nature, though He may vary the results by different combinations. But in the latter He works immediately or without the mediation of second causes in their ordinary operation. Says McPherson: "A miracle is something done without recourse to the ordinary means of production, a result called forth directly by the first cause without the mediation, at least in the usual way, of second causes." The distinctive thing in the miraculous deed is that it results from the exercise of the supernatural power of God. And this means, of course, that it is not brought about by secondary causes that operate according to the laws of nature. If it were, it would not be *supernatural* (above nature), that is, it would not be a miracle. If God in the performance of a miracle did sometimes utilize forces that were present in nature, He used them in a way that was out of the ordinary, to produce unexpected results, and it was exactly this that constituted the miracle. Every miracle is above the established order of nature, but we may distinguish different kinds, though not degrees, of miracles. There are

miracles which are altogether above nature, so that they are in no way connected with any means. But there are also miracles which are *contra media*, in which means are employed, but in such a way that something results which is quite different from the usual result of those means.

2. *The Possibility of Miracles.* Miracles are objected to especially on the ground that they imply a violation of the laws of nature. Some seek to escape the difficulty by assuming with Augustine that they are merely exception to nature *as we know it*, implying that, if we had a fuller knowledge of nature, we would be able to account for them in a perfectly natural way. But this is an untenable position, since it assumes two orders of nature, which are contrary to each other. According to the one the oil in the cruse would decrease, but according to the other it did not diminish; according to the one the loaves would gradually be consumed, but according to the other they multiplied. It must further suppose that the one system is superior to the other, for if it were not, there would merely be a collision and nothing would result; but if it were, it would seem that the inferior order would gradually be overcome and disappear. Moreover, it robs the miracle of its exceptional character, while yet miracles stand out as exceptional events on the pages of Scripture.

There is undoubtedly a certain uniformity in nature; there are laws controlling the operation of second causes in the physical world. But let us remember that these merely represent God's *usual* method of working in nature. It is His good pleasure to work in an orderly way, and through secondary causes. But this does not mean that He cannot depart from the established order, and cannot produce an extraordinary effect, which does not result from natural causes, by a single volition, if He deems it desirable for the end in view. When God works miracles, He produces extraordinary effects in a supernatural way. This means that miracles are *above* nature. Shall we also say that they are contrary to nature? Older Reformed theologians did not hesitate to speak of them as a breach or a violation of the laws of nature. Sometimes they said that in the case of a miracle the order of nature was temporarily suspended. Dr. Bruin maintains that this view is correct in his *Het Christelijke Geloof en de Beoefening der Natuur-wetenschap*, and takes exception to the views of Woljer, Denert, and Bavinck. But the correctness of that older terminology may well be doubted. When a miracle is performed the laws of nature are not violated, but superseded at a particular point by a higher manifestation of the will of God. The forces of nature are not annihilated or suspended, but are only coun-

teracted at a particular point by a force superior to the powers of nature.

3. *The Purpose of the Miracles of Scripture.* It be assumed that the miracles of Scripture were not performed arbitrarily, but with a definite purpose. They are not mere wonders, exhibitions of power, destined to excite amazement, but have revelational significance. The entrance of sin into the world makes the supernatural intervention of God in the course of events necessary for the destruction of sin and for the renewal of creation. It was by a miracle that God gave us both, His special verbal revelation in Scripture, and His supreme factual revelation in Jesus Christ. The miracles are connected with the economy of redemption, a redemption which they often prefigure and symbolize. They do not aim at a violation, but rather at a restoration of God's creative work. Hence we find cycles of miracles during the time of Christ's public ministry and of the founding of the Church. These miracles did not yet result in the restoration of the physical universe. But at the end of time another series of miracles will follow, which will result in the renewal of nature to the glory of God,—the final establishment of the Kingdom of God in a new heaven and on a new earth."—end of quote.

We would note the following in connection with the above quotation of Prof. L. Berkhof. It is plain from this quotation that Prof. Berkhof identifies the miracle with something supernatural, i.e., something above nature. Some miracles are altogether above nature whereas other occur *contra media*, but that which constitutes a miracle is its supernatural character. It is true that the professor, when discussing the purpose of the miracle, declares that they "are connected with the economy of redemption, a redemption which they often prefigure and symbolize," but it must be granted that this hardly receives the emphasis in his discussion of the miracle in Holy Writ. He seeks the essence of the miracle in its supernatural character.

Another thing to which we would call attention in connection with this quotation from Prof. Berkhof is the following, and we quote again: "Miracles are objected to especially on the ground that they imply a violation of the laws of nature. Some seek to escape the difficulty by assuming with Augustine that they were merely exceptions to nature *as we know it*, implying that, if we had a fuller knowledge of nature, we would be able to account for them in a perfectly natural way. But this is an untenable position, since it assumes two orders of nature, which are contrary to each other."—end of quote. Here the professor declares that the position of Augustine is untenable because it assumes two orders of nature which are con-

trary to each other. Augustine had taught that miracles merely imply a violation of the laws of nature, *as we know nature*, but not in the real, actual sense of the word. And now Prof. Berkhof asserts that this position of the renowned Church Father is untenable because it assumes two orders of nature which are contrary to each other. Does not the professor recall his teaching in regard to the gospel as an offer of salvation, and the love of God to all sinners? Does he not recall that we object to this presentation because it would maintain two lines of thought contrary to each other? And does he not recall that when we complain that it is impossible to teach that God loves and hates the same sinner at the same time, etc., we received the answer that this contradiction is only apparent, appears merely as such to us? May he, then, reject Augustine's conception of the miracle simply because the Church Father assumed two orders of nature which are contrary to each other? Did not Augustine speak of "nature as we know it"?

Be this as it may, Prof. Berkhof's definition of the miracle is clear. Although it is true that he also calls attention to their symbolic significance, nevertheless the essence of the miracle lies in its supernatural character.

H. Bavinck

The late Prof. H. Bavinck also speaks of the miracles as we might expect. In his book, "*Magnalia Dei*" (Great Works of God) he writes the following (pages 65-69), and we quote and translate: "If we agree with the Holy Scriptures in these fundamental thoughts and therefore stand upon the basis of Theism, every ground disappears to militate against or doubt the possibility of miracles. For whatever occurs in nature or in history is then an act, a work of God, and in that sense a wonder. And that so-called miracles are nothing but a special manifestation of the same Godly power which works in all things. It works in those things in various ways, through various means (second causes), according to various laws and therefore also with various results. It has not been said unjustly that it is a wonder for the stone that the plant grows, for the plant a wonder that the animal moves about, for the animal a wonder that man thinks, and that it is therefore for man a wonder that God raises the dead. If God works with His omnipresent and almighty power through all creatures as His means, why should He not be able to work with the same power in a different way and through other means than those which we know from the ordinary course of nature and of history? Miracles are therefore no violation of the laws of nature. For these are fully acknowledged by Holy Writ although not summed up and formulated therein; fact is, the regula-

tions of all of nature are established, according to Scripture, in the nature-covenant of God with Noah, Gen. 8:22. But, even as man subjects the earth and governs nature through his culture with his mind and will, thus God has the power to render this created world subordinate to the realization of His counsel. The miracles prove that the Lord, and not the world, is God.

This argumentation, now, would not be necessary for man if he had not fallen. Then he would have known and acknowledged God out of all the works of His hands....

In the Old Testament the miracles go hand in hand with judgment and redemption. The flood is a means to destroy the godless generation of that day and to save Noah and his own in the ark. The miracles which are grouped about the persons of Moses and Joshua: the plagues in Egypt, the passage through the Red Sea, the lawgiving on Sinai, the entering into and conquest of Canaan, purpose to judge the enemies of God and His people and to provide for His own people a safe dwelling-place of promise....

All the miracles of the Old Testament have this in common that, negatively, they accomplish a judgment over the peoples and, positively, they create and preserve among the people of Israel a sphere for the continuous revelation of God.... And when this purpose has been reached, then the full revelation is about to break forth in the person of Christ.

This person of Christ is itself a miracle, in His origin, in His essence, in His words and works, *the* wonder of world-history. Hence, the miracles which He performs are miracles of a peculiar nature. First, He performs many miracles during His earthly life, namely: miracles whereby He demonstrates His power over nature (the change of water into wine, wonderful feeding, stilling of the storm, walking upon the sea etc.); thereupon miracles whereby He demonstrates His power over the results of sin, the sicknesses and illnesses, the miseries of life and, finally, miracles whereby He proves His power over sin itself, its guilt and pollution and the dominion of Satan (forgiveness of sins, dispelling of Satan and the evil spirits). These three kinds of miracles reveal the peculiarity of the person of Christ....

The person of Christ approaches us more clearly in the miracles which were performed not *by* Him but *in* Him and *with* Him. These miracles especially reveal to us who and what He is. His supernatural conception, His wonderful living and dying, His resurrection, ascension, and sitting at the right hand of God are miracles of redemption preeminently. They demonstrate, much more than the works which were performed by Jesus, His complete power over sin and

its results, over Satan and his entire dominion. And they likewise reveal more clearly than those works that this power is a redeeming, a saving power, which will not gain a complete victory until the new heaven and the new earth.

The miracles, which were performed in the apostolic age by the first witnesses, are to be viewed as works of the exalted Christ, Acts 3:6, 4:10. They were necessary to demonstrate that Jesus, Who had been rejected by the world, nailed to the cross and now regarded as dead, *lived* and had all power not only in heaven but also upon the earth. The miracles in the Old Testament reveal that Jehovah is God and there is none beside Him. The miracles of the New Testament show that Jesus Christ, the Nazarene, Who was crucified by the Jews, was raised from the dead by God and exalted at His right hand to be a Prince and Saviour, Acts 4:10, 5:30,31. When this purpose has been reached, a congregation having been planted in the world which believes and confesses this revelation of the Father in the Son through the communion of the Holy Spirit, then the externally visible miracles cease, but the spiritual miracles of regeneration and conversion continue in the church until the fulness of the Gentiles have entered and all Israel have been saved. At the end of time the miracles of the future will appear, according to the testimony of Holy Writ, the appearing of Christ, the resurrection of the dead, the judgment and the new heaven and earth.

All of revelation and, in that revelation, all the miracles also will reach their objective and culminate in the restoration of the fallen human race, the recreation of the world, the acknowledging of God as God. They are therefore not a strange element, not an arbitrary addition to the revelation of God. But they constitute a necessary, an indispensable part of it. They are themselves revelation. In word and in deed God makes Himself known in all His virtues and perfections."—end of quote.

It appears from this lengthy quotation that the late Prof. Bavinck sees more in the miracle than a supernatural work of God. And although the late professor emphasizes the thought that in the miracle the Lord gives an undeniable testimony unto man that He alone is God and that He alone rules, yet he discusses the miracle in connection with God's plan of salvation, though we would have preferred that he had sought exactly in this plan of salvation the essential significance of the miracle.

G. Wielenga.

Our quotation from this author's book, "The Miracles of the Saviour," will be brief. It is as follows: "The miracles are, generally speaking, instruments of Divine revelation. God would transfer His thoughts

to the consciousness of man. Unto that end He does not merely speak immediately to man, through the inspiration of the heart or with audible voice, but He also uses many different means. Thus the Lord revealed Himself in the Old Dispensation through dreams and visions, through which He even presented Himself to heathens as Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar . . . But God also reveals Himself through and in His works, through all His works. The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament sheweth His handiwork. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard . . . But we must distinguish between the order which God ordinarily follows also in the preservation and governing of all things, and the extraordinary deeds of might whereby God sovereignly departs from this ordinary order. This we call then the miracles in the narrow sense: the readily discernible manifestations of His power and majesty. We therefore would define the miracles as those phenomena whose connection and inner operation man cannot fathom, and which are called into existence only by God's omnipotence, outside the common order of nature."—end of quote.

It is true that this author later makes the observation that miracles are also signs of His work of atonement and the Godly blessings which He bestows upon His people, remarking in this connection that it was not merely the purpose of the Lord to heal a few people or to raise from the dead. It is evident, however, from this quotation that this author also views the miracle as a supernatural work of God through which the Lord reveals that He alone is God and that He alone works and rules.

H. Veldman

— : — : —

O God, regard my humble plea;
I cannot be so far from Thee
But Thou wilt hear my cry;
When I by trouble am distressed,
Then lead me on the Rock to rest
That higher is than I.

Before Thy face shall I abide;
O God, Thy truth and grace provide
To guard me in the way;
So I will make Thy praises known,
And, humbly bending at Thy throne,
My vows will daily pay.

IN HIS FEAR

Looking To The Future

CHAPTER 4

CONCERNING TEXTBOOKS

(Conclusion)

We are not quite finished with this matter of textbooks. Although we made some observations last time as to the method, especially the point of beginning, in the production of our own Protestant Reformed textbooks, there nevertheless remain certain practical aspects of the matter on which we must touch. And although we once more sound the warning that we have no panacea for all the ills connected with this problem, and that we have no intention with these remarks to submit a master-plan for the production of our own system of text-books, we nevertheless will comprehend all our remarks on these matters under the perhaps-too-bold heading:

How To Do It.

The "it" in this case includes the whole range of problems connected with the actual writing and publication of textbooks. And it does not take, as we have indicated previously, a too thorough insight into this "it", in order to understand that such a project as this is of terrifying proportions, and to understand that any one individual would be rather reluctant to claim the ability to have a master-plan for such a project, especially at this stage. The "it" must certainly be done. And it includes the writing of textbooks, the production of a *unified system* of textbooks, the actual publication of the textbooks—a large task by itself, and the financing of this whole project. The "it" includes too, we must not forget, the fact that we are small, and therefore have but a limited supply of all the resources, human as well as material, which are necessary. In that light the "how" looms indeed as an ogre upon our ideal scene.

However, it seems to me, without attempting to lay a detailed plan, that there are certain main outlines of such a plan which present themselves almost spontaneously. Or, to phrase it differently, this "how" lies between two poles, midway between them. These poles are 1) enough central organization and control; and 2) too much of the same. Or, if you will, call them the poles of totalitarian control and dictation and of freedom of initiative. To move too much into the polar field of central organization and control will be fatal because it will produce an artificial, forced product, in which the spontaneous and natural produc-

tions of the individual mind, individual research, individual development and experience in the educational field, and individual talent for composition are denied their proper activity. And on the other hand, to navigate too much within the polar field of individualism will very obviously produce chaos. Let me explain.

It is evident, for many reasons, that this project is not one for a single, or even a few, individuals. Even supposing that one of our teachers succeeds in producing an acceptable textbook, the problem of the publishing of his manuscript and of the financing and distribution thereof still remain. Bearing in mind that these books will in all probability have very limited use, since they are designed for Protestant Reformed schools, and that too for only one or two grades in our schools, it is, to say the least, highly doubtful whether any independent publisher would undertake at his own risk to publish such books. There is a good deal of money involved in such an undertaking, and publishers are not usually in the business to spend money, but to earn profits. And there will be very little profit in publishing a book that has such a limited potential readership. Hence, most likely we shall have to finance the publication of textbooks ourselves. The financial risk is ours, even as the spiritual gain is ours. And certainly, the latter is not for the individual author to undertake, and we must not expect such either. We shall have to establish some sort of organization which shall make it their business to see to it that textbooks are written and published.

And the financial one is not the only reason. As we have intimated, we need not only textbooks, but a *system* of textbooks. There will only be wasted effort, for example, if five or six of our teachers, working independently, should all busy themselves with writing a history book for junior high school pupils, while no one attempts to write a general science textbook for the same pupils, or a history book for fourth- and fifth-graders. And this is but one way in which all kinds of chaos will result from unorganized and uncontrolled individual effort. Besides, who is going to pass on the acceptability of an author's efforts and to decide whether or not a proposed textbook is worth publishing? And who is going to guarantee that once a textbook is published it will also be used in the schools? Even for the various schools to attempt such an undertaking independently of one another will not suffice. It might be possible for a large school, such as Adams Street School in Grand Rapids, to do such a thing; but it would be well-nigh impossible for our smaller schools to even make a beginning all by themselves.

We must have some kind of national organization

to take charge of this matter. Such an organization would have as its duties the following:

1. To plan an entire system of textbooks for use in our schools, and that in the light of the needs of the schools in common and the needs of the various grades and levels of instruction.
2. To determine a priority in regard to the various subjects and grades for which textbooks are needed, scheduling the writing and publication of textbooks according to this priority.
3. To encourage and, as much as possible, actually arrange for the writing of such textbooks.
4. To finance and publish the textbooks written, having first, with full authority passed on the acceptability of such textbooks.
5. To promote and enforce the use of such textbooks in the schools which by common consent constitute the organization.

Such is, in general, the first main aspect of the "how to do it", which must not be overlooked.

However, the matter is not so simple as this.

When we speak of textbooks, we are dealing with a matter which involves, in the first place, a large degree of what is often called "creative work", and which involves too, for that very reason, a large degree of inborn ability, talent. Besides, the writing of textbooks involves, in the second place, a large degree of study and research, as well as intellectual maturity, ripeness, which is achieved only in the way of much experience. Because of this, we must leave plenty of room in this project for individuality. With all our organization, we certainly must not put those who are to write our textbooks in a straitjacket. The assignment of subject and grade level, we might perhaps concede, belongs partly to the organization which we suggested. But the actual planning and writing of the book must certainly be left to the individual, even though the organization passes on the acceptability of the books. We cannot say: "You sit down, and write such and such a book, on such and such a subject, according to such and such a plan and method, for such and such a grade level." That would kill all individual initiative and originality.

In fact, to a large extent all the writing of textbooks must be voluntary: teachers, educators, must offer their services for this project. It may be all right for the board to encourage their work; but the authors themselves must be left as free as the best interests of the project will allow. Writing textbooks is not everyone's work. It is not like working in a factory. There you may show anyone of normal mentality and physical strength how to run a given ma-

chine, and the job will be done. But no more than you can tell any Tom, Dick, or Harry to paint a picture or compose a cantata, no more can you tell anyone or everyone to write a book. You cannot even tell every *teacher* to write a book. And therefore we must be very careful in this respect. It is simply impracticable to call a group of teachers together and give them their assignments and set a date when they must have textbooks ready.

On the other hand, certain procedures can be followed. First of all, our teachers should as much as possible supplement and gradually replace the present textbooks with their own work, presented to the pupils in the form of mimeographed notes and workbooks. They must, both individually and in cooperation with one another, diligently work at this project, seriously studying and thus too developing in the adjustment of all the instruction along the lines of our Protestant Reformed principles. And I believe that in this way at least some of our Protestant Reformed teachers will see their way clear, nay, even see that they have the calling, to attempt writing our own textbooks.

And in the second place, parents and school boards and school principals should observe the work produced by our teachers very carefully, encourage the teacher who really produces something as far as distinctively Protestant Reformed instruction is concerned, and when they find instances of such work encourage and assist the production and publication thereof eventually in permanent form.

In the third place, we should not overlook the possibility of making use of the work of others. I am not thoroughly acquainted with the work of Dutch educators. But I have frequently heard it said that the Christian School movement in the Netherlands was much more virile and fruitful as far as attempting to stand on its own feet, educationally speaking, is concerned. If that is the case, perhaps we can even find help and examples there as far as textbooks are concerned. It is worthwhile investigating, at least.

In conclusion, therefore, I would urge upon all our people once more the sore need of obtaining our own textbooks. I am convinced that it is only in this way, no matter what may be the difficulties and problems involved, can we hope to survive as distinctively Protestant Reformed in the field of education.

H. C. Hoeksema

— : — : —

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of I John 2:15-17

II (conclusion)

That our calling, in this present evil world is a very serious one, we have pointed out in our first article on this passage.

We noticed, that our calling is, to live the life of the antithesis; we are to claim all things as ours in the Name of Jesus by faith, liberating it in faith and hope in Christ and placing all things in the service of God. Not dualism of good and evil in the creature is to be the principle of our life, but we are to live the life of grace in this world of sin, having the entire created "kosmos" in common with the world, grace excepted!

Such, we saw, was our holy calling.

Unto this John admonishes us in this passage from Holy Writ.

However, in thus admonishing us, he also assigns the spiritual motive and reason for our not loving the world.

In a word it is: it is impossible for those, who are ingrafted by a true faith into Christ and all His benefits, to live any longer in this world as being of her.

Wherefore John writes: "*If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ..Because all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lusts of the eyes, and the vain-glory of life, is not out of the Father but is out of the world*".

There are two pivotal truths from which John proceeds in His polemic with those who believe that truth and error, light and darkness, righteousness and sin can go hand in hand.

The first is, that God is a light and that there is no darkness in Him at all. Dogmaticians may argue about the exact meaning and scope of the term "light" in the phrase "God is light", but the truth here expressed has a very practical-principal import over against all dualism. The truth is that God is not both light and darkness. God is one. He is all His virtues. And in this perfection he is simple as the light. Evil cannot be "explained" out of God's being; we need to bow down in worship and confess the Testimony that came to us from the very beginning. It is the a-b-c of all Christian living. God is Light; darkness is not in Him at all. God is not an excuse for sin. That God is "light" is the death-blow to all Manichean, Anabaptistic-Antinomian reveling in sin.

The second axiomatic truth of John is, that God always demands that we confess Him to be light, and that we thus approach Him in worship in the whole

kosmos. In this world (kosmos) the children of God live. And here we are to be of the party of the living God. We are to live in covenant fellowship with God. And the only guarantee of such fellowship is that we *walk in the light*, even as He is in the light.

It is not a relative matter, whether we walk in the light: it is most absolute.

The standard, the norm of life is absolute.

We are so to conduct ourselves in this world, in Christ, our Lord, that we sin not! No, John is not interested in our sinning less; that we improve our habits, that we touch not, taste not, handle not. John does not want a little religiousness, a tear, a sigh. John writes: "I write you little children, that ye *sin not*." I John 2:1. And, again, he writes: "If anyone truly keeps His word, in him is the love of God perfected".

We must not sin; love must be "perfected" in us!

Hence, love not the world, for that is "sin" and is not "the love of God perfected".

John is not writing this admonition to the "world". In the context he addresses the church; he calls the church the "little children whose sins are forgiven"; the "fathers who have known God" in the knowledge of the forgiveness of sins; the "young men", who are strong by virtue of the word of God in their hearts, and who overcome the Evil One!

To these he writes.

And the *point of departure* is not the law as *law*, as a mere confrontation of *man-kind in general*, but it is most definitely that which is proclaimed to the church concerning the *Word of life*. John's introductory sentence, sounding the key-note is "that which was from the beginning, that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld, and our hands handled, concerning the Word of life—and the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare unto you the life, the eternal life, and was manifested unto us; that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you also, and that ye also may have fellowship with us; yea, and our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ: and these things we write, that your joy may be full". I John 1:1-4.

The point of departure is not in the law of Moses, but in the *Word of life*, the crucified, and risen Christ, who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised for our justification. In Him old things have passed away for us; the darkness is past and the true light already shineth. What is true in Jesus should also be true in us. Love must be perfected in us; God's love for us must fully come to fruition.

Hence, we have here a word of admonition to the church, that we shall not love the world, neither the

things that are in the world. For, let it be noticed, when such love for the world is present then there is no love of God in our hearts.

It simply is a dreadful fact that love for the world and love of God do not do hand in hand, and it is certainly spiritually impossible for the saints to attempt both.

That John says: for all that is in the world . . . is not out of the Father, but out of the world, is not a mere truism. It is not simply: what is out of the world is out of the world. These words are, in the contrary, full of dread meaning for the wicked, and are warning sufficient for those, who desire to obey the precepts of the Gospel.

This word of warning is an appeal to the spiritual sensitiveness of the church, which can discern the things that differ!

The little children of God, the fathers in the faith, the young men, who are vigilant in the battle, are deeply concerned with doing only that which is out of the Father! It is true we still are in the body of this death; we still must contend daily with sin and all the weaknesses and corruption of the flesh. But principally we are new creatures, and we know God, as our God.

Hence, we know also that, which is out of God.

Now there is in the while world, that lies in darkness, nothing that is out of the Father. All that is in the world is evil.

In the first place, there are the lusts of the flesh. Lusts are the characteristic of the world of Satan and his hosts, and also of all evil men. "Lusts" are simply sinful desires. Satan desired to be as God, to dethrone Him. That is lust. Lust is the quintessence of sin. Thus it was with Eve. She believed the word of Satan, that God was keeping something from them. She lusted after the forbidden tree. Now lust of the "flesh" are lusts that have their origin in "flesh". These lusts are not merely the lusts in the sense of sensual immorality, but they are lusts in the sense that man's evil nature will not subject itself to the will of God. None of the commandments are kept by the flesh. It will not subject itself to God. In the whole "kosmos" there is nothing that the "flesh" can set in the service of God. It is simply flesh, enmity against God. It sets the whole creation apart from God. It makes man the center of all things, the one and all. God is not in all their thoughts. Him it does not know. It is not at all concerned with the will of God in Christ, the Savior of the kosmos! The flesh is God-less!

Secondly, there is the lust of the eyes. The eyes are the medium of drinking in the whole of the kosmos. I take it, that John is here using the term eyes as

synecdoche, a part for the whole. It refers to the sum-total of all man's ability to apprehend the world, the kosmos, and to set it in the service of sin. The light of the body is the eye. And this eye is evil, and so the entire life is wholly polluted. All things are in the service of sin.

Thirdly, the vain-glory of life. "Life" must here be taken in the sense of the things of this tangible life, of the purely earthly. And "vain-glory" is here the glorying in earthly riches and temporal success in life. The highest glorying in this sense we hear from Satan himself, when he says to Jesus, having shown him all the kingdom of the world, and the glory of them, "all these things will I give thee, if thou wilt worship me". And possibly the greatest glorying recorded in Scripture is the proud boast of Nebuchadnezzar, when he say: Is this not the Babylon, that I have built?!

In this threefold evil life of the world there is nothing that fits in the life of the saints, who are told "not to sin". We, who daily seek our Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteousness, cannot will to walk with this evil world; here our love will never be perfected in the doing of the will of God all along the line.

Nay, this is the "world that passeth away and the lust thereof"!

The world of Nebuchadnezzar passes away. Presently it is swallowed up by the kingdoms of the Medes and Persians. The latter is again destroyed by the kingdom of the Macedonian, Alexander the Great, who in turn is again destroyed by the legions of the Roman Empire. Constantly the kingdom of this world passeth away under the wrath of God.

And not only this kingdom passes away. Also the "lusts" pass away. Its glory fades and vanishes. Their lusts do not satisfy and can to their own extremity. It is said of Alexander, who died an old man at the age of thirty years, that, when he had conquered the world, he wept. When asked the reason for his weeping, he is said to have replied, "because there are no more worlds to conquer". The blood of the conquered could not satisfy.

And this is written for our comfort, that our joy may be full. A full cup of bliss must be ours. Shall this be the case with us, who love the Father's will, then we must see what our heavenly Father is doing with the very workers of iniquity, with His and our enemies. He leads them to the slaughter. Theirs is a dismal end.

And we? We are shown a new scene. It is the New Jerusalem in the new Kosmos, where righteousness dwells. The just shall dwell there.

G. C. Lubbers

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

David's Flight

As was stated, the conspiracy was making headway at a rapid rate. Many were with Absalom. In every section of the land the people were streaming to his banner in droves. To the bystander it seemed that the rebellion had the support of the whole nation to a man. At least such was the impression of the messenger. For his report to David was that the "heart of each of Israel is after Absalom."

To avoid disaster there was need for instant action. So David gave his orders. "Arise," he says to his servants, "and let us flee, for there is else no escape to us from the face of Absalom. Let us hasten to go, lest he hasten and overtake us, and bring down upon us the evil, and smite the city with the edge of the sword."

The expression "the evil" appears in the original with the definite article and the sign of the accusative. What is therefore meant is the greatest possible evil, which would have consisted in their being overwhelmed and slain to a man. The words of the king bespeak no little agitation of soul. But why these orders? Perhaps David's standing army in Jerusalem was not large enough at the time to defend the city against a siege. Or it may be that he was too doubtful whether the inhabitants would remain loyal to him. Different reasons can be conjectured. He may have wanted to spare the city the horrors of a siege. Evidently he expected that Absalom would advance against the city immediately and with an overwhelming force.

The servants were ready to follow his counsel. It must have seemed to them the wisest thing to do. For they came with no counter suggestion. They said, "According to all that my lord the king shall choose—behold thy servants." Their confidence in the wisdom of his counsel seems to have been implicit. Besides, their words reveal devotion to his person.

Now follows the account of his departure. It is told with a deep pathos. "And went forth the king and all his house after him," literally, "at his feet," thus not at a distance but as pressing close to him. He left ten of his concubines after him to keep the house.

The procession halted at a "house afar off", probably the last house in the city. The company included besides the servants "all the Cherethites, and all the Pelethites, and all the Gittites, who had followed him from Gath." The number of these Gittites is

given as six hundred. The question is whether they were foreigners, that is, Philistines or Israelites. Some hold that they were the same six hundred men that collected about David during Saul's persecution (I Sam. xxii:2; xxiii:13; xxv:13), followed him to Gath (I Sam. xxvii:2, sq.) dwelt with him in Ziklag (I Sam. xvii:8; xxix:2; xxx:1,9) and thence removed with him to Hebron (ii:3) and Jerusalem (v. 6). If this view (which is only a conjecture) is correct, they were Israelites. But how is this to be squared with the clear statement of our text (see above) that they were Gittites? Some meet this difficulty by reading *gibborim* (Heb. for David's "mighty men of valor," all of whom were supposed to have been Israelites) instead of Gittites. But the objection to this is that all the versions have *Gittites*. To meet this difficulty, some hold that "they are here called *Gittites* simply because they were so called by the people, as having followed David 'from Gath on' ". But this is not acceptable. Are we then to hold to the view that they were Gittites, that is, men from Gath, Philistines by birth and blood? But this view raises questions as well. First, there is no account of such a body of Philistines having entered David's service when he lived in Gath. Second, if the Gittites were Philistines then David had two body guards with him there in Jerusalem, one formed of the six hundred men that had gathered about him during the persecution of Saul, and the other this Philistine body? But if so, why is no mention made of the former in the present crisis? Due to the reticence of the Scriptures regarding these points, we simply do not know. Hence, the only thing to do is to hold with our text that they were Gittites, that is, foreigners.

The procession included also all the Cherethites and the Pelethites. It may be regarded as certain that they, too, were Gentiles and not Israelites. In I Sam. xxx:14 the word Cherethites (Heb. *krethi*) signifies a Gentile tribe dwelling near Philistia. The text here tells of the young Egyptian reporting to David that the Amalekites had made an evasion upon the south of the Cherethites. Ezekiel (25:16) introduces the Lord as saying that He will cut off the Cherethim. Zephaniah (2:5) pronounces woe against this people.

Now the Cherethites of which these passages make mention were Gentiles certainly. The only question is whether the Cherethites of II Sam. xv came from this people. It may be taken as certain that they did. As to the Pelethites, the fact of their being mentioned always in connection with the Cherethites warrants the conclusion that they, too, were Gentiles. That the procession included Cherethites and Pelethites can have but one explanation. Several of the two peoples

by these names had settled in Canaan and, as converts to the religion of Israel, had entered the service of David as a separate division in his standing army. In Israel they were known by the names of the peoples from which they came.

As the sorrowful procession was being marshalled, that is, was made to pass on before David, he perceived that it included also Ittai. The text surnames him "the Gittite", which tells us that he was a Philistine from Gath. Thus Ittai, too, was a Gentile. He had come only a short while ago (xv:20). According to ver. 22, his wife and children were with him, and besides, a number of Philistine warriors. He must have been an able general, for David gave him command of one third of his army (xvii:2).

But why had he left his native land and gone over to David? Had he come in quest of position and glory? If so, he must not come after David, a refugee king, fleeing from the wrath of his own son. To test him out, David counsels him thus, "Wherefore goest thou also with us? Return and abide with the king, for thou art a stranger and also an exile with respect to thy place. (So reads the sentence of the Heb. text). Whereas thou camest but yesterday, should I this day make thee go up and down with us? seeing I go whither I go (that is, go whither Providence leads me). Return thou, and take back thy brethren: mercy and truth be with thee."

Let us take notice, "Return and abide with the king." This must have reference to Absalom, the usurper of the throne, whom David calls king in submission to the will of God.

The words of David remind of the advice of Christ to a certain scribe who would follow Him "whithersoever Thou goest." Said Jesus to this man, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head" (Matt. 8:19,20).

Ittai's reply is touching. "And Ittai answered the king and said, As the Lord liveth and my lord the king liveth, surely in what place my Lord the king shall be whether in death or life, even there also will thy servant be."

What devotion and fidelity for life and death to David! Is it supposing too much to say that what had activated Ittai is love of David and of David's God?

Truly, God was known to the heathen of Israel's world. They had knowledge of the revelation of His mercy to His people. It raises the question of their reaction. The great bulk of the heathen, following in the footsteps of the Egyptians and the Canaanites, hardened their hearts.

But the Scriptures reveal that there were also others like this Ittai and the Pelethites and Cherethites. Heathen they were, drawn by the light that penetrated the darkness also of their night into God's kingdom.

The law of Moses is much occupied with these Gentiles "strangers that would come out of a far country for the sake of the Lord's name." If a stranger, sojourner with the people of Israel desired to keep the passover, his males (and himself) were circumcized, and then he was permitted to come near and keep it; and he was to be as one born in the land (Ex. 12:48; Nu. 9:14). He was allowed to offer an offering made by fire, of a sweet savor to the Lord (Nu. 15:14). He had to be loved; food and raiment had to be given him, were he in need; and his cause had to be judged righteously (Lev. 19:34; Dt. 10:18,19; 1:6).

Certainly the position that during the centuries inclosed by the calling of Abraham and the ascension of Christ, God was limiting salvation to the Jews so absolutely that not a heathen was saved or that the number of heathen saved were too few to have any meaning or to deserve mention even, is seen to be untenable in the light of the above data. Moreover, the position is not to be harmonized with the prophetic range of the Psalms and of the discourses of the later prophets. They foretell that the heathen shall fear the name of the Lord, and all the kings of the earth His glory (Psalm y02:5); and that the Gentiles shall seek the root of Jesse, that shall stand as an ensign for the people (Is. 11:10).

Here we listen to the prophets of the 8th century before Christ. What we behold in their words is a marvelous thing, namely, the eternal God taking to His bosom in Christ all the nations of the earth.

It raises the question whether the prophets were in any way prepared for the reception of this mighty thing. Must we not conclude that such was indeed the case—conclude that they were speaking of a thing that through the centuries and especially in David's time, had been going on right along in their own limited world, to wit: the coming of "the strangers" out of a far country for the sake of the Lord's name.

Is it not rather remarkable that in the hour when David was despised and rejected by his own—his own people—he was surrounded by Gentile men prepared to defend him to the death with their lives! Did it not indicate the experience of Christ as stated by John: "He came unto his own, but his own received him not; but as many as received him he gave power to be called the sons of God."

G. M. Ophoff

God's Love of Zion

Turning to the prophetic discourse of Isaiah, the 49th chapter, the 14th and the 15th verses, we come upon this complaint of Zion, the church, "Zion saith, the Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me." As if this were possible! To this complaint of His people, the Lord replies. Says He to Zion, "Can a woman forget her suckling child, that she should not have compassion upon the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have engraven thee in the palms of my hand. Thy walls are continually before me."

Zion's complaint, though it cannot be excused, is capable of explanation nevertheless. The people of God were in exile in Babylon. For Israel had sinned and filled his measure of iniquity. And the Lord had come with His judgments. Jerusalem was in ruins and the temple was a heap. The true people of God were heart-broken. It seemed to them that the Lord had forsaken them.

So it may seem to his people even now. For let us consider that the setting of the Sun of righteousness in paradise was the commencement of a terrible night—the night of sin and the revelation of the wrath of God over all unrighteousness of men in a sea of judgments that flood the earth. And the flood runs exceptionally high in these recent times. There is a suffering of "this present time" in which also the true people of God participate. Consider further that the tribulations of God's people—those which they have in common with all mankind—are greatly augmented by the ill-treatment afforded them by the wicked for Christ's sake. The enemy without and within still defile God's sanctuary, break down His temple, the true church on earth, the saints of God, who by His mercy war His warfare. And in this warfare and in its attending sufferings, God's people stand alone and forsaken. And often it may seem that they are forsaken even of their God. And then their complaint is, "The Lord hath forsaken me and the Lord hath forgotten me."

But the Lord saith, "Can a woman forget her suckling child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb?"

No earthly tie so strong as that of the love of a woman for her child! For the child is her very own. It is the son of her womb, flesh of her flesh and bone of her bone. Second, it is the woman's suckling child of which the Lord here speaks, and not of her mature son or daughter. The matured son is a grown man, stalwart and strong and capable, self-sufficient and self-supporting. He has forsaken father and mother

and is joined in marriage to the woman of his choice.

But the suckling child, the babe in the mother's arms, the child on her breast,—can a woman forsake that child? She cannot. She yearns after her child. The thought of her forsaking it fills her with horror and pain. She can't find it within her so to do. The child is so utterly helpless and needy. What would become of it were she to forsake it!

Can the Lord forsake Zion? Can He forget His people? He cannot. They are His own people. He chose them in Christ before the foundation of the world that they should be blameless and holy before Him in love. He predestinated them unto the adoption of children by Christ Jesus to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace. He delivered up for them all the Christ—His only begotten—unto the ignominious death of the cross. And they were with Him on that cross and raised with Him and set with Him in heavenly places and there blessed with all spiritual blessings in Him. And He their redeemer-God realizes in them, His people, the virtues of Christ's cross and thereby conforms them according to His image, so that it may be truly said of them, as the Scriptures do indeed say of them, that they are born of God, and partake of His very nature.

Indeed the church of the redeemed is the son of God's womb, that womb being His almighty creative will, whereby He through Christ in His Spirit brings them into being as His children.

Can a woman forsake her suckling child?

Can the Lord forsake Zion? His people, His suckling child? Zion needs God. In Christ through the Spirit He is her very life. By His Spirit he sustains her and preserves her and nourishes her by His word. He is her Sun and shield in this dreary night so that the gates of hell do not prevail against her. Wherefore her faith in God through Christ is indestructible, because Christ prays for her, and so, in a hope that is living, she also reaches out for the things that are of Christ's Spirit, the things heavenly and eternal,—reaching out for these things under the constraint of a love that will never, that can never, lose its ardour because it is the love of God that He sheds abroad in her heart.

Zion is God's now and everlastingly. His suckling child.

You as a mother were indispensable to your child when it was the babe in your arms. But the child grew. It became a man and needed you no more. But Zion is God's suckling child now and forever. Never will He cease to be her life in Christ through the Spirit.

How Zion needs God, Christ's God. How she needs

Him now in this night of sin and death and of judgment and trial and suffering and tribulation. How she needs His grace to sustain her, His Spirit—the Spirit of Christ—to comforter, His power to keep her and His love to assure her constantly that all things work together for her good, and that the victory is hers in Christ, who loved her and gave Himself for her. How Zion needs God!

Can a woman forget her suckling child that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb, that is, love the child, and in her love, care for the child, mother the child, protect the child, comfort the child in its distress, and joy with the child in its mirth? She may forget, says the prophet. It is possible. It happens. But God cannot forget. For He is God.

Thus, though God in this Scripture sets forth His love of Zion against the background of a mother's love of her suckling child, it must not be supposed that what the Lord means to be telling us here is that no more than a mother can forsake her suckling child, no more can the Lord find it within Himself to forsake Zion, that, in other words, He means to be placing His own love as to its power and enduring qualities and the natural love of a mother for her suckling child in the same category. If this were the point to the prophet's argument his message would contain little comfort for Zion. For "they may forget." Nay, but the purpose of the prophet is to exalt God's love for Zion, His chosen people. His purpose is to set forth this love in all its infinite power and beauty and divine working. The woman's love of her suckling child is but an imperfect creatural image of this love. "They may forget." But God's love of Zion is unquenchable. For it is a love self-motivated. "While we were sinners, Christ died for us."

How the Lord loves Zion! And the proof? "Behold, I have engraven thee in the palms of my hands."

Why did the Lord engrave Zion in the palms of His hands?

You are parent with a son in military service. He is far from you in some distant land. Before he passed out of your life, but not out of your heart, you had him provide you with a likeness of his person, in a word, with a photograph of himself. You insisted. Why? Was there danger that you might forget him, so that you had to provide yourself with this means for keeping alive in your soul his memory? No, that was not the reason. You cannot forget. What constrained you is your love of the lad. He is your child, flesh of your flesh and bone of your bone. Loving him as you do, you wanted in his absence his likeness always before you. And therefore his picture is seen in the most conspicuous place of your home, there

where it is always before you. And how often during the day, as you go about your duties, you pause to look upon that likeness of your child.

The Lord so loved Zion, His people, that He graved them, their image, in the palms of His hands, so that, as the text declares, His people are always before Him, before His very eyes. Not once in all eternity does He take His eyes off them. They are before Him ever as chosen, called, justified and glorified in Christ. And the beauty of their likeness is His eternal joy and refreshment.

In the palms of His hands, in the tablet of His heart and mind, they are graved indelibly. It may seem that you have the image of your child graved indelibly in your heart, so that, though you became a thousand years old you could never forget. But be assured that as time went on your memory of your child would grow more and more dim and eventually fade from your mind altogether. But God will not forget Zion in all eternity. Everlastingly Zion is before Him—beautiful Zion.

In herself Zion is not beautiful, she being in herself dead in trespasses and sins. It is not this Zion that is the object of God's eternal delight. For certainly the Lord, whose eyes are too pure to behold sin, can take no pleasure in ugly pictures. It is Zion eternally beautifully in Christ that He loved, so loved that taking compassion on unlovely Zion in her sin and miseries, and pitying her in her woe, He gave up for her His Son—the Christ of God—to redeem her from all her sins and to conform her according to the image of Zion that He graved in the palms of His hands.

In pitying His people in their woe, in keeping them in His power, in delivering them from all their troubles, in raising them up in the last day unto life everlasting, He is always activated by His great love of the Zion engraved in the palms of His hands, the Zion of His counsel, the Zion chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, the Zion beautiful.

G. M. Ophoff

— : — : —

Let children learn God's righteous ways
And on Him stay their heart,
That they may not forget His works
Nor from His ways depart.

PERISCOPE

THE OFF-SCOURING OF ALL THINGS

Under this title ("Aller Afschrapsel") the Rev. G. van Dooren writes in *Gereformeerde Kerkblad*, a Liberated paper in the old country, about his fellow Liberated in the U.S. The Rev. van Dooren recently spent one week in the United States. But of course, like many Dutchmen, he knows all about us, and especially about the different churches here, although he bases his opinion entirely on hearsay. Those poor Liberated people, according to him, are the offscouring of all. He met a few families of his fellow Liberated immigrants, and on their report of their experience in this country he bases what he writes about us as well as about other churches.

About our Protestant Reformed Churches he has the following to say:

"One of them (one of the Liberated) thoroughly studied and investigated the ecclesiastical map while his family was still in the Netherlands. He went searching hither and thither. He searched for the living proclamation of the Word of God. He personally met the Rev. Hoeksema of the Prot. Ref. Church, and listened to the preaching in that church. This he found 'worse than synodical'. And no wonder. Most of your readers of the Reformatie will remember what the former Prof. Dr. K. Schilder wrote about the 'Declaration' of the Prot. Ref. Church, which had to be signed by our people, because it was composed especially with a view to the many Liberated people which crossed the big pond. These might not enter the church door except they expressed complete agreement with that Declaration. The Savior said: I am the door. The Prot. Ref. Church says: we make our own little church-door. Worse than synodical . . . I am afraid that that brother was not far from the truth. This also concerns the preaching, in which everything is viewed from the viewpoint of election, so that no justice is being done to the promise and the covenant."

To this the Rev. van Dooren adds:

"Thus this church door of which Prof. Schilder once had so much expectation for the Liberated people was tightly closed."

I know not to whom the above paragraph refers and who is the man who personally met me and lis-

tened to my preaching. I am, however, absolutely positive that if it is true what the Rev. van Dooren writes, that particular person never discussed that particular sermon he heard of me with me personally. I can, however, assure the Rev. van Dooren that I am quite sure that my preaching will find no grace in the eyes of the Liberated. The Prot. Ref. Church never believed in the Heynsian conception of the covenant and of the promise, as do the Liberated. According to our conviction, this conception is not Reformed, but principally Arminian. The truth as it is expressed in the Declaration of Principles is, and always was, the doctrine expressed in the Three Forms of Unity, and therefore the doctrine of the Prot. Ref. Churches. That doctrine the Prot. Ref. Churches zealously maintains and defends. And it certainly closes the door to anyone who does not subscribe to that doctrine. And I am very glad that the Rev. van Dooren, and others with him, at last have discovered that this is the truth, and that it certainly is not true, what the late Prof. Holwerda reported as the convictions of the Revs. de Jong and Kok, that there was much sympathy and plenty of room in the Prot. Ref. Churches for the Liberated doctrine. And why, pray, should we not close the door to the Liberated? Do they not close the door to us? Do they not pretend to be the only true church, while all the rest are false churches? They certainly must have nothing of our Prot. Ref. truth, which they call worse than synodical. It stands to reason, therefore, that even if we did not officially close our church doors to the Liberated and their doctrine, they would never join our church communion.

That Liberated brother mentioned above, when he found that he could not join our church, also investigated the Christian Reformed Church, to see whether perhaps he could be member there. According to the Rev. van Dooren, he talked hours and many evenings with a certain local minister of the Christian Reformed Church. This minister finally confronted the brother with a certain list of points that had to be accepted before he could be member of the Christian Reformed Church. According to the Rev. van Dooren, the list of points with which the Liberated brother was confronted were the following (He mentions the points together with his own comment.):

"1. Election. You will say: that is right. But do you still say this if it means that the power of the covenant promise is being made dependent upon this, that (as Prof. K. Dijk once said) 'God never promises anything unto the non-elect'? Then indeed it becomes quite different."

"2. The implanting of the power of faith. You know that Kuyperian proposition. Faith



MRS EFFIE MONSMA 2 53
726 FRANKLIN ST SE.
CITY 7

is preceded by the power of faith as a kind of seed.

"3. Immediate regeneration. That is something too. In 1905 half and half protected, but now abandoned by our churches, because according to Scripture the Word of God is the bath of regeneration, which therefore is not realized immediately, that is, without means.

"4. External and internal calling. This is a scholastic distinction which endangers the power of the Word of God as the sword of the Spirit, which is two-edged and very sharp.

"5. Reconciliation through Christ. Of course, a church member must believe this. But the case becomes quite different when through a certain doctrine of reconciliation (and that was the question in the connection) the gospel as glad tidings is reserved only for the elect, just as at point 1 the covenant promise."

Rather important points indeed. And I give that Chr. Ref. Minister credit for confronting that Liberated brother with these points. To say that the power of the covenant promise is not dependent on, does not flow forth from, election, and to maintain that God promises something to the non-elect is certainly not Reformed, but downright Arminian. And the distinction between the faculty or power of faith and the act of believing has always been held in Reformed circles, and, by the way, is literally based on the confessions. But of course, the Liberated with their doctrine that regeneration is effected only thru the preaching of the Word and that therefore, strictly speaking, little children cannot be regenerated and sanctified in Christ, deny this precious Reformed truth, just as is the case with immediate regeneration. And, I like to know where the Word of God teaches that the preaching of the Word is the bath of regeneration. And how the truth of the distinction between external and internal calling endangers the power of the Word of God is a mystery to me. And the Rev. van Dooren, of course, does not explain himself. In the fifth point the Rev. van Dooren seems to deny that the satisfaction of Christ is not general, but particular, and meant only for the elect. At any rate, it is very evident that he means to present the gospel as glad tidings for all that hear, without distinction, head for head and soul for soul. In short, it is very evident from the Rev. van Dooren's comment on these five points that he is far from the historically Reformed truth, as expressed in our Three Forms of

Unity. More and more it becomes evident that the Liberated must really have nothing of the doctrine of election, which is the very heart of the gospel, and that they certainly are afraid of the doctrine of reprobation.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT CHURCH

Under this title the Rev. Lawrence R. Eyres has a rather interesting article in the *Presbyterian Guardian*. He has several *don't's* and several *do's* by which one must be guided to choose the true church. One must not choose the church of his own choice. Nor must one simply go by the label, such as "evangelical" or "conservative". One must rather look beneath the name for a church's doctrine and practice. So, one must not choose a church which claims to have some rite or practice which is necessary to salvation. Nor must one choose a church which sets aside the law of God, or a church which does not proclaim the whole counsel of God. It is from one of these *don't's* that we quote the following:

"Don't choose a church which teaches that you have some part in your salvation. We hear of 'faith and evangelical obedience' as the ground, or necessary condition, to salvation. These people believe that the faith that saves is the work of man, not the 'gift of God' (Eph. 2:8, 9), and that works (that's what evangelical obedience is) are necessary to salvation. Of course, this rule excludes all modernistic or liberal churches as well as many which are commonly known as 'evangelical' or 'fundamental'."

With this, of course, we can entirely agree. No works whatsoever, not even the works of faith, not even evangelical obedience, can possibly be a condition or prerequisite unto salvation. To teach this is certainly Arminian, and not according to the Holy Scriptures.

H.H.

CLASSIS WEST

Classis West will meet in the Protestant Reformed Church at Sioux Center, Iowa, on Wednesday, March 4, 1953.
M. Gritters, S.C.

REPORT OF CLASSIS EAST

IN SESSION AT GRAND RAPIDS — JANUARY 7, 1953

Classis East was in session Jan. 7, 1953 at the First Church of Grand Rapids.

The opening exercises were conducted by Rev. G. Vos. After the credentials were received and Classis was declared constituted, Rev. J. Blankespoor is called upon to preside.

The minutes of the previous meeting of Classis are read and adopted.

The committee, appointed at the Jan. meeting of Classis, to draw up an answer to the letter of the Canadian Ref. Church of Chatham, reads the letter they have composed. This letter is adopted by Classis as an answer to their letter and will be sent to them.

Grand Haven's request for Classical appointments was granted. A committee was appointed to draw up a schedule. Later in the day, the following schedule they proposed was adopted:

Jan. 18 Rev. G. Lubbers
Jan. 25 Rev. R. Veldman
Feb. 1 Rev. H. De Wolf
Feb. 8 Rev. G. Vos
Feb. 15 Rev. J. A. Heys
Feb. 22 Rev. J. Blankespoor
Mar. 1 Rev. M. Schipper
Mar. 8 Rev. B. Kok
Mar. 15 Rev. E. Knott
Mar. 22 Rev. G. Vanden Berg
Mar. 29 Rev. H. H. Kuiper
Apr. 5 Rev. C. Hanko

An instruction from Oak Lawn in re-

gard to sending a letter to all the authorities in Washington in re the closed shop is adopted. Classis decided to send such a missive and overtured Synod to do likewise. Moderamen of Classis will execute this decision.

Two protests, sent to one of our consistories about a month before Classis convened, are to be returned to the protestants, because "according to the testimony of the consistory involved, they did not have sufficient time to treat the protests."

A protest of Oak Lawn's consistory against the consistory of the First Church of Grand Rapids is read. This protest deals with the use of hymns by the Reformed Witness Hour.

Classis decides that the material of this protest be given to a study committee which shall report at the next Classis. The committee: the Revs. G. M. Ophoff and R. Veldman, and Elders D. Kooienga and G. Pipe.

There are requests for subsidy from the following churches: — Oak Lawn, Grand Haven, Randolph and Creston. Classis decided to recommend to Synod that each church receive the stipulated amount mentioned in their request.

Classis decides to accept the invitation of Hope to meet there the second Wed. in April (4-8-53).

The president speaks a word of ap-

preciation for the cooperation shown him.

The following were chosen as delegates to the next Synod:

Ministers

Primi	Secundi
C. Hanko	J. A. Heys
H. Hoeksema	G. Lubbers
R. Veldman	M. Schipper
G. Vos	G. Vanden Berg

Elders

Primi	Secundi
A. Haan	S. Bouma
R. Newhouse	D. Langeland
G. M. Ophoff	P. Lubbers
N. Yonker	G. Pipe

Classis sings Psalter No. 197 and the
Rev. B. Kok closes with prayer.

D. Jonker, stated clerk