

THE STANDARD

Bearer

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MEDITATION

Light for the Future

"There be many that say: Who will show us any good? Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased. I will both lay me down in peace and sleep: for Thou, Lord, only maketh me dwell in safety."

—Psalm 4:6-8

If there is one question which is asked in our day it certainly is this: Who will show us any good? We hear it in many forms and in many languages by untold millions of poor anxious souls. And no wonder. If at any time, the world at present surely is wrapped up in trouble, evil and misery. Cartoonists picture to us the old world as a woebegone figure, bleeding from many wounds. On every side we see and hear of unrest, suspicion, distrust, malignity and every other kind of evil.

And in the midst of all this chaotic, thoroughly miserable world we hear the oft-repeated cry: Who will show us any good?

And the answers are not slow in coming. If there be many that ask, there are also many that make answer and say: Come to me; follow my example; accept this or that form of government, belief or theory of thought and action—and you surely will find good, abiding good for your every hunger and thirst.

It seems to me, dear reader, that the text referred to lends itself to a New Year's meditation.

It is clear to all my readers that the question will not be answered satisfactorily by the world. The world has forfeited the right to lead us, itself, the generations of miserable humanity. To put it rather crudely: The world has made a mess of things. It is advisable to close our ears to her promises of peace

and rest. After 6000 years of misery she gave us world war No. 2.

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The first thing we must attend to is the question: what is meant by *good*? Who will show us any good? But what do you mean by *good*? The answer need not disturb us if we are willing to listen to God's Word. There are many places in the Bible that tell us what is good, but I will point you to Micah 6:6. "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of thee but to do justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God?" There you have a definition of good that is really good. If you have that, you are happy for time and for eternity.

But I hear a thousand voices telling me: But who can do that? Who is there that did justly and loved mercy in all his thoughts and words and deeds? And who walked humbly with his God? And the answer is: There is no one. Ever since our first father and mother fell into sin, we do just the reverse: we act unjustly, we hate mercy and we walk proudly before the very face of God. That is a matter of history. The history of the world is a commentary to the truth of that terrible indictment.

But how then shall we arrive at that which is really good?

The answer you find in the text which I selected for our meditation. It comes to us in the form of a prayer: Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us!"

You see, when I said that there was no one who ever did justly, loved mercy and walked humbly with his God, I failed to tell you that there is just one exception. And that one is Jesus of Nazareth. Yes, He is God to be praised forever, but He is also man, true man, just as you and I. And in His perfect manhood, He fulfilled all the things that God requires of man. From babyhood in Bethlehem to manhood on the aw-

ful cross of Golgotha, He did justly, He never wavered, He fulfilled all righteousness, even though it brought Him to lowest hell, He loved mercy, O yes, He certainly loved mercy. Ask that of His sheep. They will tell you that He is so wondrously merciful, that He brought them up out of the pit of despair and set their feet upon the Rock of Ages. He is so merciful that He saved all His sheep to the uttermost and set them in heavenly places with Himself. Ask it of the murderer on the cross. And he will tell you of the mercy of Jesus. When there was no hope anywhere, when the world and the church combined in their just condemnation, this murderer found grace in His sight. And when he asked for Jesus' remembrance, he heard the merciful and glorious answer: Verily, verily, I say unto thee: this day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise! Was Jesus not merciful? He loved mercy so much that He, in order to be able to show mercy, endured the cross, despised the shame and descended into hell.

And he walked humbly with His God. When God said to Him: My Son, you must fulfill the law for all My sheep and You must pay for all the sins of the same sheep, so that You must taste and empty and swallow up eternal death for those which I gave to Your charge, He said: Speak, Lord, Thy Servant heareth. And He heard and He did and He suffered everlasting agony. We have heard His pitiful crying: O My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?

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Yes, Jesus of Nazareth fulfilled all the requirements of goodness. And for that reason the Lord God has highly exalted Him. He is at rest in heaven. He has seen the reward of all His terrible labors of the cross. And he sings the song of the Lamb of God. And the angels listen in rapture.

And that story of Jesus and His love is the good which my text refers to. The inspired psalmist knows this. And therefore he asks God: Lord, lift up the light of Thy countenance upon us!

I will try and explain it. You see, the light of God's countenance is Jesus. The countenance, the Face of God is His dear Son. And that Face beams with the light of the eternal God. When we saw Jesus walking, so-journing in Galilee and Judea, we saw God the Father, the Triune Covenant God in all His virtues. When Jesus' disciple Philip asked Him and said: Jesus, please, show us the Father! Jesus answered: Philip, am I so long time with you and do you now ask Me: show us the Father? Know you not that I am in the Father and that the Father is in Me? He who has seen Me has seen the Father. O yes, the Gift of Jesus is the gift of the very Face and Heart of God. All

the justice, love and mercy of God is in Jesus. If you receive Him, you receive the Father that sent Him.

The light of God is the embodiment of all His goodnesses, praises, wonders, virtues. And they all converge in our Saviour Jesus Christ.

And when the inspired poet asks God: Lift Thou up upon us the light of Thy countenance, he asks for two things. First he wants to see the light of God. And that light shines in Golgotha most of all, and the record of it is in the Word of God, the Bible. He wants the Word to be shown to him. And, second, he wants that light to penetrate his heart. The Bible is not enough. Millions have read the Bible who are irretrievably lost. You must have Jesus, the light of Gods' Face, in the heart. And that is the operation of the Holy Ghost. When that happens you will be a happy man or woman or child. Then you will experience what we hear further on in the text: you will sweetly sleep and rest. For God will make you to dwell in safety. You may be in Russia under the dictator, in prison or concentration camp, you may be forsaken of man and hated by him, but when you have the light of God shining in your heart, you will sweetly sleep. A little while of suffering and you will be ushered into the palaces of the heavenly King by the Angels of God. And you will see the light of the Eternal Sun who will never set. There shall be no night there.

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Dear reader, if that happens you will say with the apostle Paul: For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ. Is it not wonderful? I would ask you in all sincerity: what can the world offer in the face of all this beauty? Well, I will tell you or, rather, the text will tell you.

The best that the world will give is corn and wine. They may even increase the measure to you. Corn and wine are the staples of almost luxurious living. Yes, there is that in the world that will fill your stomach. You may even smile after your hearty meal and the cup of wine may flow over, making glad the heart of man.

But I would warn you. Do not build anything on that gladness. In it are the very seeds of eternal misery and suffering of hell. If you have no more than the increase of corn and wine, you are poor indeed. The poet says: Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased. And no wonder. When God lifts up over your weary heart the light of the Gospel of Je-

sus Christ, you have a gladness that is eternal, heavenly, glorious. It will fill all your real needs. That heart of yours *needs* that light, no matter who you may be. Without it, you are miserable even in the midst of overflowing bins of corn and vats of wine. You are created in the image of God and need to lie in His arms, looking up into the eyes of God, in order to be really happy. Safe in the arms of Jesus, we sing, and well we may. There is safety and plenty and joy unspeakable in the flock and the fold of Christ.

Corn and wine and gladness. Yes, that is your portion if you are a simple mortal, of the earth earthy. But if you have no more than that, you will even taste sorrow in the midst of your laughing and mirth. That is one of Solomon's wise proverbs. There will be a gnawing and clawing grief in the depths of you. Because you will miss the only real good there is: and that is the Triune Covenant Jehovah in the Face of Jesus of Nazareth.

The poet, however, boasts of a better, an exceeding gladness. It is the gladness when you have found your God. In Him is light, heavenly light. Of that light we often sing. Listen: Jehovah is my light, and my salvation near; who shall my soul affright, or cause my heart to fear? While God my strength, my life sustains, secure from fear my soul remains. Uplifted on a rock, above my foes around, amid the battle shock, my song shall still resound; then joyful offerings I will bring; Jehovah's praise my heart shall sing! Yes, it is a little bit of heaven.

★ ★ ★ ★

And I would have you note, dear reader, that this wondrous gladness and trust is given, it is put into my heart, says the poet. No man can give it to you, be he ever so persuasive. No, it is God who does it. And He does it by His Word and Holy Ghost. And I assure you that this happens right around you in these days of the latter ages. And He shall continue to do so, until all God's elect are safe and time ended. And then they shall continue their gladness in heaven for evermore. Here on earth we were glad, it is true and we also sang. But our voice would sometimes break: there is the light affliction which is but for a moment. But it is real, nevertheless. The children of God, the Christian Church of all the ages, are sometimes given over into the hand of evil-doers who hate God and therefore also hate the church. And then it is that our voice will sometimes break. But never fear. Those glad souls who have the light of God's face lifted up upon their hearts will continue to sing: the warbling of their song is surpassing sweet. For they love God and follow Jesus.

Yes, it is the reason why the poet concludes: I will both lay me down in peace and sleep: for Thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety.

You see, when all your needs are fulfilled, when no danger threatens, you are at peace. Peace, wonderful state! What is peace? Peace is that state of your heart and your soul and your mind where you love God, His laws and works. It is that state of man where all rebellion against God is rooted out of him and where he lives the life of God Himself. You may say that peace is that state where the heartbeat of God and of His child beat in unison.

Is it a wonder then that this man will lay himself down and sleep? If I may know that God is for me, who then could ever be against me? If He did not spare His only begotten Son but gave Him up for me, what then can be against me? Oh no, all things work together for good unto those that love God. Therefore, he will lay him down and sleep. He is safe, everlastingly safe.

Have no fear, God will make him to dwell in safety. That does not mean that you will have no troubles and trials, pains and miseries. No, I could make out a case for the theme that God's people have even more troubles than the worldlings. No, but it means this: God will turn all things to his profit. It is the portion of those who have the light of God in their heart. They will sing the psalms of David in the depths of the dungeons. Take away everything this man has in this sorry earth. Bring him to the stake and burn him with fire. He is safe in the arms of Jesus. If you will, please, step a little closer to that burning stake, you will hear him sing. Listen: In God's love abiding I have joy and peace. More than all the wicked, though their wealth increase. In His care confiding, I will sweetly sleep, for the Lord my Saviour, will in safety keep!

Say not that this is fiction! The pages of your history book will testify that this saint sang on the burning pyre. A little more suffering and the angels came to bring his soul to heaven. And there he will continue his song. But there its melody is sweeter. Here on earth he saw a little bit, but there he can see perfectly that which makes glad the heart of man. It is the light of God's face in Jesus! Amen.

G. Vos.

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MEETING OF CLASSIS EAST

CLASSIS EAST will meet in regular session on Wednesday, January 7th at First Church.

Matters for Synod should be brought to this meeting.
—D. Jonker, S.C.

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EDITORIALS**The Promise According to the Confessions**

There is still more in the Baptism Form concerning the promise to children of believers.

We refer to the texts that are quoted in this part in proof of infant baptism, the one from the Old and the other from the New Testament, besides the concluding reference to the fact that Christ embraced the little children, laid His hands upon them, and blessed them.

This part reads as follows: "As God speaketh unto Abraham, the father of all the faithful, and therefore unto us and our children (Gen. 17:7), saying, 'I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant; to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.' This also the Apostle Peter testifieth, with these words (Acts 2:39), 'For the promise is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.' Therefore God formerly commanded them to be circumcised, which was a seal of the covenant and of the righteousness of faith; and therefore Christ also embraced them, laid his hands upon them and blessed them (Mark 10)."

Let us notice the connection between this part and the immediately preceding part. For that is important. The connection is in the words "as God speaketh unto Abraham, the father of all the faithful, and therefore unto us and our children." This refers to what immediately precedes, that is, to the statement that our young children, who do not understand these things as yet, "as they are without their knowledge partakers of the condemnation in Adam, so are they again received unto grace in Christ." That this cannot possibly mean all the carnal seed of Abraham or all the carnal seed of believers, we have already shown. The promise is only for the elect. And the Baptism Form throughout speaks of the church and its elect seed. This is evident also from the quotation itself, especially if we view this quotation in the light of Romans 9. It is evident that in Gen. 17:7 we have mention of the promise. The promise is that God will establish His covenant with Abraham and his seed, and that in that covenant He will be a God unto them. The question is whether this promise is for all the children that are born from Abraham, head for head and soul for soul, as the Liberated have it, and therefore also for all the seed of believers in the new dispensation; or whether this promise is particular and

C O N T E N T S**MEDITATION—**

- Light For the Future 145
Rev. G. Vos

EDITORIALS—

- The Promise According to the Confessions 148
Rev. H. Hoeksema

OF BOOKS—

- Het Hooglied — by Dr. G. Ch. Aalders 150
Deuteronomium Part II — by Dr. J. Ridderbos 150
Dosier 333 — by B. Nijenhuis 150
The Typology of Scripture — by Patrick Fairbairn 151
Rev. H. Hoeksema

THE TRIPLE KNOWLEDGE—

- An Exposition of the Heidelberg Catechism 151
Rev. H. Hoeksema

THE DAY OF SHADOWS—

- The Rite of Expiatory Sacrifice 155
Rev. G. M. Ophoff

OUR DOCTRINE—

- God's Providence 159
Rev. H. Veldman

IN HIS FEAR—

- Looking to the Future 162
Rev. H. C. Hoeksema

FROM HOLY WRIT—

- Exposition of I John 2:15-17 164
Rev. G. C. Lubbers

PERISCOPE—

- Discipline 166
Dutch Sentiments 167
Theological Dialecticism vs. The Three Points 167
Rev. H. Hoeksema

is meant only for the spiritual seed, and therefore only for the elect. In the light of Romans 9 there can be but one answer to this question. And that is: the promise to Abraham was meant only for the elect, and not for all the carnal seed of Abraham. In Rom. 9:6-8 we read: "Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel which are of Israel: Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed."

To this important passage we must call close attention.

The passage is an answer to the question whether, seeing that so many of the seed of Abraham according to the flesh are lost, the Word of God has fallen out, the promise has become of none effect. To this question the text is an answer. And the answer is: no, the Word of God has not fallen out, has not failed to realize itself; but we must remember that this Word of God pertains only to the children of the promise. These children of the promise are designated in a four-fold way. They are called *Israel, the seed, children of the promise, and children of God.*

They are called Israel. And it is evident from the text that only the spiritual Israel is meant, not the Jews, and not all the carnal children of Abraham. For the apostle writes: "For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel." Not all the descendents of Jacob are people of God. Not all are true Israelites, to whom pertained the promises, and who must be taken into account when the question is asked whether the Word of God has fallen out. The children of the promise, therefore, are the true children of God, Israel in the spiritual sense of the Word.

Secondly, they are called the seed. In verse 7 we read: "In Isaac shall thy seed be called." And in vs. 8 the apostle writes: "The children of the promise are counted for the seed." This seed, according to Galatians 3:16 is principally and centrally Christ. From which it follows that Christ and those that are in Him are counted for the seed of Abraham. Believers in Christ are therefore the true seed of Abraham. And once more, if the question is asked whether the Word of God has taken none effect, we must not forget that only they are counted for the seed.

Thirdly, they are called the children of the promise. What is meant by this expression? Does the term simply mean the same as if the apostle had written "the promised children"? Or is the meaning, as others would interpret, "children to whom the promise per-

tains, that are heirs of the blessed promise of God"? To be sure, the children of the promise were also promised children, and the promised blessing was for them. But the expression "children of the promise" has a deeper significance. Frequently Scripture speaks of the promise. Sometimes it uses the singular, *promise*, and in other passages it uses the plural, *promises*. Essentially the expression always refers to the same truth. The promise is God's revealed and pledged, yea, sworn purpose of salvation for His people through Jesus Christ our Lord. It implies redemption and deliverance from sin, and the inheritance of eternal glory in the kingdom of heaven. Now, children of the promise are children that are brought forth through the promise. The promise is, as it were, their mother. God brings them forth through the power of the promise by realizing His Word of promise in them. Hence, they are those in whom the promise of redemption has been realized in principle, spiritual children, born not of the flesh but of the Spirit. That this is the real meaning of the expression may be gathered not only from the expression itself, and from the fact that Isaac was the typical child of the promise, but also from a comparison with the expression as it occurs in Gal. 4:23, 28: "But he who was of the bond-woman was born after the flesh; but he of the free woman was born by promise." The phrase "by promise" in vs. 23 literally reads in the original "through the promise". Isaac was born through the means of, by the power of the promise. So we are also children of the promise as Isaac was. And that this refers indeed to their spiritual birth is evident if we compare vs. 29 of the same chapter of Galatians: "But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now." By nature, apart from the power of the promise of God, we are born after the flesh. That which is born of the flesh is flesh. But by the promise of God we are born of the Spirit and after the Spirit: for that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. And therefore, children of the promise are spiritual children in whom God wrought and realized the power of His promise of salvation.

Lastly, in connection with the term children of the promise stands the name *children of God*. The children of the promise are children of God. For the apostle writes in vs. 8 of Rom. 9: "That is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted for the seed." The implication is evidently that the children of the promise are indeed God's children. They are those whom God adopted as His children in Christ before the foundation of the world, for whom Christ died and rose again, that they might have the

right of sonship, and in whom God realizes this adoption by the Spirit of grace.

If now we consider these different terms designating the children of the promise in their relation with one another, we conclude the following. In the old dispensation the children of God, God's people, were the natural descendants of Abraham and of Israel. That is the reason why they could be called the seed of Abraham and Israelites. This does not mean that all the descendants of Abraham were also children of God, or children of the promise. But in general it may be said that for many centuries all the children of God were natural descendants of Abraham. They were of Israel. They were Jews. But these descendants of Abraham and of Israel became children of God only through the power of the promise. The seed of Abraham according to the flesh is carnal, for Abraham could of himself never bring forth spiritual children of God. That which is born of Abraham is born of the flesh, and is flesh. And therefore the apostle can write: "Neither because they are of the seed of Abraham, are they all children." In fact, if that had been all that could be said of these children, that they were born of Abraham as their father, none of them would ever have been a child of God. No more than Abraham of himself could bring forth the Christ, no more could he give being to a single child of God. But God made children after the Spirit, children of God, out of Abraham's descendants. He gave the true seed to Abraham by His grace, by realizing His promise to Abraham. And thus the children of the promise are children of God, the true seed of Abraham, the Israel of God.

This is still the case. Believers in the new dispensation are still the seed of Abraham. And God realizes His covenant with them in their generations, as He did with Abraham. But grace is never inherited. Believers of themselves can never bring forth a single child of God. By nature they can only bring forth children of the flesh. But God gives unto them children of the promise. Out of their seed God takes His own children. Of their flesh it pleases Him to make spiritual seed. In that hope of God's marvelous grace the church brings forth children. God will transform their carnal children into spiritual children of God by the power of His promise. But it is very evident from this passage that the promise to Abraham and the promise of the covenant to believers does not include all their seed, but only the seed according to election.

That this is true will be plain if we answer the question: who are the children of the promise, and where are they?

But about this next time.

H.H.

OF BOOKS

HET HOOGLEID by Dr. G. Ch. Aalders. J. H. Kok, N. V. Kampen, The Netherlands. Price f. 6.90.

This commentary on the Song of Solomon we gladly recommend to our Dutch reading public, especially to ministers and students.

In an introduction the author treats the authorship of the book: Solomon is not the author but rather the object depicted in the book. As to the time of its composition the author places it shortly after the schism of the ten tribes and before Samaria was raised to the capitol of the northern Kingdom. Song of Solomon belongs to the poetical books of Holy Writ. It sings, first of all of the pure and sanctified love of a bride to her bridegroom, but it points typologically to the love of Christ to his Church and especially of the love of the Church to Christ.

The exegesis is thorough and scholarly. The style is clear.

This is not meant to be a popular commentary, but is freely based on the Hebrew text.

As such we recommend it without reserve.

H.H.

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DEUTERONOMIUM, Part II by Dr. J. Ridderbos. J. H. Kok, N. V. Kampen, The Netherlands. Price f. 3.90.

In distinction from the commentary reviewed above, Deuteronomium by Dr. Ridderbos is a popular commentary. It belongs to the series "Korte Verklaring". We heartily recommend it to all our readers who can still read the Holland language. Dr. Ridderbos writes a very lucid style. His exposition of the text, though somewhat brief as might be expected in this series (Korte Verklaring), is nevertheless quite thorough and sound. Besides, Dr. Ridderbos is a Reformed exegete who does not give an Arminian application to the text, e.g. ch. 29:29. Nor does he accept the standpoint of the higher critics, e.g. *in re* the Song of Moses, ch. 32.

I would like to have seen an explanation of the statement that, in 30:14, that the term "heart" means "memory" in that passage.

Heartily recommended.

H.H.

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DOSSIER 333, by B. Nijenhuis. Kok, N. V. Kampen, The Netherlands. Price f. 5.40.

In an accompanying folder the reader is informed that this is the first and very successful attempt at writing a novel by the author. The book is highly

evaluated as a literary product, that is capable of captivating the hearts of the readers. After this praise, with which I can only partly agree, I leave it to the reader to judge for himself. At the same time, I would like to ask him whether he would not agree with the following points of criticism:

1. The book is a mixture. Two stories are interwoven: a novel concentrating around the life of a young minister and his wife, and a detective or mystery story of post-war times.

2. I would say that the book is characterized by *multa*, many, too many. There are too many of everything: too many characters, too many details, too many character descriptions, all on the same plane.

3. The Christian character of the novel is superficial.

H.H.

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THE TYPOLOGY OF HOLY SCRIPTURE by Patrick Fairbairn. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich. Price \$6.95.

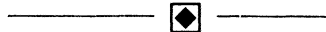
It is several years ago that I made study of the Typology of Fairbairn, and I enjoyed perusing it once again. In my library I have the work in two separate volumes. Zondervan has now published it in one volume.

The work consists of three books. The first book deals with the principles of typical interpretation and the extent to which types entered into the earlier dispensations; the second deals with the patriarchal times; the third with the dispensation under the law. Besides, the work contains several important appendices.

In my opinion it is very difficult to find a work of this nature that is so profound and scholarly, yet so clearly written; that is so sound and sober; and is so thoroughly biblical as this Typology of Fairbairn.

Heartily recommended.

H.H.



IN MEMORIAM

The Consistory of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan hereby expresses its heartfelt sympathy with our brother Consistory member, Elder A. Dykstra in the loss of his brother.

WILLIAM DYKSTRA

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

The Consistory,
Rev. C. Hanko, Pres.
Mr. J. Bouwman, Clerk

THE TRIPLE KNOWLEDGE

An Exposition Of The Heidelberg Catechism

PART III

OF THANKFULNESS

Lord's Day 34

Q. 92. What is the law of God?

A. God spake all these words, Exodus 20, Deut. 5, saying: I am the Lord thy God, which hath brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

I. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

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

III. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

IV. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy; six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt do no manner of work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man servant, nor thy maid servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it.

V. Honor thy father and thy mother that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

VI. Thou shalt not kill.

VII. Thou shalt not commit adultery.

VIII. Thou shalt not steal.

IX. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

X. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house; thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his man servant, nor his maid servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbor's.

Q. 93. How are these commandments divided?

A. Into two tables; the first of which teaches us how we must behave towards God; the second, what duties we owe to our neighbor.

Q. 94. What doth God enjoin in the first commandment?

A. That I, sincerely as I desire the salvation of my own soul, avoid and flee from all idolatry, sorcery, soothsaying, superstition, invocation of saints, or any other creatures; and learn rightly

to know the only true God; trust in him alone, with humility and patience submit to him; expect all good things from him only; love, fear, and glorify him with my whole heart; so that I renounce and forsake all creatures, rather than commit even the least thing contrary to his will.

Q. 95. What is idolatry?

A. Idolatry is, instead of, or besides that one true God, who has manifested himself in his word, to contrive, or have any other object, in which men place their trust.

1

The Law and the Christian

Once again in our discussion of the Heidelberg Catechism we meet with the subject of the law of God. The first time was in the second Lord's Day, where the law was mentioned as the source of the knowledge of our misery. This time the law of God is presented as a rule for our life of gratitude in the midst of the world in every department of life. In the second Lord's Day the law was briefly presented in the light of its inmost spiritual principle of love: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first and great commandment; and the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." And in the light of that principle of love, we found that man is prone to hate God and his neighbor. But in this Lord's Day and those that follow, up to Lord's Day 44 inclusive, the law is discussed and expounded in all the details of its ten words. This must not be understood in such a way as if in the second Lord's Day the natural man is confronted with the law of God. For it certainly is not the natural man, but the regenerated man of God that is ever able to learn to know his misery from the law of God. Nor, on the other hand, must the discussion of the law of God in the present connection be understood as being addressed to the perfect Christian: for the Christian has but a small beginning of the new obedience, and continuously the law, besides being a rule of life for the believer in the midst of the present world, also serves the purpose of causing him to increase in the knowledge of sin and of the need of redemption. Nevertheless, the Catechism in this connection emphasizes the exposition of the law of God as a rule for a life of gratitude to God.

The law of the ten words is recorded in Scripture in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5. There are minor differences between these two versions of the law. In Exodus 20 the commandment concerning the sabbath reads as follows: "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy;" while in Deut. 5 the text reads: "Keep the sabbath day to sanctify it." In Exodus 20 the rest of

the sabbath day is brought in connection with the rest of the Lord after creation; but in Deut. 5 it is added: "That thy man servant and maid servant may rest as well as thou." In Deut. 5 it is added to the fifth commandment: "that it may go well with thee,"—words which do not appear in the text in Exodus 20. In Exodus 20 the sin of coveting the neighbor's house is expressed first, while in Deut. 5 the sin of lusting after the neighbor's wife precedes, and while in the latter text it is added: "his field." These minor differences, however, have no effect on the contents of the law of God.

As to the record of the law-giving, we find it in Exodus 19 and 20, 24 and 34. In Exodus 19:19ff., the Lord commands Moses that the people must be sanctified and that they must wash their clothes, "and be ready against the third day, for the third day the Lord will come down in the sight of all the people upon Mt. Sinai. And thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it; whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death; There shall not an hand touch it, but he shall surely be stoned, or shot through; whether it be beast or man, it shall not live; when the trumpet soundeth long, they shall come up to the mount." On the third day there appeared a thick cloud upon the mount, accompanied by thunders and lightnings and the sound of a trumpet, "exceeding loud," so that the people that were in the camp at the foot of the mount trembled. Then Moses brought forth the people out of the camp, to stand at the foot of the mount; "and mount Sinai was altogether on smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly. And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by voice. And the Lord came down upon mount Sinai, on the top of the mount: and the Lord called Moses up to the top of the mount; and Moses went up." This was the first time that Moses went up on the mountain. And the Lord told him to charge the people, lest they break through unto the Lord to gaze. And at the same time he must charge the priests to sanctify themselves. Thereupon Moses went down again to speak unto the people. It is after this that in Ex. 20:1, ff., we read that the Lord Himself spoke the ten words unto the people, introducing them by the well-known sentence: "I am the Lord thy God, which hath brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." All these phenomena accompanying the giving of the law on Mt. Sinai evidently emphasize the holiness of the Lord, the fact that the Lord dwelleth in a light that no man can ap-

proach unto, striking fear into the hearts of the people.

In Exodus 24 we read of Moses ascending the mount for the second time and of the two stone tables which the Lord Himself gives unto the man of God: "And the Lord said unto Moses, Come up to me into the mount, and be there: and I will give thee tables of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written: that thou mayest teach them." vs. 12. And in vss. 15-18: "And Moses went up into the mount, and a cloud covered the mount. And the glory of the Lord abode upon mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days: and the seventh day he called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud. And the sight of the glory of the Lord was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel. And Moses went into the midst of the cloud, and gat him up into the mount: and Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights." Of these two tables of stone we read in Exodus 32: 15, 16: "The tables were written on both their sides; on the one side and on the other were they written. And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables." However, in the same chapter we read of the worship of the golden calf which Aaron formed at the request of the people, and of the fact that Moses, when he had come down from the mount, cast the two tables of stone out of his hands and broke them. Then in chapter 34 we read once more that Moses ascended the mount at the commandment of the Lord, after he himself had hewn two tables of stone on which the Lord promised to write the same commandments which were upon the first two tables. This, then, is the history of the ten words which the Lord delivered unto Moses, and through him to the people of Israel. It reveals very clearly that the people as such could never keep the law, in fact, would always violate the covenant of God, and that the true spiritual seed must look forward to Him Who is the end of the law, Jesus Christ our Lord.

As to the form of the law, we may probably remark, in the first place, that the tables were of stone, and that the law was engraven upon them by the finger of God. This was probably a symbolic indication that the law could never be wiped out, that the moral law is everlastingly valid. As to the question how many commandments were written on each table, this cannot be ascertained with any certainty. And as to the division of the ten words, there is, and always has been, difference of opinion. The oldest division is such that it connects vss. 2 and 3, and then presents the words "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" as the first commandment. However, the Roman Catholics combine what for us are the first and second

commandments into one. In this they follow Augustine, and that too on the basis that the threat and promise which are connected with the second commandment undoubtedly belong to the first. In order, nevertheless, to retain the number ten, Augustine, and following him, the Roman Catholics, divide the tenth commandment into two, so that the ninth commandment reads: "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house," while the tenth commandment begins with the words, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife." This division of the ten commandments was also adopted by the Lutherans. However, it seems rather arbitrary thus to divide the tenth commandment. And therefore the first mentioned division of the ten words undoubtedly has the preference.

We may also notice, regarding the form of the law, that it suggests completeness. This is suggested already by the fact that the law was engraven upon two tables of stone, so that none of the ten words could ever be erased, while at the same time the tables were completely covered on both sides, so that no commandment could be added unto it. This is also indicated by the symbolic number, ten. For everywhere in Scripture the number ten indicates a completeness or fullness of measure determined by God Himself. The law of God is perfect. It is the full expression of the will of God concerning our whole life in the present world, and that too in every department of it.

Moreover, that there are two tables of four and six commandments respectively indicates, as the Catechism teaches us in Question and Answer 93, that the law covers our relation both to God and to the neighbor. And the relation between these two tables is such that the love of God is the predominating and controlling principle of the whole law. This is very plain from the words of the Lord in Matthew 22:37-44: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first and great commandment; and the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." There are, therefore, not two commandments, the one greater than the other. There is only one great commandment, which controls the whole law: and that is the love of God. Without that love of God there is no love, and without it we cannot truly love the neighbor. We must therefore love the neighbor for God's sake.

Finally, we must call attention to the fact that the commandments are predominately prohibitive: they tell us not what we must do, but what we may not do. The only exceptions to this general rule are the fifth commandment, concerning our honoring father and mother, and the fourth commandment, that concerning the sabbath, in part. This negative, or prohib-

itive, character of the law clearly points to our sinful nature, in virtue of which we are always inclined to transgress the commandments of God.

Dr. Geesink distinguishes three different uses of the law. *Gereformeerde Ethiek*, Vol. I, Page 234. The first is the *usus politicus*, that is, such a use of the law that causes man as citizen of the state to "discover some regard for virtue, good order in society, and for maintaining an orderly external deportment." Canons III, IV, 4. The second is the *usus paedagogicus*, an expression which he derived from Gal. 3:24, that speaks of the law as a schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, and is especially designed as a source of the knowledge of sin. The third use is the *usus normativus*, which means that the law is a norm or rule for the life of the Christian in the world.

It is only the second, and especially the third use of the law with which we are concerned here. It is to be feared that many a preacher of the law in the church reveals the tendency so to proclaim the law of God as an external code of precepts, that the *usus politicus* is at least also implied, and that it can be applied to the whole world and to all men. By some this is even done intentionally, proceeding from the assumption that the preaching of the law may have a salutary effect on the world. Is after all the world not badly in need of hearing and being instructed in the law of God? Is not crime increasing at an alarming rate? Are not all the evils of this world, social, political, national, and international, due to the fact that the law of God is trampled under foot? Is it therefore not profitable with a view to the reformation of society and the renewal of the world to preach the law to the world in general, rather than apply it only to the Christian? But this is a serious error, and certainly not the intention of the instructor in our Heidelberg Catechism. The preacher is not a philosopher. He is not a social reformer. But he is a preacher of the gospel. To that gospel he must be faithful, regardless of what the wisdom of the world may think of it. That gospel insists that man, the whole world of men, lies in sin and under the wrath of God, which is revealed from heaven upon all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. That gospel proclaims that there is no hope for that world and for that natural man, except in Christ and through the cross of Calvary, in the way of redemption and regeneration. The attempt to reform the world and to suggest solutions for its renewal by calling its attention to the moral law is like trying to heal a corrupt fruit tree by painting the trunk; or to use another figure, which it seems to me I read somewhere, is like the attempt to cure the water in a well by washing the pump handle. From the heart are the issues of life. Make the heart good, and

the man will be good. Leave the heart corrupt, and all its issues will be evil. The heart, however, cannot be made good by instructing a sinner in the law. It can be changed only by regenerating grace. And that is the work of God. The preaching of the law, therefore, must strictly be directed to the church, that is, to the believers in Christ, redeemed by the blood of the cross, regenerated by the Spirit of God, sanctified and in principle transformed into a new man, but that at the same time still has the motions of sin in his members. And therefore, it is not the *usus politicus*, but only the *usus paedagogicus* and especially the *usus normativus* that must be applied in the church of Jesus Christ. And that law is spiritual, as we have indicated: the love of God is its principal demand. This central and basic demand of the law is its heart, that throbs in every one of its precepts. It is love of God that the law requires. The love of God must be our motive in serving God alone, in worshipping Him according to His Word, in reverencing His holy Name, in keeping the sabbath, in honoring the neighbor in his position of authority, in his person, in his marriage relation, in his possessions, in his name, and that must fill our hearts with that quiet contentment that makes us refrain from covetousness. The law of God is therefore not a mere code of precepts that is designed to regulate our external conduct. It demands our heart, our existence, our mind, our will, and all our desires and inclinations. Before a human bar of justice, we are without culpability as long as our external conduct is not in violation of any human statute, whatever our internal attitude over against such a statute may be. As long as we do not kill or hurt the neighbor, we are free, though we hate him with all our heart. God, however, traces our every action to its deep root in the heart. And whatever our external deportment may be, if it does not rise from true love of God in the heart, we stand condemned before the Judge of heaven and earth. All that is not of the love of God is sin.

The question may still be faced: is it not a mistake to preach the law to the church and to the believer in Christ Jesus? This question is frequently answered in the affirmative, and that too by especially two classes of the people, and from different considerations.

First of all, there are those who insist that it is in conflict with the freedom of the Christian, that it is contrary to the nature of grace, to confront the Christian with the law once more. The New Testament Christian is the believer in whom the prophecy of Jeremiah 31 is realized, as quoted in Heb. 8:8-12: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that

I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: And they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." The fulness of time has come, and we are no longer under the tutorship of the law, as the apostle writes in Gal. 4: 1-7: "Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world: But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; but if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." And in the sixth chapter of the epistle to the Romans, vs. 14, the apostle writes plainly: "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace." The believer in Christ, therefore, has reached the age of majority. He is no longer a little child that must be told how to direct his every step. He is a fullgrown son, no longer under tutors and governors. Christ has redeemed him from the curse of the law, and through grace he has the law of God written in his heart. Hence, these objectors to the preaching of the law in the church insist that the Christian has no need of a code of precepts and of the warning, "Thou shalt not . . .," of the law. To confront the Christian with the law of the ten words is to insult him and to deny the freedom of grace.

H.H.

Forever praise and bless His Name,
And in the Church His praise proclaim;
In Zion is His dwelling-place;
Praise ye the Lord, show forth His grace.

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

The Rite of Expiatory Sacrifice

THE ANIMAL SACRIFICE OF THE OLD DISPENSATION

Having set forth what we believe to be the right conception, let us now attend to a view of the animal sacrifice that, to our mind, must be set aside as incorrect. We have reference to the view of Patrick Fairbairn. It may be known from the following excerpts from his pen ((The Typology of the Scriptures page 54, Vol. I): "That this (the rite of expiatory sacrifice) was typically or prophetically symbolical of the death of Christ, is testified with much plainness and frequency in the New Testament Scriptures. Yet, independent of this connection with the death of Christ, it had a meaning all of its own."

Our author's view is plain. The rite of expiatory sacrifice, in addition to its typifying the death of Christ, had a meaning of its own. In other words, the animal sacrifice symbolized an idea other than the one it typified. In addition to its typifying the idea of the death of Christ, it symbolized still another idea.

The question is, what idea? The answer is the following statement from our author's pen: "It (the animal sacrifice—O) was in its own nature a symbolical transaction, embodying a threefold idea: first, that the worshipper having been guilty of sin, had forfeited his life to God; then that the life so forfeited must be surrendered to divine justice; and finally that being surrendered in the way appointed, it was given back to him by God, or he became re-established, as a justified person, in the divine favor and fellowship."

But this, certainly, could not have been the meaning of the animal sacrifice, the additional idea it symbolized. For what the conception comes down to is this: that the guilty worshipper himself expiated his own sin and that of this action on his part the animal sacrifice was the symbol. Such is indeed the view we here encounter. Our author says, does he not, that the rite in question (the animal sacrifice) embodied, thus symbolized, first that the worshipper, guilty and thus condemnable, deserved to die; then that he *must* die (surrender his life to divine justice); and finally that, having died (surrendered his life in the way appointed), he again lived (it, this life, was given back to him by God) and he became re-established as a justified person in the favor of God.

Now this, certainly, is stating as plainly as words can that the guilty worshipper *himself* atoned his own

sin by his dying and that this precisely is the additional idea symbolized by the rite in question. Now there would be no fault to find with this view, if only that worshipper were Christ. But in the reasoning of our author that worshiper is one other than Christ. For, as we have just seen, his conception is that the animal sacrifice had a meaning of its own independent of its connection with Christ. But how impossible this view. For certainly the guilty worshipper did not *actually* die there at the altar and by his death expiate his sins. How then could the rite in question symbolize the worshipper's death and his expiating his sins by his death? Impossible.

Now, certainly, our author, too, was well aware of this. It raises the question just what he meant to be telling us by the above-cited sentences.

The answer is contained in the following excerpts from his work. He writes (Typology Vol. II, p. 290, 291): "Certain passages in the New Testament . . . appear to deny to these ancient sacrifices any validity as to the purifying of the soul. Thus it is said by Paul 'that by Christ all who believe are justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses.' And still more strongly and expressly in Hebrews it is declared that the gifts and sacrifices of the law 'could not make him that did the service perfect as pertaining to the conscience'; that 'it was not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could have taken away sins;' and that such blood as the ashes of the heifer sprinkling the unclean, could not avail to the purifying of the flesh, while the blood of Christ, and this alone, can purge the conscience from dead works to serve the living God. *If such passages were to be taken absolutely, they would certainly deny any spiritual benefits whatever to the Old Testament worshipper from his legal sacrifices. That they could not be so taken is evident alone from this, that even when viewed as offerings for such offenses as affected the outward and theocratical position of an Israelite, and satisfying for these, they did not stand altogether apart from his conscience; to a certain extent, at least, conscience had been aggrieved by what was done, and must have been purged by the atonement presented.*" Thus far our author. Italics supplied.

But certainly all "such passages" *must indeed* be taken absolutely. To deny this, as does our author, is to involve ourselves in the view that *to a certain extent* the blood of bulls and of goats could and actually did take away sin, that, in other words, sin *to an extent* was *truly* being expiated by the animal sacrifices of the first covenant, and as a result the consciences of the believers purged.

That this was our author's conception is plain from

all his reasonings on the point under consideration. It is plain from the following sentences from his pen: "The matter stood thus: a certain visible relationship was established under the old economy between Israel and God—admitting of being re-established as often as it was interrupted by sin, through a system of animal sacrifices and corporal ablutions. But it was, from the nature of the case imperfect. The sanctuary itself, in connection with which the relationship was maintained, was a wordly one—the mere image of the heavenly creature. And even that was in its inner glory veiled to the worshipper; God hid at the very time He revealed Himself—kept Himself at some distance, even when He came nearest so that manifestly the *root* of the evil was not yet reached; the conscience was not in such a sense purged as to be made perfect, or capable of feeling thoroughly at its ease in the presence of the Holy One; for that another and higher medium of purification was necessary, and should be looked for. At the same time there was such a purification administered as secured for those who experienced it a certain measure of access to God's fellowship and experience of His favor, it sanctified their flesh (and to a certain extent, their conscience, our author should have added. For such is his view), so as to admit of their personal approach to the place where God recorded His name, and met with His people to bless them . . . *and while atonement* (that is, the animal sacrifice, our author means) mediated between the two, (that is, between the Lord and His people—O) removing from time to time the barrier which sin was ever tending to raise, yet it was by so imperfect a medium, and with results so transitory, that the conscience of the worshipper could not feel as if the proper and efficient remedy had yet been found. We read in the Scripture of the difference between the Old and the New in God's dispensation, that the 'law came by Moses, but grace and truth by Jesus Christ' or, 'the darkness is past, the clear light now shineth'—not as if there had been no light, no grace and truth before, but merely none worthy to be compared with what now appeared. And in like manner in the passages under consideration (the passages in the Hebrews already quoted—O) the measure of relief and purification to guilty consciences which was afforded by the provisional institutions of the tabernacle (particularly by the animal sacrifices—O) because of their inadequate character, and the imperfect means employed in their accomplishments, are for the occasion overlooked or placed out of sight, in order to bring prominently out the real, the ultimate, and perfect salvation that has been at length brought out by Christ." Typology, Vol. II, p. 241, 292.

The view that comes to the surface in the total of the above-cited excerpts is verily this: 1) that as often as the relationship between the Lord and His people was interrupted by sin, it was restored by a system of animal sacrifices; 2) that by these sacrifices also the consciences of the ancient worshipper was to an extent purged; 3) that accordingly the blood of bulls and of goats did to an extent take away sin; 4) and that therefore all such statements as "it was not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats could take away sins", and "the ashes of the heifer sprinkling the unclean could but avail as to the purifying of the flesh, while the blood of Christ, and this alone, can purge the conscience from dead works",—that all such statements cannot be taken absolutely. What is this but saying that in a sense and to an extent sin was indeed *truly* expiated by the animal sacrifices of the first covenant. This was Fairbairn's view. It is wholly in agreement with that other statement of his (already quoted) that the animal sacrifices had a meaning all of their own independent of their reference to Christ, which, as had already been made plain, is impossible.

But the thing for us to do is to hold fast the teachings of the Hebrews on this point. Certainly, the blood of bulls and of goats did not to an extent take away sin. Sin was not to an extent expiated by the animal sacrifices. By these sacrifices conscience was not in a measure purged. These were the accomplishments of Christ's blood, and of His blood only. And the animal sacrifices had meaning only with reference to Him and not independent of Him. And for these reasons and these reasons alone did the animal sacrifices have meaning and great meaning for the believers of the first covenant. As has already been fully explained, they symbolized prophetically, and thus proclaimed unto the ancient worshippers, the work of Christ's redeeming His people from all their sins by His suffering and death on the cross. And in addition they served the believers of the first covenant as the means for the expression of their faith in God through Christ and thus begot for them God's testimony in their hearts that they were righteous. These were the meanings of the animal sacrifices for the Old Testament believers. Other meaning they had not. But all these matters have already been fully explained. We need therefore take no further notice of them.

But the question is what it was that brought Fairbairn to the above conceptions. The answer is this: his view that the Old Testament believers were not able to discern what he calls the "concealed reference" of the animal sacrifices to the sacrifice of Christ. He writes: "It was comparatively an easy thing for the

Jewish worshipper to understand how, from time to time, he stood related to a visible sanctuary and an earthy inheritance, or to go through the process of an appointed purification by means of water and the blood of slain victims applied externally to the body,—much more easy than for the Christian to apprehend distinctly his relation to the heavenly sanctuary, and realize the cleansing of his conscience from guilt by the inward application of the sacrifice of Christ and the regenerating grace of the Holy Spirit. But for the Jewish worshipper to do both his own and the Christian part,—both to read the meaning of the symbol as expressive of what was already laid open to his view, and to discern its concealed reference to the yet undiscovered realities of a better dispensation,—would have required a reach of discernment and a strength of faith far beyond what is now needed in the Christian. For this would have been not like him to discern the heavenly, when the heavenly had come, but to do it amid the obscurities and imperfections of the earthy; not simply to look with open eye into the deeper mysteries of God's kingdom, when these mysteries are fully disclosed, but to do so while they were still buried amid the thick folds of a cumbrous and overshadowing drapery."

Our author is entirely correct, of course, if what he means is that the Old Testament believers were not able, with the aid of the expiatory sacrifices, to envisage the Christ *as the New Testament Scriptures reveal Him to us*. Who would maintain such a thing? Not we certainly. But that is neither the question. The question is whether the Old Testament believers were actually allowed to imagine that at least to a certain extent their sins were *actually* expiated and thereby blotted out by their animal sacrifices, whether, in other words, they were not made to realize that those sacrifices were but symbols and types, and whether, accordingly, they were not pinning their hope upon the true sacrifice that the Lord in His good time would bring in. This is a question that our author answered in the negative. He says, does he not, "But for the Jewish worshipper both to read the meaning of the symbol as expressive of what was already laid open to his view, *and to discern its concealed reference to the yet undiscovered realities of a better dispensation would have required a reach of discernment and a strength of faith far beyond what is now needed in the Christian.*"

Such being the view, he found it necessary to take the position that for the Old Testament believers the animal sacrifice in particular had a meaning of its own apart from the death of Christ.

Yet our author was certainly mistaken. And he himself also really admits that he was mistaken. For

he continues on that same page (Typology Vol. I, page 58) as follows:

"Yet let us not be mistaken. We speak merely of what was strictly required, and what might ordinarily be expected of the ancient worshippers in connection with the institutions and services of his symbolical religion, taken simply by themselves. We do not say that there *never was* (italics-F), much less that *there could not be* (italics-F), any proper insight obtained by the children of the Old Testament into the future mysteries of the Gospel. There were special gifts of grace then, as well as now, occasionally imparted unto the more spiritual members of the covenant, which enabled them to rise to unusual degrees of knowledge; and it is a distinctive property of the spiritual mind generally to be dissatisfied with the imperfect, to seek and long for the perfect. Even now, when the comparatively perfect has come. What spiritual mind is not often conscious to itself of a feeling akin to melancholy, when he thinks of the yet abiding darkness and disorders of the present, or does not fondly cling to every hopeful indication of a brighter future? But even the *best* things of the Old Covenant bore on them the stamp of imperfection. The temple itself, which was the peculiar glory and ornament of Israel, still in a very partial and defective manner realized its own grand idea of a people dwelling with God, and God dwelling with them: and hence, because of that inherent imperfection, it was distinctly intimated, a higher and better mode of accomplishing the object should one day take its place. So, too, the palable disproportion already noticed in the right of expiatory sacrifice between the rational life forfeited through sin, and the merely animal life substituted in its room, seemed to proclaim the necessity of a more adequate atonement for human guilt, and could not but dispose intelligent worshippers to give more earnest heed to the announcements of prophecy regarding the coming purpose of Heaven."

Let it be repeated, here our author really pronounces his whole view wrong, the view that Old Testament believers rested in the shadows of the Old Covenant and failed to realize as enlightened by the Spirit of God and by prophecy that those shadows were but prophetic symbols of heavenly realities.

Let us take notice of some of the statements contained in the above excerpts. First, this statement: "We do not say that there *never was*, much less that there could not be, any proper insight obtained by the children of the Old Covenant into the future mysteries of the Gospel." Here our author admits that there could be and actually was proper insight obtained by the children of the Old Covenant into the future mysteries of the Gospel. But he limits this insight to a

few believers with sufficient intelligence and endowed with special gifts of grace and sufficiently spiritual to be dissatisfied with the imperfect and accordingly seeking and longing for the perfect. But may this insight be thus limited? True, one believer is more intelligent than another, and one believer is more spiritual than another. And accordingly one believer has more *insight* than another. And so it is also true that the desire to be with Christ is stronger in one believer than in another. But is it so that only the most intelligent of the believers and the most holy of the believers have insight? Why should the Lord have bestowed this gift only upon some of his saints—and I speak of saints and not of carnal, unbelieving Jews—and not upon all of them? Why should the Lord have lifted up the hearts only of some of His saints to the heavenly Christ of whom their animal sacrifice was the prophetic symbol and allowed the rest of His saints to go on imagining that their sins were actually being expiated by those animal sacrifices? Why should those animal sacrifices have proclaimed only to the most intelligent worshippers the necessity of a more adequate atonement for human guilt? Certainly, what those sacrifices proclaimed to one it proclaimed to all. So it always is. What God through the teaching ministry proclaims on the meetings for public worship to one hearer, he proclaims to all, namely that Christ died for His people only and that the man who believes is saved. But is it so that only some of the believers hear this proclamation, have understanding of it, and receive it by faith and that thus the Lord does not speak His Gospel in the hearts of all the believers? Why should Abraham and only a few more highly gifted saints have been seeking a heavenly country and not all the saints of that dispensation? Why should only Abraham and a few more highly gifted believers have seen the day of Christ and rejoiced and not all the believers of that day?

This reasoning of Fairbairn simply won't do. It is not correct. Yet such was his view. Only some believers were thus favored but not all. That is his conclusion. He writes: "But yet when we have admitted all this, it by no means follows that the people of God generally, under the Old Covenant, could attain to very definite views of the realities of the Gospel; nor does it furnish us with any reason for asserting that such views must ever of necessity have mingled with the service of an acceptable worshipper."

The Typology of Fairbairn has one defect. It attaches for Old Testament believers a wrong significance to the animal sacrifices, which is but another way of saying that it fails to explain just how these sacrifices served the saints of that day. But aside from this, a production of no small merit. G. M. Ophoff

OUR DOCTRINE

God's Providence

(7)

GOD'S PROVIDENCE AND THE MIRACLE

WHY WE TREAT THIS SUBJECT NOW

It is logical to treat this subject now.

We have defined the Providence of God as the all-comprehensive and almighty power of God whereby He sustains and governs all things with a view to the realization of that purpose which the Lord has sovereignly willed and set before Himself from before the foundation of the world. This power of the Lord, we have noted, is strictly Divine and all-comprehensive in the absolute sense of the word. It affects and controls the life of every living creature and every phase of life of each creature throughout the universe.

It is therefore not difficult to understand why we should discuss the Scriptural truth relative the miracle while treating the truth of the Providence of the Lord. The miracles are certainly works of God. It is true, as one may readily surmise to the surprise of none, that also this truth of Scripture is being held in disrepute and treated by many with scorn and disdain. We will come back to this in due time. Among us, however, and in confessedly Reformed circles, the miracle is acknowledged in all its Scriptural implications as far as its being a work of God is concerned. This does not mean, of course, that all are agreed with respect to the Scriptural significance of these works of the Lord. Discussing the works of God in general one need not be surprised, therefore, when particular attention is directed to the miracles of Holy Writ.

Finally, to treat the miracle at this time has also another advantage. The subject to be discussed after we conclude our discussion on the miracles of Holy Writ is that of Sin. The miracle, as we shall see in due time, can only be understood in the light and in the sphere of God's redemptive grace. They are, properly speaking, signs and symbols of the grace of God. To discuss the miracle before we turn our attention to the entrance of sin into the world has also this advantage that we give it and the grace of God its proper place in our attempt to understand the works of God. Grace and the redemption of the people of God supersede sin also in the counsel of the Lord. Sin serves Christ and the manifestation of the grace of God. Christ did not merely come because of sin (although it remains true, of course, that sin necessita-

ted the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ) but sin came for the sake of Christ. Christ, we understand, is first in the counsel of God. The miracle, in common with the parable, besides being a sign and symbol of the grace of God, is based upon the Scriptural truth that the Lord, when He called heaven and earth and all things they contain into being, created a high symbol of the heavenly and the heavenly realization of His kingdom in Christ Jesus. This earthly is the sovereignly willed plane upon which the Lord realizes the antithetical development of His covenant and kingdom through sin and grace. Hence, we shall discuss the miracle at this time and prior to our discussion of the coming of sin into the world in order to call attention to the truth that the grace of the Lord supersedes sin and that sin simply serves the manifestation of the wonderful grace of God.

Hence, the matter must be presented correctly.

On the one hand, we must not deviate from the correct Scriptural view relative the providence of God. Government, we have noted, constitutes a vital element of this mighty Scriptural truth. God knows but one purpose and has eternally willed but one goal. The Lord always moves forward. We must not conceive of the Lord's Providence in any dualistic sense of the word. The theory "Common Grace" must necessarily lead us into this error. God, then, created the world and presented Adam with the mandate to dress and keep the garden. The Lord entertained an original creation idea, namely, this world's earthly development. This, then, is what people mean when they speak of culture. This culture, this world's earthly development, the maintaining of the original creation idea, so that the world can "live up" to its original purpose, is attributed to Common Grace. Fact is, so they reason, the devil made a breach in the works of God when he introduced sin into the world. This in itself is true. The devil, we surely understand, never intended to make a breach, this breach; he did not purpose to destroy the world; he only intended to tear the world away from the living God and subject it unto himself. Except for the intervention of Common Grace, the world would have perished or become a chaos, and the world's original creation idea would have been rendered impossible. However, God's Common Grace intervenes. Man does not become fully corrupt. He is rendered able in the things that are civil to lead a life which is pleasing and acceptable to God. And throughout the ages God and man are allied against the devil to maintain this outwardly good civil life. Of course, the day is coming when the world will be wholly given over to unrighteousness and evil, as in the days of the anti-christ. But just when this operation of Common Grace will cease and

man will become wholly wicked, or how this tremendous change will occur we have as yet not been told. The theorists of the theory of Common Grace have not yet informed us how or why this restraining grace of evil and wickedness will no longer operate and check the advance of sin and corruption. This conception of things must, of course, not be tolerated. Any conception which conceives of the Lord as frustrating the work of the devil is, of course, dualistic. Besides, the Lord never retraces His steps. He does not merely maintain an original creation idea and attempt to preserve what once was. Jehovah God always moves forward. Sin occurred according to the sovereign good pleasure of the Lord. The world has no significance in itself. God would eternally and sovereignly gather together all things in Christ Jesus, as we read in Eph. 1:9-10, and we quote: "Having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself: That in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him." And how beautifully this truth of the one purpose of God throughout the ages is held before us in that marvelous passage in Col. 1:15-20, and we again quote: "Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him: And He is before all things, and by Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church: Who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell; and, having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven."

Consequently, it is well, on the other hand, to understand that God's Providence and the miracle are inseparably related and connected. Too often these two have been separated from each other. Men have been at a loss to give unto the miracle its due and proper place in the Divine scheme of things. It is certainly a fact that miracles occupy a prominent place in Holy Writ. And yet the Providence of the Lord and the miracle have been virtually divorced from each other. God's Providence, then, was treated immediately after the discussion of the creation of the world. It is explained merely as the almighty and omnipresent power of God whereby He sustains and preserves what He once had made. And men failed to include in this discussion of God's Providence the heavenly and eternal restoration of all things. Some simply said

that the purpose of the miracle was to remind man forcibly and emphatically of the fact that God is God. Man, then, had become accustomed to God's "general" revelation. And now the Lord avails Himself of the miracle to call man's attention to the fact that He is God alone. However, the miracles have another and higher purpose in Holy Writ. The fact remains that even the miracle will not lead men to the acknowledgment of the living God. The Jews beheld all the miracles of the Lord Jesus and declared that He performed them through Beelzebub. God's Providence includes the heavenly restoration of all things. Sin entered according to the determinate foreknowledge of the Lord. And the miracles, as signs of God's almighty grace whereby He realizes this heavenly restoration, occupies therefore a fundamental place in the truth of the Providence of God.

MANY AND VARIED ARE THE MIRACLES OF HOLY WRIT *In the Old Testament.*

Miracles occupy a prominent place in the Holy Scriptures already in the Old Testament, whether they are performed directly by the Lord or by the Lord through the instrumentality of His servants, the prophets.

A striking feature of these miracles in the Old Dispensation is their antithetical character. We do not merely read of miracles of salvation and mercy for the people of the Lord, but also of miracles of judgment and destruction of the wicked. Sometimes, as in the land of Egypt, these miracles of the Lord are characterized by this double aspect: salvation and condemnation and destruction. This also, we understand, applies to the flood.

Many miracles are recorded in the Old Testament. The flood is a mighty work of the Lord to destroy the godless generation of that day, and also to save Noah and his family by water in the ark. Noah, we read, was saved by water inasmuch as it was the water which separated him from the wicked world. And he was saved *in* the ark which, we also understand, is a striking symbol of the Christ. The flood, of course, is of the Lord. The ark, too, is of the Lord inasmuch as the Lord told Noah exactly how he should proceed in the building of it. And we also read that, after Noah and his family had entered the ark, the Lord shut the door, so that, how furious and violent the deluge may have been, they were securely shut in the ark by the everlasting God Himself, another symbol of the fact that the Lord has "shut up" His people securely in Christ, so that, when the deluge of God's wrath descends upon Him upon the cross of Calvary, we are saved and delivered because we are in Him. The same thing (salvation and destruction) applies

to the group of miracles which revolve about the persons of Moses and Joshua. We are all familiar with the ten plagues in the land of Egypt, the passage through the Red Sea, the giving of the law at Sinai, the conquest of the land of Canaan and the passage through the Jordan. These miracles purpose to condemn and destroy the enemies of the living God and His people, and also to provide for Israel a dwelling-place in the land of promise. Another group of miracles occurs in the wilderness as, for example, the swallowing up alive of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, and their company, as well as the fiery serpents. For the serpent of brass which Moses made and put upon a pole (see Numbers 21) is not only a symbol of the Christ but also of the fiery serpents which had been sent by the Lord among the people of Israel. These serpents were the visitation of the wrath of God upon the sins of His people. Hence, this history holds before us the beautiful truth that the wrath of God surely rests upon our sins but that we are saved because the God of our salvation has visited that wrath upon our iniquity upon His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. This explains why the Old Testament symbol of the Christ in this Scriptural narrative assumes the form of a serpent. Still another group of miracles is grouped about the persons of Elijah and Elisha. These miracles occur in the kingdom of the Ten Tribes for also in that kingdom the Lord continued to have His people. They occur in the days of Ahab and Jezebel, and subsequent days, when heathendom threatened to destroy the entire service of the Lord. We are acquainted with these mighty works of the Lord. Who does not know of the drought which the Lord visited upon the land of Israel upon the word of the fearless Elijah the Tishbite, which he spoke in the palace of the wicked Ahab, and which would be lifted by the Lord upon the word of the same fearless prophet three and one half years later? And how striking is the miracle which is wrought by Elijah in the city of Zarephath when he called back to life the only son of a widow there? The man of God had left the land of Israel to take up his abode in that heathen country while, in the meantime, his life was being sought by his mortal enemy, the wicked king of Israel. There, in the heathen city of Zarephath, the Lord performs a miracle through His servant, Elijah, and reveals to the heathen widow the wonder of grace. This miracle is a symbol of the truth which would be realized in the New Testament, that the Lord would manifest His grace to the Gentiles according to election after its rejection by the Jews (we understand, of course, that the Jew's rejection of the gospel does not necessarily mean that the grace and salvation of God was offered to them; to reject something does not necessarily imply that it is offered to the one who rejects it.) And

then follows the mighty revelation of the living God upon Mount Carmel. Who is not acquainted with the stupid but also wicked attempts of the godless priests of Baal to have their god rain fire down upon the altar which they had erected, with Elijah as he pours water upon and around his altar and his prayer to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the subsequent fire which came down from heaven and consumed the sacrifice and water also? And then we read of that wonderful running of Elijah before the chariot of Ahab all the way to Jezreel. The miracles of Elijah's successor, Elisha, exceed in number those of the Old Testament type of John the Baptist. We cannot discuss them at this time. They were miracles of mercy and also of judgment—think of the two she-bears that killed forty and two mocking children.

In the New Testament.

It is not surprising, of course, that the performance of miracles should reach a climax when the Lord visits and redeems His people in the coming of Jesus Christ into our flesh and blood. In fact, we cannot escape the conclusion that an unusual number of sicknesses must have prevailed at the time when the Lord was among us in this valley of the shadow of death. It seems as though the devil concentrated all his evil forces to combat the Anointed of the Lord. And what a wide variety of miracles characterized the works of our Saviour! There are miracles, for example, whereby He reveals His power of the "forces of nature," such as: the changing of water into wine, the wonderful feeding of the multitudes, first the multitude of five thousand and then the multitude of four thousand, not counting the women and the children in each instance, the stilling of the tempest, His walking upon the sea, etc. A second group of miracles reveals His power over the results of sin, all the sicknesses and ills, even death itself. And the nature of these various sicknesses must never escape our attention. These are not ordinary sicknesses which are recorded in the Scriptures. We read of the sicknesses of deafness, blindness, dumbness, lameness, and all these illnesses are symbols of the spiritual power of sin whereby we are unable to hear, see, speak, and walk in the spiritual sense of the word. The striking character of these diseases is that they are absolute. A deaf person cannot hear, a blind person cannot see, and a lame person cannot walk. And, finally, we read of miracles whereby Christ reveals His power over sin itself, its guilt and corruption, and the dominion of the devil, as revealed in the pitiful victims of demon-possession. Every conceivable kind of miracle is performed by the Lord. He raises the dead, gives sight to the blind, causes the deaf to hear and the lame to walk, heals the maimed and the lep-

rous, etc. Except for a few exceptions (as, for example, the cursing of the barren fig tree), all our Lord's miracles are positive works of healing and restoration.

After our Lord Jesus Christ has ascended into the heavens these miracles are continued by Him through the apostles as long as the Lord deems it necessary for the establishment of His Church in the midst of the world. I need not enter into a discussion of these wonders as performed by the apostles. With the death of the apostles these miracles come to an end, and will not again appear until the final appearance of our Lord upon the clouds of heaven when all things shall have been accomplished. Or, if you will, the miracles of our Lord have now entered upon their spiritual and antitypical significance. This is expressed by the Saviour in John 14:12, and I quote: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father." Without entering into a detailed exposition of these words, we should bear in mind that the Lord here is referring to the spiritual, antitypical fulfillment of His miracles while He was among us in our flesh and blood. Christ's miracles are signs of the power of His grace whereby the spiritually deaf and blind and dumb and lame sinner is enabled to hear and see and speak and walk. The spiritual wonder of grace is effected by the risen and exalted Lord (this explains why this text mentions Christ's going to His Father) through the apostles, and these spiritual miracles of grace are surely greater than Christ's miracles while He was among us even as the body is always greater than its shadow.

This wide and varied character of the miracles of Holy Writ need not surprise us. We need certainly not be amazed because of their antithetical character. Everything is antithetic. The gospel is a savour of life unto life, but also a savour of death unto death. God loves and saves His own, hates and destroys the world. It is for this reason that God's revelation of Himself should bear the same two-fold character which also characterizes His miracles. Neither should it surprise us that our Lord Jesus Christ performed so many miracles, and that they are so widely divergent. Sin itself is characterized by this same widely divergent characteristic. Sin has laid hold upon every aspect and phase of our life. Sin exercises its dominion over our entire existence. Hence, the widely divergent character of these miracles of Holy Writ simply emphasizes the total and complete dominion of sin over us, and, of course, the marvellous character and scope of the grace of the God of our salvation.

H. Veldman

IN HIS FEAR

Looking To The Future

CHAPTER 4

CONCERNING TEXTBOOKS

In this concluding article we will make a few remarks about the actual realization of this goal of having our own textbooks in our own school. Is it possible? How large a task is it? Whose work is it? How must we go about this work? Where must we begin? All these questions we face, and a multitude of others. But again, we undoubtedly are a long way toward a solution if we but first understand the problem and its ramifications well. Let us see.

The Size of the Task

We should not deceive ourselves as to the size of this undertaking. A little serious thought will soon convince us that the task is staggering in its *scope*, first of all.

For what do we need? Consider, in the first place, that there are many, many subjects taught in a school: Bible, Church History, Secular History, Geography, Arithmetic, Grammar, Reading, Spelling, Penmanship, Music, Art, Science, to mention, I believe, the more common subjects of the primary school. In all these various subjects our goal is the achievement of our own properly written textbooks. This in itself is a large task. But we must remember in the second place, that in regard to most of these subjects at least, we also need textbooks that are adapted to the several grades and age-groups. You cannot teach Bible, of course, to a first-grader in the same way as to a ninth-grader. And this is true of all the subjects. This means already that we must multiply the number of subjects taught by the number of grades which require a new textbook in any given subject. But this is still not a full picture of the scope of the problem. For, in the third place, we must bear in mind that the textbooks must be kept up-to-date. In a subject such as history, for example, this is an important element. To the facts and events of history new facts and events are constantly being added. This means, therefore, that textbooks will have to be revised and rewritten often. The same is true of such subjects as civics and science. Certainly no one but a fool would ever rush into such an undertaking without careful planning and preparation. These facts alone are enough to make us extremely cautious.

But there is more. If we are to have textbooks, we must have authors. And I do not say that we cannot find such men and women in our circles who would be able to produce a tolerably good textbook in a given field. But here again, we must realistically face the facts. What are some of the most pertinent ones?

In the first place, the writing of a textbook is not everyone's work. We may certainly grant the fact that we may have to be satisfied at first with something less than the best. We have only a limited number of personnel upon which to draw in this work, for the simple reason that we are small to begin with. As always, the men of intellectual stature, of wisdom, of might and renown, are not found in the church but in the world. And the world has a large field from which to take its men, its expert writers, its capable educators. We have not. And however spiritually consecrated a person may be, or how doctrinally sound, these things do not as such and alone qualify anyone for the task of writing a fit textbook. And therefore, let us face this fact first. It does not require a mere teacher, but what I would call a real educator, an expert in his field, a master, to write a textbook. Besides, he must be a man who is able to write, to compose,—something which anyone who takes up a pen will soon admit is also not everyone's work. This, then, should also serve as a finger of caution, lest we underestimate the task, and lest we should rashly hail any "Tom, Dick, or Harry" who glibly claims that he can at random produce textbooks for use in our schools.

In close connection with the preceding is another factor, namely, that the number of writers required is about equal to the number of textbooks needed. Just as the same textbook cannot be used in the ninth grade as is used in the first grade, so the same author most likely cannot write books for much more than one grade. As far as teaching itself is concerned this is true already: one may be a very capable teacher of junior high school pupils, while he would be a dismal failure if he were transferred to the first grade, or vice versa. How much more would this be the case in the composition of textbooks! Besides, each different subject will again require a different author. He who might be able to write an excellent textbook for the arithmetic class would not very likely be expert in the writing of a history book: it is a rare person who is expert in more than one field.

And if more need be said, we have not even mentioned such practical problems as the financing and publication of these proposed textbooks. When we consider all the other problems, it may be seen at a glance that these problems concerning the actual pro-

duction of the textbooks lie far in the future not only, but also are comparatively minor difficulties.

To sum up, then, with only these few observations we can very readily say in this regard: "Easier said than done."

Where to Begin

All of this does not mean, however, in my opinion, that we may not and must not take the long range view of things, and make a beginning. In fact, what we have said rather points to the very opposite: we definitely should make a beginning, and as soon as possible take certain steps toward the achievement of this long range goal. It may even surprise us what can be done, if we only begin.

A pertinent question in this connection is: where should we begin? At what point must we start, first of all, as far as achieving the most profit in the shortest amount of time? And where must be our starting-point, in the second place, as far as achieving a well-organized, rather than a helter-skelter, system of textbooks? Thirdly, where must be our starting-point as far as giving direction, drive, and assistance to the entire movement for our own textbooks is concerned?

My conviction is that the answer is: not at the bottom, but at the top of our educational system. Let me explain.

It would be possible, once this work is organized, to set as our first goal the production of textbooks for the primary grades, then for the intermediate grades, and so on up. This, of course, would give a certain amount of direction to our efforts, and in a way would be a "plan" for the production of textbooks. But it would be very arbitrary. Is it the easiest task to produce textbooks for the primary grades? This may well be questioned. Are the primary grades in the greatest need of textbooks that are written from a distinctively Reformed viewpoint? This too may be questioned. Proceeding in this way, could not someone as cogently argue that the intermediate or junior high grades should have first attention?

It appears to me that at the top, that is, beginning with the teachers themselves our own textbooks are needed. This is logical, is it not. The teachers must instruct. And if the teachers are to instruct properly, they must themselves be properly instructed. If we wish to purify the water in our educational stream, let us purify the source of the instruction. Eventually, then, the whole stream will flow with pure water. Let, therefore, our teacher-training institution first of all have its own, distinctively Reformed textbooks; and from that point down

to the level of the grade school let us work. In fact, I dare say that if we begin at that point, the production of a complete system of textbooks would be a natural and spontaneous outgrowth.

However, there are also certain practical advantages which may be mentioned in favor of this method. In the first place, the quantity of textbooks needed at this point is the smallest. In the second place, the teachers will in this way be furnished with some of the fundamentals, both as to content and as to method, which will need to be incorporated into textbooks on any level. They will even be furnished with a pattern, to a degree at least. And not to be slighted is this third advantage, namely, that even without the immediate production of textbooks for the other levels of education, the instruction will to a large extent be immediately purified and given its proper Reformed direction. And even from the practical point of view of finance and publication, it would be very easy, for example, to begin with mimeographed material at this top level, as we did and still do in our Theological School.

One more matter remains to be mentioned, namely: how must we actually go about the writing of a whole system of textbooks? These remarks must be reserved until the next issue, however.

H. C. Hoeksema

IN MEMORIAM

On Friday, December 19, it pleased our heavenly Father to take suddenly unto Himself the infant son of our pastor and his wife

FREDERICK MARTIN KNOTT

The consistory expresses heartfelt sympathy with Rev. and Mrs. Knott in their sorrow. May the God of all grace sustain and comfort them. The following societies join us in this expression of sympathy:

Men's Society
Ladies' Aid
Yokefellows
Eunice Circle
Young People's Society
Choral Society
Sunday School

The Consistory:

L. J. De Koekkoek, Vice-Pres.
D. F. Langeland, Clerk

Kalamazoo, Michigan

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of I John 2:15-17

(I)

We interrupt our series of articles on I Peter 1:1 f.f. to call attention to the meaning of I John 2:15-17.

In the first place we do so because we feel that a little diversion of subject matter might be welcome to the reader; we might be mistaken in this matter of desired diversion with every reader; however, on general principles I believe that we are right.

In the second place, we believe it appropriate to consider in a couple of articles some passage of the Word of God to give direction to our thoughts and life in the passing away of the "old year" and in the matter of God's ushering in the "new year".

Such a fitting passage, we believe, to have at hand in the well-known words of I John 2: 15.17. The text reads as follows: "*Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the vain glory of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever*".

This passage from the Word of God will afford us ample food for thought, so that our hearts need not be troubled, but that as the righteous we may place our confidence obediently in the Lord.

In general we may remark concerning this Scripture passage, that its *point of departure* is such, that it speaks to the redeemed saints, God's "little children" in Christ Jesus. It speaks to the church militant in this world as she must triumph over this evil world, waxing valiant and strong in faith. In this present world of time, in contradistinction from the "ages to come", the church and the world have all things in common, except grace! Hence, the church lives, and must live out of God, the Father, and thus live the *life of the antithesis!*

Such is always the lot of God's people; such is emphatically the comfort of God's people, with the passing of time, in her pilgrimage to the abiding city of God.

As to the various elements in the text we would call attention to the following:

In the first place, we must notice the strong prohibition in this passage of Scripture. It is: love not the world, (kosmos) neither the things that are in the world."

Shall we understand just what this prohibition, that we love not "the world" implies, then it is imperative that we first understand the meaning of the concept "world" in our text. Looking at the very surface of our text, we count six different instances of its usage. And each time this concept "world" refers to something that we are not to love at all, but is indicative of that which we are to flee, as much as we love our soul's salvation.

The term employed here by John for "world" in the original Greek is "kosmos". As was said the term "kosmos" as employed in our text refers to something ethically evil. There is in this "world" as referred to in our text nothing that a child of God can or may love; it is either-or in our text. Love this world and one is an enemy of the heavenly Father, or love the Father and one is an enemy of this world. The two are mutually exclusive.

But someone interrupts us and reminds us that this term "kosmos" is also employed by John in a good sense, as the "kosmos" for which Christ became the propitiation, so that he is the Advocate with God the Father for the whole "kosmos", that is, the world! Fact is, that John thus speaks of this "kosmos" in this very chapter. In verse 2 of this chapter we read: "and he is the propitiation of our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the *whole world*".

How to account for this, you ask?

That is a good question and calls for an answer. Especially since there are many other instances and passages in the Word of God where the term "kosmos" is used both in a good sense and in an evil sense.

The term "kosmos" is employed in a good sense in such passages as John 3:16-17 and John 4:42, not to mention others. In John 3:16-17 we have the well known passage "For God so loved the *world* that He gave His Only-Begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the *world* to condemn the *world*, but that the *world* might be saved through Him." The Samaritan people, after hearing Jesus preach, exclaim: "for we have heard Him ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Savior of *the world*!"

Such is the usage of the term in a good sense.

There are also other passages which clearly show that in a certain sense the world, the kosmos, is evil and wholly under the dominion and power of sin. Says John in chapter 5:19 "and we know that we are out of God, and that the *world* lieth in darkness." Again in John 14:30, 31 Jesus acknowledges that the *world* is evil. Says He "I will not speak much more with you, for the Chief One of this kosmos (world) cometh and he has nothing in Me, but that the *world* may

know, that I love the Father, and even as He gave Me a commandment, thus I do". And finally of this world, in an evil sense, Jesus speaks in John 16:33, when he says "These things I have spoken unto you, that ye may have my peace in you. In the *world* (kosmos) ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have (even up to this very present moment) overcome the *world* (kosmos). And, to quote but one more passage of this term in an evil sense, we call attention to I John 5:3-5, where we read "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not grievous, because every one that is born out of God overcomes the *world* (kosmos). And this is the victory that overcomes the *world* (kosmos), even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the *world* (kosmos) but he that believeth that Jesus is the Christ."

From the foregoing it is abundantly evident, that the term "world" is employed by John, both in his Gospel account and in his Epistle, in a twofold sense.

Once more the question forces itself to the foreground: how do we account for it?

It ought to be kept clearly in mind, first of all, that the term "kosmos" in the Greek writings of the Classics refers to an "apt and harmonious arrangement or constitution, order". When this definition is applied to the universe of God, heaven and earth and all that it contains, the term "kosmos" is indicative of the orderly arrangement of the entire world of heaven and earth, angels and men, and animals as taught in the Scriptures in Genesis 1 and elsewhere. It refers to God's beautiful and well-arranged creaturehood, concerning which we read: And God saw all that He had made, and, behold, it was very good!

Such is the idea of the "kosmos" in Scripture.

That notion of the "kosmos" we need to explain why Scripture speaks of this "world" both in an ethically evil and in a good sense.

For, mark you well, both the powers of darkness with Satan at its head, and the Kingdom of God in Christ—both, I say, claim this entire kosmos as its own. The latter claims this world in righteousness, liberating it from sin's dominion, and the former as an evil usurping power and dominion. Listen to Satan say to Jesus, in the temptation in the wilderness when he showed Him all the kingdoms of this world (*kosmos* in Matthew 3:8): "to thee will I give all this authority, and the glory of them: for it hath been delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it." These kingdoms of the world are very really the entire world in its cosmological development throughout all of time apart from God. They are the nations that imagine vain things against the Lord and against His Anointed Son.

But Christ does not listen to Satan. And, what is

more, He gives the lie to Satan's bold assertion. Christ will receive this entire "world" from the Father, Who, bringing His Son into the world, says: let all the angels of God worship Him. Yea, at this very moment the angels come to minister unto Christ's needs in the desert. And presently they sing: Worthy is the Lamb!

Behold, then, the antithesis!

How wholly different this is from all speculation of the Greeks about the duality of good and evil. According to this theory, part of the world was good and part of it was bad; both of these were such in their very nature and, therefore, this state of affairs was eternal. The world of man's soul, the spirit world was good and immortal (had an endless existence) while the world of the material and tangible was evil. Such was the evil teaching that was creeping into the church in John's day in the name of sound doctrine.

Such is the dualism.

But John maintains the antithesis.

The "whole world" lies in darkness. All is under sin. Man's soul and body are both corrupted with sin. And all sin is iniquity. But Christ has come to destroy the works of the Devil, and the true light already shineth; the darkness is past, the day has dawned in Christ Jesus. His are all things. Satan is cast out because he has nothing in Christ.

And these two domains we cannot bring together in spiritual unison. The table of Christ and of the Devil have nothing in common. Light and darkness cannot go hand in hand. God is light and there is no darkness in Him at all. And the Children of God and the children of the Devil will surely come to manifestation antithetically in this evil world; they shall do so very concretely.

To bring to light the children of God in an evil world John admonishes the children not to love this world, as it wholly lies in sin and subjects all things under the power and dominion of sin. Nothing is sanctified by the world and set in the service of God. Its very religiousness in theory and in practice (dualism and self-improvement) is godlessness.

In this world we live as people of God on "old year's eve"; into this world we will continue to move in the year before us.

But He that sitteth on the throne is great in power and excellent in judgment. He keeps us by His Word and power in the faith that conquers the world. He says to His beloved children: Little children, keep yourselves unpolluted from this evil world. Simply say in obedience: it is written in the Book of the Testimony of God concerning His Son that I shall not love the world!

Geo. Lubbers

PERISCOPE

DISCIPLINE

The *Presbyterian Guardian* of Nov. 15, 1952 has an editorial in which, in connection with the last national election, the calling of the Church in respect to sounding forth a clear testimony "on the subject of righteousness in personal conduct" is discussed.

Writes the editor:

There were undoubtedly many factors which entered into the presidential election, by which one administration was swept out of office and another swept in. But certainly at least one of those factors was the issue of morality, or more simply of plain old-fashioned righteousness.

The revelations of corruption in high places in the administration personnel had convinced many people that there could be no effective clean-up without a thorough change.

Now there are many matters of national administration on which it may be difficult of not impossible for the Christian Church to take a unified stand. But on the subject of righteousness in personal conduct, there ought to be no hesitancy. Here the church should speak with courage and authority.

However, the writer of this article is convinced that, if the Church is ever to live up to its high calling, it is itself in sore need of a housecleaning. Not only has it emphasized man's relation to man and failed to give the chief emphasis to Man's relation to God, but it has also become lax in discipline. Writes he:

For the church is the primary agency on earth for declaring the Law of God. And the Law of God is the only true standard by which good and evil may be measured. It is right at this point that the church must face its responsibility in the present situation. The church has in large measure failed to declare unflinchingly the Law of God. And it has failed to proclaim with certainty the cardinal doctrines it professes to believe, the facts of final judgment and eternal punishment. It has failed to confront men with the reality of the living God, and the fact that every individual lives his life in the presence of God, who knows the life and heart of man through and through.

It is not strange that men brought up in churches where the talk is all of man's relation to man, and not at all of man's relation to God, have yielded under pressure to conduct contrary to God's standard of righteousness.

But the church has also failed in another direction, in the administration of discipline within its own ranks. The idea of church discipline has declined to the point where it is largely confined to removing from the rolls of a church persons who never attend. But so little do church members think of ecclesiastical discipline and church membership, that at the first inkling of such a thing the accused is liable to walk out and join another church body.

There must be a return to discipline in local churches, and in denominations, before the voice of the church calling for reform in national affairs will be heard very clearly.

With the contention that the Church on the whole is lax in discipline we can agree. And, of course, we also subscribe to the statement that "there must be a return to discipline in local churches, and in denominations." I sincerely hope that the editor has also in mind the need of a return to discipline in the local churches of his own denomination. In fact, it would have been more salutary had he written specifically on this subject, rather than write in general on the necessity of discipline in the church.

Moreover, the first and main key of the kingdom of heaven is always the preaching of the Word. It must open and shut the kingdom of heaven. Where such preaching is lacking, it is virtually impossible to apply Christian discipline.

Nor must the motive be that "the voice of the church calling for reform in national affairs" may be heard. The motive is the glory of Christ, the preservation of the church, as well as the salvation of the sinner that repents.—H.H.

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DUTCH SENTIMENTS

Polemios, a Dutch paper devoted to general Calvinistic principles, writes about the recent national elections in our country in such a way that one can almost read between the lines that the writer, prof. C. Gerretson, would have preferred to have seen Gov. Stevenson elected and the Democratic party continued in power. He writes that the election of Gen. Eisenhower was largely motivated by the desire of peace. He calls this a "sentiment" and writes that it cannot

be called a sound judgment. In the meantime, I am afraid that the writer himself was hardly motivated by sound objective judgment, but rather by the "sentiment" that, perhaps, under a democratic government Europe would more likely receive sufficient help from our country, both financially and otherwise, than when the republican party occupies the seat of government in Washington. Writes he (I translate):

In Western Europe, Fr. Roosevelt is greatly honored, just as formerly was the case with Wilson. And this is but natural, for it must be attributed to both of the American interventions that Western Europe still lives in freedom. No criticism of American errors, however necessary and justified, may cause us to forget this cardinal fact even for a moment, nor may we forget the material help of the last years. But in America, where the large mass of people is as peace-loving as anywhere in the world . . . lives the recollection that it was the "peace loving Democrats" which for the second time now have caused America to participate in the war; and therefore it is probably after all safer to have a Republican at the helm of State.

Unjust as may be this sentiment—a judgment it can hardly be called—it nevertheless seems to have influenced the election. For many Eisenhower is the peace-general.

The writer seems to forget that other factors must be taken into account that have at least just as much weight if not more. I refer to the well-known corruption in Washington, and to the power of the labor unions. At any rate, it seems to me that he was motivated by sentiment at least as much as the American people, only his sentiment was exactly the opposite from theirs. —H.H.

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THEOLOGICAL DIALECTICISM VS. THE THREE POINTS

The Reformed Journal, Dec. 1952, has an interesting article by the Rev. James Daane on "Theological Dialecticism". He introduces his article with the remark that "a theology which acknowledges the so-called 'apparently contradictory', but which always insists that apparent contradictions are not real contradictions, is confronted with the delicate task of preventing the apparently contradictory from becoming the really contradictory in actual religious thought and practice. Only a measure of theological sensitivity can prevent the apparent from becoming real.



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Where the sensitivity is lacking, the insinuation of the dialectical method (the method of the paradox, the Yes and No of Barthian theology, H.H.) into religious thought and practice is inevitable."

He then cites a few illustrations of this tendency to employ the dialectical method in "common religious practice". One sample centers around the questions whether Reformed preaching is God-centered or Christ-centered, another around the attempt to be Calvinistic and Arminian at the same time, a third around the question of supra and infra, a fourth around the relationship between prayer and work, a fifth around the question of the general well-meant offer of salvation. On this he writes as follows:

In the "Three Points" our Church stated its belief in the general well-meant offer of salvation. Rightly interpreted, this point of doctrine is completely acceptable. But if it is interpreted to mean that God wills the salvation of all men *in the same sense* in which he wills the salvation of the elect, it has been misinterpreted. Such an interpretation would involve the necessity of accepting the *truly* contradictory. Since the truly contradictory can be handled only by a dialectical method, the acceptance of the truly contradictory interpretation of the general offer would not clear the way for, but demand the acceptance of, the dialectical method.

As everyone knows, the position that holds that God equally and in the same manner wills the salvation of both elect and reprobate is strictly an Arminian position. Is it perhaps significant that, with the exception of the "infra-supra," all the above cited instances of dialecticism in our practical religious thinking constitute a movement away from the Reformed toward the Arminian doctrine of salvation? Pleas for a Christ-centeredness as against a God-centeredness, for a tempering of Calvinism by Arminianism, for a dialectical relationship between prayer and work in which prayer itself becomes a human work on which salvation depends, are all of them pleas, however unwittingly voiced, for the displacement of the Reformed conception of salvation by grace alone by the Arminian conception, in which God equally wills the salvation of all men, and in which everything does indeed depend on the prayers and work of the individual sinner, be he elect or reprobate.

It is deplorable that the Rev. Daane does not ex-

plain what is the right interpretation of the *first point*. Is it that of Berkhof or Kuiper? Does the Rev. Daane have an interpretation of his own which is not really contradictory and which is in harmony with the Confessions? Again, the Rev. Daane writes that the "first point" is an error if it be interpreted to mean that God wills the salvation of all men *in the same sense* in which He wills the salvation of the elect. I do not understand. Is there, then, any sense in which God wills the salvation of the reprobate?

Besides, the Rev. Daane must not forget that the well-meant offer of salvation was adduced by the Synod of Kalamazoo to prove the contention that God is gracious to all men, elect and reprobate. Hence, I would put to the Rev. Daane the old question that has never been answered: what grace do the reprobate receive in the preaching of the gospel? —H.H.

IN MEMORIAM

On Wednesday afternoon, November 12, 1952, it pleased our Covenant God to take from our side our beloved husband and father,

JOHN BRUMMEL

who passed away in Rochester, Minn. at the age of 38 years.

We are deeply grieved at this great loss, but we believe that he is now at home with the Lord. We further trust that our heavenly Father Who sustained us during the trying days of his brief illness will be our Refuge and our Fortress in the future.—Psalm 91:1, 2.

The bereaved family:

Mrs. John Brummel
Andrew Duane
Jane Audrey
Cornie LeRoy

Hull, Iowa

IN MEMORIAM

On the evening of the 12th of December it pleased God to take unto His eternal home our beloved daughter and sister

CATHERINE VAN HARN

at the age of 44 years.

We are comforted in the knowledge that our loss was her gain, and that God doeth all things well.

"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us—Romans 8:18.

Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Van Harn
Mrs. Frances Nouse
Mr. and Mrs. Peter Schippers
Mr. and Mrs. Stephen Van Harn
Miss Jean Van Harn
Miss Johanna Van Harn

Grand Rapids, Michigan