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MEDITATIE

Naar Het Graf

*En op den eersten dag der week, zeer
vroeg in den morgenstond, gingen zij
naar het graf. . . .*

Luk. 24:1.

Naar het graf!

Het graf van Hem, den Meester, den Heer, die gekruisigd was, en van Wiens kleine, stille begrafenistoet zij, deze vrouwen, een deel hadden gevormd.

Naar het graf gingen zij, op den eersten dag der week, den "derden dag", waarvan Hij immers gesproken had, een woord, dat zij echter thans niet indachtig waren, zeer vroeg in den morgen, zoodra als ze de sabbatsruste naar het gebod mochten afbreken. . . .

Naar het graf van Hem, ja, maar. . . . en ook dat wisten ze niet, vermoedden ze zelfs niet van verre. . . . het ledige graf!

Straks, als ze den hof van Jozef benaderen, en van uit de verte reeds haar blikken naar het graf, *Zijn* graf, wonden, bezorgd ook over den zwaren steen, die den ingang van 't rotsgewelf toesloot, vinden ze den steen van 't graf gewenteld.

Eén harer, Maria van Magdala, al te haastig conclusies trekkend uit het verschijnsel van het opene graf, is toen waarschijnlijk aanstonds op haar schreden teruggekeerd, om eerst den jongeren te berichten, dat men het lichaam van den Meester gestolen had, en straks haar Heiland te vinden in Hem, Dien zij meende de hovenier te zijn.

Maar de anderen liepen door.

Naar het graf!

Naar 't ledige graf!

Het veelzeggende, luide getuigende, ledige graf!

O zeker, ge kunt dit gaan van deze vrouwen naar dat graf van Jezus in den hof van Jozef van Arimathea óók bezien uit het oogpunt van haar verknochtheid aan de aardsche verschijning van Jezus, én van haar in-
attentie jegens het woord, dat de Heiland aangaande dezen derden dag zoo duidelijk gesproken had.

Ge krijgt dan een verhaal over die vrouwen. . . .

Een schoon verhaal! Want die vrouwen, de Maria's, Salome, Johanna en anderen met haar, hadden Jezus lief. Ze hadden hem in den laatsten tijd altijd gevolgd, gediend, verzorgd in Zijn aardsche nooden, en waren met geheel haar hart aan Hem verknocht; ze hadden deze laatste, deze donkere, ontzettende dagen in Jeruzalem doorgebracht, hadden in angstige spanning de uitkomst van de procedure tegen Hem afgewacht, hadden Hem gevolgd naar het kruis, hadden Hem den geest zien geven, hadden de baar gevolgd naar het graf van Jozef, hadden tegenover het graf gezeten, terwijl Nikodemus en Jozef in de donkere rotsholte haastiglijk het lichaam balsemden en in de linnen doeken wonden, waren teruggekeerd om den sabbat te rusten naar het gebod. . . .

En thans, zoo vroeg mogelijk, keerden ze terug naar het graf, om den Heiland, den dooden Meester een laatsten dienst te bewijzen!

Wat een trouwe verknochtheid!

Of ook!

Ge zoudt er op kunnen wijzen, wat eene ellende en onnoodig verdriet deze vrouwen zichzelf hadden bezorgd, door niet te letten op het woord van den Heiland, dat Hij tot haar en tot Zijne jongeren gesproken had; door niet te gelooven *al*, wat Hij tot haar gezegd had; door Zijn woord ongehoorzaam te zijn en zich thans te spoeden naar het ledige graf, inplaats van naar Galilea, waarhenen Hij haar immers zou voorgaan! Hij had het haar immers alles voorspeld, hoe Hij den Joodschen leiders moest worden overgeleverd, hoe Hij gekruisigd moest worden en sterven, en hoe Hij ten derden dage moest opstaan. En duidelijk had Hij het beloofd, dat Hij haar naar Galilea zou voorgaan na Zijne opstanding. En ze hadden blijk-

baar geen acht op Zijne woorden geslagen. Ze hadden er niets van begrepen. En thans gaan ze den verkeerden weg op. . . .

Inplaats van naar Galilea, gaan ze thans naar het graf!

O zeker, een treffend verhaal!

Ge kunt er uit leeren, zelfs, dat het veronachtzamen van Jezus' woord ons altijd verdriet en schade berokkent, ons immer den verkeerden weg doet inslaan. . . .

Maar dan concentreert zich uwe aandacht toch altijd nog maar op die vrouwen.

En dan doet ge toch feitelijk maar hetzelfde als die vrouwen deden. En dan gaat ge toch niet naar Galilea om Hem te zien: den opgestanen Christus!

En dan mist ge toch het eigenlijke doel van het verhaal en van al de Schriftverhalen in de Evangeliën in verband met de opstanding van den Heiland. Want in dien vroegen morgenstond van dien eersten dag der week concentreeren zich alle dingen niet om die vrouwen, maar om den Christus, Die gekruisigd was, en Die uit de dooden opstond.

Daarom moet onze aandacht niet gevestigd blijven op het doen der vrouwen, hetzij dan uit het oogpunt van haar verknochtheid of van haar ongeloof en ongehoorzaamheid, maar zich vestigen op het doen Gods in en door die vrouwen.

Immers, let ge op die vrouwen alleen, dan zegt ge: och, loopt toch niet naar dat graf met uwe specerijen!

Maar let ge op Gods werk dóór haar, dan verstaat ge: die vrouwen *moeten* naar dat graf!

Immers, er gebeurt niets bij geval, ook niet het doen van menschen, ook niet als dat doen van menschen plaats heeft uit misverstand of ongeloof en ongehoorzaamheid.

God doet alle dingen naar Zijn welbehagen! En Zijn doen is enkel wijsheid.

Hij leidt ook deze vrouwen op dien eersten dag der week naar de plaats harer bestemming.

Naar *Zijn* graf!

Naar het graf *moesten* die vrouwen!

En straks ook nog Petrus en Johannes!

Ze moesten daarheen, omdat ze immers getuigen moesten zijn van Zijne opstanding straks, en heel de wereld moesten verkondigen, dat de Heer waarlijk is opgestaan!

En let er wel op, dat er aan die opstanding van den Heer twee zijden zijn. Daar is de historische werkelijkheid van die opstanding. Hij is waarlijk opgestaan. Hij is niet maar "vergeestelijkt", noch ook slechts naar Zijn geest verheerlijkt, nog veel minder slechts opgestaan in de herinnering en verbeelding Zijner jongeren, maar Hij is opgestaan. Zijn lichaam, hetzelfde lichaam, dat in het graf van Jozef van Arimethea werd

bijgezet, werd aan de macht des doods ontruikt, veranderd, verheerlijkt. Doch, en dit is de andere zijde dier opstanding van den Heiland, Hij stond op in heerlijkheid. Zijne opstanding is niet te vergelijken met die tijdelijke opwekkingen, die aan de Zijne voorafgingen, met de opstanding van een Lazarus, een dochtertje van Jairus, een jongeling van Naïn. Deze toch keerden terug, de Heiland ging door. Zij kwamen uit het graf om nogmaals in *deze* wereld, in hun aardsch, sterfelijk en verderfelijk lichaam, te verkeerden; maar de Heiland stond op in onverderfelijkheid, onsterfelijkheid, in heerlijkheid en kracht, met een geestelijk lichaam, vertoonende het beeld des Hemelschen.

Hij behoorde hier, in de sfeer van ons aardsche leven, niet meer.

En van deze opstanding, beide van hare lichamelijke en historische werkelijkheid, zoowel als van hare heerlijkheid en onverderfelijkheid, moesten de jongeren getuigen zijn.

Maar hoe?

Hoe zouden ze, zij, die op dien derden dag zelfs geen opstanding van hun Heer verwachtten, én van de werkelijkheid, én van de heerlijkheid dier opstanding overtuigd worden?

Van de opstanding zelve was niemand getuige. Er geschiedde een groote aarbeving, er kwam een engel uit den hemel, die, terwijl de verbaasde en verschrikte wachters op de vlucht sloegen, den steen afwentelde van de deur des grafs, en. . . . hij zat op denzelfen!

Van die opstanding des Heilands werden de jongeren overtuigd, zeer zeker door de verschijning van den opgestanen Heer aan hen. Onderscheidene malen, nu eens op deze, dan weer op die wijze, verscheen Jezus aan Zijne discipelen nadat Hij uit de dooden was opgestaan. Hij vertoonde Zich aan hen, Hij sprak met hen, Hij noodigde hen uit om Zijn lichaam te tasten met hunne handen, Hij at voor hen, Hij brak brood met hen. Maar die verschijningen waren zonder meer niet genoeg. Immers, het was alles zoo vreemd! De omgang met den Heiland, dien de discipelen gewoon waren vóór Zijn dood, werd thans gemist. Hij kwam even in hun midden, plotseling, terwijl ze met gesloten deuren vergaderd waren, sprak tot hen, en verdween weer, even mysterieus, als Hij gekomen was, Of Hij sloot zich bij hun gezelschap aan op den weg, legde hun de Schriften uit, deed Zich kennen in de breking des broods en was plotseling weer weg. Soms meenden ze, dat ze een geest zagen. Soms hadden ze de vreemde ervaring, dat ze Hem wel wilden vragen, wie Hij was, en toch overtuigd waren, dat Hij de Heere was. Op den berg in Galilea, waar zij Hem zagen en aanbadten, twijfelden er nog sommigen. . . .

En straks zou de Heiland naar den hemel gaan, om niet meer aan hen te verschijnen.

Zouden ze dan niet, nadat ze van den olijfborg teruggekeerd waren naar Jeruzalem, de vraag aan-

gaande de *werkelijkheid*, de lichamelijke, historische werkelijkheid der opstanding in zich hebben voelen oprijzen, ware het niet, dat ze getuige van meer geweest waren?

Daar was, behalve het getuigenis der verschijningen van Jezus, het ledige graf, zwijgend getuige van het woord des engels: Hij is hier niet! O, dat graf, dat ledige graf, waarin Hij gelegen had, maar nu niet meer was, hoe luide getuigde het van de werkelijkheid der opstanding van Jezus! Immers, had God er voor gezorgd, door de dwaasheid der vijanden, dat men nooit zou kunnen zeggen, dat het lichaam van Jezus gestolen was. De vijanden hadden den stadhouder verzocht om een wacht, en hun verzoek was toegestaan. Het graf was verzegeld, de steen was met een keten, voorzien van het Romeinsche zegel, aan de wand van het graf bevestigd, en rondom het graf was de doodenwacht geplaatst van Romeinsche soldaten. Hoe dwaas werd daardoor het verhaal, dat de omgekochte soldaten straks toch in Jeruzalem verbreidden, dat men het lichaam van den Heiland gestolen had!

Bovendien waren daar in het graf de linnen doeken, was daar de plaats waar Jezus gelegen had!

O, het wonder dier linnen doeken! Ze lagen daar, zooals ze om het lichaam van Jezus gewonden waren geweest!

En dan was daar bij het graf de hemelboodschapper, die geroepen was om het eerste Paasch-evangelie te verkondigen.

Want immers altijd behoort bij Gods wonder Zijn gesproken woord, om dat wonder te verklaren.

En wie zou dat woord spreken op dien eersten dag der week, behalve een engel uit de hemel?

O, dat wondere, ledige graf, machtig getuige, dat de Heer waarlijk is opgestaan!

Zeker, het was misverstand, dat aanleiding was voor deze vrouwen om naar het graf zich te wenden.

Maar zij moesten er heen!

Naar Zijn graf!

En God leidde haar naar het graf!

Leidde haar, zóó, dat het op den eersten dag der week was, den "derden dag", den dag van Jezus' opstanding, zeer vroeg in den morgen, niet eerder, niet later, dat ze zich grafwaarts keerden.

Want vlak vóór den sabbat was de Heiland gestorven. Ware het eerder geweest, er ware tijd genoeg geweest, om het balsemen van des Heilands lichaam naar de gewoonte der Joden te voltooien. Er ware dan geen behoefte geweest voor deze vrouwen, om met specerijen zich nogmaals naar het graf te begeven. Ware er niet juist de sabbat tusschenin geweest, ze hadden zich ongetwijfeld reeds den volgenden morgen

grafwaarts gespoed om het lichaam van den Heiland te balsemen. Maar ze moesten naar het ledige graf, terstond na de opstanding. En op den sabbat rustten ze naar het gebod.

En op den eersten dag der week, zeer vroeg in den morgen, gingen ze naar het graf.

Dan, ze hadden niet gemerkt, dat in het donkere graf, aan dien vooravond vóór den sabbat, Jozef en Nikodemus het lichaam van den Heiland wel zorgvuldig hadden voorbereid voor de begrafenis. Zoo toch meldt ons Johannes. Ze hadden het lichaam van Jezus in doeken gewonden, met de specerijen, gelijk het de gewoonte der Joden was om te begraven. En deze vrouwen hadden wel tegenover dat graf gezeten, maar van de verzorging van het lichaam hadden ze blijkbaar niets gemerkt. Vandaar haar begeerte om nogmaals zich naar het graf te wenden met haar specerijen, om de begrafenis te voltooien.

En zij gingen naar het graf!

Dan, ze wisten blijkbaar niets van de, door de Joden verzochte en door Pilatus toegestane doodenwacht en de verzegeling van het graf. Hadden ze het geweten, ze hadden zich waarschijnlijk in dien vroegen morgen naar het graf niet begeven.

Doch thans gaan ze naar het ledige graf.

En bovenal: ze verwachtten de opstanding des Heilands niet op dien eersten dag der week. Ze waren het woord des Heeren niet indachtig, dat Hij tot haar gesproken had. Hadden ze op dat woord gelet, ze waren thans reeds op weg naar Galilea geweest.

Doch nu keeren ze zich grafwaarts.

Dat ledige graf moesten ze zien.

De plaats, waar Jezus gelegen had, moest getuigen.

De engel met zijn Paasch-evangelie moest een gehoor hebben.

God leidde haar naar het graf!

En ze kwamen met haast!

En komende bij het graf, stonden ze verbaasd!

Want immers, ze stonden daar bij het ledige graf van den opgestanen Heiland! Ze zochten den Levende bij de dooden! Hem, Die de opstanding en het leven is, wilden ze dienen met haar specerijen, alsof Hij door den dood gehouden zou kunnen worden.

En ze werden grootelijks verblijd!

Want ze hoorden het daar, uit engelenmond, de verklaring van dat ledige graf, en van die wondere plaats, waar haar Heiland gelegen had: "Hij is hier niet! Want Hij is opgestaan!"

Groote blijdschap: de Heer is waarlijk opgestaan! Onze rechtvaardigmaking!

Ons eeuwig leven!

H. H.

EDITORIALS

Banner Ethics

"The Banner", official organ of the Christian Reformed Churches, published in its editorial columns the following paragraph:

"Third, we feel that the unbrotherly propaganda which the so-called missionary of the Protestant Reformed Church is making especially in some of our Western churches must cease before there can be any consideration of ecclesiastical union or ecclesiastical fellowship with those brethren. We are wondering whether all the members of the Protestant Reformed Church are aware of the deplorable tactics employed by its "missionary". This minister moves into one of our communities and seeks to create dissatisfaction among the members of the Christian Reformed Church. Thus the minister of one of our Western churches—we have information from others which agrees substantially with his—writes that this person rode through his church as though he was its pastor and called at every place whether he was welcome or not. He did not at once begin to hold services but attended all the meetings in the Christian Reformed church: services, weddings and funerals, and even had the affrontery to come to the consistory meetings. At the public meetings he was very attentive and took notes, of which he made use afterwards. After some time he proceeded to hold meetings and announced them by weekly letters freely distributed. It was stated that the pure doctrine of sovereign grace, which is in eclipse in the Christian Reformed Church, would be preached in all its purity. Then this missionary created disturbance by claiming that the consistory was half-hearted in its devotion to the Christian School. He called a meeting in view of the alarming situation and *before consulting the consistory of the Christian Reformed Church sent out a letter announcing that the meeting would be held in the basement of that church!* Some time later this same minister served notice on the consistory that it must invite Dr. K. Schilder to come to this community or else he would be called to do this. Enough to show what deplorable methods are used by the Protestant Reformed missionary to undermine the peace and welfare of some of our churches. We do not write this because we

hold all the members of the Protestant Reformed Church responsible for such conduct. In fact, we know that there are fairminded men and women in that church—Christian people for whom we have high respect—who will refuse to approve such methods. We wonder if they are informed about the situation. Let us add that we have the written evidences for all the statements that we have just made. This is not mere hearsay.

This was in the issue of March 23, 1939.

In the April 13 number of the same Christian Reformed publication we found the following:

It is not our policy to refuse articles in which reply is made to criticism expressed in our editorial columns. Recently, however, we received an article of this nature which we cannot place. It was received from the Rev. Bernard Kok, minister of the Protestant Reformed Church, stationed at Manhattan, Montana, whose methods as home missionary, there and elsewhere in the West, where the Christian Reformed Church has congregations, we criticized in an editorial of March 23. The writer seeks to refute our charges that he used unworthy methods in seeking to gain adherents in some of our congregations. His lengthy letter of defense will not be placed because the language employed makes it unfit for publication. If it were not for this circumstance, we would not be at all reluctant to place his letter before our readers since the very explanations given prove the justice of our complaints. Let us add that all our statements were taken almost literally from a letter on the subject written by the Rev. A. H. Bratt, pastor of the Christian Reformed Church of Manhattan, in response to an inquiry on our part regarding the truth of the rumors which had come to us regarding the missionary methods of Rev. B. Kok. We don't want a quarrel with the latter or with the Protestant Reformed Church but we cherish the hope that what we wrote on this subject will lead to the removal of some of the irritations that are an obstacle in the path of better relations between that Church and ours.

The reader understands that the article of the Rev. B. Kok, to which the editor of "The Banner" refers in the above paragraph is the communication we published in "The Standard Bearer" of April 15.

In this article it is my purpose merely to call attention to the ethics implied in the policy pursued by "The Banner".

First the editor makes a deliberate attempt to blacken the name of our home missionary. He speaks of the "unbrotherly propaganda" of our "so-called" missionary; of "the deplorable tactics employed" by him. He informs his readers that the Rev. Kok moves into a certain territory and "seeks to create dissatisfaction among the members of the Christian Reformed Church"; that he ("this person") "rode through (Rev. Bratt's) church as though he was its pastor"; that he attended all the services, weddings and funerals; and that "he even had the effrontery to come to its consistory meetings". He created disturbance, according to the editor of "The Banner" "by claiming that the consistory was half-hearted in its devotion to the Christian School", and on his own accord and authority called a meeting in the basement of the Christian Reformed Church for the purpose of delivering a Christian School speech. Later he practically compelled the consistory of the Christian Reformed Church in Manhattan, to invite Dr. K. Schilder, by the threat that otherwise he, the Rev. Kok, would do it. And thus the editor pictures the Rev. Kok as a man who, by "his deplorable tactics" would "undermine the peace and welfare" of the Christian Reformed Churches. The editor is, furthermore, wondering whether all the Protestant Reformed people, among whom the editor knows some fairminded persons, are acquainted with these lamentable methods of our missionary.

Thereupon, the Rev. B. Kok, reading these public indictments and innuendoes, sent the reply to "The Banner", which we published in our last number of "The Standard Bearer", in which he calls the insinuations by the editor of "The Banner" a concoction of lies, and challenges him to prove them or to retract.

And now the editor of "The Banner" gives notice to his readers:

1. That he has received such a communication from the Rev. Kok.

2. That the language the Rev. Kok employs makes it unfit for publication.

3. That the contents of Rev. Kok's communication is such that they prove the truth of the editor's first insinuations.

Let me assure the editor of "The Banner" that "The Standard Bearer" considers the methods pursued by the editorial department of "The Banner" positively immoral.

May I not remind the editor of the judgment our Heidelberg Catechism expresses upon slander and back-biting? They are the very works of the devil.

Hard language, not fit for publication in "The Banner", the editor of that publication will probably exclaim with Pharisaistic indignation. But let him consider his own corrupt policies, be ashamed of himself, and remove the beam from his own eye, that he may better see the mote in his brother's eye.

What did he do? On the testimony of one witness,

and this by no means an impartial one, he painted a very black picture in public, before some twelve thousand onlookers, of the Rev. Kok. The latter, considering the product of the editor of "The Banner" a fraud, a gross misrepresentation, asked for redress. But the editor refused! Kuiper uses his editorial power to tell twelve thousand people how corrupt Rev. Kok is, and again employs the same editorial power to prevent Kok's self-defense. Nay more. Instead of sending Kok's communication back to him by private mail, he adds to his back-biting by assuring his twelve thousand readers, whom Kok cannot reach, that the latter's language is too abusive for publication, and that he painted his own picture just as black as the editor of "The Banner" had done before.

And so it happens that our missionary stands accused, slandered, abused, as a low, mean, sneaky character, in the eyes of some twelve thousand people, by the testimony of one man, Kuiper, without an opportunity to defend himself, all because the vile pen of that one man, Kuiper, has editorial power!

This I consider deeply immoral, un-Christian.

Granted even, for the sake of argument, that there is some rather strong language in the reply of the Rev. Kok, was not the language of the Rev. Kuiper far more abusive in contents and implication, though, no doubt, less direct? And is the matter involved here not an attack, made by the editor of "The Banner" upon the personal character of the Rev. Kok. Is it not perfectly understandable that the latter became a little "warm under the collar", when he saw his cartoon, drawn by the Rev. Kuiper in public? And should not the latter have made a little allowance for this, rather than refuse the reply? If the matter in dispute had been of a doctrinal nature, there might have been some justification in refusing to publish a reply on the ground of unfit language. But I believe that it is immoral, corrupt, quite contrary to all the teachings of Holy Writ, to refuse a man the right of redress when an attack is made upon his character.

Who, as the case now stands, is judge, jury and attorney in the case of Kuiper vs. Kok? Kuiper.

On whose testimony must we accept that Kok is as bad as Kuiper described him? On Kuiper's.

How do "The Banner" readers know that the language of God's reply was unfit for publication? Kuiper says so.

How can we be convinced that the contents of Kok's reply corroborated Kuiper's insinuations? By the statement of Kuiper.

Has Kuiper the only right to speak in this matter before his twelve thousand readers? Not the right but he has the power and abuses it.

But may not Kok appear in the witness-stand? Must he take all this abuse of Kuiper without even an opportunity at self-defense? He must, and others

must, as long as Kuiper is editor of "The Banner", and the "Big Four" support his methods.

It is our turn to ask: are there no fairminded people in the Christian Reformed Churches, that will openly condemn and put a stop to such corrupt methods? Or are they so cowed by hierarchical oppression that they allow their leaders to abuse their power any way they please?

First, the editor of an official organ uses his editorial power to boycott Dr. Schilder, though he is a professor in good standing in a sister denomination in the Netherlands, an attempt which almost succeeded.

Then all the "big men" of the church, professors and some ministers, including the editor of "The Banner" again, get together, and write a long letter to him, to persuade him not to come.

Now the editor of "The Banner" uses his editorial power to refuse a man redress when he is publicly slandered by the same editor.

Are not the people better than these leaders?

I believe that the reception the people gave Dr. Schilder proves that they do not agree with such leadership.

And the time will come when they will prove this in other ways.

THE TRUTH OF THE MATTER.

I shall now proceed to examine into the truth of the innuendoes of the Rev. Kuiper against our missionary.

Let me first of all ask the editor of "The Banner" to make a sincere attempt to appreciate our Protestant Reformed view of the work of our missionary.

He complains that the Rev. Kok creates dissatisfaction and disturbance in the Christian Reformed Churches.

I frankly reply that such is his calling. And no fairminded Protestant Reformed man will deny this. In fact, such is the calling of any missionary, whether at home or abroad. A missionary that does not cause disturbance in and dissatisfaction with existing conditions in the field in which he labors, is not worthy of the name.

The trouble is, of course, from the Rev. Kuiper's viewpoint, not that the Rev. Kok creates disturbance and dissatisfaction, but that he chooses the Christian Reformed Churches as the field of his activity. Let him, however, not blame the Rev. Kok for this. He is officially commissioned to do exactly this. It is the conviction of the Protestant Reformed Churches, that their God-assigned duty directs them, first of all, to the Christian Reformed Churches as their field of labor.

It is, therefore, inevitable that our home-missionary, if he performs his labors faithfully, must become a center of disturbance and create dissatisfaction with

the doctrine of the "Three Points" in the Christian Reformed Churches.

I can very well appreciate the fact that to the Rev. Kuiper as well as to the Rev. Zwier and others this aspect of the missionary-work of the Rev. Kok is a thorn in their flesh. They naturally look at the matter in a different light than we do.

But let the editor of "The Banner" make a sincere attempt to see, at least, our view of the matter.

We are convinced that the Christian Reformed Churches in 1924 departed from the Reformed truth by adopting the well-known "Three Points".

In 1924 we openly declared that we considered it our duty before God and our conscience to explain to the Christian Reformed Churches, in which we then still had a place, the error of those "Three Points".

We had a quarrel with mother.

The Christian Reformed Churches denied us the right, within those churches, to combat those errors, and placed us before the alternative: keep still or be expelled.

We refused to keep still, and they expelled us.

Cannot now the Rev. Kuiper, and also the Rev. Zwier understand, that we still consider it our God-given calling to quarrel with mother, to show her the error of her way, to lead her back to the ways of the pure Reformed truth? The fact, that we were expelled from the fellowship of the Christian Reformed Churches could not possibly alter our calling before God. When we were still within the Christian Reformed Churches we pledged ourselves to expose the heresy of the "Three Points"; now we are outside of the fellowship of those churches, we still are faithful to that pledge. The only difference is that, while, as long as we were within the Christian Reformed Churches, mere ecclesiastical power could prevent us from carrying out our pledge, this power is powerless against us now.

Hence, we earnestly attempt to fulfill our peculiar calling: to show the Christian Reformed Churches the error of their way and lead them to the truth of our Reformed faith.

This creates disturbance. That is inevitable.

But let the Rev. Kuiper and Zwier and others consider that it is a fair battle. We fight openly, with fair means, that are perfectly proper in the cause of the truth to employ: the means of the spoken and written word. And they are means which also the Christian Reformed brethren may employ. Let them, then, wherever our missionary appears and labors, oppose him by these same means, not by backbiting and slander. Let them debate with our missionary and show their people, that the "Three Points" are pure Reformed doctrine, and that the contentions of the Rev. Kok are false.

The result we reach so far, to which also the Rev. Kuiper must agree if he will only consider the matter

from the viewpoint of all fairminded Protestant Reformed people, is that the Rev. Kok faithfully performs his duty if, by means of the openly spoken or written word, he creates disturbance and dissatisfaction with the "Three Points" in the Christian Reformed Churches.

There is nothing extraordinary in this.

All churches that are expelled or return to the confessions always do the same thing.

It would not be difficult to prove that in the early part of the second half of the nineteenth century and since that time, the Christian Reformed Churches followed the same practice with respect to the Dutch Reformed Church or Reformed Church of America.

The recently seceded Presbyterian Church follows the same method with respect to the Presbyterian Church of the U. S. A.

We do the same thing in the Christian Reformed Churches.

The Rev. Kuiper may object, that we have no reason for this missionary activity in their churches, seeing that they still profess the Reformed truth. The Rev. Zwier may write, that similar activity was justified when the Christian Reformed Churches tried to show the Reformed Church of America the error of their way; and is perfectly in order when the new Presbyterian Church performs its extension work in the Presbyterian Church of the U. S. A.; but that, when we perform our calling in the same way, it all of a sudden brands us as a sect.

But, in all fairness, do not the brethren understand that this is only a point of view on their part, and a very partial one at that?

We are convinced that the "Three Points" are a departure from the Reformed Confessions. And we consider it our peculiar calling to fight for the maintenance of the pure Reformed truth, and to show the Christian Reformed Churches the error of their way.

When we create disturbance and dissatisfaction in the Christian Reformed Churches, it is with the Arminian errors adopted by them, and in the interest of the Reformed truth.

Let us, then, appreciate one another's viewpoint and fight an honest battle.

Bearing in mind, therefore, that it is the Rev. Kok's calling to create disturbance of a false peace, and dissatisfaction with the errors of 1924 in the Christian Reformed Churches, let us examine into the insinuations of the editor of "The Banner" against him.

Did he employ fair means or foul?

I will produce evidence.

On Aug. 22, 1938 the Rev. Kok sent the following circular letter to the Christian Reformed people in Manhattan: (I translate from the Dutch)

"To all lovers of the Reformed truth,

"Beloved brethren and sisters in the Lord:—

"The undersigned approaches you with the serious question whether you are acquainted with the 'Three Points' the Synod of 1924 added to our confession. Briefly these 'Three Points' are as follows:

"Point I. That, besides saving grace, there is a certain favor or grace which God shows to all creatures, hence, also to the ungodly that reject Christ.

"Point II. That all men are somewhat improved by a general operation of the Holy Spirit which is not regenerating.

"Point III. That by virtue of this improvement all men are able to do the good before God in matters civil.

"Because it is our sacred conviction that these 'Three Points' are in conflict with all that is revealed in the Word of God, the Churches in which we are born and raised have denied us a place. Let no one say that this is slander and falsehood, for I witness before the Lord that this is the truth.

"Over against these 'Three Points' we openly declare before you and the churches, that according to the Word of God it is established:

"That, outside of saving grace, revealed in Christ, there cannot be a certain favor or grace of God towards the ungodly that are disobedient to the Son, but on the contrary, the wrath of God abideth on them. John 3:36.

"Secondly, that the heart of an unregenerated sinner is and remains wholly corrupt, unless he is regenerated by the Spirit of God. By nature the imagination of a man's heart is only evil continually. Gen. 6:5; Mark 7:21, 22.

"Thirdly, that the natural man is incapable of any good, so that even in things natural and civil he can do nought else than sin and increase his guilt. Rom. 14:23. Here the apostle teaches that all that is not of faith is sin.

"The purpose of our sojourn in your midst is to point out to you and to the churches the danger implied in the doctrine of 'Common Grace'; not to destroy but to cause the Church to return to the old reformed confession of God's sovereign grace. Brethren, pray for us. It is our daily prayer that the people of God, also in this vicinity, may earnestly investigate these matters, in order that not the error but the truth may have the victory to the praise and glory of His grace. If you desire to receive without cost the sermons on Rom. 9, 10, 11, we ask you to fill in and return the enclosed postcard. A beautiful treatise of these important chapters of the Word of God. These sermons are in the English language".

"Your servant in Christ,
"Bernard Kok, V. D. M."

I consider this letter, which was written at the very beginning of the Rev. Kok's stay in Manhattan, important evidence.

In the first place, because it plainly reveals that

our missionary was entirely faithful to his calling.

In the second place, because it proves that he used no foul means to persuade the people, but openly announced the purpose of his coming and labors.

In the third place, because this letter contains neither misrepresentation nor distortion of the facts or of the truth.

And, finally, because it gives the lie to the insinuation of the editor of "The Banner", that "this person rode through the church *as though he was its pastor*". In this letter he openly and publicly announces himself as the missionary of the Protestant Reformed Churches and definitely states the purpose and character of his labors. Surely, the Rev. Kok made personal calls in the Christian Reformed Church of Manhattan. That is his calling. And it is a fair means. But no one could, after he wrote a letter as reproduced above, pass through the congregation *as though he was its pastor*. That, therefore, is proved to be a lie of the Rev. Bratt and of the Rev. H. J. Kuiper.

Rather is the Rev. Kok to be commended for his honest, open and above board methods.

Another point.

The editor of "The Banner" writes that the Rev. Kok "even had the effrontery to come to the consistory meetings". This is written at the close of the mention of a series of "meetings" which the Rev. Kok "attended". He attended "all the meetings in the Christian Reformed Church. . . and even had the effrontery to come to the consistory meetings". We receive the impression that the Rev. Kok not only "rode through the church as though he was its pastor", but that he also imposed himself upon the consistory as though he were one of its regularly installed members, perhaps, even its president.

Now, what is the matter? thought I.

Is the consistory of Manhattan such a gathering of nincompoops, that they allow anyone, particularly one that rides through their church as though he were their pastor, to "attend" their meetings, and, perhaps, dictate to them what should be done? I am rather sure, that no one need try to put over such a trick in my consistory. He would find the way out more quickly than he discovered the way in. Does not the editor of "The Banner" realize that he insults the consistory of Manhattan by putting it on so thick?

Or is, after all, our missionary, perhaps, gifted with dictatorial abilities, equal to those of Hitler or of Mussolini? Perhaps, we had better confer upon him the title of "Il duce" or "Der Führer", and meet him henceforth with the Nazi salute and the shout "Heil Kok!" How vivid a picture one who has a little imagination receives in his mind as he reads these words of Kuiper's editorial! I can see the imposing figure of our missionary sailing unexpectedly into the consistory meeting of Manhattan's officebearers, deposing their president and himself take his place, and

cowing with his dictatorial eyes everybody into submission!

What a man!

But let us return to cold reality.

What was this "effrontery" of our missionary?

Here is the evidence. He wrote me as follows:

"As far as the effrontery of going (not 'attending') to the consistory is concerned, the following. When my brother preached here last summer he compared me to a snake behind the backs of the minister and officebearers. Thus I went through the congregation, according to him. Therefore, I went to the consistory to inform them concerning the purpose of my coming; and that it was my purpose to point out the errors of 1924 and to propagate the truth, and that in my labors I was constrained only by the love of Christ, and not by any personal animosity. More than one elder commended me for coming to the consistory".

O, but what a different picture we now receive of our missionary from that called before our imagination by the Rev. Kuiper's editorial! Now I see the friendly and honest figure of the Rev. Kok, knocking for admittance at the door of the consistory-room; I see some elder open the door and turn back for a moment to his brethren to report that the Rev. Kok is there asking for a word with the consistory; I hear the president say "let him come in"; I hear our missionary deliver his message; and I can tell by the faces of the consistory-members that they are all convinced that this man is not a sneak, and that they admire him for his openness.

Yes, yes, the representation of the editor of "The Banner" is a downright lie.

The Manhattan consistory-members are no nincompoops, and the Rev. Kok did not act dictatorially!

Another point.

Emphatically (in italics) the editor of "The Banner" informs his readers that our missionary called a meeting for the purpose to deliver a lecture on the Christian School and (here follow the words in italics): "*before consulting the consistory of the Christian Reformed church sent out a letter announcing that the meeting would be held in the basement of that church!*"

When you read this, you naturally ask the question: and what did he do next? Already you visualize "il duce" Kok, with a company of black-shirts marching against that basement of the Christian Reformed Church and taking it by storm.

But hold on, brethren! Let not your imagination run away with you! For, I have evidence that this also is a lie. Yes, yes, a lie.

I will produce the evidence.

On Oct. 24, 1938 the Rev. Kok wrote in a circular letter the following (I translate from the Dutch):

"In connection with Reformation-Day the undersigned will, in the near future, deliver a few lectures about Christian Instruction for our children. Well may we seriously consider this matter, when more than

two thirds of our children are deprived of the privilege of Christian instruction. Can we give account of this before God?"

In a similar letter, written on Nov. 2, 1938 our missionary wrote (this time the original is written in English) :

"Every true Christian is vitally interested in the Christian education of his children, not only because he seeks the very best for his children, but also and chiefly because it is a divine injunction. It is a matter which concerns not only the parents of children of school-age, but every child of God. Never may we entrust the education of the seed of the covenant to the State, but it is primarily our duty, and woe be unto us if we entrust God's little ones to the Christless and Godless instruction of the Public School. D. V. we will deliver a lecture on this vital issue next Wednesday evening at 7:45 P.M. The text of our subject will be based upon Proverbs 1:7: 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; but fools despise wisdom and instruction'. As we expect every christian to be interested in this vital issue we will ask the consistory for the use of the large room in the basement of the church; otherwise this meeting will be held in our own auditorium. We urge you for God's sake and our children's sake to attend this meeting. It will be a lecture entirely devoted to our Christian School. An offering will be taken for our Christian Schools".

One more quotation to prove my point. This time from a letter dated Nov. 7, 1938:

"We are very sorry to announce, not only that the consistory has seen fit to deny us the use of the basement for the purpose of giving a lecture in behalf of Christian Instruction, but also that they saw fit to meet on the same evening that the lecture was to be held. Therefore, in order to make it possible for all to attend, we have postponed our lecture to Friday evening, Nov. 11 at 7:45 P. M."

The matter is plain. Even the Rev. Kuiper, will have to admit that he wrote a lie when he published in "The Banner" that our missionary announced that this particular meeting would be held in the basement of the Christian Reformed Church before consulting the consistory.

Fact is, that he never announced that the meeting would be held in said basement.

Fact is, too, that he announced that *he would ask* the consistory for the use of the basement.

Fact is, again, that he *did ask* the consistory for the use of the said basement.

And fact is, finally, that the *consistory refused*.

Now, finally, what is the truth about the Dr. Schilder episode? The Rev. Kuiper writes that "this same minister (Rev. Kok, H.H.) served notice on the consistory that it must invite Dr. K. Schilder to come to this community or else he would be called to do this".

Now, I am not in a position to inform the readers

what sort of a "notice" the Rev. Kok did "serve" on the consistory. But we happen to know enough about this matter to present the truth.

We know, for instance, that in Manhattan the consistory, intimidated by the boycotting article of the Rev. H. J. Kuiper in "The Banner" brought the question of inviting Dr. Schilder to speak, before a congregational meeting, where, after considerable discussion, the matter was tabled! Nothing was done.

We know, too, that in a circular letter, dated Nov. 22, 1938, the Rev. Kok wrote as follows:

"According to the Church-papers Dr. K. Schilder, theological professor in Kampen, will pay us a visit in America. It is also our desire that the consistory here invites him to lecture for our people".

It appears that, thereupon, the Rev. Kok and others also, sent a request to the consistory of Manhattan that they invite Dr. Schilder. This was apparently refused or not acted upon, for in a circular letter, dated Dec. 21, 1938 the Rev. Kok wrote:

"If the consistory persists in its refusal to have Dr. Schilder speak here, we will try to make arrangements for one or more lectures here by this eminent scholar and theologian".

I also happen to know that the Rev. Kok during the Christmas season made arrangements with Mr. Eerdmans for lectures by Dr. Schilder in Manhattan. And it was not till after this that the consistory of Manhattan turned about and also asked Mr. Eerdmans for lectures by our guest from Kampen.

I fail to see the "deplorable tactics" our missionary followed in this case.

The deplorableness, it seems to me, must be sought wholly on the side of the consistory.

In conclusion.

May I give the Christian Reformed Churches some sound advice?

Would you paralyze the activities of our missionary?

There is only one way: retract the "Three Points".

H. H.

Wat Op De Conferentie Voorviel

Als ik over *de* conferentie schrijf, dan begrijpen de lezers natuurlijk aanstonds, dat ik het oog heb op de vergadering, die onlangs gehouden werd tussen enkele broeders der Christelijke Gereformeerde en Protestantsche Gereformeerde Kerken.

Ofschoon het van het begin af, dat er van zulk eene vergadering sprake geweest is, mijn doel was, om ons volk op de hoogte te houden met hetgeen daar gesproken mocht worden, toch was het eerst niet mijn voornemen, om thans reeds een meer of min volledig verslag te geven van hetgeen besproken werd.

Maar de redakteur van "The Banner" heeft, afgaande op inlichtingen van één persoon, die bovendien slechts een gedeelte van den vergaderingstijd tegenwoordig was, een zeer gebrekkig rapport in zijn blad gepubliceerd; ook Dr. Beets schreef in de "Missionary Monthly" iets over onze conferentie, een schrijven, dat ik niet al te goed begrijp wat zijn eigenlijke bedoeling betreft, en waarin ik ook den geest, dien Dr. Beets op de conferentie openbaarde niet kan herkennen. Nu zal ik toch ook wel moeten schrijven en een volledig verslag moeten leveren, temeer, omdat het zeker niet te verwachten is, dat de officieele organen der Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken zulk een volledig verslag zullen publiceren.

En dan moet mij allereerst iets uit de pen aangaande de aanleiding tot die vergadering. Men heeft het voorgesteld, alsof ik eigenlijk zelf aanleiding daartoe gegeven zou hebben. Zelfs heeft men den indruk gegeven, en uitgesproken met zooveel woorden, dat ik gesuggereerd zou hebben of geschreven, dat ik wel eenigszins van gedachten was veranderd in betrekking tot de "gemeene gratie"; dat ik althans zou hebben uitgesproken, dat ik de "Drie Punten" misschien niet goed zou hebben verstaan; en dat daarom een samenspreking wel gewenscht kon geacht worden. Zoo werd, meen ik, door Dr. Beets geschreven. En dien indruk kan men ook krijgen uit hetgeen de redakteur van "The Banner" schrijft in een hoofdartikel van den 13 April, l.l.

Dit is echter geheel bezijden de waarheid.

En ik kan mij bijna niet voorstellen, dat de broeders mijn schrijven zoo verkeerd hebben kunnen opvatten.

Ik schreef namelijk het volgende:

"Het wordt verteld, dat Ds. D. Zwier alsmede Ds. Van Baalen, nadat zij dezelfde lezing (van Dr. Schilder over De Algemeene Genade) in Holland, Mich., gehoord hadden, hebben uitgesproken, dat zij er ten volle accoord mee gingen.

"Indien dit waar is, dan belijd ik, dat ik de beschouwingen van die broederen nimmer verstaan heb, noch ook den inhoud der Drie Punten. In dat geval zou een colloquium om de geheele zaak nog eens te bespreken zeer wenschelijk zijn". Zie Standard Bearer, 1 Maart, l.l.

Uit hetgeen aan deze verklaring voorafging, werd genoegzaam duidelijk, dat ik er juist niets van geloofde, dat genoemde broeders het eens konden zijn met Dr. Schilder's voorstelling.

En daaruit volgt ook, dat ik persoonlijk er niets van geloofde, dat ik hun beschouwingen niet goed verstond, of de bedoeling der Drie Punten niet vatte, en dat er op dien grond behoefte zou zijn aan eene samenspreking.

En bovendien heb ik aan één der commissieleden, die de beweging voor onze gehouden conferentie op touw hebben gezet, duidelijk te kennen gegeven, dat

men van mij geen compromis moest verwachten.

Ik schreef dit, om den indruk weg te nemen, alsof ik eerst een eenigszins compromiseerende houding had aangenomen, om dan op de conferentie zelf, zooals blijken mag uit mijn daar geleverd referaat, een geheel andere houding aan te nemen. Ik heb van het begin gemeend, dat het de bedoeling der conferentie was, om een wetenschappelijke samenspreking te houden over de punten, waarover er onder ons verschil van meening is. Konden we in dien weg dan tot samenstemming komen, we zouden ons over dat praktisch resultaat verblijden. Ik meende, dat dit ook de bedoeling was van Dr. Schilder, wiens vertoeven onder ons zeker de aanleiding is geweest tot het houden van de conferentie. Tot zulk eene samenspreking ben ik ten allen tijde bereid. Daarom had ik mij ook grondig voorbereid.

Laat mij thans eene beschrijving geven van de conferentie, die gehouden werd op 29 Maart, l.l.

Ik gebruik hierbij de aantekeningen door Ds. P. De Boer, één der door de vergadering benoemde twee scriba's, gemaakt. Deze aantekeningen zijn zeer juist en volledig.

De vergadering koos Dr. H. Beets tot voorzitter, en ik moet hem de eer geven, dat hij zich op waardige en eerlijke wijze van zijn voorzitterstaak kweet. Hij opende met het lezen van 1 Cor. 13 en gebed. Ds. R. Veldman werd gekozen tot vice-president en de broeders J. K. Van Baalen en P. De Boer werden gevraagd om als scriba te dienen.

Een zestiental Christelijke Gereformeerde broeders waren uitgenoodigd deze vergadering bij te wonen, waarvan er tien tegenwoordig waren (hierbij is ook Mr. W. B. Eerdmans gerekend). Door Ds. Van Baalen werd meegedeeld, dat de professoren L. Berkhof, S. Volbeda en M. Wijngaarden, alsmede Ds. H. J. Kuiper voor de uitnoodiging per brief hadden bedankt. Ds. G. W. Hylkema was zonder kennisgeving afwezig.

Veertien Protestantsche Gereformeerde predikanten waren tegenwoordig. Drie hadden zelfs de lange reis van Sioux County naar Grand Rapids gemaakt om deze vergadering te kunnen bijwonen.

"Uit "The Banner" vernemen we thans, dat sommige der Christelijke Gereformeerde predikanten ter vergadering gekomen waren, hoofdzakelijk met het doel om "stille luisteraars" te wezen. Men kan hierbij natuurlijk dan verder vragen, welk oogmerk die broeders hadden met dat "stille luisteren". In elk geval wil het mij voorkomen, dat het "stille luisteren" een minder waardige rol is, als men een uitnoodiging aanneemt om kwesties met elkander te bespreken. Doch de broeders achtten het ongetwijfeld de meest veilige rol, die ze konden spelen, vooral daar de "Big Four" hun wenkbrauwen reeds over deze conferentie hadden gefronst.

De lezers weten, dat ook Dr. K. Schilder tegenwoordig was.

Na de opening der vergadering vroeg de voorzitter aan elk der tegenwoordigen persoonlijk, één voor één, wat naar zijne meening diende besproken te worden. En thans moet ik toch mijne verwondering uitspreken over de bewering van den redakteur van "The Banner", dat er op onze conferentie ook tegenwoordig waren, die bedoelden de rol van "stille luisteraar" te spelen. Want, behalve één, die meende, dat het al of niet wet-tige van onze vergadering eerst besproken diende te worden, en die blijkbaar ook inlichtingen aan "The Banner" verschafte, bleken allen het er over eens te zijn, dat de "Drie Punten", of ook de kwestie der "gemeene gratie" in het algemeen diende te worden besproken. Er was niet één, die te kennen gaf, dat hij de kat maar eens uit den boom kwam kijken, en bedoelde een "stille luisteraar" te zijn. En wat een pantomime zou het ook geworden zijn, indien we allen eens met zulk een voornemen ter vergadering waren gekomen! Misschien hadden we dan allen wel het voorbeeld gevolgd van de paar Christelijke Gereformeerde broeders, die later op den dag heel gemoedereerd de krant gingen lezen!

Ondergeteekende gaf te kennen, dat hij een referaat ter inleiding had opgesteld, de lezing waarvan een paar uren in beslag zou nemen.

De voorzitter benoemde een commissie om te adviseeren, wat gedaan zou worden. De commissie bestond uit Dr. K. Schilder, Ds. W. P. Van Wijk en ondergeteekende. Ze gaf advies om ondergeteekende eerst gelegenheid te geven zijn referaat te lezen. Deze kreeg daarop het woord en leverde hetgeen hij had opgesteld.

Dit nam het overige van de voormiddagvergadering in beslag. Zooals de lezers zullen hebben opgemerkt uit het vorig nummer van ons blad, waarin geheel het referaat werd gepubliceerd, eindigde ondergeteekende met een twintigtal stellingen, die hij de vergadering ter overweging aanbood.

Het was meer dan tijd om te middagmalen, en de vergadering verdaagde tot kwart voor twee.

Na de pauze sprak de voorzitter allereerst een woord van waardeering uit voor het geleverde referaat. Hij meende, dat het een weluitgewerkt en doorwrocht stuk was, en dat het geen twijfel overliet aangaande het standpunt van den referent. Daarna werd het woord gegeven aan Dr. Schilder.

Deze begon met zijn blijdschap te uiten over het feit, dat broeders, die voor vijftien jaren elkander niet hebben ontmoet, dit thans mogen doen en broederlijk kunnen samespreken. Ook verblijdt hij zich er in op deze vergadering tegenwoordig te mogen zijn, en zelf te mogen spreken. Hij acht de vergadering een zegen Gods. Hij deelt niet het bezwaar van sommigen, alsof het niet-officieele van de vergadering een bezwaar is. Veeleer acht hij dit een voordeel, geen nadeel. En het bezwaar acht hij ongegrond. Immers belijden gereformeerde menschen het ambt aller geloovigen, en krachtens dit ambt is een vergadering als deze moge-

lijk en gewettigd. Voorts merkt de spreker op, dat er van de geruchten, die gaande zijn, alsof er geheime zaken zouden zijn tusschen spreker en Ds. Hoeksema, niets aan is. Hij ontkent dit ten stelligste. Hij wist b.v. van het referaat van Ds. Hoeksema vóór de vergadering niets af.

Spreker vervolgt met te zeggen, dat hij zeer gaarne het referaat van Ds. Hoeksema in zijn bezit zou hebben, om het in zijn geheel in "De Reformatie" te kunnen publiceeren. Hij biedt aan, om dit te doen. Dan zal hij het punt voor punt in bespreking nemen, en zijn kritiek er op leveren. Thans kan hij slechts op enkele punten ingaan. Hij heeft gedurende de lezing van het referaat aantekeningen gehouden; heeft gedurende de pauze ook nadere inzage genomen van het stuk, doch is slechts door de eerste zeven stellingen gekomen. Hij kan dus thans niet op alle bijzonderheden ingaan.

Spreker merkt op, dat hoemeer hij naar Ds. Hoeksema luisterde in de morgenzitting, hoemeer hij het jammer vindt, wat in 1924 gebeurde. Hij betreurt het, dat de Synode van '24 de "Drie Punten" vaststelde, en wenschte wel, dat zij de richting had gevolgd door Ds. Zwier en anderen destijds aangewezen, om geen definitieve uitspraken te doen en de bespreking der gemeene gratie vrij te laten.

Spreker kan zeggen, dat hij het in hoofdzaak eens is met het referaat. Er worden daarin lijnen getrokken, die hij zelf ook gaarne trekt.

Maar er staan ook dingen in het referaat, waarmee hij het niet eens is.

Zoo b. v. als Ds. Ds. Hoeksema het heeft over de wenschelijkheid en mogelijkheid der vereeniging der Christelijke Gereformeerde en Protestantsche Gereformeerde Kerken, en dan beweert, dat grondige bespreking op alle punten eerst noodig zal zijn, voor en aler het tot zulk eene vereeniging zou kunnen komen, dan moet spreker van den referent verschillen. Spreker heeft den referent zoo verstaan, dat deze eerst haar-fijne uiteenzetting van de leer der gemeene gratie eischt en definitieve uitspraken desbetreffende, voor er sprake kan zijn van vereeniging. Indien dit de bedoeling is van de referent, dan gaat spreker niet met hem mee. Dan komt er van vereeniging nooit iets en dan hangt men de kerk op aan wetenschappelijke vragen. Wat alleen noodig is, is wegneming van binding aan bepaalde, reeds gedane uitspraken. Wegsnijding is noodig; geen bepaling.

Spreker wijdt vervolgens de aandacht aan het "Eerste Punt". Hij betwijfelt het, dat er in dat punt eigenlijk wel sprake is van eene "gunstige gezindheid Gods". Wel wordt in de eigenlijke redactie van dat punt (Synodale Acta, 1924) in een inleidenden zin van zulk eene "gunstige gezindheid" gesproken: "rakende de gunstige gezindheid Gods jegens de menschheid in het algemeen en niet alleen jegens de uitverkorenen spreekt de synode uit"; maar in de eigenlijke uitspraak zelf wordt van die *gezindheid* toch niet ge-

sproken. De commissie van prae-advies had gesproken van de gunstige *gezindheid* Gods, en daarop reflecteert het inleidend woord van Punt I; maar in hetgeen de synode nu zelf uitsprak ontbreekt die term. Neemt men dus de uitspraak van de synode als zoodanig en letterlijk, dan zou men ook kunnen zeggen, dat de synode van 1924 van een gunstige *gezindheid* Gods niet spreekt. Spreker weet echter niet, of hij op die wijze de *bedoeling* der synode wel zuiver weergeeft. (Intusschen verzekeren Ds. Van Baalen en anderen spreker, dat het wel degelijk de bedoeling van de synode was om te spreken van eene "gunstige *gezindheid*" Gods).

Dr. Schilder gaat voort met te zeggen, dat, indien Ds. Hoeksema de intrekking van de "Drie Punten" als eisch stelt tot eventueele vereeniging, hij bang is, dat er van vereeniging nooit iets zal komen. De spreker wijst er op, dat men ook heeft te rekenen met het element van het "vleesch". (Hij bedoelde blijkbaar, dat het niet gemakkelijk is voor het "vleesch" om eens gedane uitspraken openlijk en volkomen in te trekken). Spreker meent echter, dat het zonder compromis, waarvan hij zelf ook een vijand is, zoowel als Ds. Hoeksema, mogelijk is om eene nadere interpretatie te geven van de "Drie Punten", die beide zijden kan bevredigen.

Spreker vervolgt, en zegt, dat er waarlijk reden tot dankbaarheid is, na het hooren van het referaat. Het is inderdaad verblijdend, dat Ds. Hoeksema de organische gedachte op den voorgrond schuift en spreekt van het alles omvattende van Gods verbond. Hiermee bestrijdt Ds. Hoeksema het dualisme. Men heeft spreker verteld, dat Ds. Hoeksema Anabaptist is, maar uit het referaat blijkt wel duidelijk, dat dit niet het geval is, dat de referent het Anabaptisme als stelling verwerpt. Ook was het spreker verteld, dat Ds. Hoeksema uitgaat van een abstracte conceptie van de predestinatie en alles ophangt aan de verkiezing. Maar hoewel de referent deze lijn sterk trekt (iets, dat spreker ook zelf zegt te doen, ofschoon er misschien tusschen hem en den referent wel verschil kan bestaan over de methode, waarop dit stuk wordt aangewend), is het toch wel duidelijk geworden, dat de referent niet alles aan de verkiezing ophangt. In het referaat wordt terdege rekening gehouden met de wetten Gods, met scheppings-ordinantiën en relatiën. Hierop wordt zelfs veel nadruk gelegd door den referent.

Wel zijn er enkele dingen, waarin spreker van den referent moet verschillen. Zoo b.v. in betrekking tot de voorstelling van "kern en bolster", waarop de referent nogal veel nadruk legde. Spreker herinnert er aan, dat dit beeldspraak is. Hij wijst er op, dat beeldspraak altijd meer of min gevaarlijk is. Dr. Kuiper brengt ook vaak met zijn beelden in de war en leidt ongemerkt van het spoor af. De referent past het beeld toe op de menschen en den kosmos beide. Dit beeld lost de zaak niet op. We loopen gevaar te poneeren, dat God het betere heeft uitverkoren. Dit is wel

niet de bedoeling, maar de schijn is er dan toch. In de natuur heeft de bolster ook zijn nut; de dieren eten die op, etc. Doch hoe kan men het beeld van kern en bolster toepassen op de organische kosmos? (Op verzoek van Dr. Schilder geeft Ds. Hoeksema in korte woorden op dit punt even zijn gedachten te kennen. De "verworpen bolster" is, naar zijne voorstelling hetzelfde als hetgeen de Heilige Schrift aanduidt door de (goddelooze) "wereld". "Heb de wereld niet lief", etc. Ook de goddelooze bolster der menschheid leeft niet opzichzelf, maar staat in verband met de schepping en maakt van haar gebruik tot ontwikkeling van de goddelooze "cultuur").

Dr. Schilder vervolgt. De referent heeft alle ruimte gelaten voor de beschouwing, dat God het creatuurlijke liefheeft. Referent zegt, dat God genadig is in Zichzelf, dat Hij ook genadig is jegens het schepsel, in het schepsel behagen heeft, voorzoover het nog aan de scheppingsordinantiën beantwoordt. Spreker zegt, dat God de "movie" als zoodanig niet verwerpt, noch ook de dans, maar het zondige gebruik er van. Spreker meent voorts, dat Punt I zóó zou kunnen worden gewijzigd, dat het sprak van "behagen" inplaats van "gunstige *gezindheid* Gods".

Spreker kan voorts niet meegaan met de voorstelling van referent, dat God genadig is in Zichzelf, afgedacht van eenige relatie tot het schepsel. In het woord genade ligt wel degelijk de relatie tot het schepsel uitgedrukt. God is genadig aan een bepaald adres.

Spreker gelooft, dat er vele dingen staan in Dr. Kuiper's *Gemeene Gratie*, die verwarrend zijn. Hij is het eens met veel van de critiek, die door referent op Kuiper's voorstelling is geleverd. Toch gelooft hij niet, dat het Kuiper's bedoeling was, om een brug te slaan van de algemeene genade naar de particuliere. Ook gelooft hij niet, dat het de bedoeling van de synode van Kalamazoo was, om Kuiper's voorstelling te formuleeren. De leer van Kuiper heeft de synode niet voor haar rekening willen nemen.

Spreker is het niet eens met stelling 7. Hij heeft bezwaar tegen de stelling, dat de zonde zich zoo snel mogelijk ontwikkelt. Bepaaldelijk heeft spreker bezwaar tegen de uitdrukking "zoo snel mogelijk". Daar is zekere retardatie in den loop der zonde. Romeinen 1 leert dit ook, volgens spreker. Dit hoofdstuk wijst op historische ontwikkeling. Er is daar sprake van "overgeven". Dit veronderstelt, dat er eerst een tijd aan dit overgeven voorafging. Eerst was er een "niet-overgeven" en toen kwam, als straf op het verlaten van God het "overgeven". Er is dus van Godswege retardatie in de ontwikkelingsgang der zonde. Evenals men ook spreken kan van retardatie in de genade. Dit staat in verband met mijn zondig leven naar het vleesch. Als ik in de zonde leef, dan onttrekt God Zich aan mij voor een tijd, dan komt er geestelijke verlaten, dan verachter ik in de genade.

Hiermede is echter Punt II aan de orde gesteld.

Dr. Schilder merkt even op, dat hij ook vandaag de "Drie Punten" zonder nadere interpretatie niet zou kunnen onderteekenen. Hij heeft dit ook reeds in "De Reformatie", in het nummer, dat binnenkort verschijnt, geschreven. De "Drie Punten" eischen verdere exegese.

Zooals thans Punt II verklaard wordt, kan spreker het niet onderschrijven. Er is toch reeds veel te veel gemaakt van die "algemeene Geesteswerkingen", ook in Nederland. Spreker wil dit toestemmen, en gaarne meewerken, om het gebouw, dat men aldus optrekt, omver te werpen. Toch kan men, ook buiten Geesteswerkingen in verlossenden zin, wel spreken van "Geesteswerkingen".

In verband met Punt III, dat spreekt van "burgerlijk goed", komt het op de verklaring van "goed" aan. Goed, b. v. in den zin van nuttig en bruikbaar is te aanvaarden. In dien zin echter is "goed" nog niet te verstaan als en te verwarren met "zedelijk goed". Daarom komt het aan op de juiste verklaring van den term "goed". Nadere interpretatie zou hier tot elkaar kunnen brengen.

Wat de stelling van den referent betreft inzake de bevoegdheid van de meerdere kerkelijke vergadering, kan ieder het standpunt van den spreker kennen. Hij is het met Dr. Greydanus eens. Ieder weet dat. De breedere vergaderingen zijn geen hoogere kerkelijke autoriteiten, met macht om leeraars en kerkeraden af te zetten.

Spreker besluit dit den vrede zoekend woord met de opmerking, dat hij allerlei lichtpunten ziet. Hij zou gaarne zien, dat de breuke tusschen de Christelijke Gereformeerde en Protestantsche Gereformeerde Kerken werd geheeld. Zeer gaarne!

We ontleenden ons verslag van deze speech van Dr. Schilder bijna letterlijk aan de notulen, die door Ds. De Boer werden opgeteekend gedurende de vergadering.

We hebben ons er over verwonderd, dat hij zooveel kon opteekenen, en zoo volledig en juist het woord van Dr. Schilder weergeven kon.

Later sprak Dr. Schilder nog weer.

Doch gebrek aan ruimte maakt het noodzakelijk, dat we ditmaal afbreken.

In het volgend nummer de rest, D. V.

H. H.

BEKENDMAKING

Classis-vergadering staat, D. V. te worden gehouden Woensdag, Juni 7, om negen uur, in den voormiddag, in de Eerste Protestantsche Gereformeerde Kerk te Grand Rapids, Mich.

M. Vander Vennen, S. C.

Eerstelingen Zijner Schepselen

Jac. 1:18.

In nauw verband met deze woorden staat, gelijk we een vorige keer schreven, de gedachte, dat God de Auteur der zonde zou kunnen zijn. Als iemand in de zonde valt, zegge hij niet, God verzoekt mij tot zonde. Het is een van de meest Godonteerende gedachten, om de God van volkomene Majesteit daarvan te beschuldigen. Hij toch, kan niet verzocht worden, omdat Hij anti-thetisch het goede bemint. Geestelijk-zedelijk wil Hij altijd, onafgebroken, geheel in harmonie met Zijn Wezen, het goede. Hij haat tegelijkertijd volkomen het kwade. Immers wordt Zijn toorn van den hemel geopenbaard over alle ongerechtigheid? Het is daarom dan ook, dat de goddelooze bij Hem niet kan verkeeren. De booze gaat nooit Zijn tente binnen, en Hij is iederen dag vergramd op den goddelooze. Wie dat eenmaal ziet vat des Apostels woord als hij zegt, daarom verzoekt Hij dan ook niemand tot het kwade.

Niemand zal dan ook God van deze ongerijmdheid ooit kunnen beschuldigen. We mogen dan ook niet spreken van tegenstellingen, die niet bestaan, want God is volmaakt in het goede en haat altoos het kwade en den kwade.

Maar daarom is het dan ook, dat Jacobus tegen die grove dwaling de broeders wil waarschuwen. Dwaalt toch niet, dat is, loopt toch niet op verkeerde paden. Laat in spreken en handelen het toch altijd en in alle dingen tot openbaring komen, dat ge van uw God nooit anders denkt, dan van den Heilige en reine, den alleen volmaakt Goede en de onvloeiende fontein van alle goed.

En we zagen dan ook, dat deze gedachte verder werd uitgewerkt in het feit, dat van Hem alle goede gaven en alle volmaakte gift nederdalende zijn. Nederdalend op Zijn erfdeel, dat Hij met een onafgebroken stroom van goedgunstigheid overlaadt.

Aldus werd het afdoende bewijs geleverd, dat de zonde verzoeking niet van God komt of van Hem komen kan.

Als in een hoofdgedachte wordt nu saamgevat al hetgeen, dat in dit hoofdstuk voorafging. Alle goede gaven en volmaakte gift zijn van boven van den Vader der Lichten afdalende, wordt in één hoofdsom begrepen, namelijk dat God ons gebaard heeft.

Het is vooral op drieërlei waarop de aandacht gevestigd wordt. Op het baren op de wijze waarop en op het doel waartoe dit geschied. En dan is voor alle dingen wel duidelijk, dat de tekst niet spreekt over de wedergeboorte in den engeren zin des woords. Het woord in den grondtekst beteekent en ziet niet op de inplanting van het zaad der wedergeboorte, waardoor God den in Zichzelven dooden zondaar begiftigd met het leven dat van boven is, en dat van nieuws aan in hem dat leven in het beneden bewustzijn instort. Ons hollandsch woord is hierin aan het oorspronkelijke gelijk,

dat het die gedachte van inplanting uitsluit. Baren toch is te voorschijn brengen van het leven, dat alreeds aanwezig is. Baren is principieel vrucht van inplanting, doch niet de inplanting zelf. We worden dan ook in tweeerlei zin des woords gebaard. Geheel uit kracht van Scheppings ordinantie, in den natuurlijke en aardchen zin des woords, waardoor we ons bestaan ontvangen. Echter is dit ook waar in den geestelijken zin des woords. Hierdoor wordt dan ook geestelijk-zedelijk de stand onzer natuur bedoeld. We kunnen dan ook in meer dan één zin des woords van dit baren spreken.

We zijn uit het oogpunt van natuurlijke geboorte, kinderen des duivels en daarom dan ook geen kinderen Gods. Dit wil natuurlijk niet zeggen dat we geen menschen kinderen blijven, noch ook dat we een *andere* natuur ontvangen. De zonde vervormt den mensch niet tot een ander wezen en maakt van hem geen ander schepsel. Alle geredeneer, dat er genade noodig is (algemeene) om den mensch mensch te doen zijn en blijven, is een theorie, die, nu ja, wel te pas komt bij die andere der gemeene gratie, maar ons nergens in het Woord Gods wordt geboden. De vernuftigheid is in dezen dan ook ko'ossaal. Neen, maar het betekent, dat, wanneer we in de Schrift lezen, ge zijt kinderen der duisternis van nature, we in ons bestaan vervuld zijn met het geestelijk bestaan des duivels en aldus geestelijk op hem gelijken, doende den wil des vleesch. En zoo zijn we allen van nature.

Zelfs de man van de gemeene gratie durft het nooit anders te zeggen. Hij spreekt ook van het goed doen der zondaren, zonder de vernieuwing des harten, daarmee uitsprekende, zal hij consequent blijven, dat van nature met en zonder gemeene gratie, we kinderen des duivels zijn, doende de begeerte van den moordenaar van den beginne. Daar is nu eenmaal geen ontkomen aan.

Of we zijn ter anderer zijde, kinderen Gods. En ook hier is de gedachte niet, dat we een *andere* natuur ontvangen, dat we dus iets anders worden dan menschen, maar dezelfde menschelijke natuur, die, in disharmonie stond met God en Christus, staat nu weer in harmonie met Gods natuur.

Het is haast onnoodig dit te zeggen, maar een ieder begrijpt wel wanneer hij dit leest, dat hier geen sprake is over onze schepping. Jacobus had gesproken over het ontvangen der zonde en dat met het oog op haar einde. Ook daar ging het over het baren, het te voorschijn brengen. Dat einde der zonde is de dood. De zonde in haar voleinding brengt de dood te voorschijn. In tegenstelling hiermede gaat het hier over de baring in de wedergeboorte, zooals Gods kind geestelijk daarvoor op Vader gaat gelijken. En juist omdat Hij de Vader der lichten is, Zelf licht zijnde, baart ook Hij nooit iets anders dan kinderen des lichts.

Voorbijgaande het feit, dat ook deze tekst mede heeft gediend om de bestrijders der onmiddellijke we-

dergeboorte in het gelijk te stellen, waardoor men dan ook de roeping eerst stelde, letten we op de vraag hoe God Zijn volk baart? Door het Woord der Waarheid is de instrumentale dativus. We dienen allereerst op te merken, dat de tekst niet zegt, het Woord der Waarheid baart. Want evenmin als de letter dood is, evenmin baart het Woord der Waarheid zonder meer. Het Woord der Waarheid is natuurlijk Gods Woord gelijk we het in onzen Bijbel bezitten. En gelijk we zeiden, zonder meer baart het Woord nooit. Nu baart de Heere op tweeerlei wijze en in beide gevallen geschied dit door Zijn Woord. Het allereerste baren is het te voorschijn roepen der dingen die niet zijn, alsof zij er eeuwig waren. Het is Zijn scheppend Woord, waardoor de dingen uit Zijn Raad werden afgescheiden en nu buiten dien Raad hun bestand krijgen. Zij waren eeuwiglijk, doch waren er alleen in Zijn Raad als de eeuwige contemplatie van Zijn Souvereine Wil. Doch daar gaat het hier natuurlijk niet over. In dien zin heeft de Heere alles gebaard, Engel, mensch en beest, boom en plant, hemel en aarde, tijd en ruimte en nog zooveel meer. Neen, er is ook een baren in geestelijken zin des woords. Dan maakt Hij van geestelijke kinderen des duivels de Zijnen, die weer op Hem gaan gelijken. De duisternis is de geestelijke sfeer waarin wij leefden, bedoelt Jacobus te zeggen, doch God wederbaarde en baart, brengt die wedergeboorte te voorschijn, door het Woord der Waarheid. Dat Woord is dan ook niet het middel, dat wij gebruiken en waardoor wij, bij goed gebruik en ernstig voor-nemen, kinderen des lichts worden. Wie een weinig oplet en zijn oor te luister legt, zal merken hoe juist in onzen tijd het goed gebruik der middelen, eigenlijk de wedergeboorte en bekeering zijn, welke een iegelijk, die wil, in zijn hand heeft. Feitelijk staat in dat teeken een overgroot deel van het godsdienstig leven. Wie zich bekeert is daarmede wedergeboren en de mensch bewerkt aldus zijn zaligheid. Maar het is dan ook juist daardoor, dat de wedergeboorte geen plaats, of haast geen plaats meer vindt in de heilsorde.

Neen, maar dat Woord der Waarheid is niet ons, doch Gods middel. Als Hij roept door Zijn Woord, dan luistert en komt de wedergeborene en wordt ook werkzaam. En laat er ons aan toevoegen, dat dit niet bepaald wordt door de prediking of door den prediker. En schoon het waar is, dat ook de prediker in dien zin zich niet ongerust behoeft te maken, als zoude de prediking dan alleen goed zijn wanneer *hij* menschen bekeert, want dat is en blijft Gods werk en staat in nauw verband met de wedergeboorte, het verbond, alsmede verkiezing en verwerping. Evenmin mag hij daarom spreken, alsof zoude de bloote prediking, waarin den eisch en de belofte nooit ontbreken, voor een ieder genade zijn. Want, in het baren door het Woord waarin de Geest onwederstandelijk werkt, sluit de Heere Zich aan bij de wedergeboorte, door Hem gewerkt als een onmiddellijke inplanting, door Zijn roe-

pen, en voleindigt Hij en Hij alleen dat roepen, wanneer Hij door het Woord der Waarheid het door Hem ingeplante leven te voorschijn roept. Dat baren is aldus een werking Gods waardoor het nieuwe leven vruchten draagt en in verstand en wil tot openbaring komt. Deze menschen, tot wie Jacobus het Woord richt, waren niet slechts wedergeboren, maar tevens als kinderen des lichts gebaad. En in de vruchten komt dan ook het echte van die baring uit. Het eerste wat een gebaarde doet is het werk van boete en berouw, van een hongeren en dorsten naar de gerechtigheid van Christus Jezus alleen, gelijk deze verdiend is op het vloekhout des kruises. En in het midden der wereld zijn zij dan ook kinderen des lichts, in het licht wandelende en in dat licht zich verblijvende. Zij zeggen dan ook nooit a's zij somtijds uit zwakheid in zonde vallen, dat deed God. Neen, maar zij zijn bedroefd over hunne zonden en hebben er berouw over en strijden uit genade dagelijks daartegen. Het is altijd hun zonde en nooit de zonde van hun God, waarom dan ook die droefheid een onberouwelijke bekeering werkt.

Zoo heeft God het gewild. Zijn onveranderlijke Souvereine wil en vrijmachtig welbehagen was eeuwiglijk over Zijn volk. Hierin ligt dan ook Zijn vurig verlangen opgesloten. Immers, komt die wil des Heeren *opuit* en wordt gedreven *door* Zijn liefde *voor* Zijn volk. Hij heeft die kinderen gewild, naast en door en met dien Zoon. Door dien wil wederbaarde Hij hen. Schoon zij niet wilden, en ook niet konden willen, heeft Hij gewild en gebaad. Vrijmachtig.

En Hij heeft dat gedaan met een zeer keurig doel.

Zij moeten zijn een zekere eerste vrucht der schepselen. Let er op, er staat niet dat zij dit zullen worden, *doch zijn*. Van al de schepselen welke de Heere gewild heeft, staat de mensch aan het hoofd. En de wedergeborene, door Hem gebaad is van al die schepselen en gansch de schepping een eersteling. Hier hebben we dus het beeld van wat de eerste garve was in Israel. Deze werd eerst den Heere gewijd. En nadat die eerste schoof voor het aangezicht des Heeren was verschenen kon nu gansch de oogst volgen. In dien, aan den Heere toegewijde eersteling, zat dan ook de gansche oogst in.

We merkten op, dat die schoof was eene aan God gewijd. Zoo ook is de eersteling der schepselen Gode gewijd.

In de tweede plaats, volgt hier dan ook de lof en dank uit voort. Als door het Woord kinderen der Waarheid gebaad worden die lichtende lichten zijn in de wereld.

Maar straks ook de volle oogst.

Nu nog het schepsel der ijdelheid onderworpen, zuchtende onder de verderfenis en uitziende naar de eindelijke openbaring der kinderen Gods. Maar straks dan ook het verlost worden van alles wat nu nog zucht. De eerstelingen zijn er alreeds. Zij zijn gebaad. In

hun levensopenbaring zijn de vruchten er van waar te nemen. En in den dag van Christus' komst zal aan het hoofd der schepping de gemeente staan en met de gemeente de schepping en schepselen op de nieuwe aarde en in den nieuwen hemel, door Hem Die ons heeft liefgehad ten einde toe, als God alles en in allen zal zijn.

W. V.

The Son Of Man Exalted

John 3:14.

Nicodemus came to Jesus at night.

Was he a disciple? Did he become a disciple later?

To our mind it does not matter whether or not he was a disciple the night he paid our Lord a visit. That after all is a secondary matter. The Scriptures do not present a biography of certain persons, not even of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We know very little about this learned man who came to ask a few questions. He had heard concerning Jesus, the Rabbi, and perhaps this new teacher may belong to our class of leaders. Who he was is briefly expressed in the words 'There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews'. Hence, we know very little concerning him. He was a ruler, one who was a master or teacher in Israel. The emphasis is placed on art *thou* a teacher, not ironical, but to mark Nicodemus' official relation to the people, and it gives additional force to the contrast in the words which follow.

We can deduce from the conversation that Nicodemus is rather naive when the fundamental question, the doctrine of regeneration is placed before him. The subject was, to be born again. Man must be born anew and must therefore be born from above of water and of the Spirit. And the teacher replies with two other questions. First of all, he wonders how it is possible to be born again? That is, how can someone be born from above and how is this birth to be realized? To him mighty questions. He frankly admits I do not know what it is all about. To Nicodemus they seem to be dark sayings, which no man could comprehend. He was not able to discuss these matters intelligently. And dark it was indeed. For, when a teacher is rebuked, because he does not understand, how will he be able to teach such important and most vital questions? And how beautiful over against the ignorance of this leader stands the answer of our Lord Jesus Christ, we speak—we know—we have seen, for every one that is born of the Spirit, the new birth imparts a new vision, being able to discern and to bear witness of these heavenly facts. Remarkable when one turns to Jesus to find out who Jesus is, returns with the knowledge, I may not know him, but He most assuredly knows me.

The Saviour instructs this teacher further and unveils to him the great mystery, when he answers: this is not possible by the flesh, because that which is born of the flesh is and always shall remain flesh. And flesh does not even as much as *see* the Kingdom of God, and never will be able to enter that Kingdom. But by water and the Spirit, these things of which I speak, are realized. The way of purification and that of sanctification, the cleansing and the washing away of the corruption of sin and of all evil, by the blood of the Redeemer and by his death, are necessary to realize the new birth, the birth from above and that is done only through the Spirit of the exalted Mediator. Then it shall come to pass. And by implication (as to the text) the exaltation is attained only by the way of the cross.

Was it not a rather heavy lesson? Was Nicodemus not to be excused? Could he know these things? We would say, Nicodemus, we understand that you do not understand these things, because as yet you live in the Old Dispensation. And we would be wrong, of course. But what about the Old Testament prophecy? He should have known. At least he should have known the fundamental principles, although it is possible that he did not understand them. And he did not know.

And because the Old Testament spoke of this fact, the Lord points this teacher to the well-known history of the brazen serpent, raised by Moses in the desert as the symbol of the exaltation of the Son of man, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. Or to put it slightly different, when I am raised, lifted up, symbolized in the desert by Moses, the rebirth out of water and the Spirit will most assuredly take place, and my own shall not perish, but have eternal life. That is the sum and substance of the instruction given at this late hour of the night.

The question is, what is this raising of Christ? As a rule the answer is given, the raising of Christ is nothing less than His crucifixion. And of course, we do not intend to exclude the cross. We know and confess the cross is of necessity being raised in the midst of and for the sake of God's people. We realize that the serpent lifted up in the wilderness became conspicuous as the raising of the curse from the midst of the people. It simply can not be denied. Nor do we deny the similarity of the brazen serpent raised on the pole and the Saviour who was raised on the bloody tree. They are identical although the one is the symbol and the other the reality of that symbol.

The reference here is to the crucifixion, but beyond that, to the glorification of Christ. In the Gospel of John we find this one characteristic throughout namely, the blending of the two ideas of the passion of Christ and the glory following His suffering. It is never different with John.

With this in mind we can safely say that with the exaltation is not merely meant the crucifixion. After

being nailed to the cross death and the grave were to follow and afterwards the glory.

But His death is the means whereby Christ attains to His Messianic glory. The word (lifted up) is used in this sense as we find it in Luke 1:52; James 4:10; I Peter 5:6. And the Lord also speaks of it in John 8:28: "Then said Jesus unto them, when ye lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father hath taught Me, I speak these things". So also we find the same idea expressed in John 12. The Greeks came to Jesus, Philip and Andrew told Jesus about it and the Lord answered—the hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified. However, this glorification shall be obtained by the way of the cross, 'for except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die; it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit'. Speaking of His death the Lord looks through the grave and speaks of the glory that was to follow. In the same chapter we read (verse 32): "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all (men) unto me". The meaning is clear. Our Lord does not mean, when I am crucified I will draw all men to my cross, but, I will, after I am exalted, when I have received the things of the heavenly Kingdom, draw all (my own) out of the sphere of their earthly existence into the eternal-heavenly sphere of my Kingdom.

Hence, the cross is not the lifting up, but the means to enter the state of His exaltation. That is also implied in the name Son of man. Born of the virgin Mary He became one with our race and took upon Himself our flesh and our blood. Sin excepted, He is one of and one with us. He stands in all kinds of relations to us. And in the likeness of sinful flesh, He placed Himself under the curse of the Law and accepted the eternal punishment that He may take away the curse from us. To that end the cross is necessary as the only way to that exaltation. And the exaltation is the entrance into the eternal and heavenly Kingdom to be King of that Kingdom. He received the authority, the power and the glory inseparably connected with His Kingdom.

The means to that end was the cross. "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up". We know the reason why the serpents appeared in the camp of Israel. It was the old story of Israel being dissatisfied with the Lord and His servant Moses. Israel complained "Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water, and our soul loatheth this light bread".

An outrageous complaint, for the manna had fallen day by day; and there is no water, but the rock that followed them quenched their thirst. And all of a sudden venomous serpents appeared in their midst with their poisonous stings. The serpents were the instruments to reveal God's wrath over his rebellious

Israel and their poisonous bites caused many to die in the camp. The Lord poured out His wrath upon His people and the fiery serpents embodied His curse upon Israel. God's hot displeasure is thus illustrated and felt.

The Lord commanded Moses to make a fiery serpent and set it upon a pole. And Moses made one of brass and put it upon a pole and it came to pass, if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.

This raising of the serpent by Moses, was the raising of the curse from the midst of Israel. Without this raising, the wrath of God would remain in the camp and no one would live. And in this raising, the serpent was cursed in that it was the curse for Israel and thus the curse was judged by God. True it is, the serpents were sent by the Lord and must be considered the curse of God in the midst of Israel, but the fiery serpent, the one set upon the pole by Moses and thus taken from the midst of Israel, was the embodiment of that curse, now taken from the midst of the people, no longer able to bite Israel. It was thus the cursing of the curse, which meant that Jehovah's wrath no longer rested upon His people. For we read "and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live" (Num. 21). Who in faith looked upon the serpent of brass, that is, whosoever believed that the curse was taken away was healed at that moment.

It is true, Moses was only instrumental in the raising of the serpent. The Mediator of the Old Testament could not bear that curse in his own body. But that is of minor importance. First of all, he was only a type of the better Mediator who was to come, and, secondly, he must of necessity be an imperfect Mediator that he may make room for our Lord Jesus Christ. It does not matter much as it was ordained that the Son of God was to take away the curse and the cause of the curse in time to come. And the reality has come.

We have the reality of the Old Testament type in our Mediator. Christ Jesus is raised and took the curse upon Himself. Moses and the serpent were two separate beings. In Christ Jesus, Moses and the serpent are one. Raised out of the camp of Israel He becomes a curse for us and through Him, the curse of the Law which was upon us is taken away. For in Jesus Christ sin and death receive their judgment. The power of sin is death, through His death on the cross that power is broken. God's wrath is placed on the Mediator, who bears that wrath on the cross and who by the way of the cross enters His glory.

Therefore, *the Son of man* must be lifted up, must be exalted and glorified. Notice how the Lord placed the emphasis on this particular name. Often He called Himself by that name, especially when He referred to His Messianic task. We find this name in Daniel 7:13, 14, where we read: "I saw in the night visions, and,

behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed". Of significance is the fact that in most places where we find the name mentioned, Scripture interprets it. And when we compare the one passage with the other the conclusion is always: this name, Son of man refers to Jesus as the Messiah. Not simply a son of man, for that would mean He was a man amongst men, one of us, one who is like us. No, but *the* Son of man and our Lord makes use of it particularly with a view to the authority of being the Messiah and He does that at the same time with a view to the close connection of His suffering. And in the capacity of Messiah He is the fulfillment of that long historic line of types. And as such He is the Prophet, the Priest and the King. Hence, speaking of Nicodemus, He now prophesies concerning Himself as the fulfillment of His own type. He is filled with the Word of God and speaks with authority concerning His own death. He is at the same time the priest, who brings the sacrifice and at this moment does not speak about a sacrifice, but the sacrificing of Himself, becoming a curse for us, and as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up. But as King the Messianic office calls for His exaltation. The cross and death are necessary to that end, that final goal, but without that end salvation is not possible. Therefore, in what follows is implied His exaltation. Cross, death and grave may do away with the curse, they cannot give life unless from the death He arose, ascended into heaven and sitting at the right hand of God the Father, He gives eternal life. Then and then alone men can be born again of water and of Spirit when that state of exaltation is reached.

W. V.

The Altar Of Incense

The instructions for the making of this altar is contained in Ex. 30:1-5, "And thou shalt make an altar to burn incense upon: of shittim wood thou shalt make it. A cubit shall be the length thereof, and a cubit the breadth thereof; four-square shall it be: and two cubits shall be the height thereof: the horns thereof shall be of the same. And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, the top thereof and the sides thereof round about, and the horns thereof; and thou shalt make into a crown of gold round about. And two golden rings shalt thou make to it under the crown of it, by the two corners thereof, upon the two sides of it shalt thou make it;

and they shall be for places for the staves to bear it withal. And thou shalt make the staves of shittim wood, and overlay them with gold”.

The altar of incense, so it appears from the above description, was a square-like box in height three feet and one and a half foot at the top each way. It was made of shittim wood and its top and sides were covered with a veneer of gold round about. About the rim of its top was an ornamental wreath (crown) of gold. Into each of its two sides close to the corner and just underneath the wreath for holding the staves with which the structure was carried. From each of the four corners of the top horns projected.

Though the detailed descriptions of this altar make no mention of it, there is no room to doubt that this altar was merely a stand for a vessel or censer of incense, which was placed upon it. To this view we are bound, it would seem, by John's vision of the offering of the prayers of all saints (Rev. 8). And an other angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. The plain implication of this report is that the incense with the prayers of the saints were placed upon the altar as contained in the golden censer of fire.

The incense in a state of consumption upon the altar was a symbol of prayer. This is the teaching of the above-cited scripture and of several other passages of Holy Writ as has already been shown in connection with the frankincense with which the flour and the cakes of the meat-offering were mingled. There is the petition of the psalmist, “Let my prayer be set before thee as incense. . . .” The seraphims of Isaiah's vision (Isa. 6) are reported as crying to one another, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory.” While this adoration is being uttered, the whole house fills with smoke, so we are told. This smoke can be nothing else than the smoke of incense, as there can be in the holy place no other thing of this description. That it accompanies the outcries of praise of the seraphims, betokens that of this praise it is the symbol. In the scene described in Luke 1:10, the assembly without offers prayer, while Zacharias offers incense within the sanctuary. The priestly service is the figure of what the worshippers do in spirit.

The Scriptural data that concerns the incense is contained in Ex. 30:34-38, “And the Lord said unto Moses, Take unto thee sweet spices, stacte, and onycha, and galbanum; these sweet spices with pure frankincense: of each there shall be a like weight: and thou shalt make it an incense, a perfume, the work of the perfumer, salted, pure and holy (so this text reads in the original): And thou shalt beat some of it fine, and put of it before the testimony in the tabernacle of the tent of meeting, where I will meet with thee: it shall be unto you most holy. And the incense which thou

shalt make, ye shall not make for yourselves with its proportions: it shall be unto thee holy unto Jehovah. Whosoever shall make any like unto that, to smell thereof, he shall be cut off from his people.”

From this passage we learn that the base of the holy incense was pure frankincense, a sweet-smelling, inflammable vegetable substance exuded by plants. All that is known with certainty of *stacte* (Heb. *nataph* meaning *a drop*) and *galbanum* is that each was a sweet-smelling gum which slowly flowed out from trees or shrubs. *Onycha* (Heb. *shechaleh*, *a shell*) consisted of a shell or cover of a species of muscle, found in the lakes of India and also in the Red Sea and along the whole coast of Arabia; which when burned emitted a sweet odour.

The holy incense was thus a composition of substances that yielded, there is every reason to believe, a most fragrant odour. And being, as it was, an emblem of prayer, it set forth God's believing people as plants and flowers in His house, yielding sweet incense, fragrant odour, unto Him. And the incense they yield is the true prayers that rise from the divine life in them,—prayers unto God in which He can and does take a perfect delight.

How numerous the voices that come to man, telling him that he must will to exist for God to cry out His praises. The very fragrance of the flowers which he cultivates in his garden and with which he adorns his person and decorates his home, tell him this. But the ear of the natural man is not attuned to these voices. He will possess God's flowers and delight his sense organs with their odour; he will set the flowers in their blooming before his eye as the emblem of the flowering of his own natural strength and beauty, but he, the godless one, wills to be no flower in God's house, yielding sweet incense unto Him. Therefore as the flower of the field he shall also pass away and perish forever. But the man whose delight is in the law of the Lord, shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither;

It is to be noticed, further, that the incense was salted and was thus holy and pure (symbolically). The above-cited passage from the book of Exodus contains a statement to this effect, “And thou shalt make it an incense. . . . salted, pure and holy”. As has already been shown, salt is the emblem of: 1) the believers in their corporate capacity; 2) a conscious and thus flowering spiritual life; 3) that spiritual wholeness of which the life of regeneration is the principle. Thus that the incense as well as all the other offerings was prepared with salt signifies that the only prayers that God can tolerate on His altar in His sanctuary are those which His people offer and of this class such only that spring from a living faith. God, being what He is, can delight in the pure and the holy only. “He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his

prayer shall be an abomination" (Prov. 28:9). More must be said. The truth set forth by the holy incense is that God can receive into His sanctuary only such prayers which are absolutely sinless, so that, even the prayers of God's people, in so far as they are carnal as a result of their being mixed with the issues of the flesh, are not upon His altar. God certainly can no more delight in what springs from the flesh of His people than He can take pleasure in the issues of life that proceed from the corrupt hearts of the godless. The holy place is closed to the former as well as to the latter, so that only so much of the prayers of believers succeed in winging their way into this place as rise from the divine life in the believers' soul. What is more, only in so far as the prayers of believers are pure can and does the Holy One hearken unto the voice of these prayers.

Let not that man—the man that wavereth and whose prayer therefore springs from unbelief—think that he shall receive anything from the Lord (James 1:17). From these observations it follows that man, the believers, must strive to offer the prayer that is pure, the holy incense, and none other. Such also is the Lord's explicit command—the command to His priests, "Thou shalt put of it, 'of it, that is, of the incense that is salted, holy and pure, and of none other' before the testimony in the tabernacle". Speaking of the altar of incense, the Lord said, "Ye shall offer no strange incense thereon" (Ex. 30:9). How the anger of the Lord is kindled when His servants do the contrary, is seen from the punishment that overtook Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron. Fire went out from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord. These sons had offered strange fire,—fire which they had brought in contact with strange incense. Their sin was so great in the sight of the Lord, that Moses had to caution Aaron and his two sons that remained to him against uncovering their heads and rending their clothes to give expression to the grief and dismay that the death of the offenders had occasioned them. Such an expression of grief would have betokened dissatisfaction on their part with the punishment that the Lord had measured out to the offending relatives.

If God can delight in holy incense only, in the prayer that is pure, it is well that we have before our mind what a pure prayer is, namely, one that is offered by a praying man—the new man or creature—who is sinless and who therefore in his praying has his affections set solely upon God, on that which is of God, namely, God's promises, purposes, counsels, God's work in Christ, the things above, the heavenly. The pure prayer is one offered by a praying man who desires nothing either in heaven or on earth beside God, who subordinates every legitimate desire to the will of God, who seeks not the earthly in his prayer but the heavenly through the earthly and whose every thought is that

God be God. Now of such a prayer the believer, who still lies in the midst of death, is not capable except in principle. Yet the prayer that he makes is a delight to the thrice holy God. But it is this only in so far as it is the embodiment of the longings, of the praise and adoration of the new man. As the embodiment of the vile strivings of the flesh, also the prayer of the believer is strange fire. That the believer is not on this account consumed is because, being in Christ, he has forgiveness of all his sins, thus also of the sins that he commits when, directing his gaze toward God's sanctuary, he lifts up his voice in prayer.

The holy incense then signified the perfect prayer. It thus, as did the sacrifices in general, betokened the ideal to which the believers will by the mercies of God eventually be made to attain in their fellowship with God.

The remaining precepts that concern the incense are as rich in instruction on the subject of prayer as the ones that have thus far been examined. Moses was told to put the altar of incense "before the vail that is by the ark of the testimony, before the mercy-seat that is over the testimony" (Ex. 30:6). Now the cover of the ark was God's throne. Upon this cover and between the cherubims hovered the cloud,—the symbol of God's presence. Close by the ark hung the vail that formed the entrance to the holiest place. According to the Scripture just cited, it was by the vail and on its other side that the altar of incense stood. Thus the burning of the holy incense by the priest took place in God's very presence right before His face. Here God meets with His people (Ex. 30:6). What now has all this to say to us? The following: when believing people truly pray, they draw near unto God, lift up their hearts to Him and stand in the spirit not without but within His sanctuary (which is now above) in His presence before His very countenance. Here in the holy place before His throne they offer the holy incense. This is a prerogative that now belongs to all the believers. All now have right to enter the holiest. For there is to them a new and living way—the way of a living faith in the justifying and cleansing power of Christ's blood—which Christ hath consecrated for them through His suffering and death. And they have a high priest over the house of God (Heb. 10). And let them consider that, whereas God can receive into His sanctuary the pure and the just only, and whereas they, the believers, by themselves are vile, they *must go* by this way—the way that leadeth through the vail which is His flesh. And by this way they go, when they draw near (Heb. 10) *with a true heart*, that is, with a heart that does not pretend to be seeking but that is actually seeking after God, thus with a heart whose affections are truly set solely upon God and His things, the things heavenly. By this way they go when they draw near *in full assurance of faith*, that is, with a confidence toward God which is the portion of him who walks in

the way of God's commands and thus walks with God. By this way they go, finally, when they draw near *with a heart cleansed from an evil conscience*, that is, with a heart that does not accuse and denounce its owner on account of his standing in the way of sinners but with a heart in which resounds the witness of Christ's Spirit that he is God's son and is thus washed in Christ's blood from all his sins. And going by this way, believers do consciously appear before God's face sinless and just in Christ; for this way leadeth through the vail, *which is His flesh*—that flesh in which He expiated their sins and merited for them eternal life. Going by this way they appear before God in His holy temple and offer unto Him holy incense as His priests in Christ.

That such are indeed the realities symbolized by the holy incense and by the position of the altar of incense in the holy place, is certain from all what Ho'y Writ has to say to us on the subject of prayer. In showing this we may begin with attending to the petitions of the psalmist, "Rejoice the soul of thy servant: for unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul. . . . *I will lift up my eyes unto the hills*, from whence cometh my help. . . . Unto thee do I lift up my eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens. . . . Cause me to hear thy loving kindness in the morning; for in thee do I trust: cause me to know thy way wherein I should walk; *for I lift up my soul unto thee*. . . . Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out *your heart before him*: God is a refuge for us. . . . Praise the Lord. *Praise God in his sanctuary*" (Ps. 86:4; 121:1; 123:1; 148:8).

Such a man, who by the mercies of God lifts up his soul unto God is in God's sanctuary as was Asaph when he prayed, "Who have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee" (Ps. 73). In the sanctuary are to be seen the Lord's beauties. Here one is near God. Here therefore all desires are concentrated on God only. How can a man be near God and behold with an eye of love His beauties and desire anything beside Him? But to be capable of desiring Him only, one must be the possessor of the life-giving and sanctifying Spirit — the Spirit through which Christ dwells in the hearts of His people and conforms them according to His image that, as so conformed, their affections may be set solely upon the things above and thus upon God, upon His name that must be hallowed, upon His kingdom that comes, and upon His will that is being done. Hence it was exclusively with reference to this Spirit and with reference to nothing else that Christ, discoursing on the efficacy of prayer, said to His disciples, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. . . . If ye (then), being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the

Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?" (Luke 11:9-13). And the Spirit gives good things—all the things that form that fulness which dwells in Christ. And these *good things*, said Christ to His followers on another occasion, "shall your Father which is heaven give. . . . to them that ask Him" (Matt. 7:11). He cannot withhold from the asking and seeking ones *these things*; for they constitute a *good* which He promises them,—a *good* that is theirs by virtue of their being His heirs and co-heirs with Christ.

So, then, the holy incense in a state of consumption upon the altar of the world's sanctuary is the emblem of the glorified company of redeemed men as they will stand before God's face in the Holiest everlastingly crying out His praises. It is the emblem, is this incense, of the saints on earth, dwelling in the spirit with God, seated at a table that He prepares for them in the presence of their enemies, but at once fighting, also through their seeking in prayer the things which are of the Spirit, the good fight of faith, confessing before men, through this same seeking, that they are not of this world, but, on the contrary, are the servants and the redeemed children of the God and Father of Christ and thus citizens of God's city,—the city with foundations and whose Maker and Builder is God. And so seeking and asking, they walk worthily of the calling wherewith they are called, champion, as His servants, God's cause in the midst of this world and thus show that by His grace the interests of His kingdom are also theirs.

True prayer is not narrow. It is as wide in its scope as the universe is immense. Being consecrated on God, on the heavenly, it concerns all things; and this of necessity as all things are Christ and must be made to work together for good to those who love Christ's God. And how mighty the achievements of the man who has the power to pray this true prayer. All the achievements of Christ, with whom this man is identified by faith, are his. Such a man reigns with Christ in the midst of the common enemy. As he prays according to God's will and for its realization, every event in time however small or great is made to come to pass in answer to his prayer. It is in answer to his prayer that the kingdom comes. In answer to his prayer, the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with a fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up, the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness shall, together with the church, appear with Christ in glory. What a glorious and at once terrible action true prayer is. How can it be otherwise if God upon whom true prayer is centered is terrible.

Compare now with this true prayer the prayer of that man who when he prays is shut up in that little world of his own carnal and selfish desires. What a prayer! How short-sighted, altogether ineffectual, and

God-displeasing such a prayer is! It is not on God's altar in the Holy place. It is as bound to this earth as are the earthly things upon which it is centered. The effectual prayer is the prayer of the righteous.

From these observations it is plain that the man destitute of the life of regeneration cannot pray. Such a man has no conception of his real need and is thus not in the need of God. He will and dare not draw near unto God as he lacks confidence toward God.

True prayer is the fruitage of the suffering and death of Christ. This, too, is the message that comes to us through the action with the holy incense. When the high priest appeared before the Lord in the holiest, he did so with his hands full of sweet incense, which he put in a censer full of burning coals of fire from off the altar of burnt-offering before the Lord (Lev. 16:12). Thus the incense was put upon fire that came from the altar upon which was lying in a state of consumption, the carcass of an animal that through its death had atoned for the sins of the offenders by which it was presented.

Finally, if the holy incense in a state of burning, symbolized the prayers of the believers, it also and in the first instance pre-figured the praying Christ. This is especially evident from the circumstance that if the high priest would live and not die while he performed the service in the holiest on the great day of atonement, he had to stand in Jehovah's presence with the smoke that rose from his burning incense covering the mercy seat. That with the savour of the incense in His holy nostrils, the Lord spared the life of the officiating priest, shows that this incense was charged, so to say, with the atoning virtue of the burnt-sacrifice and thus pre-figured with this sacrifice the Saviour also in His work of interceding for His people. Other evidence of this is that on the great day of atonement the blood of the burnt-sacrifice was also put upon the horns of the altar of incense. This action with the blood brought the burnt-offering in closest connection with the incense and this certainly with a view to suggesting that the incense derived its efficacy from the atoning virtue of the blood.

So did the holy incense then signify the prayers of Christ which He prayed while atoning the sins of His people and which He now prays in the holy place above. An examination of as many of Christ's prayers as are contained in the gospels tell us that the description of the true prayer, given above, is correct. Christ, and how could it be otherwise, prayed the true prayer, the prayer that springs from pure love and is centered wholly on God and the heavenly. The incense which He placed and as the exalted and glorified priest everlastingly places on God's altar is pure. "Our Father. . . hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done" *'Thy will Father, and not ours'*. "Give us this day our daily bread" that is, give us not poverty, not riches, but give us day by day bread as much as is

needful for us". Forgive us our sins. . . . Deliver us from evil. . . ." "Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son may also glorify Thee: As thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given Him. . . . I have glorified thee on the earth: . . . And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self. . . . I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: . . . I pray for them. . . . for they are thine. . . . Holy Father keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are one. . . . I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. . . . Sanctify them through thy truth. . . . Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovest me before the foundation of the world" (John 17).
G. M. O.

The Table Of Shewbread

To the furniture of the Holy place belonged also the table of shewbread, the instructions for the making of which is contained in Ex. 25:23-30. "Thou shalt also make a table of shittim (Heb. acacia) wood: two cubits shall be the length thereof, and a cubit the breadth thereof, and a cubit and a half the height thereof. And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, and make thereto a crown (or wreath) of gold round about. And thou shalt make unto it a boarder of a hand breadth round about, and thou shalt make a golden crown (or wreath) to the boarder thereof round about. And thou shalt make for it four rings of gold, and put the rings in (on) the four corners that are on (that belong to) the four feet of (for) the staves to bear the table. And thou shalt make the staves of shittim (acacia) wood, and overlay them with gold, that the table may be borne with them. And thou shalt make the dishes thereof, and the spoons thereof, and the covers thereof, and the bowls thereof, to cover (pour out) withal: of pure gold thou shalt make them. And thou shalt set upon the table of shewbread."

It is rather difficult to convey by the written or spoken word, a clear picture or conception of this piece of sacred furniture. Let us nevertheless make the attempt. This table was in length three, in breadth one and a half, and in height two and a fourth feet. (A cubit measures eighteen inches). Its top or slab rested upon a border of a hand breadth in depth. To the corners of this border were affixed four feet or legs. There were two ornamental wreaths of gold to this table, one round the rim of the slab and the other round the border underneath. On the four corners of

the four legs and close by the border four rings were fastened to hold the staves or poles with which the table was carried. The four vessels—the dishes, the spoons, the covers, and the bowls—were of pure gold and were made to stand upon the table (cf. chap. 37:16).

What manner of articles were these vessels? Neither the names which they bear in the Hebrew text nor the use to which they were put in the sanctuary tell us anything definite respecting their peculiar form or design. The first (*kearoth*) were, as their name indicates, some sort of dishes; the second (*kaphoth* from *kaph* the hollow of the hand in our version erroneously rendered *spoons*) some kind of hollow bowls. The third (*keshaoth* from *kashah* to bring into round form and erroneously rendered *covers*) were likewise some kind of cups and bowls; and so, too, the fourth (*menakioth* from *nakah* to pour out).

These articles belonged to the table and were for the three elements—bread, frankincense, and wine—of which the offering under consideration was comprised. But to what use the one sort in distinction from the other was put is not certain. In all likelihood the first were for carrying the bread to and fro from the table on which also it stood, and, if so, must have been some kind of large platters. The second were probably for the frankincense. Of the last two sorts the first might have been the bowls from which the wine was poured out as a drink offering and the second pitchers in which the wine stood on the table. That we know nothing more definite about these articles is of little moment. But enough is known to allow us to say that two of the four sorts were not comprised of spoons and covers. The offering under consideration called for no such articles but only for cups, bowls and platters. Such therefore, were the objects called in our version *covers* and *spoons*.

The instructions for the preparation of the shewbread are contained in Lev. 24:5-9, "And thou shalt take fine flour, and bake twelve cakes thereof: two tenth deals shall be in one cake. And thou shalt set them in two rows, six in a row, upon the pure table before the Lord. And thou shalt put pure frankincense upon each row, that it may be on the bread for a memorial, even an offering made by fire unto the Lord. Every Sabbath ye shall set it in order before the Lord continually, being taken from the children of Israel by an everlasting covenant. And it shall be Aarons and his sons; and they shall eat it in the holy place: for it is most holy unto him of the offering of the Lord made by fire for a perpetual statute."

From these instructions it appears that the bread consisted of twelve cakes. Were these cakes *spread out* in two rows or placed one upon the other in two little piles or stacks? The latter belief is not opposed to the notice "And thou shalt set them in two rows, six on the row" as the Hebrew word rendered in our version *row*

has also the meaning of *pile*. It is a belief that best coincides with the requirement that frankincense be put upon each row. If each of these rows were formed of six cakes *spread out* upon the table, then *each* cake must have had a censer of frankincense upon it. If this is too unlikely then, in case the cakes were spread out, ten of the twelve were without frankincense. But if this, too, is just as unlikely, there is but one possibility remaining, namely, that the cakes were so arranged as to form two piles, each supporting a censer of frankincense. This arrangement agrees with the symbolical design of the cakes, which was to set forth the twelve tribes of Israel—the twelve bore respect to the twelve tribes—as a oneness, as the one spiritual bread of Jehovah. The spreading out of the cakes would have obscured this truth—the truth that believers being many are one bread (I Cor. 10:17).

The above instructions also tell us in what precise character this bread was laid upon the table. The statement occurs, "for it is most holy unto him (Aaron) of the offerings of the Lord made by fire. . . ." This bread was an offering and the "pure table" upon which it was set partook therefore of the character of an altar. The nature of this offering can be perceived only in the light of the relation that Israel sustained to God, and He again to Israel. Israel was a people that had been delivered by Jehovah from the bondage of Egypt. The land of Canaan was Jehovah's rest which He had prepared for and entered with His people. Of this land therefore He, as Israel's Redeemer-God, was supreme Lord. This the people had also to acknowledge which they did through their separating unto Him, in obedience to His command, the tithes and firstfruits of all their earthly gain. Ten being the number of completion, these tithes were representative of the entire increase of the soil, so that through their offering these tithes and firstfruits, the offerers declared that all was held in fief of Him and that of all He remained the absolute owner. And that these offerings were placed by the officiating priest before Jehovah's altar, that it was here that these gifts were partaken of, signified that Israel's entire material substance had to be regarded as a gift that came from the altar, thus as a benefit that accrued from the suffering and death of an innocent substitute.

However it was not enough that the people of Israel declare through their offering the tithes and the firstfruits that Jehovah was sovereign Lord of all their material gain; there also had to be to them an instrument for the expression of the truth that they themselves belonged to Him—Him their faithful Saviour—that they were His people holy and pure in Christ, and as such His everlasting delight. Now such an instrument they possessed in all those sacrifices to which applied the statement, "And Jehovah smelled a sweet savour." This, let it be said in passing, is the one statement contained in the books of the law which tells

us that the offerings which were placed upon Jehovah's table or altar—the offerings by blood, the meat-offering, the holy incense and the shewbread—were the emblems of heavenly things. For, as has already been pointed out, that savour so agreeable to God's holy nostrils was in the final instance the spiritual fragrance that arose from the good fruit which His believing people bore.

As to the shewbread, it had respect to the same heavenly realities to which the other sacrifices of its kind pointed. It set forth the same fundamental truths. And yet it had its own peculiar message as did each of the others. Each in distinction from the rest symbolized and accentuated some particular phase of the work of Christ and of the blessed state of the redeemed. The one offering certainly was not a mere duplication of the other. As to the shewbread, what each of the provisions of this offering symbolized has already been shown in connection with the meat-offering and the holy incense. The frankincense as consecrated to sacred use was in its burning state a symbol of the prayers of believing people. The bread symbolized Christ and His body, the Church. Christ said of Himself that He is bread—the bread of God which came down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world (John 6:33). And as to the believers, they being many are one bread, and one body. . . . (I Cor. 10:17). The wine in Scripture appears as the emblem of Christ's blood and of all the blessings of the covenant of God of which His blood *as shed* was and is the meritorial source. Christ is the true wine as well as He is the true bread and the living water. And the believers, drinking, as they do, His blood, are likewise wine in Him. Wine, says the psalmist maketh the heart glad. It is thus the fitting figure of the spiritual joy of that man whose portion is Christ.

So then, also the twelve cakes (the shewbread) with its wine and frankincense was an offering setting forth the truth that the ideal believer is a new creature in Christ, holy, harmless and undefiled, a creature praising and adoring God (upon each row of the shewbread frankincense was set) and joying in God's salvation (the shewbread was presented in connection with a portion of wine), and thus a man in whom God everlastingly delights.

But as this was the truth set forth also by the meat-offering and by all the sacrifices by blood, we have still to inquire after the mark of distinction of the offering of the shewbread. How did this offering differ from the others? What was there about this offering that saved it from being a mere duplication of the meat-offering? What peculiar phase of the truth about the heavenly did it, in distinction from the others, accentuate?

The answer to these questions is contained in the name which the offering bore. Now the name *shewbread*, though not exactly a misnomer, a name wrongly

applied, does not nevertheless adequately and fully express what was peculiar to this offering. As can be expected therefore it is not the name contained in the Hebrew text. The name found in this text is "bread of faces or presence". Yet typologists have been delineating on this offering in a way that indicates that the name *shewbread* was regarded by them as expressive of the idea peculiar to it. So Fairbairn, "These cakes, as a whole, were called '*shewbread*' literally 'bread of faces or presence.' The meaning of the expression may, without difficulty, be gathered from Ex. 25:30, where the Lord Himself names it 'shewbread before me always'; (also this scripture reads in the original, "And thou shalt set upon the table bread of faces or presence before my face or presence continually". G.M.O.) it was to be continually in His presence, or exhibited before His face, and was hence appropriately designated, 'shewbread', or bread of presence."

"It has been thought (so the writer continues) that something more must have been intended by the peculiar designation 'bread of presence' than we have mentioned, since if this were all, the altar of incense and the golden candlestick might, with equal propriety, have been called the altar and candlestick of presence—which, however, they never are. . . . But a special reason can easily be discovered for the peculiar appropriation of this epithet to the bread, viz., to prevent the Israelites from supposing,—what they might otherwise, perhaps, in their carnality, have done,—that the bread was, like bread in general, simply for eating; to instruct them, on the contrary, that it was rather for being seen and looked on with complacency by the holy and ever watchful eye of God. . . . As connected with the table, its design was served by being exhibited and seen, for the well-pleased satisfaction and favorable regard of a righteous God; so that it is not possible to conceive a fitter designation than the one given to it, of shewbread or bread of presence" (The Typology of Scripture, Vol. II, p. 319).

From this excerpt it appears that Fairbairn did take cognizance of the name that this offering has in the original. He also repeatedly calls it by this name. Yet his reasonings plainly indicate that in his contemplation of this offering he consistently proceeded from the idea expressed by the name *shewbread*. The design of this bread, he avers, was being served by its being exhibited and seen for the favorable regard of the righteous God. And the *special* reason for the peculiar appropriation of this name to the bread was to prevent the Israelites from supposing that it was for being eaten and thus to instruct them that it was for being seen and looked on by God. Now as a matter of fact this bread was for being seen and not for being eaten. But this does not warrant calling the twelve cakes *shewbread* if the Scripture calls them "bread of presence"; nor does it allow imposing upon the name

"bread of presence" the meaning of such words as *shewing* and *exhibiting*. If these words were expressive of the idea peculiar to the offering under consideration, the Holy Spirit would have given to it some such name. Fact is that, contrary to Fairbairn's contention, also the golden candlestick and the holy incense were for being seen.

Let us then in the attempt to set forth this offering in its right light, proceed in our contemplation from the name "bread of presence". Why then were the twelve cakes called by this name? The simple and obvious reason is that they were especially prepared to be in God's presence and actually were continually in His presence. The table was never without this bread; on the return of every Sabbath morning the old materials were withdrawn and a new supply provided. Herewith has been brought forward that which was peculiar to the twelve cakes. They were continually *before Jehovah's face in His immediate presence*. However, as the altar of burnt-offering that stood in the outer court of the sanctuary was, as well as the mercy seat in the holiest, the place of meeting between Jehovah and His people, it must also be said of the offerings placed upon this altar—of the carcasses and the blood of the sin-trespass-burnt-offering and of the provisions of the meat-offering—that they were before Jehovah's face. Why then were the twelve cakes in distinction from all these other provisions given the name of "bread of presence"? The obvious reason is that of all these provisions the twelve cakes only were in God's immediate presence. It is in the light of this observation that we can understand the peculiar design of the twelve cakes. This design was *in part* to accentuate the truth, that the blessed prerogative of the believers, of the church, is to dwell continually in God's very presence before His countenance.

Now this was also in part the design of the holy incense, and even of all the provisions on the altar of burnt-offering. All the sacrifices were *essentially* one, necessarily so, as the truth is one. Between them all there existed a near relationship. We need but call attention to the following. Not only upon the altar of incense but also upon each of the two piles of shewbread rested a censer of burning incense symbolical of the prayers of God's people. And the fire in the censers was taken from the altar of burnt-offering.

But even the observations thus far made do not set forth the peculiar significance of the "bread of presence" in all its fulness. To understand this significance regard must be had firstly to the measures that were adopted to impress upon the worshippers that this bread was holy. It was taken from the children of Israel by an everlasting covenant. It belonged to Aaron and his sons only to be eaten by them alone after its removal from the "pure table". They had to eat it in the Holy place. The worshippers were told the reason: "It is most holy unto him (Aaron) of the offerings

of the Lord made by fire. . . ." From the circumstance that through the adoption of these measures this bread was made to stand out in the minds of the people as a thing most holy, it follows that its design was also to lead into the truth that only the pure and the holy can dwell in God's presence.

The question still remains whether the name "bread of presence" is not expressive of something more than has thus far been mentioned. It is indeed.

(To be continued)

G. M. O.

NOTICE, CURATORIUM.

Curatorium meets, D. V. Wednesday, May 31, at 3:30 o'clock in the Fuller Ave., building.

Examination Schedule:

Wednesday

7:30-8:30.....	Church Polity
8:30-9:30.....	O. T. History

Thursday

8:30-9:30.....	History of Dogma
9:45-10:30.....	Introduction
10:30-11:15.....	Theology
11:15-12:00.....	Anthropology
1:30-2:15.....	Christology
2:15-3:00.....	Soteriology
3:15-4:00.....	Ecclesiology
4:00-4:45.....	Eschatology

Friday

9:00-10:30.....	Isagogics and O. T. History
10:30-11:30.....	O. T. Exegesis
1:00-2:00.....	N. T. History
2:00-3:00.....	Homiletics

Monday

2:00-3:00.....	Typology
3:00-4:00.....	Church History

Tuesday P. M.

Sermons and examination of sketches

Commencement exercises, D. V. will be held Wednesday evening, June 7, at 7:30 o'clock in the Roosevelt Park church building. The Rector, Rev. H. Hoeksema, will give the graduation address and a few musical numbers will be rendered by the Roosevelt Park congregation.

Rev. M. Gritters,
Sec'y, Curatorium.