

THE STANDARD *Bearer* A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

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MEDITATION

Restoring Mercy

So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. . . .
John 21:15-17.

Lovest thou me?

Thou, Simon, son of Jonas?

Ah, yes, that was really the question that touched the heart of the matter that now had to be settled between the disciple and his Master, and that, too, publicly, in the presence of other of the apostles.

The question must be asked and answered, three times, with growing emphasis: lovest thou me?

Oh, yes, this implied a reminder of the threefold denial on the part of Peter, in that awfullest of all nights, when the Saviour had been betrayed into the hands of sinners, and when the disciple had cursed himself and sworn that he had no part with Jesus of Nazareth! It was a painful moment for the apostle there on the shores of the sea of Tiberias, when Jesus inquired again and again: lovest thou me?

But was there another way?

Is there ever another way to be restored unto favor with God, and unto confidence with the brethren, than that of being reminded of one's sin and of heartfelt confession in true repentance? Must not the sinner, who has shown in very deed by his unfaithfulness and apostacy that he does not love the Lord, have an opportunity openly to repudiate that sin and to confess before all: Lord, thou knowest that I love thee? With sinful sentimentality we feel sometimes, as if it were kinder to let the matter rest: why enumerate one's sins and cruelly remind him of his shame, especially in public? The Lord, Who is motivated neither by a cruel desire needlessly to humiliate, nor by morbid sentimentality, but by truest and purest love, evidently

deems it necessary to perform the painful operation of reviewing the sinful past of his disciple, and of exposing the real nature of the sin that had been committed.

Lovest thou me? Thou, Simon, son of Jonas?

Is there not, by this simple question, vividly recalled before the apostle's mind, as well as before the minds of those present, the threefold denial and all that had been connected with it? There had been times when Peter had boasted, confident of his own strength rather than trusting in the grace of his Lord. Oh, how he loved the Lord! He would lay down his life for the Master! And not knowing the darkness of the hour they were about to enter, he had continued to boast, not heeding the warning words of Jesus. The Lord had warned him and them all, that Satan desired to sift them as wheat, that He had prayed for Peter that his faith might not utterly fail; He had foretold His self-reliant disciple that he would deny Him thrice. But Peter had not heeded his master's words. He was ready to go with Him into prison and into death; and though all should be offended, he never would! . . .

And from that dizzy height of his self-confidence he had fallen into the dark depth of shame where he lay uttering deprecations upon himself to convince the enemies of Christ that he knew Him not!

Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? . . .

Intentionally the Lord here calls the disciple by his natural name. He was Simon, the son of Jonas. As such he was born. That name denoted his natural existence and origin. He was Simon before the Lord called him Peter, the Rock. Peter he was, not by nature, not of himself, but only by virtue of the Lord's calling. Only through grace could he be the rock in relation to the confession he had once made: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Only as Peter, and therefore, by grace, could he be faithful to that confession regardless of the fury of the enemies. By nature he was Simon, the son of Jonas, "flesh and blood"! And as Simon he would say: "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee." As Simon he would rather curse himself than be known as one of

Jesus' disciples. . . .

Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?

O, yes, that question touched the root of the matter. The sin Peter had committed concerned his love for the Master. The Lord might have asked him to review the matter, to tell there, in that early morning on the shore of the sea of Tiberias, once more just what had happened, what he had done, and how he had come to commit so great an offense. But that was not important. It was a matter of history. And history. . . .who can undo it? No, but that which had been done concerned the love-relation. Of that love of his to the Lord Simon had been extremely certain. Loudly he had boasted of it. And that love had been put to the test, and. . . .it had failed! Under the stress of temptation the disciple had utterly broken down, and denied that he loved the Lord! That love-relation must be restored. The denial of that love must be retracted and the positive confession, not now by Simon, but by Peter, not in the vain confidence of the flesh, but in the strength of grace, must take its place: I love Thee, Lord, Thou knowest!

There was reason for the question: lovest thou me?

Yea, Lord, *thou knowest!*

Yes, but lovest thou me? Three times the question is asked, and by each of these three questions the Lord, evidently, reflects back upon the threefold denial of Peter. And even as each denial had become more positive and vehement, so each question by the Lord is more pressing and more significant than the preceding. Lovest thou me *more than these*? Such is the first question with reference, not to the disciples fishing utensils and his former occupation, as some would have it, but to the rest of the disciples: Lovest thou me more than these love me? Had not the apostle boasted that, though all were offended, he would never be? Well, then, let him now say it: lovest thou me more than these?

Lord, thou knowest!

But the second question is much more urgent: lovest thou me? The first question had been relative. It had not questioned Peter's love, but merely had inquired about the comparative greatness and strength of that love. But much more serious in its implication is the second question, no longer involving a comparison, but absolute in its meaning: "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Thou darest not repeat that thou lovest me more than these. But lovest thou me at all?

Lord, thou knowest!

Yes, but, Simon, lovest thou me even a little? Is there even a little affection in thy heart toward me? Such is the real meaning of the third question. This delicate shade of meaning is lost in our English translation entirely. But that it is intentional the original leaves no doubt. In the Greek there are two different words for love, the one weaker than the other. Though

these two words are by no means correctly rendered by our English "love" and "like", we will use them here to bring out the rich meaning of the original. In the first two questions the Lord had employed the stronger word for love, while Peter had replied by using the weaker word, not daring to employ the stronger. But in the third question the Lord takes over the weaker word Peter had used, as if He now meant to ask: is that even true? And so we may render the conversation thus: "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I like (or feel love for) thee! Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I like thee! Simon, son of Jonas, likest thou me? Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I like thee!"

Thus Simon is led back over his way of sin, step by step, his self-confidence, his boast, his sin.

And his denial is exposed to him in its deepest nature: a violation of the love-relation.

But also a threefold opportunity is offered him here to appeal, no longer to his own faithfulness, but to the knowledge of Christ Himself that he loves him, even though his denial may testify against him.

Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?

Yea, Lord, thou knowest!

Thou knowest that I love thee!

Implied in these words of Peter there is a most humble confession, and a sincere longing to be restored to the favor of the Lord.

We may surmise that personal forgiveness had been received upon a private confession by Peter before the Lord a few weeks before. Had not the miserable disciple been especially privileged by that message which the risen Lord had left with the angel in the grave: "Tell my disciples, *and Peter*"? And had not the Lord appeared to Simon on that glorious first day of the week? Can it be possible, then, that Peter on the occasion of that meeting had not unburdened his deeply troubled soul, confessed his sin, and received the blessing of forgiveness? And had he not informed the rest of the apostles about it all, so that he could again freely move about in their company?

Yet, the apostle must be publicly, that is, in the presence of the other apostles, be restored to his office. And this could not be accomplished except in the way of a public confession before them.

Hence, the repeated: "lovest thou me?"

And although there is a very clear reference here to the threefold denial, Peter does not demur, nor does he look for excuses or mitigating circumstances to cover up his sin. How often the sincerity of a confession is made subject to doubt, because the guilty party is loath to confess wholeheartedly! How often a confession is marred by an appeal by the guilty person to circumstances that somewhat explain, that

would almost seem to justify his sin! How easily Peter might have done this very thing! He might have mentioned the fact that he was weary and exhausted with grief and disappointment that night when he denied the Lord, that it was an awful night, that the enemy took him by surprise. But he does nothing of the kind. Without protest, without demur, he permits himself to be conducted once more along the whole way of his grievous sin by the repeated question of Jesus: "lovest thou me?"

Then, too, all boasting is gone!

And what is more a mark of the genuineness of repentance than that the penitent refrains from further boasting, assumes the attitude of true humility?

The disciple's humility is revealed in the fact that throughout he refrains from employing the stronger word for love, though the Saviour uses it twice, thus suggesting that Peter take it over. But the latter never once takes that stronger word upon his lips, the word that denotes love as it is a matter of the will, rather than of the feeling. He prefers the weaker word. And so he confesses: "Lord, in the light of recent experience I have no right at present to profess that I love thee with a firm love; I dare not say that I love Thee with a love that will never be offended. Nevertheless, I can honestly confess that I even now feel that I love Thee!"

All boasting is gone!

Nor is there a trace left of that bold self-reliance that made him run into the enemy's trap in spite of the repeated warnings of the Lord.

He does not even directly say: "Yea, Lord, I love Thee!"

On the contrary, he rather appeals to the Saviour's knowledge of his love to Him than to his own assurance of that love: "Thou knowest that I love thee; thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee."

His recent experience might be considered abundant proof to the contrary. It was sufficient even to cast doubt into the heart and mind of the apostle himself, as to whether he really loved Jesus.

But he appeals to Christ's knowledge of Him!

Does He not know all things? Does He not know the disciple's heart?

O, the blessed comfort! In spite of all the appearances to the contrary Christ knows!

Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love Thee!

Merciful restoration!

For the apostle is, indeed, fully restored to his office, and that, too, with unconditional and unlimited trust!

Christ's flock, those for whom He shed His life-blood, whom He came to save and out of whom He may lose none, are entrusted to the shepherd's care of Peter!

No, indeed, they are not entrusted to his care alone in distinction from the other apostles. Peter is not appointed chief bishop over the entire flock on this occasion. Also the other apostles are shepherds of the sheep under Christ. Not one apostle, but all of them, feed the entire New Testament Church. But Peter seemed to have forfeited the right to function in that important and exalted office. How could the sheep of Jesus' flock be entrusted to one, who would deny the chief Shepherd in the hour of personal danger? And therefore, it was necessary that Peter be restored to his office as an apostle, and that, too, before the rest of the apostles.

And completely restored is he!

Over the flock of Jesus he is appointed a shepherd!

That flock of the chief Shepherd is here mentioned from a threefold viewpoint, perhaps, according to the original: lambs, sheep, little sheep. It is at least possible thus to read the original. In answer to the first avowal of Peter's love to the Lord the Saviour says: "Feed my lambs"; the second time he commissions the apostle: "Shepherdize my sheep"; the third time he enjoins him: "Feed my little sheep." A distinction that does not refer to age merely, but has respect rather to the spiritual strength and development of the individual sheep of Jesus' flock. And the trust is twofold: he must feed them, and he must watch over them, have the oversight over them, shepherdize them.

Yes, all the sheep of the Great Shepherd must be watched. There are false shepherds, and ravening wolves that are bent upon the destruction of the sheep. And the sheep themselves are inclined to be wayward and to wander away from the flock. Watch, therefore, over my sheep!

But there are the lambs that need special care, and are in need of special nourishment; and the young sheep that must also be fed according to their special needs. Feed, then, my lambs; and be not forgetful of my little sheep!

Precious charge!

How necessary for a shepherd of that flock of Christ, that he be motivated by the love of the chief Shepherd! To function as an apostle, appointed over the entire New Testament Church, or as a minister of the Word, who is to feed the flock and watch over the sheep according to the example of the apostles and by their Word, or to function in any capacity as office-bearer in the Church of Christ,—how is it possible, unless we love them? And how can we love them, unless we love Him Who loved His own unto death? Hence, it was quite necessary to repeat the question: "lovest thou me?"

And how complete is Jesus' forgiveness!

Not: *forgiven but not restored!* But *forgiven and completely restored!*

Adorable mercy!

H. H.

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EDITORIALS

Synode Om De Twee Jaar?

In het rapport van Classis West, las ik, dat aldaar instructies ter tafel waren van de kerkeraden van Hull en Edgerton, om de synode voor te stellen voortaan elke twee jaar inplaats van elk jaar synodaal te vergaderen. De classis besloot om zoodanige instructie naar de synode op te zenden en dat "op genoemde gronden."

Ik zocht naar die "genoemde gronden" voor de instructie, doch tevergeefs; ze komen in het rapport niet voor. Blijkbaar is bedoeld, dat de gronden door Hull en Edgerton genoemd waren en door de classis werden overgenomen.

Dit vond ik jammer.

Een besluit van dezen aard gaat al de kerken aan, en is m.i. niet van gewicht ontbloot. De kerken hebben er dus ook wel belang bij, om de gronden voor zulk een besluit te weten. Hull en Edgerton zullen de zaak wel goed hebben overwogen. En Classis West zal de instructie wel van alle zijden hebben gezien, eer ze het besluit nam om haar ter synode te brengen. Maar als het straks synode is, zijn er slechts een betrekkelijk klein aantal afgevaardigden, de helft waarvan met de zaak niet op de hoogte is totdat ze in bespreking komt. Daarom had het m.i. beter geweest, dat we niet een bloote kennisgeving in het rapport hadden gehad van hetgeen classis West wijs oordeelt, maar dat ook de gronden voor dit besluit gepubliceerd geweest waren.

Zooals het besluit daar genoteerd staat, zonder de gronden, rezen er, toen ik het las, allerlei bezwaren bij mij op.

Daar is in de eerste plaats het bezwaar, dat we, zoo dit besluit door de synode wordt aangenomen, verder van elkander verwijderd raken. Dit is voor ons als kleine kerkengroep in ons tegenwoordig stadium van ontwikkeling niet wenschelijk. We zijn nog jong. In vele opzichten zijn we ook zwak. We hebben behoefte aan elkanders raad en steun. En nu komen wel niet alle kerken door hare afgevaardigden ter synode, zooals dat vroeger het geval was, toen we nog slechts één classis vormden, maar toch is de synode een band der gemeenschap voor de kerken, en door om de twee jaar te vergaderen wordt die band er niet sterker op.

Als ik het besluit bezie uit geestelijk oogpunt, en dat in het licht van den ernst der tijden, trekt het mij niet aan. We gaan ongetwijfeld als kerken moeilijke dagen tegemoet. Tot op zekere hoogte is het nu reeds donker. Het is thans reeds heelemaal niet moeilijk om zich de mogelijkheid voor te stellen van omstandigheden, waarin het voor de kerk, die getrouw wil blijven

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aan Gods Woord, zeer eng zal worden in de wereld. En het komt mij voor, dat Gods volk in zulke tijden geen vergaderingen opzegt, maar juist elkander zoekt en sterkt in den strijd. Uit dat oogpunt had ik het kunnen verstaan, indien classis West had besloten om der synode voor te stellen het aantal afgevaardigden naar de synode te vermeerderen. Maar dit besluit trekt mij niet aan. Wie weet of ook voor ons de dagen niet komen, dat we niet zullen kunnen samenkomen! Laat ons toch vergaderen, terwijl we nog kunnen!

Dan zijn daar de zaken, die we synodaal verzorgen, en dus ook synodaal dienen te behartigen.

Dat is het geval met de zaak onzer inwendige zending. Waren we sterk genoeg in aantal en krachten, dan zouden we natuurlijk voor elke classis eene classicale inwendige zendeling hebben. We kregen dan ook op elke vergadering een rapport aangaande dat werk. En zoo hadden onze kerken dan veel meer contact met dien arbeid, dan thans het geval is. Dat dit niet zoo is, is niet ideaal, maar een behelpen. Maar als we nu ook nog de synode om te twee jaar laten samenkomen, en al den arbeid en de regeling van den arbeid der zending in de handen leggen van de zendingscommissie, maken we met opzet dat contact nog minder dan het thans is.

Hetzelfde geldt van de school. Zooals het thans is, worden de Theologische schoolzaken in het interim tusschen twee synodale vergaderingen behartigd door de Theologische school commissie. Maar de synode verzorgt toch de school. Moeten er studenten geëxamineerd worden voor het candidaatschap, de synode is het daartoe aangewezen lichaam. En we moeten toch eigenlijk ook eens wat verder. Er mag wel eens wat meer aandacht gewijd worden aan onze school en haar curriculum. Veel verband tusschen school en kerken is er nu reeds niet. Gaan we om te twee jaar synode hebben, dan zullen we in elk geval weer een curatorium moeten hebben, bestaande uit leden van classis Oost en classis West beide, die minstens eenmaal per jaar vergaderen. Ik ben bang, dat als onder de bestaande omstandigheden en regelingen de synode om de twee jaar vergaderen gaat, classis West schier alle contact met de school verliest.

Bovendien worden de behoeftige kerken niet classicaal, maar synodaal verzorgd, en zullen de besluiten dienaangaande dan ook zeker synodaal moeten worden genomen. Het zal zeker niet aangaan, om elke classis te laten besluiten over gelden uit een gemeenschappelijke kas. Maar hoe zal dit kunnen? Is het mogelijk om den steun voor elke behoeftige gemeente vast te stellen voor twee jaren? Of zal dit ook in handen moeten komen van een commissie? Het laatste zou ik beslist onwenschelijk achten.

Maar misschien komen al deze bezwaren wel bij mij op, omdat ik de gronden niet weet, die door classis West zijn overwogen.

Deze gronden mogen echter wel deugelijk zijn om

mij te overtuigen van de wijsheid van dit besluit.

En in elk geval hoop ik, dat classis West niet alleen met deugdelijke gronden ter synode komt, maar ook met regelingen voor de wijze, waarop de verschillende zaken, die thans synodaal behartigd worden, dan zullen worden verzorgd.

En het zou, m.i. goed zijn, dat classis West ons én die gronden, én die regelingen liet weten vóór de a.s. synode.

H. H.

Bevoegdheid

Ik ontving nog het volgende schrijven van broeder Hoekstra in verband met mijn schrijven over de kwestie van den oorlog en den Zondagsarbeid:

Hooggeachte redacteur "The Standard Bearer":

Mag ik s.v.p. nog een enkel woord over den Zondagsarbeid?

In de S. B. van den 15den Maart, '42 had ik mijn standpunt tegenover Zondagsarbeid wel kortelijks aangeduid, maar niet verklaard. U. E., dat artikeltje beantwoordende, maakt het verschil tusschen uw en mijn standpunt heel wat duidelijker. Mijn standpunt is: "Een onrechtvaardige oorlog door de overheid aangegaan, maakt niet alleen de overheid, maar ook de door de overheid aangestelde Zondagsarbeider schuldig voor God."

De redacteur in zijn antwoord zegt in de eerste paragraaf: "Geen onderdaan kan of mag zondigen op gezag der overheid. Zonde blijft altijd een persoonlijke zaak, waarvoor iemand in alle gevallen persoonlijke verantwoordelijk blijft, en schuldig is voor God."

Dat strookt precies met mijn standpunt.

In de tweede paragraaf zegt de redacteur: "dat op haar eigen terrein (het terrein van het zwaard) de overheid beslist souverain is, maar daarom dan ook alleen verantwoordelijk. Zij alleen heeft de bevoegdheid, de autoriteit en de roeping van God ontvangen om te beslissen hoe ze het zwaard zal hanteeren. De individuele onderdanen hebben dat niet." enz.

De redacteur maakt hier duidelijk, dat niemand dan alleen de overheid uitmaken kan, wat een rechtvaardige of onrechtvaardige oorlog is.

Dat zal zeker waar zijn aangaande hen, die onbekend zijn met wat God zegt van de koninkrijken der wereld, als opgetekend in Dan. 2:31-45; 7:1-8; 15-28, in verband met Openb. 13 en 17, en in vergelijking met de teekenen der tijden. Maar de vraag is: staat de zaak ook zoo met degenen, die, door Gods Geest geleid, de teekenen der tijden in overweging met de genoemde bijbel-hoofdstukken min of meer verstaan?

Persoonlijk zou ik denken, dat zij, die deze hoofdstukken min of meer verstaan en de teekenen der tijden zien, wel een oordeel zouden kunnen vellen over den oorlog en zijn aanhangige Zondagsarbeid. Toch zou ik gaarne deze vraag beantwoord willen hebben door onzen redacteur.

Ik liet in mijn vorig schrijven blijken, dat, naar mijne gedachten, in een onrechtvaardigen oorlog de overheid wel bovenal schuldig staat, doch dat ook de door de overheid gedrongen Zondagsarbeiders schuldig staan aan de zonde tegen het vijfde gebod. Met aldus te denken rekende ik ook met het feit, dat de overheid door God is aangesteld als zwaard-draagster. Maar, zoo dacht ik, heeft God de overheid ook het zwaard gegeven om onrechtvaardige dingen te doen? Ik zou meenen van niet. En nu in zulk een concreet geval meende ik, dat de door de overheid gedreven Zondagsarbeider ook schuldig was, zoowel als de overheid, maar natuurlijk in mindere mate.

Om die schuld aan te toonen noemde ik Adam en Eva in het leggen van hunne schuld op de schouders van Satan. God nam dat niet aan, maar verklaarde allen schuldig, de een meer dan de ander.

Deze dingen aldus beschouwende geloof ik niet, dat ik mij schuldig maak voor God aan revolutie, hoewel ik gaarne beken, dat eene onrechtvaardige overheid mij hieraan schuldig zal verklaren.

J. H. Hoekstra, South Holland, Ill.

Feitelijk gaat het niet meer over oorlog en Zondagsarbeid in bovenstaand artikel, maar over de vraag of ieder burger persoonlijk verantwoordelijk is voor zijn aandeel in den oorlog, indien hij niets anders doet dan de overheid gehoorzamen. Het is blijkbaar broeder Hoekstra's standpunt, dat: 1. Ieder onderdaan persoonlijk bevoegd en geroepen is te oordeelen over het al of niet rechtvaardige van een oorlog. 2. Dat, indien iemand de overheid gehoorzaamt door aan de oproep onder de wapenen gehoor te geven, hij mede schuldig wordt voor God, indien zijn overheid het zwaard opneemt in een onrechtvaardige oorlog.

Zoo althans versta ik zijn standpunt.

En dan maakt het natuurlijk niet uit, of iemand op Zondag of op Maandag werkt tot het vervaardigen van oorlogsmateriaal. De zonde zit niet meer in het werken op Zondag, maar in het meedoen aan een onrechtvaardigen oorlog.

Nu moet broeder Hoekstra mij goed verstaan.

Ik schreef niet, "dat niemand dan alleen de overheid uitmaken kan, wat een rechtvaardige of onrechtvaardige oorlog is."

Ofschoon het in de meeste gevallen wel niet zoo gemakkelijk zijn zal voor een gewoon burger, om een zuiver oordeel te vellen in bijzonderheden over het

al of niet rechtvaardige van een oorlog, stem ik hem gaarne toe, dat een Christen wel oordeelen kan in het licht der Schrift, en ook metterdaad oordeelt over de oorlogen der wereld.

Dat doe ik ook. Zelfs meen ik de vrijheid te moeten handhaven om uit geestelijk oogpunt zulk een oordeel te vellen ook over den tegenwoordigen oorlog.

Maar dat is heel wat anders dan *bevoegdheid, gezag en roeping* om te beslissen, hoe de overheid het zwaard zal hanteeren. Deze bevoegdheid heeft alleen de overheid.

Nu leert ons de Schrift, dat we aan de overheid onderdanig zullen zijn, niet aan een goede of rechtvaardige overheid, maar aan de overheid als zoodanig, als eene macht door God over ons gesteld. En onderdanigheid wil niet zeggen, dat wij eerst eens oordeelen of de overheid (altijd als overheid, en dus op haar eigen terrein) in eene rechtvaardige of onrechtvaardige zaak gehoorzaamheid eischt, om dan naar ons oordeel te handelen; maar dat we ons oordeel aan dat der overheid onderwerpen, om Gods wil gehoorzamen, en het oordeel ten slotte aan God overlaten.

Eigen oordeel stellen tegenover dat der overheid in deze zaak, waarin de overheid alleen *bevoegdheid* heeft, om dan naar eigen oordeel te handelen, is grijpen naar het zwaard der overheid, is revolutie.

Het is waar, dat we Gode meer gehoorzamen moeten dan de *menschen*.

Maar goed opgevat, is het niet mogelijk Gode meer te gehoorzamen dan de overheid *als overheid*.

Voor het hanteeren van het zwaard in eene onrechtvaardige zaak staat de overheid schuldig. Maar in het onderdanig zijn aan de overheid ook in zulk eene onrechtvaardige zaak doet de Christen zijn plicht.

Het voorbeeld van Eva, die haar schuld op de slang trachtte te werpen, is hier heelemaal niet van toepassing, om de eenvoudige reden, dat de slang geen *overheid* was.

Doch nog eens: we gaan van het punt af. Het gaat niet meer over den Zondagsarbeid.

H. H.

IN MEMORIAM

The consistory of the Redlands Protestant Reformed Church wishes hereby to express its sympathy to one of its former members, brother Harry De Gelder, in the loss of his wife,

MRS. MINNIE DE GELDER—Ronda

May our God and Father comfort him in this grievous bereavement in the assurance that she fell asleep in Jesus.

The Consistory.

The Triple Knowledge

An Exposition Of The Heidelberg Catechism

IV.

LORD'S DAY III

4.

Total Depravity. (cont.)

The question arises: what is the meaning of total depravity? The catechism answers: total depravity signifies "that we are wholly incapable of doing any good, and inclined to all evil?" But it may be expedient at this point to ask the further question: but what is good and what is evil? It seems a rather severe judgment that all men are wholly incapable of doing any good, and if we look about us in the world and judge of men as we come into contact with them, we are, perhaps, inclined to doubt the truth of this statement. That there is a good deal of corruption among men of every station in life is evident. That men in their relation to one another are often motivated by covetousness, lust, pride, ambition, hatred and envy and the like no one can deny. But that, outside of regeneration, all men are always wicked and perverse, so that they never do anything that is good, is difficult to harmonize with actual experience. It is true that in the lower strata of society one may find men that are so deeply and hopelessly submerged in the mire of sin that one would not hesitate, perhaps, to consider them totally depraved; but is there not also a higher moral level on which one meets with men that give themselves wholly to the pursuit of the happiness and well-being of their fellowmen, and that are characterized by integrity and nobility in all their walk and conversation? And is it not a fact, too, that the same men who on some occasions and in some situations reveal themselves as being actuated by the meanest and most corrupt motives, will at other times perform the noblest and most unselfish deeds? Is, then, one not forced to the conclusion, either that Romans 7 gives us a picture of the natural man, or that there is, besides regenerating grace, some other kind of grace whereby men are somewhat improved, so that in actual life they are not wholly incapable of doing any good and inclined to all evil?

It is not the testimony of Scripture, but that of this apparent conflict between our Confessions on this point and actual experience that led Dr. A. Kuyper to write his work on Common Grace. Writes he: "If one

conceives of sin as a cause, indeed, of spiritual and physical deterioration, but not as a deadly and quickly operating poison that, unless it is restrained, leads to spiritual, temporal, and eternal death, there is no room for the restraint of sin, to which Calvin first emphatically called attention, and on which the entire doctrine of *general grace* is based. It is exactly because of this that the Reformed confession has always placed full emphasis on this deadly character of sin, and opposed every attempt to weaken the conception of sin. 'Incapable of doing any good and inclined to all evil' was the formula the Heidelberger used to express this truth. And if you take your position unmoveably in this truth, then it is but natural that you will discover in the narrative of Paradise, and in all the rest of Scripture, and in human life round about you, and in your own heart, evidences of a divine operation, by which the quick and absolutely fatal operation of sin has been and still is restrained in many ways, even there where there is no question of *saving* grace. Or do you not find, even by heathen peoples and by unbelievers in your own environment, many phenomena that bespeak a certain inclination to good things, and a certain indignation over all kinds of crime? It is true, there is not found any inclination to *saving* good, but, nevertheless, a certain attraction for integrity and things of a good report. Are there not acts of meanness, dishonesty and perversion of justice, against which the public conscience, even of unbelievers, rebels? And can one not relate numerous deeds of philanthropy and charity, performed by unbelievers, by which they often put to shame the believers? When the daughter of Pharaoh rescued Moses from the Nile, did she do good or evil? And is it, then, not evident that the total corruption of our nature through sin, a truth which we unhesitatingly confess, is in conflict with reality? And do you, therefore, not clearly see that in such cases you stand before the alternative: either abandon your confession of the deadly character of sin; or maintain this confession with might and main, but then with the additional confession that there is an operation of general grace, whereby this deadly operation of sin in numerous cases is restrained." *De Gemeene Gratie*, I, 248, 249.

The question that confronts us, therefore, is whether the life of the natural, fallen man in this world, as we observe it, must be explained as being the result of a certain grace of God, whereby sin within him is restrained; or whether all its impulses and manifestations are quite in accord with the statement of the Heidelberg Catechism that "we are wholly incapable of doing any good and inclined to all evil." This is not a purely scholastic question, but concerns the very heart of our Reformed truth on this point. For, if the life and walk of fallen, unregenerate man

is to be explained as the fruit of grace, this fruit must certainly be good, the natural man is not wholly depraved, and the doctrine of total depravity becomes an abstraction that does not harmonize with actual experience. And again, if this is true, the truth of total depravity cannot be applied in actual life: a basis is established for the amalgamation of the Church and the world, for the cooperation of the believer and the unbeliever. In that case there is some concord between Christ and Belial. That this is the lamentable result of the doctrine of "common grace" may be seen in those churches that adopted and glorify this doctrine. The antithesis is obliterated, and the "sons of God" are more and more lost in the world. The question, therefore, is one of great doctrinal and practical importance. And this question cannot be decided by taking our standpoint in experience and by proceeding from what we see in the world of the life of natural man, but must be answered solely in the light of the Word of God, and next, in that of the Reformed Confessions.

And then we may state without fear of contradiction that the Scriptures *never* speak of a *restraining grace* to explain the activity and development of the natural man in the world. Neither the term nor the idea is found in the Bible. The life of the regenerated is, indeed, presented throughout the Word of God as the fruit of *grace*; the life of the natural man never. It is true, of course, that also the activity and development of the wicked and of the devils are strictly under God's control, so that, as Art. 13 of the Netherland Confession teaches us, "nothing can befall us by chance, but by the direction of our most gracious and heavenly Father; who watches over us with a paternal care, keeping all creatures so under His power, that not a hair of our head (for they are all numbered), nor a sparrow, can fall to the ground, without the will of our Father, in whom we do entirely trust; being persuaded that he so restrains the devil and all our enemies, that without His will and permission they cannot hurt us." But this overruling providence of God, whereby He holds the wicked in His power and controls all their actions, is quite different from a certain restraining grace by which the unregenerate are inwardly somewhat improved and enabled to do the good. Of this the Bible never makes mention.

The passages from the Bible on which this doctrine is supposed to be based are not to the point. A few of them we will examine by way of illustration. All of them are mentioned in Kuyper's *De Gemeene Gratie*. There is, first of all, the case of Abimelech in relation to Sarah, Abraham's wife, quoted by Dr. Kuyper as proof of the proposition that there is a general restraining grace of God operative in all the unregenerate. Let us read the account of it in Scripture: "And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, She is my sister: and

Abimelech king of Gerar sent, and took Sarah. But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, Behold, thou art but a dead man, for the woman which thou hast taken; for she is a man's wife. But Abimelech had not come near her: and he said, Lord, wilt thou slay also a righteous nation? Said he not unto me, She is my sister? and she, even herself said, He is my brother: in the integrity of my heart and innocency of my hands have I done this. And God said unto him in a dream, Yea, I know that thou didst this in the integrity of thy heart; for I also withheld thee from sinning against me: therefore suffered I thee not to touch her." Gen. 20:2-6. Now Dr. Kuyper concludes from this passage the following; "mention is made here, therefore, of a direct operation of God upon the person of Abimelech, whereby a sinful passion that was aroused is restrained, an impelling sin is checked, a premeditated evil is frustrated; and that, too, of such a direct operation as affected alike his sensuality and his soul, so that he became sensually a dead man, and in his soul the passion was broken. It was necessary to explain this here somewhat elaborately, because Scripture here explains and God Himself interprets to us the operation of common grace more broadly than usual." *De Gemeene Gratie*, II, 58.

But is this conclusion of Dr. Kuyper's the true interpretation of the text as found in Gen. 20? That it is not shall be evident from the following considerations. 1. Whatever may be the correct explanation of Abimelech's case, it is at all events a very exceptional occurrence, from which no general conclusions may be drawn with respect to a possible operation of God restraining sin in all men. Sarah was the covenant mother of the promised seed, and for her sake God does not permit Abimelech to touch her. 2. That Abimelech was an unregenerate man is presupposed by Dr. Kuyper's interpretation, but is by no means an established fact. In those days, relatively soon after the flood, when Shem was still living, when a God-fearing king like Melchisedec is still found in the land of Canaan, and when there must have been thousands of children of God outside of Abraham and his house, a man like Abimelech may very well be classified with those that feared the Lord. In fact, the text does not at all leave the impression that he was a wicked person. God speaks to him in a dream, and with evident reference to himself he answers: wilt thou slay a righteous nation? Moreover, he says to God: "in the integrity of my heart and innocency of my hands have I done this;" and God Himself corroborated this statement. 3. It certainly is quite contrary to the plain statements of the text when Dr. Kuyper explains that there was in Abimelech's case a direct operation of God "whereby a sinful passion that was aroused is restrained, an impelling sin is checked, a premeditated evil is frustrated." There was no sinful

passion, and surely no premeditated evil on the part of Abimelech. He acted on the supposition that Abraham and Sarah spoke the truth, and that he had the perfect right to take Sarah to wife. And God Himself seals the statement of Abimelech that he had done this in the integrity of his heart. It is true, of course, that the act of intercourse with Sarah was prevented by an act of God, but this was no *restraint of sin*, no influence of a certain *grace* whereby Abimelech's nature was somewhat improved, for the simple reason that there was no intention of sin in Abimelech's heart at all.

4. Finally, let us also note, that the act of God whereby the deed of intercourse with Sarah on the part of Abimelech was prevented, was not an operation of *grace*, but such an influence of God upon the body of Abimelech that intercourse with Sarah became a physical impossibility. This is evident from the text itself: "Behold, thou art but a dead man, for the woman which thou hast taken." For all these reasons it may be considered quite evident that Abimelech's case cannot be quoted in proof of the doctrine of a general restraining grace in the nature of all unregenerate men.

The second passage from Scripture to which we must call attention in this connection is Rom. 1:18ff. Especially verses 24, 26 and 28. We read there: "Wherefore God also gave them up unto uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves". vs. 24. And again: "For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature." vs. 26. And once more: "And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over unto a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient." vs. 28. To understand how the doctrine of a restraining grace is elicited from these passages, we must let Dr. Kuyper speak. He explains these passages as follows:

"This fact (that the nations developed from bad to worse, H.H.) the apostle attributes to this, that it pleased God gradually to cause His 'common grace to shrink (*te doen inkrimpen*).' Common grace was extended after the flood, now again its influence was cause to shrink, and this shrinking of common grace the apostle pictures to us in these words, that it pleased God "to give them over to a reprobate mind." . . .

"This "giving over" of the nations by God may not be understood in the sense of a common hardening. Obduration and hardening incites to rebellion and enmity against God, while 'to be given over' in itself merely implies that the evil of sin is no longer restrained so forcibly as before, so that as a result the evil worked through in a most dangerous manner. Hence, as a result of this 'giving over' the apostle points as often as three times, not to an audacious

God-provoking presumption as that of Pharaoh, but constantly to the corruption of morals, i.e. to the being swallowed up of what is human by bestiality." *De Gemeene Gratie*, II, 412.

The "giving over" of which the apostle speaks in this passage, therefore, is explained as referring to such a withholding of the operation of common grace, that man is left to himself, to his own lust, sin is no longer restrained, and the world is left to develop in corruption to its own destruction. And this presupposes that there was a period in which God did restrain the process of corruption and the breaking out of sin by restraining grace. Romans 1:18ff. does not directly teach common grace, but presupposes it. However, against this explanation several objections may be raised. 1. Certainly the text in Romans 1 does not speak of restraining grace, but of the very opposite: of a wrath of God that delivers the ungodly over to their own corruption. "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness." In these words of the eighteenth verse the theme of the entire section to the end of the chapter is announced. And the apostle explains first of all just how men hold the truth in unrighteousness, in order then to show how God's wrath is revealed from heaven against such ungodliness of men. Their ungodliness and unrighteousness consists in this: a. They know God, for the invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen, and that which is known of God is manifest in them. b. They glorify Him not as God, neither are thankful. This is their iniquity, and against this is the wrath of God revealed. Now, let us note that the apostle does not write that there was a time when this was different, as Dr. Kuyper presupposes. Always God made Himself known as God; and always men held this truth in unrighteousness. Hence, the wrath of God of which the apostle speaks in this chapter was always revealed. And how was this wrath of God revealed? First of all in this, that God made them foolish, who professed themselves to be wise, so that they bowed themselves before man and beast and creeping things. And secondly in this, that God cast them into the mire of utter moral degradation. The section, therefore, does not speak of restraining grace, but of delivering wrath by which men develop in sin and corruption. 2. The word that is used for "giving over" may not be rendered by the merely passive "letting go", as Kuyper would explain. Three times the apostle uses the word *paredoonen*. And that this word has a very positive and active meaning may be gathered from other instances where the same word is employed in Holy Writ. It occurs in Matt. 10:21: "And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child." It is plain that here the meaning is not: "the

brother shall let go, or abandon the brother to die" but that a positive act is meant whereby the brother is put to death. In Acts 8:3 we read: "As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and hailing men and women committed them to prison." The word in the original that is rendered by "committed" in this verse is the same that is translated by "gave over" in Rom. 1. Yet it is plain that the meaning is not that Saul let them go into prison, but that he actively made them prisoners, led them into bonds. In the same sense the word occurs in Matt. 17:22: "The Son of man shall be betrayed (delivered up) into the hands of men." And again in Matt. 24:9: "They shall deliver you up to be afflicted." These examples might easily be multiplied. And they shed light upon the meaning of the word as the apostle employs it in Rom. 1. No more than it can be said that anyone is delivered upon into prison or unto death, into the hands of anyone or unto affliction and tribulation, by an act of mere passive abandonment, no more can the words "he gave them up" have that passive denotation in the first chapter of the epistle to the Romans. It denotes a positive act of God, whereby in His holy wrath God cast the ungodly that would not glorify Him, neither were thankful, deeper into the mire of sin and corruption. To be sure, this act of God does not destroy or ignore the moral nature of man. He gave them up through their own lusts. But the fact remains that the words "he gave them up" denote an active delivering up on the part of God. But if this is true, then it must also be plain that this term does not at all presuppose a previous period of restraining grace. Were the meaning of the term "to let go" it would have sense to say that such a previous restraint was presupposed. I let go that which I withhold or restrain first. But now the word denotes a positive act of delivering up, this divine act of restraint is not at all presupposed. 3. Besides, the question arises: why should God cause His common grace to "shrink"? Dr. Kuyper answers: because men increased in unrighteousness and ungodliness. The shrinking of common grace was a punitive measure on the part of God. But how could men develop in corruption and break out in iniquity, as long as God by the operation of common grace restrained sin in their nature? It is evident that thus we are reasoning in circles: the cause of the shrinking of common grace is the breaking out into sin on the part of the ungodly, and the cause of the latter is the shrinking of common grace. The cause is the effect and the effect is the cause! But apart from this, it should be quite clear that Romans 1 cannot be referred to as a proof for the doctrine of a restraining grace. It teaches the very opposite.

H. H.

Communication

As the readers will recall, a brother sent me some questions on the book of Ecclesiastes. Two of these questions I have answered in the immediately foregoing issue of this magazine. The questions left unanswered for lack of space are the following:

"Finally, how are the questionable actions of Solomon to be explained in the light of his wisdom which God gave him? I refer now to such things as his overtaxing the people for the sake of maintaining his extravagant way of living, his marrying so many wives, and especially his turning away from the Lord to serve the idols of his heathen wives in the last years of his life."

REPLY

Let me first bring out clearly my correspondent's problem. Identifying Solomon's wisdom with godliness, he evidently reasons thus: How is the amazing discrepancy between Solomon's great wisdom and his deep fall into sin to be accounted for. How could a man of such wisdom do as he did—live so extravagantly; place burdens so unbearable upon the people whose king he was; practice polygamy and practice it on such a scale as he is reported to have done; fill his harem with women taken from among the daughters of heathen nations; and build high places for their gods. How could a man so wise, so godly, direct his life into such a course. This is the last of the three questions with which my correspondent came to me. Let me give the answer—one which, I hope, will remove the difficulty that here presents itself.

In replying, let me begin with saying that we should not imagine the cloud under which Solomon's doings brought him, to have been more dense than it actually was. What I mean is that we should not look for sin in Solomon's way of life where no sin is to be found. To do so is to make it unnecessarily difficult for ourselves to find the proper solution for the problem with which we here have to deal; and we do Solomon an injustice. Should we be critical of Solomon because of his extravagance? I think not. I take it now that my correspondent uses the term *extravagance* in the sense not of wastefulness but of lavishness, profuse, thus as the anti-synonym of miserliness. Let us consider that God was extravagant—with the people of Israel when they kept His covenant and especially so with Solomon while he walked in the statutes of the Lord. When the nation kept covenant fidelity, Canaan was to it a land "*flowing* with milk and honey." So the Lord had promised, "And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and to do all His commandments which I command thee this day

. . . that the Lord shall make thee plenteous in goods (mark you, *plenteous*), in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy ground, in the land which the Lord sware unto thy fathers to give thee. The Lord shall open unto thee his good treasure, the heaven to give the rain unto thy land in his season, and to bless all the work of thy hand: and thou shalt lend unto many nations, and thou shalt not borrow" (Deut. 28:1, 11, 12). Their lending to many nations was made possible, certainly, by the Lord's giving them a great abundance of his material treasure. "Bring ye", said the Lord to His people Israel, by the mouth of His prophet, "bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, *that there shall not be room enough to receive it*" (Mal. 3:10). In the Old Dispensation, and in this Dispensation only, material abundance bespoke the Lord's favor and this in agreement with the symbolical-typical character of that epoch. This must be born in mind in passing judgment upon Solomon's extravagance. The Lord was extravagant with him. Pleased with him on account of his choosing wisdom and not riches, the Lord gave him both.

Solomon was made as amazingly rich as he was made wise. Speaking now hyperbolically, the Lord threw into his lap mountains of gold. The books of the Kings and the Chronicles bear out the truth of this statement. "And he (Solomon) reigned over all the kings from the Euphrates even unto the land of the Philistines, and to the border of Egypt" (2 Chron. 9:26). "And all the kings of Arabia and governors of the country brought gold and silver to Solomon. And all the kings of the earth sought the presence of Solomon. . . and they brought every man his present, vessels of silver, and vessels of gold, and raiment, harness, and spices, horses, and mules, a rate every year" (2 Chron. 9:14, 223, 24). "Now the weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was six hundred and threescore and six talents of gold" (2 Chron. 9:13). Solomon was thus provided by the Lord with the means for establishing himself as king in greatest splendour. He did so, rightly believing that it was the Lord's will. He made two hundred targets of beaten gold; three hundred shields of beaten gold. Moreover, he made him a great throne of ivory, which he overlaid with gold. There were six steps to it, with a footstool of gold. A lion stood on each side of the sitting place, six lions on each side of the six steps, thus fourteen lions in all and all of gold. And all the drinking vessels of king Solomon and all the vessels of the forest of Lebanon were of pure gold; none were of silver; it was not anything accounted of in the days of Solomon. And king Solomon surpassed all the kings of the earth

in riches" so well as in wisdom. (2 Chron. 9:15-22). Also this busyness of the king formed a part of that labor of which he speaks in the book of Ecclesiastes, as having been laid upon his hands by the Lord. So I do not believe that we should regard this doing of Solomon as indicative of a carnal lust of earthy magnificance and criticize him for it. The Lord was extravagant with him. It is not so unlikely that these engagements were performed by him in the awareness that he foreshowed one greater than he—Christ Jesus. This, of course, is not saying that he had Christ as the direct object of his vision. But there can be no doubt that such Old Testament worthies as Solomon and David, men of more than common insight, perceived that the economy of which they in their capacity of theocratic kings formed a part, was type and symbol. Besides, a man need not accuse himself if he is rich, provided he can truthfully say that the Lord has made him rich. What, of course, gives a man a right to say this is that he comes by his riches in a strictly honest way (which in this day is impossible) and in spite of his not seeking the things on earth and working for the bread that perishes.

Solomon was extravagant in still other ways. He had many servants in his employ. His court personnel was amazingly large. But there was need of this, too. True it is that this need to an extent was his own creation (his wives and concubines numbered one thousand), but only to an extent. His palace was always full of visitors. "*All the kings of the earth sought the presence of Solomon to hear his wisdom, that God had put in his heart*" (2 Chron. 9:21). It was God who sent these visitors; not Solomon. Accommodations had to be made for them all.

Did now the maintenance of a court so very costly bring Solomon under the necessity of over-taxing the people? There are solid grounds in Scripture for saying that it did not. The books of the Kings contains an estimate of the amount of food daily consumed by his household. "And Solomon's provision for one day was thirty measures of fine flour, and threescore measures of meal, ten fat oxen, and twenty oxen out of the pastures, and an hundred sheep, besides harts, and roebucks, and fallow-deer, and fatted fowl" (1 Kings 4:22, 23). Thus his provision for one year—counting only the oxen and the sheep—amounted to 6760 animals. Certainly the burden could not have been resting heavily on the people on account of this provision. There was great abundance in the land at this time. What is more, only a portion of Solomon's provision came from the soil of Canaan. Much, if not most of it, was brought up by the nations over which he ruled. After stating his provisions for one day, the sacred narrator continues, "For (mark you, *for*) he had dominion over all the region on this side the river. . . ." (1 Kings 4:23, 24). That Solomon's

burden was not heavy, but if anything light, is a view supported also by a statement found at 1 Kings 4:20, "Judah and Israel were many, as the sand which is by the sea in multitude, *eating and drinking, and making merry.*" And further, "And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig tree, from Dan even to Beersheba, all the days of Solomon" (1 Kings 4:25). Then, finally, this scripture: "As for all the people that were left of the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, which were not of Israel, but of their children, who were left in the land, whom the children of Israel consumed not, them did Solomon make to pay tribute until this day. But of the children of Israel did Solomon make no servants for his work; but they were men of war, and chief of his captains, and captains of his chariots and horsemen" (2 Chron. 8:7-9). With these scriptures under our eye, it cannot very well be maintained that the Israelitish nation was being over-taxed by Solomon. The plain design of these scriptures is to represent Solomon as a benevolent ruler and his kingdom in its greatness and in its prosperous, well-ordered condition. The period of the judges was a time of public crudeness in which there was no order. The age of David was that of continuous warfare in which victory over all enemies came at last and with it the beginning of a well-ordered condition. But complete peace came with Solomon. During his reign the kingdom of Israel reached its highest. And at this reach it was the historical prophecy of the kingdom of Christ in glory. But how could it have been this at this time if the people were groaning under the crushing yoke of a cruel despot?

But did not the tribes after Solomons' death say to Rehoboam, "Thy father made our yoke grievous: now therefore make thou the grievous service of thy father, and his heavy yoke which he put upon us, lighter". First, it is well to notice that the yoke they speak of does not mean every kind of load, but the levy—work for Solomon's public buildings. The word used in the original for yoke tells us this. This yoke may not be taken to mean all the burdens laid on the people i.e. the taxes and produce which they had to pay and deliver. But the complaint even as so limited, is not well-founded. The tribe leading this insurrection is Ephraim—a tribe which had always been exceedingly jealous of Judah. At the head, too, stood a man who already had tried to raise an insurrection. Complaints from the mouths of such cannot be taken as testimony under such circumstances, except joined to other and purely historical evidence. We have none such. Nowhere is the voice of complaint heard about this labour, and our author, as has already been shown relates to it with praise to Solomon. "But of the children of Israel did Solomon make no servants for his work." For this reason the complaint must be taken as only a welcome

excuse suggested to them by their former superintendent, Jeroboam.

Solomon's polygamy is a mark against him. But here it must be considered that an example had been set him by his own father, David, and other Old Testament worthies. And although the practice goes contrary to divine ordinance, it is not forbidden in the law of Moses.

The only sin with which the *sacred narrator* charges him is his loving many strange women and his allowing his wives to turn away his heart after other gods. This was his great sin. He went far, fell deep. He "built an high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab in the hill that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon. And likewise did he for all his strange wives, which burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods" (1 Kings 11). Our author passes judgment on this sin in this language, "And his heart was not perfect with the Lord His God, as was the heart of David his father. And Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord and followed not after the Lord, as did David his father" (1 Kings 2:4, 6). Yet at the heart of his disposition he was a true believer. "And Solomon loved the Lord, walking in the statutes of David his father" (1 Kings 3:3). How could he, a believer, and a man of such wisdom commit this sin. It is well to notice the following. The great riches in silver and gold are mentioned in the preceding section, chap. 10:14-17, and also the number of horses brought out of Egypt. The mention of the many wives immediately follows. What was foreseen in the law for the kings happened: "his heart was turned away. This connection tells us that it was not course sensuality that gave rise to such a large harem, but the reason was that as Solomon grew in riches, esteem and power, excelling all other kings in these, he also wished to surpass them in the largest possible harem. Here, too, pride came before the fall. Second, this *turning away his heart* occurred in his old age. "And it came to pass when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart. . . ." Thus it occurred at a time of life when, in consequence of luxury and indulgence, the energy of spirit and heart deserted him. These heathen wives were a dissatisfied lot. Reveling in luxury, they lived a vain, useless and dull life. It was no doubt to stop their persistent wailing for some diversion to break the monotony of their miserable existence, that Solomon built them high places for their gods. It is not stated that he, as well as his wives, formally worshipped these idols. His sin was that he allowed his strange wives to observe idolatrous worship in Jerusalem and even went so far as to favor it by the building of high places. Finally, we should have a right conception of Solomon's wisdom.

There is also a wisdom that as such is to be identi-

fied with godliness. Christ says that unless a man be born again, he cannot see, that is, spiritually discern the kingdom of heaven—cannot see it in the sense that a man cannot endure upon his eyes the sight of one whom he bitterly hates. Seeing the heavenly with an eye of love—this is true wisdom so that in the mind of the man endowed with it the things which are of the Spirit of God stand out as a blessed and most desirable entity. To be wise in this sense is to judge *in love* that the best in ends is to love God and to see Him as He is. Translated into action it is building on Christ for eternity and seeking His kingdom and its righteousness. It is thus the flowering of a true faith and a living hope and takes in the whole man—his mind, will, heart and all his strength.

Now to Solomon the Lord said, "Behold, I have done according to thy words: Lo, I have given thee a wise and understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee" (1 Kings 3:12). Of all men of all times and of every land Solomon was the wisest. Just what was this gift? Was it exceptional godliness and the wisdom *thereof*? If so, the construction to be placed on the word of the Lord that came to Solomon is: Lo, I have so replenished thee with spiritual life, caused thy faith to permanently flower so wonderfully, that as a saint thou wilt tower above all the saints of all history and wilt thus stand out as the most amazing model of true virtue that humanity will at any time be made to behold. This was not God's promise to Solomon. If so, the promise was not fulfilled. Solomon was a believer certainly. From the sacred narrative we learn that he truly loved God. Yet he was no spiritual giant of such stature as to dwarf the faith of all other believers. But he was a man of great wisdom,—a wisdom to be defined as a sanctified rational power of mind and heart to form: 1) The fittest and truest judgment in any matter presented for consideration; 2) judge what is best in ends to be pursued and what is best in means for attaining those ends; 3) seeing deeply into the heart of things both natural and spiritual; 4) summing up relations and drawing right conclusions. Thus Solomon's gift, though sanctified by grace and in this sense spiritual was not as such grace, the spiritual power to love God and to walk in the way of His commands. Hence, his gift as such was no guaranty against apostacy. It did not as such arrest in him the riotings of sin and empower him to bring himself forward as a man spiritually perfect or nearly so. With all his great insight he continued to be a believer with but a small beginning of true obedience. His spiritual life continued to be subject to the same fluctuations as that of any other believer. He was wonderfully wise and at once as spiritually foolish as the rest of God's believing people. For to discern the right is one thing; to love and to do the right quite

another.

These remarks of mine apply in all their force to all the other organs of revelation. (Solomon was this—an organ of revelation). By reason of their revelation they were wise; but spiritually they were far from perfection. But their spiritual weaknesses and imperfections did not bring their teachings under a cloud. What they spoke is the truth; for God spoke through them. This must also be said of the teachings of Solomon. So the question, "how are the questionable actions of Solomon to be explained in the light of his wisdom," is one that may and must be asked in reference also to, let us say, David, king of Israel; all the other prophets; and all the preachers of the gospel. Rightly considered, it is a question that may be asked in reference to every believer. How is it that with all our knowledge and insight, with all our capacity to see deeply into the heart of matters, we persist in transgressing in every way and in thought, word and deed the law of God, even at times becoming so unspiritual that the brethren do not know what to make of us anymore. The simple answer is that knowledge is not yet virtue. It is not enough that God put the truth in our hearts; He must also make us to love the truth. To hear and to *do the* words of Christ, this is grace. So you see that there is just as much reason to marvel at the inconsistencies of believers in general as to marvel at those of Solomon.

G. M. O.

Berouw

(Psalm 51; Tweede Deel)

Over den psalm in het algemeen hebben we eenige bladzijden geschreven. Nu rest ons nog eenige woorden over den psalm in het bijzonder.

Direkt aan het begin werpt David zich in de armen van Gods deugden van genade en barmhartigheid, van groote goedertierenheid.

Merkt er op, dat wanneer de Heilige Geest van God ons ontdenkt aan onze zonden, we zoo oprecht worden als God. " 'k Verborg geen kwaad dat in mij werd gevonden!" is de wet des Geestes des levens. David brengt geen verzachtende omstandigheden bij, ook niet in vers 7. Hij heeft niets in te brengen, dat dienen kon om de Rechter voor hem te stemmen. Als hij zijn mond opent, het is om zichzelf te verdoemen. Ook bekent hij zijn zonde niet nolens volens, omdat het niet te loochenen is, omdat hij toch uitgevonden is. O neen, hij bekent en belijdt van harte. Zijn gansche wezen is in deze belijdenis.

Hoe zit dat?

Hierboven gaven we eigenlijk de reden alreede aan. Het komt hier van daan dat David in 't volle licht staat. En omdat hij dat licht bemint. Daarom is het belijden van zijn zonde tevens een belijdenis, dat hij het licht bemint.

Doch bij de kennis van dat licht weet David, dat er ontkomen mogelijk is. Hij pleit op dat licht, dat van Zijn aan'zicht straalt.

Wees mij genadig, O God! Ziedaar, David, zich werpende in de armen van zijn God. Wees mij genadig! Hij grijpt God aan in Zijn deugden. David weet, door Goddelijke aanspraak vermaand zijnde, dat er ontkoming mogelijk is. Dat er deugden in God zijn die den schuldige vrijspraak kan schenken.

En dat heeft de Heere Zijn volk van de vroegste eeuwen af geleerd. Die waarheid schitterde in den geheelen dienst van Jehovah. God had het Zelf gepredikt aan Adam en Eva. De Heere slachtte een dier en toog de vellen aan het naakte lichaam van Zijn kinderen. Abel offerde een lam, omdat God het aan Adam bevolen had. O ja, de Heere had Zijn volk onderwezen. Zij hebben het ook verstaan, al is het, dat zij het niet zóó helder zien als wij, die het voorrecht hebben van het Kruis Evangelie.

Wees mij genadig!

De genade Gods is die deugd, waardoor de Heere Zich nederbuigt naar het voorwerp van Zijn eeuwige liefde, met het doel om hen zoo schoon en lieflijk te maken als Hij Zelf is.

Is dat voorwerp van Zijn liefde in groote ellende en smart, dan is die liefde tevens barmhartigheid. En David was in smart. Probeer het niet om in woorden uit te drukken de smart die U verscheurt bij de gewaarwording van ontdekkend licht.

David bidt om de verzwelging der leelijke zonde door de lieflijkheid der genade. Hij bidt om de rommelende ingewanden Gods over zijn ervaring van groote smart bij het zien zijner ongerechtigheden.

Hier komt bij, dat David een groote haat heeft, een afkeer van de zonde. Luistert slechts naar hem: Wasch mij wel van mijne ongerechtigheid en reinig mij van mijne zonde. Dat is ook een van de ware kenmerken des Christens. Een kind Gods haat de zonde. O ja, we weten het wel, dat dit ook betrekkelijk gezegd kan van sommigen die zonder genade zijn. Doch dat soort menschen haten de zonde, wanneer ze zien en ervaren, dat zonde pijn en smart veroorzaakt. Als een dronkaard zijn verwoest leven en huisgezin ziet, kan hij dronkemanstranen schreien. Doch dat is geen haten van de zonde zooals we het hier vinden. David haat de zonde omdat hij haar kent. Hij zegt dat dan ook in het volgende vers. Dat vijfde vers is de reden voor zijn bede om reiniging. Het redebeleid loopt zoo: Reinig mij van mijn zonde, O God! Want ik weet wat monster die zonde is. Neem weg mijne ongerechtigheid, want ik kan het vreeselijke en afzichtelijke van

die zonde niet verdragen. Dat wordt nog duidelijker bij het volgende vers. Tegen U, U alleen heb ik gezondigd! Daar is de overwinning der genade. Daar glinstert het werk der heiligmaking! Alle zonde, ook die van de tweede tafel der wet, zijn eigenlijk alleen zonde tegen God. O ja, hij had gehoereerd met Bathseba en hij had ook vermoord tegenover Uriah, doch ten slotte waren het zonde tegen God. Alle werk, alle actie, alle gedachten, woorden en werken, moeten zoovele uitingen zijn van liefde tegenover God. Het tweede gebod is gelijk aan het eerste. Het tweede gebod, dat wil zeggen, de tweede tafel der wet stoelt op de eerste. Daarom zegt David: Tegen U, U alleen heb ik gezondigd.

In de volgende clausule merken we op, hoe groot de liefde Gods is die in Davids hart is uitgestort. Hij zegt: "opdat Gij rechtvaardig zijt in Uw spreken en rein zijt in Uw richten." Wat bedoelt David daarmee? Dit: David is bezorgd over de eere Gods. Hij verwacht, dat de bezoekende en straffende hand van God over hem zal komen. Is die hand er en als David straks zich zal moeten krommen vanwege de krachtige hand des Heeren die hem zal doen schreien, wil David, dat hijzelf en een ieder het zal weten: al dit overkomt mij, omdat ik tegen den Heere heb overtreden. Als de Heere straks "spreekt" in de straffen, dan wil David, dat een ieder zeggen zal: de Heere is rechtvaardig in Zijn spreken. Als de Heere straks komt om David te richten, dan wil David dat geheel Israel zal zeggen: Onze God is rein in Zijn richten van onze koning! Daarin blijkt de liefde Gods. Die liefde is altijd bezorgd over God, meer dan over zichzelf.

Luistert naar de berijmde psalm: "'k Erken mijn schuld, die U tot straf bewoog; Uw doen is rein, Uw vonnis gansch rechtvaardig!'"

Dat zal heerlijk blijken als de Heere zal brullen uit Zion in den dag der dagen. Doch dat willen wij nu al hebben in 't diepste hart en op zijn minst in de kerk des Heeren. Daarom heeft David dit dan ook in den psalm opgenomen. Het is, opdat hij ons zal leeren van de wegen des Heeren.

Hoe diep heeft David het probleem der zonde bestudeerd. Let er op, dat hij niet bij de bloote daad blijft staan. Verre van de schuld op zijn ouders te werpen, rept hij van de erfsmet, omdat hij het de Heere wil vertellen hoe zijn gansche natuurlijke hart verdorven is. "'t Is niet alleen dit kwaad dat roept om straf; Neen, 'k been in ongerechtigheid geboren; Mijn zonde maakt mij 't voorwerp van Uw toren, Reeds van het uur van mijn ontvang'nis af!'"

David heeft een diepen blik in zijn zondig bestaan, doch hij kent ook Zijn God. Uit dezen psalm blijkt duidelijk, waarom de Heere hem een man noemt naar Zijn Eigen hart!

Hij zegt het al: Zie, Gij hebt lust tot waarheid in het binnenste, en in het verborgene maakt Gij mij

wijsheid bekend! Hoe schoon.

Zoo is het. De Heere neemt het aangezicht der menschen niet aan. De Heere ziet het hart aan. En het hart van David doet juist zooals Gods doet: God en David beiden gruwen van zijn zonde. Daar in dat diepe hart heeft David gesmaakt hoe vuig zijn zonde met Bathseba en tegenover Uriah was. En in het diepe hart maakte God hem wijsheid bekend. Wat een schoone belijdenis van de Souvereine Genade. 't Mag niet, doch ik zou haast gezegd hebben: hoe Protestantsch Gereformeerd klinkt die belijdenis. David zegt hier immers, dat het de Heere was die hem op het pad van den boeteling zette. Het was de Heere die ook in die nacht van slangachtige daden tot David zeide: Zoek Mijn aangezicht! Zoek het, David, met groot gewezen en in de ervaring van veel tranen, tranen des harten. Wijsheid Gods, het bewandelen van de beste wegen en het gebruiken van de beste middelen tot het bereiken van het hoogste doel: de glorie van Gods Naam! Dat is het schoone van den een-en-vijftiger!

En dan vaart hij voort om te smeken om licht en blijdschap. Hij heeft het zwarte en duistere van zijn hart en daden beleden. Nu zal hij zich uitstrekken naar de vrije gave van de lieflijkheden Gods. Spreekt de Bijbel niet elders van de "gewisse weldadigheden Davids"? Hij smeekt om de witheid der onschuld, het schitterend schoone der reinheid. Och, Heere, wasch mij wel van mijne ongerechtigheid!

O, indien dat zijn ervaring mag zijn, dan zal David opspringen van vreugde in zijn God. Dan zullen zich de beenderen verblijden die God verbrijzelde. Hoe kunnen we David verstaan! Er is immers geen blijdschap dan in den glimlach Gods? Hoe zal ik eten en drinken en vroolijk zijn, wanneer de Heere in mijn vuile hart en daden dondert: Gij zijt die man!? David wil een effen pad zien tusschen zijn verstoord gemoed en den Heere zijn God.

Daarom, Heere, verberg Uw aangezicht van mijne zonden en delg uit al mijne ongerechtigheden! Als we dat nu neerschrijven in den jare 1942, dan kunnen we dat niet doen zonder aan het kruis van Jezus te denken. O, daar hebt ge de verbergings. Daar hebt ge de uitdelging. Doch ten koste van het Lam. Uw God en mijn God en Davids God verberg Zijn aangezicht van onze zonden. Het zij zoo. En de Engelen Gods zingen het amen er op. Doch ten koste van Jezus. De Heere verberg Zijn aangezicht niet van de zonde als schuld die op Jezus lag. Als dezelve geëischt werd, zie, zoo werd Hij verdrukt. Het bang-vreemde werd door Jesaja gezegd: Het behaagde de Heere Hem te verbrijzelen. Ja, hij heeft alle Uwe zonden uitgedelgd. Doch ten koste van Jezus. Hij delgde Hem uit om Uwentwil. Hij werd zoo vreeselijk-bang uitgedelgd, dat Hij in vertwijfeling moest uitroepen: Waarom, O Mijn God hebt Gij Mij verlaten? Hier hebt ge het worstelen met hoofdletters,

En dan gaat het hooger op: Schep mij een nieuw hart, O God! En vernieuw in het binnenste van mij een vasten geest! Wat een gebed!

Een nieuw hart: het oude deugde niet. Een vasten geest, de oude was los en ongestadig, en valsch. Dat zijn oude hart en zijn oude geest niet deugden, was bewezen. Al die vreeselijke geschiedenis van Bathseba en Uriah had dat onomstootelijk bewezen. David durft zóó niet verder. O dat mijn hart zoo door U omgeschapen worde, dat mijn hart met de daden gepaard gaande, enkel billijkheid en lieflijke schoonheid openbaarde! De zucht der heiligmaking!

Ontroerend klinkt het bange: Verwerp mij toch niet, O God, van voor Uw aangezicht. O, neem toch niet Uwen Heiligen Geest van mij! Van God verworpen te worden! Kan het vreeselijker? Soms kan mijn hart schreien voor de ontelbare schare die nu alreede naar de ziel ellendig omzwerven. Waar? En waarheen? Ze kunnen niet ophouden van bestaan! Van God verworpen, onder het vloeken des Almachtigen. Een verterend vuur, Wiens vlammend aangezicht mij altijd weer opzoekt ten kwade! Kunt gij er in komen? David siddert: O verwerp mij niet. . . .

Wat dan?

Hij wil de vreugde van Gods heil en de vrijmoedigheid in het bijzijn van God. En, ach, waar is God niet? Hoe zalig is het volk, dat naar Uw klanken hoort, O God! Ja, dat is zoo. Ge moogt er wel bij zeggen: Hoe zalig is het volk en de Engelen die zoo maar bij God kunnen zijn in dat land waar nimmer tranen vloeien! Stelt het U toch voor: Ze zijn in den hemel, vlak voor den grooten witten troon. En ze worden niet weggeworpen, noch verbrand voor dat Aangezicht. Eeuwig lonken de oogen Gods in Jezus tot die schare en die vliegende Engelen. En ze zijn niet bang! O God, geef mij die vrijmoedige Geest!

Ja, als dat geschieden mag, dan zal David prediken de wegen Gods tot de zondaars. Dan zal David niet meer hoereeren, noch moorden. Dan is Bathseba veilig op het dak, en mag Uriah slapen den slaap der vermoedenis.

Dan zal er vrucht zijn. Dan zullen de Engelen Gods zich verblijden en vroolijk elkander wijzen op arme zondaren die in het stof liggen te kermen.

Als dat geschieden mag, dan zal er een Engel snellijk vliegen tot den Middelaar en jubelend zeggen: O Koning Jezus: er ligt een zondaar in 't stof! Dan zal Jezus Zich keeren tot den Vader en zeggen: Vader, een arme zondaar roept Uw Naam aan! En dan zal den Vader zeggen: Ik hoor hem!

En zoo hebben de gebeden van David hun eigen einde.

Het einde van het heil des Heeren.

Aanbiddelijk Opperwezen!

Verleiders En Hun Prooi

II Tim. 3:6, 7.

Karakteristiek, in Paulus Brieven aan Timotheus, is het aantal vermaningen, die dikwijls waarschuwingen zijn, tegen de valsche leeraars en hun valsche leer. In de beide Brieven aan den jeugdigen Timotheus is dit in het ooglopend.

Bij oppervlakkige lezing schijnt het alsof de Apostel over dingen spreekt die nog in de verre toekomst liggen. Hij spreekt immers over “zwarte tijden en over de laatste dagen”? Wie echter met de wijze van spreken der Schrift bekend is, weet dat meestal de vermaningen worden gesproken voor het heden en de toekomst beide. Wezenlijk is dat altijd het geval, met dit verschil, hetgeen waartegen gewaarschuwd wordt in het heden, wordt in verdere en volle ontwikkeling gezien in de toekomst door den loop der tijden. Aldus is dikwijls iedere vermaning noodzakelijk met het oog op het heden en met het oog op de toekomst.

In de eerste vijf verzen van dit hoofdstuk worden de verleiders ten voete toe uitgeschilderd, zoodat hun verschijning geen verwondering hoeft te baren. Zij worden, wat betreft hun innerlijk zijn, genoemd, liefhebbers van zichzelf, liefhebbers der wellusten en loochenaars van de kracht, die door de Godzaligheid tot openbaring moet komen. Dat innerlijk zijn deugt in geen enkel opzicht.

Zeker, zij hebben een gedaante of schijn, van Godzaligheid. “Vroomheid” is hun kleed waarmee zij tekoop loopen. Doch de Apostel ziet dwars door hun gewaad heen. Het gepraat over den godsdienst, wordt door hun daad weersproken. Zoo staan zij voor den aandacht van den Apostel. De vraag dekt de lading niet. Hun theorie en hun praktijk zijn niet een, doch twee zaken, die elkander absoluut weerspreken. Als zij spreken dan is hun taal alleszins godsdienstig, maar dat is dan ook alleen het kleed, waarmee zij zich hebben omhangen. Want, wanneer het toekomt aan de praktijk des levens, dan werpen zij hun kleed weg en treden zij te voorschijn, zooals zij werkelijk zijn. Dan draait het alles om het vleesch en wordt er niets van den Geest gezien.

Zeide de Apostel nu niet meer, dan was het voor de gemeente uiterst moeilijk, om van meet af deze verleiders te onderkennen. Maar met de waarschuwing, waardoor Timotheus en de gemeente zich dienen te wapenen, gaat nog gepaard de vingerwijzing, omtrent het hoe van hun listige manier van werken. Zij hebben het gemunt op de onvaste zielen, die, hoewel leden der gemeente, voor allerlei verderf bloot staan en er gehoor aan leenen.

Met nadruk wijst de Apostel hier op als hij zegt: “Want deze zijn het die in de huizen insluipen, en nemen de vrouwkens gevangen die met zonden beladen

zijn en door menigerlei begeerlijkheden gedreven worden, vrouwkens, die altijd leeren en nimmer tot de kennis der waarheid komen”.

Het ingaan in de huizen, dat ook vertaald kan worden “in de families”, geschied op een wijze, waardoor het moeilijk is, het ware motief van het valsche te onderscheiden. Sommigen hebben gemeend, dat het deze verleiders te doen was, om aan de lusten des vleesch bot te vieren, zoodat hier sprake zou zijn van het zoeken van verder niet te noemen ontuchtigheden. Weliswaar, zijn er zulke praktijken daar, waar men eerst begint te spreken over de eigen vrouw als de vleeschelijke vrouw (denk aan “Neveldijk” en “Schapen zonder Herder” en “Kinderen huns tijds”), terwijl men daar benevens er nog een “geestelijke” vrouw op nahoud, die man dan zielsvriendin noemt of met iets van dien aard betiteld, met het gevolg dat men tenslotte niets anders dan het vleesch overhoud. Natuurlijk, want het was met vleesch begonnen. Maar zelfs in die ziekelijke kringen blijft dat tenslotte beperkt en behooren de uitspattingen tot de uitzonderingen.

De Apostel bedoelt daar dan ook niet voor te waarschuwen. Ware dat de zonde geweest, dan zou de vermaning geheel anders zijn geweest en dan zou hij Timotheus zeer zeker de opdracht hebben gegeven, gelijk hij deed in verband met de gemeente te Corinthe, om dezulken onder de Christelijke tucht te brengen, indien niet uit de gemeente te bannen, opdat de gemeente door dien weg zoude gezuiverd worden.

Trouwens, de tekst weersprekt de hierboven genoemde voorstelling. Er wordt immers gezegd, dat deze vrouwtjes “leergierig” zijn, schoon het waar is, dat zij nimmer tot de kennis der waarheid komen, iets dat met onzedelijkheid niets uitstaande heeft. Want altijd leeren ziet op altijd gewillig zijn om te hooren. Zouden we de tekst in eigen woorden weer geven, dan vertalen we als volgt: Deze verleiders sluipen de familiekringen van sommige der gemeente binnen en vinden in die kringen vrouwtjes, die gemakkelijk onder hun betoovering worden gebracht—vrouwtjes onder den last van zonden zijnde—geleid door de neigingen van hun zonden en zich in allerlei richting begevend, die ook altijd leeren en nimmer bekwaam zijn, om tot kennis der waarheid te kunnen komen. De levensrichting zelf openbaart dan verschillende schakeeringen van zonde. Het ligt er maar aan naar welke ketter zij luisteren.

Wat betreft het ingaan tot deze huizen merken we op, dat de wijze van het optreden van deze mannen den indruk trachtte te bewerken, alsof het hen te doen was om anderen te leeren. Wat nu precies hun methode was valt niet met zekerheid te zeggen. Te oordeelen naar hun doel, dan hebben zij zich voor gedaan als zijnde zeer godsdienstig.

Zij hebben immers een “gedaante” van godzalig-

heid. De vorm ontbreekt niet. We mogen wel zeggen, gelijk het meestal is, dat hoe meer het wezen der godsdienst ontbreekt, des te menigvuldiger worden de vormen. Altijd een teeken van armoede, als de vorm oorzaak wordt dat men de hoofdzaak niet meer kan vinden. Het is waar, ook de eenvoudigste vorm is geen waarborg voor de echtheid des harten. Maar als dat waar is dan kan het zonder tegenspreken worden gezegd, dat, waar het wezen ontbreekt, de vorm des te grooter indruk moet maken—welke vorm het dan ook zij.

Deze verleiders waren dan ook zeer drukke menschen. Zij spraken maar niet in de publieke samenkomsten der gemeente, neen, zij gingen er ook op uit en bezochten de huizen, om op geheel particuliere wijze de menschen te onderwijzen, zij het dan ook, dat zij dit deden zonder het Woord of met verdraaiing van hetzelfde.

Zij hadden het echter gemunt op deze vrouwkens. Waarom juist deze vrouwen? Iemand zegt ergens, dat de Apostel spreekt van “vrouwen”, omdat deze gemakkelijker misleid kunnen worden. Dat is wel waar, maar dan ook alleen als het zulke zijn, waarvan de tekst spreekt. Er zijn ook heel veel anderen. Ons antwoord is, deze “vrouwkens” hielden, evenals hunne verleiders, het wezen voor den vorm. Wezenlijk was bij leermeester en leerlinge het ééne noodige niet aanwezig. Daarom valt het onderwijs er ook zoo maar in. Beter nog, de vorm werd eigenlijk voor het wezen gehouden. Daarom zijn zij dan ook gewillige leerlingen, die, hoe kinderachtig ook zijn godsdienst moge zijn, bij zulke menschen een luisterend oor vinden.

Godsdienst kan ook een zaak van amusement zijn, waardoor het vleesch wordt gestreeld. Zie maar rondom u en luister eens naar al het humanistisch gedoe, dat door uw radio komt. Zelfs voor de verkoop van een doos schoensmeer wil men nog wel godsdienstig zijn en ook wel voor het bakken van het brood en de cake, zingt men de hymne van alle kerken.

Zoolang men dan ook maar met een waas of vernis zijn godsdienstig gesprek inkleedt, willen deze “vrouwtjes” wel naar jan en alleman luisteren. Daarom dan ook zegt de Apostel, dat zij door deze leeraars zoo gemakkelijk gevangen kunnen worden genomen. Zij komen niet slechts onder den indruk van deze verleiders, doch worden zelfs door hen in vervoering of verrukking gebracht.

Geheel het spreken van deze verleiders heeft vat op en vindt zijn aanknoopingspunt in hun zondig begen. En wat verschil maakt het dan wie spreekt, zoolang als er aan het zondig begeeren wordt voldaan. Zelfs is er telkens meerdere behoefte om naar allerlei leugen te luisteren, zoolang als al dit geknoei en zondig gedoe maar overtrokken wordt met een schijn van godsdienst? Beladen met zonden, maar van zondelast en zondeschuld weten zij niet af, evenmin als van de noodzakelijkheid der ver-

giffenis, de boete en het berouw voor God den Heere. Zichzelfen te kennen, vergeving te zoeken in het bloed van Christus, is taal die zij niet kunnen, maar ook niet willen verstaan. Het is de godsdienst des vleesch, die zichzelf vleit en zichzelf streelt. Is het dan zoo verbazend moeilijk om te zien, dat men zeer “godsdienstig” zijnde toch met zonde beladen blijft? We moeten wel verstaan, dat het ook hier geldt, wie zich keert van het Woord Gods, begeeft zich tenslotte tot alles wat met Zijn Woord in strijd is. Zonde baart zonde, maar vooral in de kring van Gods Kerk.

Deze zware tijden zien dan ook niet op een vervolg van buiten af. Ook dat zal zeker komen, doch is niet de gevaarlijkste vijand tegen wien de Kerk zal moeten strijden. Juist het tegendeel is waar. Van buiten af weet zij, dat het komen zal en het is nooit moeilijk den vijand te kennen en te herkennen. Hij is altijd dezelfde, die zich met ruw geweld werpt op de schaapskooi van Christus. De brieschende leeuw, die rondgaat, brult door de wereld, die de Kerk zal willen verslinden. Gods Woord en de geschiedenis der Kerk zijn ons genoegzaam bekend, om te weten wat iedere keer weer de taktiek zal zijn in het aanvallen van den Booze.

Neen, voor de Kerk zijn de zwaarste tijden, wanneer zij in haar boesem mededraagt de type van de “vrouwkens”, die zichzelf leeraars kiezen. De lidmaten van het lichaam van Christus, zooals dat lichaam in het zichtbare tot openbaring komt, brengt de verleiders uit haar eigen lendenen voort. En ook de “vrouwkens”. Daar ligt voor haar de zwaarste strijd, om niet alles wat ook de schijn moge zijn, voor het wezen te houden. Wie dat niet ziet, werkt juist in de hand het gevaar, dat geheel zijn Kerk opgaat in vorm zonder wezen.

Temeer nog, waar geheel dit werk, dat uit het vleesch opkomt, zich weet voor te doen alsof het tot het echte wezen der dienst des Heeren behoort. Er is een zekere mate van list toe noodig om anderen te verleiden. Het neemt een onstandvastig karakter en een persoon beladen met zonden, om er zich op te beroepen zeer godsdienstig te zijn—althans “vroom” te kunnen spreken.

En het is juist dan zoo gevaarlijk, om allerlei leer oogluikend toe te laten. Want niet alleen, dat verleiders en verleiden ten verderve gaan, maar ook voor tijd en wijle werpen dat soort menschen zich gaarne op als de verpersoonlijking van de wijsheid, die er voor de gemeente van noode is.

Wat er echter ontbreekt is: De kennis der Waarheid

Daarom geeft ook al het leeren voor diezelfde menschen niets, behalve dan, dat de blinde nog steeds meer blind wordt.

W. V.

The Significance Of The Ninety Nine Theses

The reader of these lines is warned, at the very outset of this essay, that he must not confuse the "ninety-nine theses" with the "ninety-five theses". This warning is not superfluous, for not a few will when reading the title invariably think of the eve of all-saints day, Oct. 31, 1517, when Luther nailed his ninety-five theses to the door of the castle church at Wittenberg. Someone may even say, when reading the title to this writing: Now that is a serious error on either the part of the writer or the printer.

The reason for this is obvious. The "ninety-nine theses of Luther are little known. So little, in fact that librarians at accredited colleges and seminaries told me and wrote me, that they had never heard of the "Ninety-Nine Theses"; that they were very sorry, but they could not give me a copy of the same in full, neither could they give me any critical discussion on them.

However, after some correspondence with the Pritzlaff Memorial Library, St. Louis, Mo., they informed me that they only had these "theses" of Luther in Latin. I here wish to acknowledge my indebtedness to them for loaning me the "Works of Luther" (Opera Lutheri) as also to the Rev. Petter for his kind assistance in the translation and for his helpful suggestions in general.

A few remarks concerning the history of these theses may first of all be in order.

It is quite certain, that these were written in the year of 1517, possibly some months before the writing of the ninety-five. At this time Luther was professor in the university at Wittenberg, a man of good standing in the Catholic church of his day. Luther wrote these theses, but did not publish them. He sent them to the theologians at Erfurth to a certain John Lange at that time Prior. He wrote as follows: "My suspence as to your decision upon these paradoxes is great, extreme, too great perhaps, and full of anxiety. I strongly suspect that your theologians will consider as paradoxical, and even as kakodoxical (unsound doctrine, G. L.) what is in my opinion very orthodox (sound teaching, G. L.). Pray inform me as soon as possible of your sentiments upon them. Have the goodness to declare to the faculty of theology, and to all, that I am prepared to visit you, and to maintain these propositions publicly, either in the university or in the monastery." *History of the Reformation*, D'Aubigne. Vol. I, p. 245.

Luther never received any notice from the theologians. It was only after publishing the ninety-five theses that the world was set aflame with reformatory fire. The fact that these theses were ignored, and that

the ninety-five were the occasion of the breaking forth of the reformation, may be the reasons why these theses under discussion were forgotten through the ages.

Focussing our attention on the theses proper we wish to call attention to three matters.

First of all to: *The main subject of these Theses.*

The great subject treated of in these theses is: The Bondage of the Will of Sinful, Fallen Man. It is the same subject that Luther later treated in his book "The Bondage Of The Will", written against the Diatribe (abusive discourse) of Erasmus on this subject.

The position taken by the great reformer, is that man's will is *spiritually* not able and *free to choose the good*, but that it is in *bondage*. To show that this is the teaching of Luther we will quote from the "theses" quite extensively. (For the sake of brevity and clarity we will number them between brackets.)

Luther says (4) "It is true, that man having become a bad tree, is not able to do or to will, except evil". (Veritas itaque est quod homo arbor mala factus, non potest nisi malum velle et faciere). Thus also in (5) "It is false that the desire left to itself (appetitus liber) is able to choose in both opposites (the good as well as evil, G.L.) (in utrumque oppositorum) indeed it is not free but in bondage."

That Luther has in mind spiritual and not physical bondage (the latter would be "determinism") is evident from the following. In (6) he writes: "It is false, that the will is able to conform itself by nature to right teaching" (se conformare dictamen recto naturaliter). Here Luther speaks of two matters, which merit our attention. (a) He does not say that the will does not conform itself to anything, does not choose at all, but that it cannot conform itself to right teaching. (dictamen recto). And as we shall have occasion to demonstrate in an other connection is this essay this "right teaching" is the good Law of God (Lex bona). (b) He says that this is so of man "by nature" (naturaliter). Luther here refers to the spiritual operation of man's mind and will, as spoken of by the apostle in Eph. 2:1-3. That thus it was before the mind of Luther is evident from what he says in (7) to wit, that the will "necessarily brings forth works deformed and evil, without the grace of God". But that from this "does not follow (nec. . . sequitur) that the will is naturally evil, that is, that it is the nature of evil, as the Manicheans teach." (quod sit naturaliter mala, id est, natura mali, secundum Manichaeos). It should not be forgotten, that the Maichaens, sought for the principle of sin and evil in "matter" in the material world. Consequently they did not see the doctrine of the "old man" versus the "new man" as taught by Scripture, but they spoke of the "higher" and the "lower" in man. The "higher" the soul is

the good in man, and the "lower" the body is evil. Now Luther warns that this construction must not be placed on the "bondage of the will".

It is a spiritual-ethical question. That such is the case is most clearly expressed in (17) "Man is not able by nature to will God to be God, yea, rather he wills himself to be God, and God not be God". (Non potes homo naturaliter velle Deum esse Deum, imo vellet se esse Deum, et Deum non esse Deum). "To assert (18) therefore that man can choose God above all things is a fictitious term, yea, a monstrosity" (terminus fictus, sicut Chimera).

According to Luther the evil of man's will is brought to manifestation by the good law of God. He stresses that the ethics of Scripture is a matter of love, question of the heart. It is everything or nothing. He writes (64) "But it follows that he sins, not spiritually fulfilling the law" (Sed sequitur, peccat non spiritualiter legem implendo). Likewise he affirms (65) "he who spiritually does not become angry, neither lusts, does not kill, fornicate and steal". And (67) "It is the justice of hypocrites not to kill in deed and openly, neither to commit fornication."

This good law forces the "evil will" to show that it is exceedingly evil. It is (71) as "good law of necessity an evil to the natural will". For (86) "the will of anyone so-ever prefers if it were possible, that there were no law, and itself altogether free".

Luther also asserts, that man *always* sins, and never keeps the law. He writes (63) "He continually sins (Assidue peccat) who is without the grace of God, not killing, not fornicating, not stealing" (qui extra gratia Dei est, non occidendo, non moechando, non furando).

But what must be said of those cases where there is a certain external orderly deportment, and adherence to the law of God? Is there not a certain "inclination of the will" toward the law of God, a certain "relative good"? (The reader ought to compare "De Drie Punten In Alle Deelen Gereformeerd" by Prof. L. Berkhof). To this Luther answers: (77) "All works of the law, without the grace of God, outwardly appears good, but inwardly it is sin". (Omne opus legis sine gratia Dei, foris apparet bonum, sed intus est peccatum). And here Luther has in mind the virtues of which pagan philosophers sing; the scholastic teaching of the good of man, without the grace of God, following the ethics of Aristotle.

But how does Luther explain this phenomena of "outward righteousness"? He says (79) "a will turned unto the law, without the grace of God, does this for the endeavouring of a kind of advantage of its own". (Conversa voluntas ad legem sine gratia Dei est commodi sui talis). However, this striving to outwardly keep the law does not have the sanction of the Law-giver, and therefore (8) "Cursed are all who

work the works of the law". (Maledicti sunt omnes, qui operantur opera legis).

How can man come under the judgment (81) "Blessed are all who work the works of the grace of God"? Luther answers (29) "The highest and infallible preparation and unique disposition unto grace, is the eternal election and predestination of God". (Optima et infallibilis ad gratiam praeparatio et unica dispositio, est eterna Dei electio et Praedestinatio). For (30) "on the part of man, nothing precedes grace, except indisposition and rebellion against grace".

From the above can be seen the great theme of the Ninety-Nine Theses.

The second matter to which we call attention is: *Luther's Purpose In Writing These Theses.*

The doctor of Wittenberg did not intend these "theses" to be against the Catholic church. He "believed an holy catholic church" and was "a living member of the same". As such his purpose was to save the church from errors, and heresies which had crept into her. The error of Pelagianism was undermining the very foundations of the doctrine of grace. And it is against these errors, that this product from Luther's pen is pitted. And as we saw above, they were directed to the universities of his day, the theologians who were departing from the faith of the Latin fathers, at whose head Luther places Augustine.

That such is the position of the Reformer is evident from the theses themselves. In (1) Luther writes: "To say, that Augustine speaks excessively against the heretics, is to say, that Augustine nearly everywhere deceives." And (2) "the same is (the) Pelagian (contention) and concedes to all heretics an opportunity of triumph, yea, indeed, of victory".

That Luther's purpose is to maintain the teaching of the Latin fathers, he by implication states in (51) "It is strongly to be doubted, whether the opinion of Aristotle was held among the Latin fathers" and in (99) "In this book (volumen) nothing is said, neither do we believe taught, by us, what is not in agreement with the Catholic church doctors".

Luther therefore consciously takes position upon the Augustinian tradition in the "Theses". His purpose is positive, not negative. He wishes to build, not destroy. He is conservative in the good sense of the word. This does not mean that he tolerates what cannot be taken into the structure of Augustinian theology. To the contrary, these must be shown to be false, and as not having a part in the truth of God.

The representative teachers of these heresies, who are attacked by Luther are those standing on the Aristotelian-Aquinian tradition. Sometimes the reformer merely speaks of them all in one breath, and then again he singles out their teachings and calls

them by name. Those mentioned are: Aristotle, Porphyry of Tyre (b. 232-d. 304 A.D.) William of Occam (1280-1350?) Duns Scotus (1265?-1308) Gabriel Biel (1425-1495).

These men all have in common, that they teach that man in the way of rational processes and judgments can come to the knowledge of God, apart from revelation. These were the men of the synthesis between theology and philosophy. But as always the latter predominated over the former. The axiom here is: "Intelligemus ut credemus", we know that we may believe. Luther said following Augustine: We believe in order that we may know.

Of Porphyry Luther writes: (52) "It had been good for the church, if Porphyry with his universals had not been born a theologian". (Bonum erat ecclesia, si theologus natus non fuisset Porphyrius cum sui universalibus). Of this Porphyry, M. De Wulf "History of Medieval Philosophy" page 140, writes as follows: "The *Isagoge* (Porphyry's introductory commentary on Aristotle's logics — laws of thinking) studies the five predicables: (genus, species, specific difference, property, accident): it served as an introduction to the study of the *Categories*."

"In the *Isagoge* Porphyry does not go beyond the logical aspect of predicables, he does not enquire into the *real* or *ontological* significance of the *Categories*. He merely hints at the great problem of the objectively of universal notions: and his statement of the question later on became the starting point of the "universal" controversy".

Now it was such men as Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus and Gabriel Biel, who calimed that the knowledge of God was possible in the way of reason. This is not merely the opinion of Luther, but also of a scholar such as W. D. Ross. Writes he: "St. Thomas and Duns Scotus expressed themselves cautiously, but tended to interpret Aristotle's God in a theistic sense." Aristotle, page 183.

Over against these men, Luther states that this Aristotelian interpretation of God and divine matters, can have no place in theology. Just as it is true, that the will of man cannot find God, so also his reason cannot reveal Him. The one is as absolute as the other. for (41) "nearly the whole Aristotelian ethics is bad and hostile to grace". And (42) "It is an error (to say) that the view of Aristotle concerning happiness is not in conflict with the Catholic doctrine." And again (43, 44) "it is error to say that without Aristotle one is not a theologian, yea one is not a theologian, except he become with Aristotle." And therefore according to Luther the whole matter can be thus stated: (50) "Briefly the whole Aristotle is to theology, what darkness is to light."

This can only mean that *materially* Aristotle, (i.e. reason) can give nothing to theology. Luther does,

however, attribute a *formal* value to logics, and the syllogism. Says he: (48) "it does not follow, that the truth of the Articles of the trinity conflict with the syllogistic forms". (Non tamen ideo sequitur, veritatem Articuli Trinittis repugnare formis syllogisticis).

Luther therefore does not deny that logic has a place in theology. The truth of revelation is not irrational, although it is not the product of reason.

Thirdly we wish to call attention shortly to: *the Significance of these Theses*.

Historically, these theses have great significance for the churches of the reformation. They show that the Reformation was in its birth not merely reactionary against some abuses in the church, but that the deepest questions in life were at stake. It was the question of God or man, grace or "good works", revelation or reason of man. And the Reformation stands for the former of these alternatives.

Protestantism in distinction from Catholicism follows the Augustinian conception of sin and grace. It was for Luther more than a logical problem of seeking after truth in the abstract; it was for him a question of life or death. Catholicism left the Augustinian tradition, and continued in the Aristotelian-Aquinian error. Even the counter-reformation did not have the spiritual potentiality to retrace its steps. Hence the theology of Roman Catholicism is Pelagian-rationalistic. One has but to inquire into their conception of "man" "image of God" "the fall" and it at once becomes evident that they are Pelagian. Man is "naturally good". He is good "in puris naturalibus". What man lost was the "image" which does not belong to man's essence, for it is some added besides, it is "superadditum".

Now it is a remarkable phenomena that the theological "issue" of 1924 was centered about the same questions, as Luther is treating in these theses. The question in these theses are of such a nature, that it is "either or". One must choose for Luther or for the Scholastics. Points II and III of 1924 choose the latter of the two. Now I know, that the approach to the questions in these "points" is different from that of the Scholastics and Roman Catholicism. Fundamentally there is no difference. Both are Pelagian. The one speaks of the "restraining influence of the Spirit" which is not regenerating, and so man can perform civil righteousness, can live a naturally good life. Rome also teaches that man can live a *naturally* good life by virtue of his being "in puris naturalibus". Luther denies both.

That those who maintain the "points" of 1924 must speak of the "mystery" when the error of their stand is pointed out, is due to the fact that they attempt to bring Aristotle and Augustine together. They attempt a synthesis between "natural theology" and the revela-

tion of God. It may be that not all are conscious of this who maintain the theory of common grace. They also do not go as far as Rome does, but that is not due to the teaching of "points II and III" but due to an inconsistency of the defenders, because they hold to Calvinistic tradition.

I am aware that this is saying quite a lot, but the conviction has grown upon me during the past few years, that "common grace" is not an outgrowth of the Augustinian-Calvinistic tradition, but of the Aristotelian-Aquinian synthesis. At least that is the judgment of Luther in the Nine-Nine Theses.

G. L.

Education In High School Age

Training the child in the way he should go, weighs heavily with the parent who is conscious of his responsibility as parent. To develop and cultivate the talents which God has entrusted to our children so that they can take their God-given places in life, is a task we cannot esteem lightly.

As the child grows older, the problem, instead of dissolving itself, thrusts itself fully upon us.

During the grammar school years the question of education is a comparatively simple one. Today every parent realizes that a grammar school education is essential to the child's future welfare. For he himself has neither the time nor the ability to give him the education he needs. Besides, the laws against illiteracy, especially in our country, are definite enough on that score.

Nor does the subject matter in which he is to be instructed during his early years create any real difficulty. He must learn to read and write, make his acquaintance with numbers and the intricacies of arithmetic, know something about geography, history, health and science. Whether it be a boy or a girl a certain amount of general knowledge must be acquired to become acquainted with the world in which we live and to be able to make its way through it.

The Christian parent, not content with a mere secular education, nor satisfied with merely adding Bible study to the list of subjects taught, insists that all the instruction be based upon the Word of God, with God as its center, so that the child will learn to behold the beauties of the Lord and His mighty works, and to live a God-centered life, even in the midst of a wicked world.

So far the matter of education presents no real problem as far as the individual child is concerned, except possibly that one child takes to learning far

more readily than another, and some will show outstanding ability in one subject while others will show ability in some other subject.

By the time the child has reached the high school age the problem of his education fully asserts itself.

The period between the ages of twelve or thirteen and eighteen, commonly known as the period of early adolescence, marks a definite change in the child himself. He begins to assert himself and take on maturity. The childishness disappears and physically he begins to look "grown up". His features change, his characteristics and interests become more pronounced. He becomes more independent in his thinking, not merely accepting the word of parent or teacher, but tries to reason out the problems he meets by individual thinking. Almost overnight the child of yesterday outgrows his shorts or her braids, and has become an individual who must be treated as such. In this period of transition between childhood and maturity the education becomes an education of the individual and must serve to develop and cultivate the particular abilities of the individual child. The opportunity must be taken in its stride because the high school age passes swiftly by and maturity is soon reached.

The time comes when the parent faces the question with all its implications: shall I send my child to high school?

This question is of a comparatively recent date. Not many years ago only the well-to-do were in a position to give their children a high school education, while those of moderate means even wondered as to the value of it. No one went to high school unless he had in mind some definite profession, such as becoming doctor, or lawyer, or minister. By the time that he had finished the grades the father could often use him in his own field or business or labor. Frequently it was simply taken for granted that the child would follow in the footsteps of his father and his further education rested solely on the shoulders of the parent. If such was not the case, it was often quite important that the child should help support the family, and his future depended largely on the kind of job he could find.

This has undergone a remarkable change during the last few years. Witness the fact that in 1910 about one million children of America graduated from high school, while twenty years later, in 1930, the number had increased to five million and is very likely still on the increase.

Various factors have influenced this rapid expansion in higher education. One of these is the fact that many states have introduced laws making school attendance compulsory until the age of sixteen or eighteen years. There are objections which can be raised against laws of this nature, particularly the fact that many children are inducted into the high schools

who have no ability or desire to study, but are compelled to waste their time there while they might be spending it profitably in preparing themselves for some work they are capable of doing. Yet the fact remains that these laws are there and also enforced.

But there are also other factors that enter in. Our way of living has undergone a radical change during the last few decades, so that the higher standard of living and the improved means of communication thru the radio and the press have made an advanced education an invaluable asset. The introduction of the machine has caused labor and industry to make great strides ahead, but have also tended to make our lives far more complicated. Where formerly a man had to have brawn to handle a pick and shovel in digging a ditch, he now needs a brain to manipulate the complicated piece of machinery that does the work far more quickly and efficiently. Modern inventions, no less, create a demand for skilled craftsmen and trained workmen. The blacksmith shop, for one thing, is now transformed into a modern automobile industry where car after car is run off from the assembly lines by experienced workers. And behind these workers stands a staff of executives, office workers, engineers, designers, chemists, mechanics and others. Likewise electricity and the radio have opened new fields of endeavor demanding training and experience. Now more than ever industry sends out a call for young men and young women who can be inducted into the work and make advancements as they go along. The present war, instead of slackening this demand for trained workmen, only tends to increase it, so that today many positions cannot be obtained without some sort of advanced education.

The question of whether a child should receive an advanced education relegates itself in many cases to that other question, what is the proper form of education for the particular child? There should not only be a definite end in view in sending the child to high school, but the child should also begin to specialize in some particular field of study as soon as possible. His ability and liking for a certain branch of study often holds the key for his future. The child who is making rapid strides toward maturity and must take his place in life tomorrow, must not while away those precious years but must receive his preparation today.

But these things, as important as they may be by themselves, only scratch the surface of the problem. Far more important is the question for every Christian parent, what is the ultimate purpose of giving your child an advanced education?

Only too readily can we allow ourselves to be swept along with the trends of present day education.

In the field of modern education there is a very definite and common trend toward *materialism*. The love of money is still, as it always has been, the root of

all evil. Behind this lies the wicked desire of man to set himself up as God, to seek a self-centered life and to determine for himself what is the highest good. Often the parent will sacrifice himself without end to give his child an education with the sole purpose that he may "make good" in the world. The child must not go through life as he was forced to do, working by the sweat of his brow in menial labor for a meager income. He must arise to some prominent position and "amount to something" in life. It does not make a great deal of difference what position or vocation he chooses as long as it makes his future secure. Professing Christians will even risk sending their children away from home and church into an utterly worldly environment if the profit can be measured in dollars and cents. Little do they seem to realize that they are training the child to labor for the bread that perishes, even at the expense of his soul.

Another common trend in modern education is the trend toward "culture". It is not entirely distinct from the trend toward materialism, but is nevertheless to be distinguished from it. Culture, they will tell you, is an end in itself and has its own excuse for being. A man of culture is a man of prominence who rises to a position, honor and fame among men. The main question is not what a man is, or what he does, or even why he does it, but simply how he does it. Whatever profession or business he may choose, he must make himself a man of influence and be somebody in this world, no matter what. "Culture" becomes the outward shell in which a man lives among his fellow men, a cloak of self-righteousness to hide the corruption of the heart and gain the high respect of others. It means worldly mindedness in a world where God has no place and Christ has long since been cast out.

We cannot ignore the fact that these and similar tendencies take a prominent place in the public high schools. The world that is "neutral" overagainst religion lays down its own godless principles and inculcates them into the receptive minds of the youth of high school age. The public high school student, who reached the age that he considers himself quite capable of thinking for himself and formulating his own opinions, is subjected to the subtle influence of these principles for five or six hours of every day, five days a week and some forty weeks of the year, for four or more years. Place overagainst that the Catechetical instruction of about thirty hours, more or less, per year, the attendance of the public worship on Sunday, and the influence of the home. Even outside of the fact that the time spent in positive instruction in the school far exceeds that of both the home and church together, there is a very natural and constant conflict between them. The child is led into a maze of contradictions and confusions, even while he is being trained for the future. This can only be detrimental

to him.

Well may even the Christian schools and Christian high schools be on the alert against these modern trends. We need Christian schools for higher education, but we cannot rest there, for we need Christian schools that are based on the Scripturally Reformed principles which we maintain and defend. The child must be taught that "wisdom is the principle thing, therefore get wisdom, and with all thy getting get understanding." (Proverbs 4:7). Wisdom, not in the sense in which the world seeks it, but wisdom which has the fear of the Lord as its beginning, its basic principle. True wisdom sees God in all things, seeks to delve ever deeper into His revelation and to behold His beauty, strives to live according to His statutes and to do all things to His glory. God's friend-servant in the world must bear the image of Christ Jesus in every sphere of life unto the glory of the Father. Need it be said that an education that will be used by God, through His Spirit, to inculcate that true wisdom must be a thoroughly theo-centric education?

We have not begun to reach our goal until we have created a real cooperation between the home, the church and the school in the education of our children. We need schools that are founded four-square upon the Word of God. But we also need a training for our children in the Church which fits the child of today, in order that he may learn to know the Word of God and apply it to the daily walk of life; a faithful and regular attendance of Catechism and the divine worship. But we need, no less, a home where parents are living examples to their children, instructing them in word and deed and transmitting to the generation to come the heritage of truth handed down to them from the fathers.

The man of God must be made perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

C. H.

Seeking Contact

In our last article, entitled "De keuze van een zendingsveld", we purposed to set forth how that we as Protestant Reformed Churches felt it our duty to call the Christian Reformed Churches back to the faith of our fathers, and cause her to retract her heresies and return to the truths of God's absolute sovereignty and of the total depravity of man, the two cardinal doctrines of the Reformed faith. And further that if she refused to return from her evil way, to call out of her midst all those, who, together with us, desired to

be faithful to our Reformed heritage. How to seek contact with all such is the subject of this present article.

During the first ten or twelve years of our existence as Protestant Reformed Churches it was our policy to seek contact only with those seeking us, and hence only to labor in such localities and communities where there were those who were already interested in our cause and requested us to labor in their midst. It was especially the Rev. H. Hoeksema, who, during these years was sent out into various localities of the Christian Reformed Churches, and rendered invaluable service. He would enlighten and instruct such communities in re the Common Grace controversy, and point out the heresies contained in the "Three Points". If there were a sufficient number of those that were vitally interested in the Reformed truth, these groups were then organized into Protestant Reformed congregations. During the first years of our existence there were several such communities that were interested in the cause of our churches. Among the first congregations so organized there were Hull, Byron Center, Hudsonville, Roosevelt Park, South Holland, Oak Lawn, Doon, Sioux Center, Pella and Oskaloosa. Later Holland, Creston, Rock Valley, Orange City, Redlands, Bellflower and Grand Haven were added. Due to the fact that the Common Grace controversy, during these first years, was a very live issue also in the Christian Reformed Churches, there was a far greater interest than now. Gradually there is arising a generation that is more or less ignorant of the controversy which was waged during the years 1920-24. This was in no small part due to the fact that the leaders of the Christian Reformed Churches soon learned that the more they sought to defend the theory of Common Grace as expressed in the "Three Points", the more the people's eyes were opened to its fallacies, and hence they have avoided the issue as much as possible. Instead of instructing the people as to the issues involved in the Common Grace controversy, as the Synod of 1924 advised, they have used every possible means to cast ing remarks at our churches. It has time and again been presented as though the Protestant Reformed Churches are a group of people, who a few years ago withdrew from the Christian Reformed Churches, and caused an unnecessary breach under the leadership of a few ministers who could not have their own way. Others have spread the rumor that the doctrine of the Protestant Reformed Churches is extremely dangerous, making God the author of sin, and denying the responsibility of man. We have even met more than one during the past few years, who were under the impression that not the Christian Reformed Churches, but that we had adopted the "Three Points" in 1924. One elderly gentleman even informed me that some years ago during house visitation he had

remarked to the visiting pastor, "wat wil die Ds. Hoeksema toch met zijn 'drie punten'?", and that his pastor had left him in his ignorance, instead of informing him that not the Rev. Hoeksema, but that the Christian Reformed Churches had accepted the "Three Points". We have even met members of the Christian Reformed Churches who were entirely ignorant of the fact that there was a Protestant Reformed denomination, and lived under the impression that there was but one "Ds. Hoeksema's church". This wide-spread ignorance is largely due to the policy of "dood-zwijgen" which the leaders of the Christian Reformed Churches have adopted, while on the other hand their false accusations have filled the hearts of others with suspicion and prejudice against us.

It was for these reasons that we as Protestant Reformed Churches felt that it was not sufficient to wait until there were those that sought contact with us, but that we should go out and seek contact with Reformed Christians everywhere and combat these evil reports and this wide-spread ignorance, and show that not we, but that the Christian Reformed Churches, in adopting the "Three Points" had departed from the Reformed faith. It was for this purpose that our churches felt the need of a home missionary.

It must, however, be self-evident, that it is far more difficult to seek contact with those that are grossly ignorant of our churches, or deeply prejudiced against them, than with those who first sought contact with us and requested us to labor in their midst. It was comparatively easy to come into a community where there were those who were already vitally interested enough in the cause of our churches to ask us to come, and in some cases even ready to join the fellowship of our churches. The soil, as it were, was all prepared and all that had to be done was to sow the seed. Then it was oftentimes only a matter of a few weeks and there would be sufficient interest to warrant the organizing of a new congregation. It is a far different matter, however, there where as yet no interest has been shown. Then it is very difficult.

So it was in our missionary labors. One can hardly imagine how difficult it is to find contact and gain the confidence of those that are filled with prejudice against our churches, and even if there were a few that were sympathetic to our cause, they would hesitate to reveal their sympathies for "fear of the Jews". It often took weeks and months to overcome this fear and prejudice, and gain the confidence of a few. In order to gain this confidence it is very important that the missionary live in the community in which he labors. He should continually come in contact with those whom he seeks in their daily walk of life. It is also of great importance to find a centrally located meeting place where he can lecture and speak, and also find the best

ways and means of announcing these meetings. It has been our experience that the best way to find contact with Reformed Christians is to bring them the Reformed truth. If one can only succeed in arousing enough interest so that they will come and listen to the expounding of the Reformed doctrines as revealed in the Word of God, then you can soon find an entrance into the hearts and confidence of those that love the Reformed truth. But even as it is in the field of radio, all your efforts are in vain unless you can get them to "tune in". It is certainly true that only the Lord, by His grace and Spirit, can incline the hearts unto His truth, but it is and remains our duty to use every means at our disposal to seek contact with many of our Reformed brethren who are still ignorant of the truths for which we stand, and for which we were cast out from the fellowship of the Christian Reformed Churches. It is our hope and prayer that we as churches may continue to see this as our duty and that the Lord will soon provide our churches with another home missionary, who will make it his calling to seek contact with these Reformed brethren.

B. K.

IN MEMORIAM

It has pleased the Lord to take into His Heavenly Home on Friday, April 3 at 8 o'clock, my beloved wife and our dear sister,

MINNIE DE GELDER—Ronda

at the age of 58 years and 14 days.

Harry DeGelder, Redlands, California
 Mrs. John VerLeen, Holland, Michigan
 Miss Dena Ronda, Walker, Michigan
 Mrs. John Posthumus, Walker, Michigan
 Henry Ronda, Detroit, Michigan
 Arthur Ronda, Grand Rapids, Michigan
 Mrs. R. N. Terpstra, Walker, Michigan

Revelations 21:4.

!—NOTICE—!

All Announcements and Obituaries must be sent to Mr. R. Schaafsma, 1101 Hazen St. S. E., Grand Rapids, Michigan, and will not be placed unless the regular fee of \$1.00 accompanies the notice.

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