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MEDITATIE

Het Weiden Der Slachtschappen

Dies heb ik deze slachtschappen geweid, dewijl zij ellendige schapen zijn; en ik heb mij genomen twee stokken, den eenen heb ik genoemd LIEFELIJKHEID, en den anderen heb ik genoemd SAMENBINDERS; en ik heb die schapen geweid. Zach. 11:7.

Vreemde opdracht!

Weidt deze slachtschappen!

Immers is het een schijnbaar hopelooze en ook doellooze taak, om slachtschappen nog te weiden, schapen, die ten doode zijn genoemd en reeds op weg zijn naar de slachtbank. . . .

Het laat zich denken, dat de profeet bezwaar zou hebben tegen het uitvoeren van dit bevel, dat hij althans zonder veel ijver en geestdrift zich zette tot het volbrengen van den hem opgedragen taak. Ach, waarom toch dit bevel? Was het dan geen werk, dat er op berekend was, om den uitvoerder van den aanvang alle moed te benemen? Waarom toch, o Heere?

Weinig verschil maakt het daarbij, althans wat de idee aangaat, hoe we ons den vorm voorstellen, waarin deze profetie door den profeet werd ontvangen en uitgevoerd. Er komen in hoofdstuk drie verschillende profetieën voor, die op het nauwst met elkander in verband staan, en die, wat den vorm betreft, alle een zekere profetische actie veronderstellen. De eerste is die van de opdracht om de slachtschappen te weiden, een opdracht, die door den profeet getrouw wordt uitgevoerd. De tweede is de profetie van het verbreken van de herdersstaven en hetgeen er mee in verband staat. En de derde is die van de voorstelling eens dwazen herders en zijn gereedschap.

En de vraag komt op: hoe ontving de profeet deze drievoudige profetie, en hoe werd ze door hem aan

het volk verkondigd? Hebben we hier te denken aan iets, dat werkelijk plaats greep in het leven en den arbeid van den profeet onder de teruggekeerden uit Babel, en dat aldus profetie werd van hetgeen later zou geschieden? Of hebben we hier te doen met een profetische handeling, die door den profeet voor de oogen van het volk werd verricht, en waardoor het Woord des Heeren in concreten vorm tot Israel kwam? Of kwam dit Woord des Heeren tot den profeet in den vorm van een drievoudig visioen, dat hij later aan het volk mededeelde?

Het laatste is meest waarschijnlijk.

Immers komen er in dit hoofdstuk elementen voor, die door den profeet niet kunnen zijn verricht of ervaren, noch in de werkelijkheid, noch in den vorm eener profetisch-symbolische handeling. Denk maar aan het afsnijden der drie herders in ééne maand (vs. 8), en aan het eischen en het afgewogen worden van des profeten loon (vs. 12).

We hebben hier dus te denken aan profetische gezichten.

Doch aan de gedachte in deze opdracht vervat verandert dit niets.

Weidt deze slachtschappen,—aldus is de opdracht, die de profeet van den Heere ontvangt.

En de profeet vervult haar ten einde toe: Dies heb ik deze slachtschappen geweid.

Wonderlijke opdracht!

Slachtschappen!

En let wel: niet *Mijne*, maar *deze* slachtschappen!

Want slachtschappen zijn wel schapen, die ten doode zijn gedoemd, die naar de slachtbank worden gevoerd; en wel zijn *deze* slachtschappen het volk Israels, dat zijn ondergang tegemoet ging; maar toch maakt het groot verschil uit welk oogpunt het wordt aangeduid als slachtschappen.

Wil het hier zeggen, dat ze zich openbaarden als Gods volk in de wereld, dat ze getrouw waren aan Jehova, hunnen God, en dat daarom de vijand hen

haatte en vervolgde en den ganschen dag doodde, en hen achtte als schapen der slachting? Of spreekt de Heere Zelf hier, en noemt Hij hen slachtschapen, omdat Hij Zelf het vonnis des doods over hen heeft uitgesproken, reeds vóór de grondlegging der wereld, en thans ook in den tijd, omdat ze rijp worden voor het oordeel?

Beide zou wel kunnen.

Ach, Gods verkoren en getrouwe volk klaagt immers dikwijls: "Maar om uwentwil worden wij den ganschen dag gedood; wij worden geacht als slachtschapen." Ps. 44:23. En ook van deze slachtschapen lezen we toch in het verband, dat het hunne bezitters zijn, die hen dooden, en het voor geene schuld houden; dat een iegelijk dergenen, die hen verkoopen zegt: "Geloofd zij de Heere, dat ik rijk geworden ben"; en dat niemand hen verschoont. vs. 5. En het zijn immers "ellendige schapen", die nog door den Heere geweid worden. En waarom zou de Heere dan verworpen goddeloozen weiden, die reeds ten ondergang zijn gedoemd? Maar, aan den anderen kant, er wordt in het verband ook gesproken van een oordeel Gods. De Heere zelf zal hen niet meer verschoonen, maar Hij zal hen overleveren, zoodat de vijand het land te morzel zal slaan, en de Heere zal hen niet verlossen. Bovendien heet het straks: "Mijne ziel was over hen verdrietig geworden, en ook had hunne ziel een walg van mij. En ik zeide: Ik zal ulieden niet meer weiden; wat sterft, dat sterve, en wat afgesneden is, dat zij afgesneden, en dat de overgeblevenen de een des anderen vleesch verslinden." vss. 8, 9. Straks wegen ze den herder het loon der verachting uit, vs. 12. En de staven des herders worden verbroken!

En toch deze twee elementen sluiten elkander niet uit.

Veeleer moeten ze aan elkander worden verbonden.

Slachtschapen zijn het, die door den Heere ten doode gedoemd zijn, en voor welker slachting Hij de vijanden als Zijne instrumenten gebruikt. Of, om het beeld te laten varen, Israel wordt hier beschouwd uit het oogpunt van zijn verworpen, vleeschelijken bolster. God wil hen ten ondergang voeren. En de vijanden van rondom willen het ook, en worden door den Allerehoogste gebruikt tot dat doel. Het zijn dus geen slachtschapen, die door de wereld als zoodanig worden beschouwd en behandeld, doch die voorwerpen zijn van Gods gunst; maar voorwerpen van Gods toorn en eeuwige gramschap zijn het, wier ondergang nabij is. Israel wordt hier profetisch beschreven in zijn snellen afval en ondergang, na de ballingschap en tot op Christus, door God zelf ten ondergang en verwoesting overgegeven aan de hen hatende wereldmacht!

Weidt deze slachtschapen!

Die heb ik deze slachtschapen geweid!

Maar hoe nu? Is het dan niet in tegenspraak met zichzelf, dat God verworpen, vleeschelijke kinderen

zou willen weiden? Weidt men dan slachtschapen? Ligt dan in dat weiden niet een daad van gunst en liefde. En als God de schapen wil geweid hebben, houdt dit dan niet in, dat Hij bedoelt hen te verzorgen en te voeden, hen te beschermen en te zaligen?

Zeker, wat het overblijfsel betreft!

En in dat overblijfsel naar de verkiezing der genade ligt altijd het positieve motief van het weiden der schapen.

Israel was één kudde. En in die ééne kudde was er tot het einde toe het overblijfsel naar de verkiezing der genade, dat geweid moest worden en behouden.

Maar bij die ééne kudde behoorde ook het verworpen, vleeschelijk Israel. En dat vleeschelijk element nam toe in aantal, in invloed, in macht, kreeg de overhand. En die ééne kudde moest worden geweid met het eindelijk gevolg, dat in den weg der verharding het Joodsche volk rijp werd voor het oordeel en verworpen werd, terwijl het overblijfsel behouden werd, en overging in de Kerk der nieuwe bedeeeling.

En nu zou het wel kunnen, dat een onderherder zou meenen, dat hij die goddelooze slachtschapen niet meer moest weiden, dat zijne ziel al te spoedig verdrietig over hen zou worden.

Het laat zich denken, dat hij "alleen voor de uitverkorenen zou willen prediken"!

Vandaar de opdracht: "weidt deze slachtschapen."

En: dies heb ik deze slachtschapen geweid!

Ik heb ze geweid!

Maar wie is deze herder?

Zeker, in de allereerste plaats de profeet Zacharia, zoodat hij in het profetisch gezicht bezig is, en als herder over Israel optreedt.

In de tweede plaats, zeker ook alle onderherders, die hem volgden tot aan de komst van Christus toe. Want immers strekt deze profetie, die spreekt van het verbreken der staven Liefelijkheid en Samenbinders, en die gewaagt van het loon der verachting, dat men den herder uitkeert, zich veel verder uit dan het leven en den herdersarbeid van den profeet. Hier zijn dus inbegrepen al de herders, die ooit Israel hebben geweid, al de profeten, die het Oud Testamentische volk het Woord Gods hebben verkondigd tot den dag van Christus toe.

Zelfs geldt dit woord allen, die door God geroepen zijn, ook in de nieuwe bedeeeling, tot den eindelijkden dag van Christus toe, om de gemeente Gods te weiden. Want de geschiedenis van het Israel der oude bedeeeling herhaalt zich in de kerk der nieuwe bedeeeling. Altijd is er de uitverkorene kudde Gods, en altijd zijn er de slachtschapen, en altijd krijgt het vleeschelijk element de overhand, en altijd komt opnieuw de opdracht tot

de herders, wier ziel al te spoedig verdrietig zou worden over de schapen: Weidt deze slachtschapen!

Maar ook zoo is niet genoeg gezegd.

Er is hier meer dan de profeet en dan alle profeten!

Er is hier een hooger Ik!

Immers, hoe zou de profeet kunnen zeggen: "Ik heb drie herders in eene maand afgesneden"? vs. 8. En ook hetgeen verder in dat achtste vers wordt gezegd: "want mijne ziel was over hen verdrietig geworden, en ook had hunne ziel eene walg van mij", kan wel op den profeet toegepast worden, maar toch niet in laatste instantie op hem alleen, of ook zelfs in de eerste plaats. Ook zou een menschelijke herder niet van zichzelf kunnen besluiten om de schapen niet meer te weiden, om te laten sterven, wat sterft, en afgesneden te laten, wat afgesneden is; noch ook om zijne herderstaven Liefelijkheid en Samenbinders te verbreken. En vooral ook uit het afwegen van het loon der verachting, genomen in het licht van de eindelijke vervulling daarvan, is het wel duidelijk, dat hier een hooger Ik optreedt als de Herder der slachtschapen.

Daarom is deze Herder allereerst God Zelf!

Hij is de Herder Israels. Hij heeft Zijne schapen verkoren vóór de grondlegging der wereld. Hij vergadert Zijne kudde in den tijd, en dat wel zoo, dat er bij die kudde altijd weer slachtschapen gevonden worden. Hij verlost Zijne uitverkorene schapen van de schuld der zonde, roept hen uit de duisternis tot Zijn wonderbaar licht, voedt hen en weidt hen, beschermt hen en bewaart hen, en geeft hun het eeuwige leven. En Hij weidt ook de slachtschapen, en maakt hen door Zijne weiding vet voor den dag der slachting. Of wie is anders tot deze dingen bekwaam? . . .

Deze Herder is óók Christus, zooals overduidelijk is uit het volgend verband, vooral uit het afgewogen worden van het loon der verachting. Hij is geen ander dan de Herder Israels, maar God in het vleesch, zooals Hij tot Zijne schapen komt, om hen te verlossen en te verheerlijken, hen te weiden ten eeuwigen leven. Hem heeft God vóór de grondlegging der wereld verordined tot Oppersten Herder. En Hij is gekomen, heeft Zijn leven gesteld voor de schapen, is verheerlijkt, en weidt en beschermt van den hemel de schapen, die Hem door den Vader zijn gegeven. En niet één van hen zal verloren gaan in der eeuwigheid. . . .

Maar ook Hij heeft de opdracht: "weidt deze slachtschapen!" En ook Hij is aan deze opdracht getrouw, zoodat ze "ziende zien, en niet bemerken, en hoorende hooren, en niet verstaan; opdat ze zich niet te eeniger tijd bekeeren, en hun de zonden vergeven worden." Mark 4:11. En Hij dankt den Vader, dat Hij deze dingen voor de wijzen en verstandigen verborgen heeft.

En zoo zijn hier dan eindelijk bedoeld de onderherders, door wie deze Opperste Herder werkt, de profeten, straks de apostelen, de herders en leeraars.

Door hen vergadert en bewaart en beschermt en

voedt de Opperste Herder Zijne kudde in het midden der wereld.

Door hen weidt Hij ook de slachtschapen!

Daarom worden ze gesteld tot een reuke des levens ten leven, maar ook tot een reuke des doods ten doode.

En wie getrouw is ten einde toe, verstaat zijn opdracht: "weidt deze slachtschapen."

En zegt: "Dies heb ik deze slachtschapen geweid!"

Wie is bekwaam?

Weidt ze!

En weiden beteekent altijd hetzelfde: leiden, beschermen, voeden!

Zoo weidt de Opperste Herder Zijne kudde. Zoo leidt Hij de Zijnen in het spoor der gerechtigheid. Zoo beschermt Hij hen tegenover de macht der vijanden, die het op hun verderf toelagen. Zoo voedt Hij hen met het brood des levens.

En zoo doet ook de onderherder. Hij weidt de schapen, ook de slachtschapen!

Hij neemt zich daartoe de twee stokken, hem door den Oppersten Herder ter hand gesteld: Liefelijkheid en Samenbinders. Het zijn herdersstaven. Ze zijn des herders gereedschap, waarmee hij de kudde weidt. Ze zijn dus in het algemeen symbool van het middel, waardoor de onderherder de kudde van en Oppersten Herder weidt. En dat middel is altijd hetzelfde. Beide in de oude en in de nieuwe bedeeïng weidt de herder altijd de kudde door middel van het Woord des Evangelies. Een ander middel bezit hij niet. Dat Woord verkondigt hij. Door dat Woord wordt de kudde gevoed, geleid, gesterkt, beschermd in het midden der wereld. En dat Woord wordt door de twee stokken voorgesteld naar twee zijden, uit tweeërlei oogpunt: het is een Woord van Liefelijkheid, van schoonheid, van aantrekkelijkheid, gunst en genade: de volle liefelijkheid Gods in Christus Jezus over Zijn volk is er in geopenbaard en wordt er in verkondigd; en het is een Woord van *Samenbinding*, want het verkondigt vrede in den band des Verbonds, de band aan God door Christus, de band der eenheid in liefde tot elkander.

Ander gereedschap heeft de herder niet.

Met die twee staven, door dat ééne Woord, weidt hij de geheele kudde.

Het ééne liefelijke, saambindende Woord wordt altijd aan allen zonder onderscheid verkondigd.

En altijd is de uitkomst tweevoudig.

De slachtschapen worden verhard. Hunne ziel krijgt een walg van den onderherder, en van den Oppersten Herder. Straks worden ze overgegeven aan het verderf.

En de "ellendigen" onder hen worden behouden!

En bekennen: het was des Heeren Woord!

H. H.

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EDITORIALS

A Deceptive Application

According to reliable reports by several well-pleased of his audience, a Christian Reformed minister in Grand Rapids recently preached a sermon on Genesis 14:13 in which he emphasized that the Christian must not separate himself from the world, and that it is proper for him to become member of the worldly unions.

The text reads as follows: "And there came one that had escaped, and told Abram the Hebrew; for he dwelt in the plain of Mamre the Amorite, a brother of Eschol, and brother of Aner: and these were confederates with Abram." It is usually explained that these confederates took part with Abram in the pursuit of and battle against the kings that had invaded the land of Canaan, and in the rescuing of Lot and the people of Sodom.

It is not impossible that the preacher had read Dr. Kuyper's "De Gemeene Gratie", for in this work of the Dutch theologian one may find a paragraph in this passage of Scripture which attempts to prove that Abram and Sarah did not live in the land of Canaan "as two lonely vagabonds, without any contact with the surrounding tribes". (I:325). It must be considered very questionable, however, whether even Dr. Kuyper would have agreed with the application made to membership in the worldly unions by the preacher referred to above. In fact, in view of the separate action in various departments of life and the necessity for separate organization emphasized by this Dutch author and leader, we may well draw the conclusion that he would have condemned such application wholeheartedly.

But however this may be, the application is certainly deceptive, and the interpretation of Scripture on which it is supposed to be based is erroneous. It is deceptive, because it tends to make the people of God join the worldly unions with a clear conscience and with an appeal to the Word of God. It even presents such action on the part of the Christian as being in accord with the will of God. It is he that refuses to join that acts contrary to the divine will and to the revealed Word of God. But the interpretation of the text that is implied here is certainly erroneous. Let us note, in the first place, that it proceeds from the supposition that Mamre, Eschol, and Aner were ungodly men. This is a thing that is frequently taken for granted. Abram was the only regenerate, God-fearing man in the land of Canaan at that time, all the rest

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were reprobate and wicked. However, that this supposition cannot be maintained is evident from the presence of a man like Melchisedec, king of Salem and priest of the Most High God. Why may there not have been (in fact, there must have been) other God-fearing people in a land that counted among its inhabitants a king that was priest of God? Let us note, secondly, that we read that the three Canaanites were "confederates" with Abraham, which is something quite different from membership in the union. Abram entered into an alliance with his neighbors as the head and chief of a not inconsiderable army (for those days) of three hundred and eighteen men, for the defense of the country against the invading kings. But when one becomes member of the union he joins an existing body on its own basis, and promises to abide by and to act according to its rules and principles. He does not form a confederacy but takes upon himself a yoke, and that yoke is the yoke of unbelievers. How true this is, may be inferred from the fact that a Christian does not join a union freely, but by compulsion, i.e. because the union closes the shop to him if he does not become member. Let us note, in the third place, that the confederacy was, evidently, *Abram's confederacy*. In the whole history of the pursuit of the kings that had captured Lot, Abram is the chief figure, and he takes the initiative. It is to him that God gives the victory, and he dispenses with the booty. Let us not forget that the land of Canaan was Abram's land by promise. He defends his own country, and expels the wicked from the inheritance of God. In this action the three neighbors were Abram's allies, confederates. But if one joins the union he allies himself with the world; the world does not join his cause, but he joins the cause of the world. The two cases are exact opposites!

If the preacher who made use of this text to defend membership in the worldly unions had at all understood the Word of God, he would have preached a different sermon.

As it stands, he abused the Word of God to mislead the flock, and to plunge the Church headlong into the world!

H. H.

The Salt Of The Earth, - A Pretext

A very common argument used to defend the membership of the Christian in a worldly union is that God's people must be salt of the earth. Now, salt is of no use as long as it remains outside of the substance that is to be salted. It is evident that a Christian cannot influence the union for good and act as the salt of the earth in such an organization unless he

join it first. Hence, it is evidently the plain duty of the Christian to become member. The Word of God demands it of him.

It is next to impossible, in view of actually existing conditions, and in view of the evident motives of all that join the worldly unions, to believe that they who advance this argument are serious. It is the *bread question* pure and simple that determines one's action when he becomes member. Afterwards he may try to soothe his conscience, to justify his action which he knows is wrong, and to find arguments in the Word of God to help him in this evil purpose of justifying himself in a wrong cause,—fact is that his action was motivated by fear that he would not have a job, or by the desire to keep a good job. Perfectly carnal reasons motivated him in taking the step, and he knows it.

But let us take the argument seriously for a moment, and analyze it.

First of all, it may be remarked that the exegesis of the phrase "salt of the earth" that is implied in this argument is not Scriptural. Salt, according to this explanation, is a *preservative*: it is used to prevent corruption. But in Scripture salt is not presented as a preservative against corruption, but as a seasoning to render the food palatable and savory. Let us note in this connection, too, that the Lord does not say that His people are the salt of the "world", but the salt of the "earth".

Secondly, even if one takes the explanation that is implied in the above mentioned argument, it should be noted that salt is certainly no *restorative*. One does not put salt in rotten meat to cure it.

Thirdly, let us not forget, that when one joins the worldly union he pledges himself to abide by the principles and practices of the union. He agrees to the closed shop, the boycott and all kinds of unchristian principles and practices. In other words, he promises beforehand that he will not act as the salt of the earth in the union. Just let anyone put this to the test. Let him try to join a union on condition that he will not agree to the principle of the closed shop. He will soon discover that "the substance" refuses to take "the salt".

We can well agree with Prof. L. Berkhof (the one of 1916), when he writes:

"Finally, the question arises: What should our Christian laborers do in view of the anti-Christian character of the general labor unions? Shall we say that they ought to join the existing organizations and attempt to reform them? From what we said in the foregoing you can easily infer that we do not intend to give any such advice. It is our firm conviction that the idea of such a reformation is purely illusory, for it would not merely mean the correction of a few abuses, but a radical change in the essential character of the whole labor movement. And they who are not

unmindful of the lessons of history, know that it has always proved impossible to reform even a church from within; are we then justified in supposing that it will be an easier matter to reform the trades unions of the present day? We repeat that the influence of the individual Christians scattered in the various unions will be practically nil, while the danger will be by no means imaginary that their spiritual sensibilities will be blunted, and they themselves gradually conformed to the standards of the world. Moreover if our Christian laborers identify themselves with these unions, they are no more able to show the world by an organized example what Christian principles mean for the world of labor, and they clearly expose themselves to the charge of hypocrisy. It seems to us also that, where in the past some Christian workingmen, that had a clear conception of the Christian view of the world, joined the general labor unions, they did not do this in virtue but rather in spite of the principles, simply because it was the line of least resistance, or since it offered them good prospects of material returns." (*The Christian Laborer in the Industrial Struggle*, p. 29).

With this we can agree.

It is only deplorable that this definite stand is now repudiated by the Christian Reformed Church.

But surely: the "salt-of-the-earth" story is rather a pretext than a serious argument.

H. H.

The Triple Knowledge

An Exposition Of The Heidelberg Catechism

IV.

LORD'S DAY III

4.

Total Depravity. (cont.)

A third and final passage to which we must call attention in this connection is Romans 2:14, 15: "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another."

It must be remarked here that the Revised Version renders verse 14 more correctly, when it translates "the things of the law" instead of "the things contained in the law." Dr. Kuyper appeals to this passage in support of his theory of a restraining grace, whereby even the heathen are enabled to do the good. He finds the following elements in this passage:

1. It teaches that there is a remnant in the hearts of the heathen of the original divine handwriting of the law. Writes he: "He (i.e. Paul, H.H.) explains in so many words, that the heathen, even in his days, i.e. forty centuries after the fall really have a remnant of this divine handwriting in their soul: 'which shew the work of the law written in their hearts'. Mark you well, it does not state that they have *the law* itself written in their hearts, but the '*work* of the law, as if to refer to a *practical incentive* rather than to a clear and pure knowledge. However this may be, it is plainly stated that there is always in the heart of the fallen sinner a remnant of this divine handwriting. Though largely obliterated and having become illegible in its details, this divine handwriting is nevertheless left in the fallen sinner to such an extent, that one can still see that it was originally there, and also can still make out what was originally written there." *De Gemeene Gratie*, II, 14, 15.

2. The passage teaches that the heathen consents to this remnant of the handwriting of the law of God in his heart. He consents to it, and responds to it with an *Amen*. We quote him: "In the second place it follows from Rom. 2:13, 14 (should be 14, 15, H.H.), that this remnant of the law in the heart of the fallen sinner is quickened to a certain extent by divine grace. ("door de Goddelijke genade tot op zekere hoogte levendig in hen wordt gehouden.") For it states 'that their conscience also bears witness in them', i.e. gives testimony to this remnant of the law in their heart, and still responds to it with an *Amen*. The conscience and the law of God are, therefore, distinguished. The conscience and the law of God are not the same, as many would have it. On the contrary, the conscience bears witness *with* the law. . . . And of this conscience he says that in relation to the remnant of the divine law it is not rebellious, nor silent, but *bearing witness with it*. And since this cannot come out of sin as such, it follows, that God not only left a remnant of His law in the heart of fallen man, but that He also operates into his consciousness and compels him in that consciousness to respond with an *Amen* to the law." *Idem*, II, 15, 16.

3. The text teaches that this operation of common grace is not limited to the individual heathen or sinner, but also operates upon his communal life in society. This Dr. Kuyper deduces from the statement: "and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another." Although it is by no means cer-

tain that this is the correct interpretation of this clause, and though it is not impossible that "one another" refers to "thoughts" rather than to the heathen in their mutual relationship (the Revised Version translates: "and their thoughts one with another accusing or else excusing them") we may let this pass as being of minor importance for our present discussion.

4. Finally, the passage teaches that this common grace enables the fallen sinner to do the good, i.e. to keep the law of God. Writes Dr. Kuyper: "And finally, in the fourth place, it follows from Rom. 2:13, 14 (should be 14, 15, H.H.) that this common grace keeps operative in the fallen sinner not merely a sense of what is honorable and dishonorable, of what is just or unjust, good or evil, but also that this common grace furnishes him with power to do the good. For he says: 'If the Gentiles, which have not the law (of Sinai) *by nature do the things of the law.*' They, therefore, not only *know* them, but they also *do* them, and it is precisely from the fact that they do them that the apostle draws the conclusion that they know them. That they do them is for the apostle the point of procedure for his argumentation. And if it is established that even a child of God confesses that he is incapable of himself to think any good, far less to do it, then it follows necessarily that also the Gentiles do not perform this good in their own power, but only because common grace impels them and enables them to do it." Idem, II, 17.

But in reply to this interpretation we may remark the following:

1. That the passage speaks very emphatically of things which the Gentiles do *by nature* (*phusei*): the Gentiles, which have not the law, do *by nature* the things of the law. Whatever, therefore, may be our interpretation of the rest of the text, whatever may be our conception of just what the Gentiles do, it must be maintained that they do it, *not by grace*, common or special, but *by nature*. *By nature* and *by grace* are terms that are mutually exclusive in Scripture, and on its basis also in our Confessions. *By nature* we are all that which we are by reason of our birth in a fallen human race, from sinful parents and through the fall of our first parents in Paradise. Nothing is added, certainly no grace. For we were "dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in times past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were *by nature* the children of wrath, even as others." Eph. 2:1-3. And the Heidelberg Catechism teaches us that we are "*by nature*" prone to hate God and our neighbor. Qu. 5. And it explains that by the fall and

disobedience of our first parents in Paradise our *nature* is become so corrupt that we are all conceived and born in sin. Now, surely, even as we are not by grace prone to hate God and the neighbor, and even as we are not by grace corrupt, and even as we are not by grace dead in trespasses and sins, and children of wrath, so the heathen do not by grace the things of the law, seeing that it is plainly stated that they do it *by nature*. When Dr. Kuyper, therefore, introduces into the explanation of the text the idea that the Gentiles do good by common grace, he corrupts the text. Whatever these Gentiles do, they certainly do it *by nature*. If, then, what they do is good (keeping the law), it follows that their *nature* must be good, for only a good tree can bring forth good fruit. But seeing that the whole of Scripture teaches us that we are *by nature* corrupt, dead in trespasses and sins, it must follow that what is said of the Gentiles in Rom. 2:14, 15, cannot be good. For *by a corrupt nature* they cannot do anything that is good.

2. That the text does not state that the Gentiles keep the law of God by nature, nor that the law of God is written in their hearts, nor that there is a remnant of the original handwriting of God in their hearts, but that they do the *things of the law*, and that they show that *the work of the law* is written in their hearts. And the things of the law and the work of the law are not the same as the law itself. By "the things of the law" I understand *the things which the law does*. Those things which the revealed and written law did for Israel, the Gentiles did themselves. What things did the law do? It distinguished in broad outlines what is good and what is evil, and it prohibited evil and commanded the good. Now, the Gentiles do by nature just that. Fallen man is not such that he does not know the difference between good and evil. He has a certain knowledge of God; he knows that God must be thanked and glorified; he discerns the difference between good and evil: he knows that it is wrong to murder, to steal, to commit adultery, to bear false testimony. The reason for this is, that the *work* of the law, the groundwork, the broad outline of the law is written in his heart. God keeps it there. Fallen man remained a rational moral being. If he were not, he could not even sin, nor could God condemn him in the day of judgment. But now it is different. That the Gentiles do, indeed, have this groundwork of the law written in their hearts they show not only by doing the things of the law, by distinguishing between good and evil, by making their own laws, but also by the fact that their own conscience bears witness, and that they accuse or excuse either one another or themselves. That this is, indeed, the meaning of the text is also evident from what is added: "these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves."

3. That in all this there is nothing that is not in

accord with the truth that *by nature* fallen man is wholly incapable of doing any good and inclined to all evil; nor is there anything in the passage that suggests or requires the theory of a restraining grace. What do the Gentiles do? Do they have the law of God or a remnant of it written in their hearts? Not at all; but the groundwork of the law, the broad principles of the law are in their hearts, are known to them, so that they discern the difference between good and evil in a broad sense, and are a law unto themselves. What do they do? Do they keep the law? Not at all; but they do *the things* of the law, they announce what is good and what is evil and show that they are capable of distinguishing between the two. Does this mean that they also do that which they know to be good? Not at all. They may, indeed, show a certain regard for what they know and declare to be virtuous, whenever they consider it advantageous to themselves. But all that Paul has written in the first chapter of this same epistle remains true of them: knowing the judgment of God that they that do such things are worthy of death, they not only commit them, but also have pleasure in them that do them! It is as the Canons of Dordrecht teach us in III, IV, 4: "There remain, however, in man since the fall, the glimmerings of natural light, whereby he retains some knowledge of God, of natural things, and of the difference between good and evil, and discovers some regard for virtue, good order in society, and for maintaining an orderly external deportment. But so far is this light of nature from being sufficient to bring him to a saving knowledge of God and to true conversion, that he is incapable of using it aright even in things natural and civil. Nay further, this light, such as it is, man in various ways renders wholly polluted, and holds it in unrighteousness, by doing which he becomes inexcusable before God."

H. H.

Contribution

Dear Editor:—

Permit me to make a few remarks in *The Standard Bearer* about our Society for Protestant Reformed Education in Grand Rapids, in order that this cause may be in the mind of all for good.

The society has made progress again. The school board was instructed to look for possible building sites and come with proposed building plans and costs to the society. You will remember that about 180 children were pledged to be sent to our school, and for this number of children we would need at least a seven room school, which would cost approximately thirty-

four thousand dollars. There was an old Y.W.C.A. property available on Eastern Ave. north of Wealthy St., at a cost of 8500 dollars, but after due inspection this was deemed unsuitable for our purpose. The society then directed the board to purchase a site located on Adams St., between Kalamazoo Ave. and Fuller Ave. The price of this site is 4000 dollars. This must be paid in cash, and it was decided to raise this sum through the means of pledge cards. Let all concerned acquire one of these cards and fill it in as the Lord has prospered them.

The remark has sometimes been made that our school society meetings are mostly attended by men of forty years and older, and that of the younger men, of whom we may expect that they have children to send to school, not so many appear. But I do not consider this so very abnormal. Of course, we do like to see more of the younger generation attend our meetings and join our movement. But when we consider the history of our Protestant Reformed Churches from the beginning, we will find that all things among us are connected, and we must look at the picture as a whole. In the beginning three congregations were ejected from the Christian Reformed Church. Of these one separated itself from us again and went its own way. And there followed days of much anxiety, for we had no assurance that the Lord would provide a place for us in this world. History testifies and Scripture predicts that those that are expelled from the church in the world because they held fast to the truth, finally have no more standing room in the world, and sometimes they disappear from the earth, as for instance, the Huguenots in France. Sometimes the devil accomplishes this by persecution, sometimes by causing internal dissension and strife. How we rejoiced, then, when we might prosper; when our Theological School might begin training young men for the ministry, and when brethren and sisters in different localities asked to be organized into local congregations in our fellowship, so that we began to see that the Lord was giving us a place in this world to stand for His cause. For His cause it is. And He has no need of any of us. Let us remember this.

In May, 1940, our churches might meet for the first time in synodical gathering, and so, after seventeen years, we might complete our denominational organization. And now, about a year and a half ago, we might organize a society for Protestant Reformed education. The question still is: shall we by the grace of God have standing room in the world as a Protestant Reformed Church? And that this question is closely connected with that of the education of our children the older people, who lived through our history, plainly see. It is this that brings especially them to our school meetings. They realize that this work *must be done!*

Till now the Lord has given us a place. And with it comes the privilege and calling to *go on!* For go on we must, would we have the assurance of a place in the future. We must go on with our Standard Bearer, we must go on, too, with the cause of a Protestant Reformed education for our children. With respect to the cause of our R.F.P.A. and that of our educational program: Grammar School, High School, we must set our face like a flint. These things *must be done*. To us all the cause of the Protestant Reformed Churches is the cause of our Lord Jesus Christ, and we have *no other cause!* In the cause of His Kingdom in the world He will use sinful and imperfect men, that have only a small beginning of the new obedience. But we are confident that the grace of God was upon us in the past, because we have the truth, and where the truth is preached there is the Church, and there is His grace and His blessing. That we have the truth the Scriptures testify; and for this we have the testimony of all the saints that have loved and adhered to the truth of God's sovereign grace; of this the very synod that adopted the "three points" had to bear witness in spite of itself.

To go on will mean considerable expense, especially for the new school building. This we cannot build now because of war restrictions. But we can go on to provide the necessary funds. And ways and means may be worked out by the board. In the work of the Lord our heart and mind and will must be controlled by His mind and will through the Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us praise Him and take courage with the prophet Jeremiah, Lam. 3:21ff.: "This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope. It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness. The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him. The Lord is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord. It is good for man that he bear his yoke in his youth." I conclude then, that if we all agree that the Lord is our portion, we have no other portion here below; all else is excluded. And, therefore, our way is clear: as Protestant Reformed brethren and sisters we must go on and stand together in the same mind and in the same spirit.

Sidney Bylsma.

ATTENTION — Consistories

The "Agendum" for our next Synod has been mailed to all the Consistories.

D. Jonker, S.C.

The Book Of Esther

The book of Esther records events that took place in the sixty years that came in between the work of Zerubbabel and that of Ezra. These events, of which we have no account save that supplied by our book, form a story that has nothing to do with Jerusalem or with those that had returned there under Zerubbabel and Joshua but with those that had refused to return of which there were many.

Ahasuerus, the well-known Xerxes of profane history, in the third year of his reign entertains at his court the aristocracy of his realm for an hundred and eighty days and all the common people in Shushan for seven days, which is the usual proportion. In this feast he displays to his subjects the wealth and splendour of his kingdom. When on the seventh day the king, whose heart is now merry with wine, would place on exhibition also the beauty of his wife, Vashti, she declines to appear before him and his guests, and the consequence is that he puts her away and gives her royal estate to Esther, whom he prefers before all other virgins. At the same time Mordecai, her uncle, from whom she has been separated in consequence of her elevation, remains near the court. She makes a secret of her Jewish origin and Mordecai makes the king his debtor by uncovering a plot against his life. Haman, who is a heathen and an enemy of the Jews, is set by the king "above all the princes that were with him". Embittered by Mordecai's disrespectful attitude—the king had commanded that he be revered by all the court personnel—Haman easily gets the king to have published a decree which, so far as human foresight can predict, must result in the complete extirpation of the Jewish race. Letters are sent by posts "into all the king's provinces, to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish, all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day—and to take the spoil of them for a prey". In every province, whithersoever the king's commandment and decree comes there is "great mourning among the Jews, and fasting and weeping, and wailing; and many in sackcloth and ashes." Conspicuous among them is Mordecai, who stands, crying aloud with a loud and bitter cry, in the street that is before the king's gate, so as to draw the attention of the attendants of queen Esther. She is prevailed upon to dare the utmost for the salvation of her people. She is even ready to perish in the attempt. But she obtains favor in the king's sight, whom she approaches without previously being called; yet she thinks it advisable to ask the king to dine with her once or twice and this in company with Haman, who does not perceive that this distinction is the beginning of his end. Having received a second invitation, he goes forth from Esther's banquet joyful and with a glad heart. But

when he sees Mordecai again sitting in the king's gate and refusing to give him the required homage, he is full of indignation. Finding that the only blot on his great good fortune is this impudence of the hated Jew, he consults with his wife and friends and resolves to remove this proud Mordecai out of the way the next morning, in order that he may recline at the next banquet with unmixed joy. He orders a gallows to be built of seventy-five feet high for Mordecai to be hanged thereon in order that the punishment might be the more terrifying and disgraceful. But that night could not the king sleep. In consequence he has read to him from the records of the kingdom. The scribe reads precisely that passage which narrates how Mordecai saved the king's life through disclosing the conspiracy against him. This raises the question, since Mordecai hitherto has not been rewarded for having made himself so deserving, what honour and dignity should be done to him. Hence, just as Haman has come in the early morning with the purpose of gaining permission for the execution of Mordecai, the question is put to him. As the question is indefinite, namely, what should be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour; and as the self-conceited Haman has no doubt that the king has in mind him, it so happens that in the same moment in which he thinks to destroy his mortal enemy, he both seals his own humiliation and raises his enemy to the highest honour. He is instructed to execute his own counsel. This first blow, which to his wife and friends presages his downfall, is immediately followed by a second. In a second banquet he is exposed by Esther, and the incensed king orders him hung on the same gallows which he had caused to be constructed for Mordecai. Esther now entreats the king for her people. The king assigns the matter to Mordecai, who adopts such measures as render the regal decree, which ordered the destruction of the Jews, ineffective, in spite of the irrevocableness which it has as the king's decree.

The Jews receive permission from Mordecai to gather themselves together and stand for their lives in the day selected for their destruction. In consequence they turn the calamity away from themselves and throw it upon the adversaries. So successful are they that the day in which their destruction was apprehended is made a day of feasting and gladness; and Mordecai, as well as Esther, by means of letters and ordinances established among them that they should annually keep this day as a day of feasting and joy, "and of sending portions one to another and gifts to the poor." Ahasuerus rules with a mighty hand over land and sea, and Mordecai, now second in the kingdom, and great among the Jews, seeks the wealth of his people, and speaks peace to all his seed. Such is the story.

The first question that confronts us is: With what

have we to do in our book? Is its content history or fiction or a commingling of the two? History is a record of past events. It is solely concerned in the presentation of facts. Fiction, from *fictio* to form, invent, treats of imaginary events. Christ made use of fiction in making His disciples know the mysteries of the Kingdom. His collective discourses contains several parables. "Now a parable is a brief narrative of imaginary incidents for the purpose of inculcating some moral or religious truth."

The view that predominates among interpreters in general is that the book of Esther is a medley of fact and fiction, a story not historical but only standing on a historical basis and the design of which is to demonstrate that God will certainly cause His believing people to triumph over their adversaries.

The reason why interpreters have their doubts as to the strictly historical character of this book is the following.

In the real turning-point of the whole story, as if in order to raise the interest of the reader to a high pitch, and also to make a satisfactory conclusion as regards Mordecai and the Jews, the timely and fitting nature of many of the incidents seems to translate the reader involuntarily from the world of reality to that of ideality. Haman, it is said, must take revenge upon Mordecai in the moment of his anger, and cause the gallows upon which he himself should be hung in the morning to be erected over night. But in the very night, when Mordecai has so much at stake, the king is made to have a disturbed sleep, and thereupon cause the state documents to be read to him, by means of which he is reminded of the desert of Mordecai. The question of the king, which is quite indefinite, is accordingly misunderstood by Haman, and thus misleads him, so that he applies it to himself, and in consequence of this self-deception, awards to his mortal enemy the highest distinction, and that too in the very moment when he is intent upon his destruction. It is said that, however intent God may be in a plan where the salvation or protection of His own people depend upon it; and though at times He may bring about occurrences in their favor, nevertheless the facts are not usually so artistically arranged by Him as appears here.

Such is the reasoning of Fr. W. Schultz in his introduction to his exposition of the Book of Esther. And such in substance is the reasoning of all the interpreters whose view it is that the story in our book is fiction, a religious romance.

What to think of this reasoning? It is purely subjective and therefore without worth. It comes down to this that the working of God's Providence, as presented in our book, is too wonderful to be true. Rightly considered the argument is deeply sinful. It is equivalent to saying that there are things which are

too hard for the Lord. Now what is man to tell God what thing is too hard for Him to perform? What is there to prevent one, who takes this stand, from disbelieving the working of the Divine Providence as presented in all the other historical books of the Bible? Nothing but personal whim, humor, sinful fancy. But should sinful whim be allowed to set itself up as judge over Holy Writ? Apart from any other consideration, such a method of dealing with the sacred Scriptures is thoroughly unholary. We should understand that the working of God in favor of His people is always uncommon, marvelous, extraordinary, new, unheard of. It is the newness of this working that spells the salvation of His people. So, to disbelieve the working of Providence, as narrated in the book of Esther, on the ground of its being too wonderful, is to open for oneself the door to the rejection of the whole plan of redemption.

Before the thesis that the story in our book is fiction can be pronounced true, it shall have to be made to repose on a ground other than the one under consideration. The only ground that will do here is a statement of the author to the effect that in penning his book he was writing not history but fiction. All the parables of Christ, incorporated in the Gospel narratives, are said to be parables by some such statement as, "And he spoke to them this parable." No such statement occurs in our book. But there is found in the book indisputable evidence that its story is history. At ch. 10:2 the statement occurs, "And all the acts of his (the king's) power and his might, and the declaration of the greatness of Mordecai, whereunto the king advanced him, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia?" Here the author tells us that the incidents which he narrated are also found in the archives of the empire, the chronicles of the kings. Now a *chronicle* is a register of facts in the order of time in which they occurred. The implication of this notice may even be that the writer of our book derived all his data from these "chronicles of the kings".

All attempts to disprove the historical character of our book have not only failed, as they were bound to, but have resulted in establishing its historical accuracy to the most minute details. It has been found that the character of Ahasuerus is drawn to the life; that point after point in it may be matched in the Xerxes of Herodotus.

Those interpreters who held that the story of our book, at least in its real turning point, is pure fiction, nevertheless maintain that its manifest design is to promote a revival of the Jewish faith in the persistent salutary ruling of Divine Providence in behalf of the Jews. But it should be clear that, if the story of our book is fictitious, like the incidents in a parable, its design cannot be to promote such faith. For faith in

a benevolent Providence cannot possibly be promoted by a narration of a specific working of this Providence, if the narration must be held to be fictitious and if the working must be held not to have taken place. So, if the story of our book is not history pure and accurate, it is sheer folly to maintain that its design is to strengthen faith in Divine Providence.

In ascertaining the place of the book of Esther in the Canaan, it must be noticed that this book is wanting in the religious spirit which we find in the other Old Testament historical books. As to Mordecai, the view that, however passionately devoted he may be to his people, he is a person devoid of true faith—this view is not at all unlikely. Mordecai was a Benjamite. Carried to Babylon in the person of his forebears, he was born in captivity. Instead of returning with his people to Jerusalem in obedience to God, here in captivity he had remained. That he truly loved Esther his cousin, whom he had taken for his own daughter, she being an orphan; that he was bent on seeking her true welfare, may be questioned. Did he not charge her that she should not shew her people nor her kindred as being one of the captive and despised Jews? Does this not imply that, had she revealed her nationality, she would not have been brought to the king's harem, or that, had she been brought to this house, she would soon have been sent back? Mordecai, at least, must have been of this conviction. Otherwise he would not have charged her to make a secret of her people. So then, Esther's removal to the king's harem, her marrying the king, her elevation to a place formerly occupied by Vashti, the repudiated wife, are events in her life for which Mordecai must evidently be held responsible. He wanted it so. But how could he? A harem, filled with pagan women, was no place for Esther. The king was no husband for her. He was a heathen, a godless man; she was a child of the covenant. Such marriages the Lord had strictly forbidden. Yet how eager Mordecai was that the royal crown be set upon her head! During the time that she was being prepared to meet the king, "he walked every day before the court of the women's house, to know how Esther did, and what should become of her."

Mordecai refused to reverence Haman, though the king had commanded it. So determined was he that it was all in vain that the king's servants daily urged him. Why this refusal on the part of Mordecai? The reason is not given. But our author does say this: "Now it came to pass, when they spake daily unto him—Mordecai—and he hearkened not unto them, that they told Haman to see whether Mordecai's matters would stand; for he had told them that he was a Jew." It is not certain that the implication of this notice is this that Mordecai had told the king's servants that, *because* he was a Jew he could not reverence Haman. If

is doing this scripture no violence if we take it to mean that Mordecai had already revealed his nationality to the servants prior to Haman's exaltation and thus not as a result of their urging him to give to Haman the required homage. All that with fairness can be gotten out of this notice is that the king's servants, having learned from Mordecai at some time in the past that he was a Jew and eager to know whether he, a despised Jew, could continue to flout Haman to his face with impunity revealed to Haman both Mordecai's conduct and nationality. If this scripture brings us under the necessity of ascribing his refusal to bow before Haman to his being a Jew, the question still remains whether he was being restrained by Jewish pride or right principle, fear of Jehovah. If the latter, this bowing before Haman stood out in his mind as an action that would involve him in idolatry. But if so, why then did he not, after the example of Daniel and his friends, boldly confess this to these servants? Besides though he refused to reverence Haman, he later on accepted, apparently without a murmur, the homage given him by the inhabitants of Shushan in the first hours of his elevation. This shows, it would seem, that in refusing to honor his enemy he acted from pride, stubbornness and personal enmity.

When Mordecai perceived the great mischief that had been devised against the Jews by his enemy Haman, he was frantic. And well might he be, seeing that the blame was so largely his. He rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth with ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and cried with a loud and bitter cry. This reaction of his bespeaks no piety certainly. To rend one's clothes in grief was as much a Persian as a Jewish practice. What is more, it is not said that he cried unto the Lord. He cried out in the street before the gate of the king. His object was solely to draw the attention of Esther's women-servants and eunuchs, i.e., such as were assigned her for her exclusive service. They delayed not to inform the queen. He now required of her that she put her life in her own hands and go in unto the king to make supplication to him. She hesitated, and he said to her, "Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews. For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place, but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this."

Especialy these words are seized by interpreters to show that there flowered in Mordecai's soul a true faith in God. Here, it is said, he manifests a precious sense of trust. It may be. Yet it should be observed that, instead of pointing to the Lord as the almighty Protector and Avenger of His people, he merely contented himself with saying that if she refused to act,

deliverance would come from another place. All that this language may reveal is that Mordecai had implicit faith not in God but in the destiny of his people and this solely on account of their being Jews. And his statement, "Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this," is a kind of language that the world also employs with reference to its heroes in times of national crises. The hero in such times is "the man of the hour", thus a man who, as Esther, is come to the kingdom, that is, to power, just for such a time as this.

G. M. O.

(To be continued)

De Bedrieglijke Tong Uitgeroed

(Psalm 52)

Dit lied wil een onderwijzing zijn voor Gods volk tot betrachting van waarheid, gerechtigheid en barmhartigheden, door God te stellen tot hun sterkte.

Negatief leert Gods volk om het kwade te haten, bedrog en veinzing te vlieden en op te houden van schade te werken.

Het vreeselijke voorwerp van studie is Doëg, de Edomiet. Die Doëg was een vreeselijke man. Het vreeselijke komt hierin uit, dat hij het kwade lief had.

De geschiedenis is overbekend.

David was gevlucht voor het aangezicht van Saul, nadat hij door Jonathan was gewaarschuwd. Hij kwam dan te Nob tot het aangezicht van den priester Achimélek. En, zooals te begrijpen is, hij kwam geheel berooid en zonder voedsel en zelfs zonder zwaard bij den man Gods. Daarom vroeg hij om beide, voedsel en een wapen.

Toen Achimélek hem alleen zag komen, trad hij hem bevende tegemoet: Waarom, o David, komt gij zoo alleen? Waar is Uw gevolg? Gij zijt toch des Koning's schoonzoon? En dan liegt David. Hij doet het voorkomen alsof hij door den Koning Saul gezonden is met een boodschap om zeker werk te doen. (Tus-schen twee haakjes moet hier geoordeeld, dat ofschoon Gods Woord niets zegt van dit liegen, toch David zich bezondigde door dit bedrog. Onder ditzelfde oordeel valt ook ander zondigen van Gods kinderen. Denkt, bij voorbeeld, aan het liegen van Rachab, de veelwij-verij der patriarchen en ook aan David's aanstellerij voor Achis toen hij zich hield alsof hij gek was. Al dat zondigen is te veroordeelen. God's wet is eeuwig en bindt altijd. Witte leugentjes zijn ook leugen. Er mag graadverschil zijn, zoodat ook Gods Woord spreekt van groote zonden of van zondigen zonder oorzaak; zonde, echter, is zonde: daarom is dit huidige liegen van David een schenden van het 9de gebod.

Achimélek gelooft David en geeft hem de oude

toonbrooden. En dat mocht. Jezus heeft daar later over geoordeeld. Bovendien, de tijd was aangebroken, dat er warme, versche brooden voor het aangezicht des Heeren moesten neergelegd worden. En de Heere heeft het goedgekeurd. Het was een zaak die geoorloofd was omdat David hongerde er anders geen brood was.

Ietwat later geeft de priester hem het zwaard van Goliath. Tevens een bewijs, dat David geen klein man was, doch van buitengewone kracht en gestalte geweest moet zijn. Dat bleek trouwens ook uit het feit, dat hij met datzelfde groote zwaard het hoofd van Goliath afhieuw. En hier neemt hij hetzelfde zwaard mede om te gebruiken in tijd van nood.

Doch, o wee! David heeft zoo tersloops bemerkt, dat Doëg zich opgehouden had voor het aangezicht des Heeren "te dienzelfden dage". Het is mij altijd een raadsel, dat zulk soort menschen óók mee doen aan den godsdienst. Hij was een door en door slecht mensch. En toch hield hij zich op voor het aangezicht des Heeren! En de tijd en gelegenheid gebruikt hij om zijn Satan's werk te doen. Dat zal angstiglijk blijken straks, als het bloed van God's knechten zal vloeien in stroomen.

David spoedt zich voort, vluchtende voor het aangezicht van Saul.

En Doëg, de machtigste van Saul's herderen, keert terug naar het leger van Saul.

En die zit onder het geboomte te Rama, broedende en zuchtende om wraak. Ach, ja, wraak op den gezalfde des Heeren.

En als dan die Koning van Israel zich uit in pessimistische redenen, luistert Doëg aandachtig toe: hier krijgt hij zijn kans om met bedrieglijke redenen zich te sterken in den gunst des Konings. O Koning, leef in eeuwigheid! En dan klappt hij uit de school. En liegt, zonder oorzaak. Hij stelt het voor alsof de priester Gods met voorbedachten rade en geheel en al kundig van David's vlieden voor Saul, dien vluchteling geholpen heeft met het brood Gods en het zwaard van Goliath!

Het gebod des Konings gaat uit en de schare priesters, het gansche huis van Achimélek, al de mannen die den linnen lijfrok droegen, wordt ter slachting geleid. Kalm, waardiglijk en gerust spreekt Achimélek de waarheid voor het oor van den dwingeland. Doch het mocht niet baten: Valt op hen aan en brengt ze om! Zoo klinkt het van onder het geboomte te Rama. O, ik wilde U wel duizendmaal danken, gij mannen van Saul, omdat gij allen den moed gehad hebt om dit bevel te verachten. Zij allen zeiden: Wij willen onze hand niet uitsteken om op de priesters des Heeren aan te vallen! Toen zeide de Koning tot Doëg: Val aan op de priesters! En Doëg kent geen erbarmen, noch eer: Hij viel op hen aan en richtte een vreeselijk bloedbad aan. Een vuile kroon op een vuil werk. Hij slachtte

te dien dage vijf-en-tachtig mannen die den linnen lijfrok droegen. Ook sloeg hij Nob met de scherpte des zwaards: de oude mannen en oude vrouwen, de kinderen en de zuigelingen. Slechts één zoon van Achimélek ontsnapte.

De vuige leugenaar! De lafhartige kwaaddoener! De verachtelijke moordenaar!

David hoorde het en zag den arme vluchteling: Abjathar, den priester des Heeren. Hij vluchtte tot David en snikte zijn vreeselijke boodschap tot den man naar God's hart. En David heeft dit erbarmelijke feit met het rechtvaardig gericht Gods bezongen.

Dit is de achtergrond van den twee-en-vijftigsten psalm. Dien moet gij weten om eenigzins te verstaan de groote verontwaardiging van David die zich in zulke sterke woorden uit in dezen psalm.

Zijn eerste uitroep kenschetst het leven van Doëg: Wat beroemt gij u in het kwade, o gij geweldige?!

O, kwaad te doen is erg, doch zich te beroemen in het kwade is erger. Dat is echt duivelsch. Roem behoort alleen bij het goede en heerlijke en hetgeen dat welluidt. We zien in gedachten dien geweldenaar. Hij heeft zijn rookend zwaard afgewischt: het bloed van God's lievelingen mocht niet stollen op het glimmend staal van zijn zwaard. En terwijl hij zich ontgordt, hooren we zijn snoeven en lachen. Hij zal zelfs de smarten en het angstig gillen van zijn arme slachtoffers nabootsen. Hebt ge het nooit gehoord? Och, ge behoeft geen stad uit te moorden om in ditzelfde oordeel te vallen. Ik heb menschen beluisterd die juist thuiskwamen van hun hatelijk werk en mij geërgerd over hun snoevend gebral: zij hadden tezamen toch zoo'n schik gehad. En een ziel was achter gelaten die nog snikte. Denkt gij, dat de wreedheid en vuigheid met Doëg uit had? Gij weet beter.

Er zit ook sarcasme, of beter, ironie, in de kenschetsing van dien afvallige: O gij geweldige! Vrage: hoeveel kracht en geweld heeft het genomen om die arme priesters te vermoorden? Of om een zuigeling af te maken? Of om den broeder te verscheuren in 't diepe hart door leugen en gedrog?

En waarom zullen wij ons beroemen in zulke verachtelijke daden? Gods goedertierenheid duurt toch den ganschen dag. Ja, Doëg mag zich beroemen, want de dwaas wist niet, dat de Heere klaar stond om Zijn priesters te verwelkomen in den hemel, ditzelfde bange uur! Nauwelijks had men schreeuwende den laatsten adem uitgeblazen, of de Heere wischte de tranen van de oogen Achimélech's in den hemel daarboven bij God.

En dan volgt in de volgende drie verzen een beschrijving van dat soort menschen—en we sidderen.

Stelt het U voor, zulk een mensch denkt enkel schade, heeft het kwade liever dan het goede, de leugen dan gerechtigheid te spreken, ze hebben lief alle woorden van verslinding, hunne tong mag geheeten een tong des bedrogs. En God heeft er voor gezorgd,

dat ze openbaar worden. Er is een soort menschen die werkelijk genot heeft om den naaste te verslinden. Het gaat hun niet zooals Gods volk, dat berouw heeft, zoodra zij zich door Gods Geest en Woord bewust weten van gezondigd te hebben. En zelfs terwijl zij zondigen, een klagende stem beluisteren in 't diepe hart. Dat volk haat de zonde en verre van te roemen in 't verslinden met vlijmscherpe tong, trachten zij den ganschen dag om die tong in toom te houden. Dat volk bidt: Zet een wacht voor mijne lippen. . . .

O, die tong! Als een scheermes, neen, als een *ge slepen* scheermes vlijmt het en snijdt, scheurt het en verslindt den arme en dien die geen helper heeft. Soms zelfs door waarheid te spreken, doch met den duivel in 't hart. En de schaterlach weerklinkt, misschien niet luide, doch wel in 't zich verknukelend hart.

Vreeselijk zal het zijn te vallen in de handen van den levenden God! Voor dezulken is Hij een verterend vuur. Ik heb gedacht aan de ontmoeting van God en Doëg, toen de laatste den adem uitblies en de geest weerkeerde tot Hem die hem schiep. Ik moet er niet inkomen, hoe het Doëg te moede was, toen hij de oogen van God zag, God, Wiens kinderen hij verscheurd had.

Luistert naar de beschrijving van den Heiligen Geest; Doëg zal afgebroken worden en weggeraapt, uitgerukt en ontworteld. In één vers stapelen zich de woorden op, om de ontmoeting met God te omschrijven. Drie beelden worden gebruikt. Doëg zal omgeworpen worden, gelijk men een gebouw omwerpt. Hij wordt aangegrepen om met een wringende beweging uit zijn plaats uitgerukt te worden. En, ten slotte, de Heere zal hem aangrijpen en plotseling als een boom uit zijn bodem uitrukken!

Dachten we daar altijd om, hoe zouden dan onze woorden gezouten zijn met hemelsch zout. Want we zouden dan voller, rijker, meer aanhoudend bidden en zingen: Och, schonkt gij mij de hulp van Uwen Geest! Mocht die mij op mijn paan ten Leidsman strekken! 'k Hield dan Uw wet, dan leefde ik onbevreesd; dan zou geen schaamt mijn aangezicht bedekken!

Heere! onzen Heere! Geef ons die gedachten en woorden die lieflijk zijn en welluiden! Dan zal den naaste gebaat worden en niet geslacht! Want dat volk van God heeft de gerechtigheid en het gericht lief!

Dat blijkt uit het volgende: David ziet het gericht over Doëg van verre! "De rechtvaardigen zullen het zien en vreezen; en zij zullen over hem lachen, zeggende: Zie den man die God niet stelde tot zijne sterkte, maar vertrouwde op de veelheid zijns rijkdoms; Hij was sterk geworden door zijn beschadigen!" Hieruit blijkt ook, dat Doëg een vloekloon van Saul gekregen heeft. Na het bloedbad is hij door Saul in bescherming genomen en is gegroeid in kracht en invloed. Ten koste van het stuip trekken en bloeden der kinderkens. Afschuwelijk loon!

Doch de rechtvaardigen zullen lachen als zijn ver-

derf komt. Hebben die rechtvaardigen schik in de smarten van den Satanischen Doëg als hij zich krommen moet onder de slagen van een toornenden God? Neen, geliefden, neen, doch hun hart springt op van vreugde vanwege het gezicht van recht en gerechtigheid. Dat volk, die rechtvaardigen, hebben God lief en daarom beminnen zij ook Zijn deugden, deugden die blinken in den straf der goddeloozen.

David is kalm geworden onder 't zingen. Alles kwam recht. Doëg zal zijn straf niet ontgaan, noch allen die de wegen van Doëg bewandelen.

Het bracht David tot de gedachte hoe het met hemzelf zou gaan.

Ik, Heere, ik zal groeien en bloeien onder de schoone en lieflijke beloning Uwer oogen. Ik zal zijn als een groene olijfboom in Gods Huis.

De olijfboom in zijn groenheid is de frissche en jeugdige kracht die er in straalt. Hij is bron van de olie die in zijn vruchten schuilt. Hij is zinnebeeld van het vet en groen zijn der kinderen Gods die door Zijne begunadiging vruchten voortbrengen der bekeering waardig.

Die bekeering uit zich door het vertrouwen op Gods goedertierenheid. En dat is ter laatster instantie Jezus Christus, de Heere. O, die Jezus heeft anders gedaan dan Doëg. Zijn tong sprak enkel billikheden. Zijn leven was ten offer gesteld aan het goede. Hij beminde God en Zijn naaste, gelijk geen mensch het ooit deed of kon doen. Zachtzinnig, lieflijk, aanvallig was Zijn gestalte, leven en sterven. Heftig, met oogen die vlammen konden van toorn tegen den duivel en het duivelsche. Doch zacht en teeder tegenover die lammeren, de armen van geest, de bekeerlingen: Weest welgemoed, mijn zoon en dochter, uwe zonden zijn U vergeven!

Op dien Jezus zullen wij vertrouwen. Ons huis zal opgericht op Hem als op de Rots die van geen wankelen weet. Wij zullen bidden om de bescherming van dien Jezus en in Zijn Naam zullen wij ons beroemen den ganschen dag. En dan is het goed. Goed voor David en goed voor Gods gunstgenooten. Want de kracht om goed en waar te zijn is niet in ons, in het vleesch. De kracht om het goede te beminnen en in de sfeer van het goede te wandelen groeit niet op vanuit de mesthoop van ons liegende en verdervende hart, doch ligt in de kracht van den Naam.

Onze vaders van lang vervlogen jaren lieten ons een erfenis in hunne woorden. Vaak moeten wij die woorde herhalen: "En opdat wij dan dit alles mogen verkrijgen, laat ons voor God ons verootmoedigen, en Hem met waarachtig geloof om Zijne genade aanroepen. . . ."

En dan buigt de gansche gemeente het hoofd en hart en klimt op met een smeekbede om de ervaring van de kracht des Naams onzes God!

G. V.

Kennende Het Goed En Het Kwaad

Genesis 3:22d.

De val des menschen is een vallen van hooger naar lager, van uit de waarheid in de leugen, van uit Gods gemeenschap tot in de gemeenschap van den Satan.

Waar hij eens stond, daartoe kan hij nimmermeer terugkeeren. Hij heeft zichzelf en met zich al zijn nakomelingen van zijn goede eigenschappen beroofd, door het ingeven des duivels en door moedwillige ongehoorzaamheid. Zóó staat het met de zaak des menschen en met de zaak van het menschdom. Aldus is de Goddelijke uitspraak, omtrent een ieder, die uit het eerste ouderpaar voortkomt. Moedwillige ongehoorzaamheid.

Ongehoorzaamheid, niet onkunde, is tenslotte de groote en de eenige oorzaak waardoor zijn overtreding wordt gekenmerkt. Ongehoorzaamheid houdt in, een kennen en een verstaan van een uitgevaardigd gebod, waarover werd nagedacht en waar omtrent de wil oordeelt. In het geval van den val des menschen, een oordeel, dat zich kant tegen het oordeel Gods.

De val des menschen is een afvallen en wegvallen van God, de Bron van alle leven en licht. Los van den levensbron beteekent niet anders dan een levensexistentie, die zich altijd en in alles tegen God keert. Als de mensch eenmaal den levensband los scheurt van God, dan plaatst hij zich buiten den kring der Goddelijke gemeenschap der vriendschap. God duwt hem van Zich weg, schenkt hem niet langer die vriendschap, doch stort over den mensch Zijn Goddelijke toorn der gramschap uit. God handhaaft Zichzelf in heilige Zelfliefde en verwijst het schepsel naar het eeuwig verderf, van waar uit het zich nimmer kan verlossen.

Van speelruimte blijft er dan ook niets over. Er is uit dat oogpunt maar één verhouding mogelijk, namelijk deze, dat er vijandschap is tusschen God en Zijn in zonde gevallen schepsel. En die vijandschap is wederkeerig. En niet alleen wederkeerig, maar ook absoluut, totdat er voor die ongehoorzaamheid betaald wordt. Ten volle.

Met een gewichtig handgebaar, dat de gemeene gratie hier nog veel vermag, nog veel in stand houdt, voor meerdere zonde en overtreding stremmend werkt en ingrijpt, is men alleen niet klaar, maar men raakt daardoor geheel en al het spoor bijster en glijdt van het voetspoor der Schrift af, om tenslotte bij het Modernisme aan te landen, dat altijd van de moedwillige ongehoorzaamheid onkunde maakt en Gods toorn inwisselt voor algemeene goedheid van het algemeen Vaderschap voor alle menschen, tot op het stuk der zaligheid toe—schoon het wellicht niet zoo werd bedoeld.

Wie nu eerlijk blijft tegenover de klare en ondubbelzinnige uitspraak der Heilige Schrift en zich door haar

dan verder laat voorlichten, die alleen ontkomt het gevaar van zichzelf tegen te spreken—iets dat men juist niet ontmoet bij degenen, die sterke of minder sterke voorstanders zijn van de gemeene gratie theorie. Het is vooral waar van de laatstgenoemden, dat zij een slag om den arm houden, om dan tenslotte, tenopzichte van dezelfde zaak, tegelijkertijd, ja en neen te zeggen, te schrijven en te prediken. “Zie de mensch is geworden als onzer één, kennende het goed en het kwaad”. Vele theologen van vroeger en later tijd, waaronder ook Calvijn, hebben gemeend en meenen hier te doen te hebben met een ironische wijze van spreken. God de Heere zeide dan spottender wijze: “Daar staat nu die mensch, met zijn inbeelding, alsof hij onzer een ware geworden en alsof hij, door van den Boom des levens te eten, nu ook zijn leven en aanzijn vereeuwigen kon”.

Calvijn gaat nog verder als hij verklaart: Goed en kwaad te weten, beschrijft de oorzaak van de groote ellende, namelijk, dat Adam, niet tevreden met zijn toestand, trachtte hooger te klimmen, dan voor hem geoorloofd was. Waarom dan de Heere in deze tekstwoorden bedoelde te zeggen: Zie nu, of uw ambitie en verdorven smaak, voor de ongeoorloofde kennis u hebben terneer geworpen. Om dan verder de woorden “Zie, de mensch is geworden als onzer één” te verklaren alsof er stond: Na dezen zal Adam mij zoo gelijk zijn, dat wij kameraden (companions) zullen zijn van elkander. Hieruit zou dan veel eerder verklaard kunnen worden, dat het dan toch Adam te doen zoude zijn geweest, om met God verder op gemeenzame voet te leven. Iets dat ons onmogelijk toeschijnt en door de tekst met alles wat in den val geschiedde, wordt tegengesproken.

Kuyper maakt bezwaar tegen deze verklaring van Calvijn en merkt op: “Dat ironie nooit tot het nemen van een ernstigen maatregel kan nopen”, iets dat nog lang niet zoo zeker is, als men wel zou meenen. Als de Heere in den hemel zal lachen over den goddelooze en hem bespot wanneer hij zich opmaakt om tegen God zich te stellen, dan is daar toch wel ironie. Of, en de zaak was al even ernstig, als Elia spottender wijze de Baalpriester tart om harder te schreeuwen, dan is daar althans een bewijs, dat ironische wijze van spreken wel meer voorkomt in de Schrift. En zoo zou nog kunnen worden gewezen op het spreken van den Heiland tegenover de Farizeën.

In ieder geval, zou een enkele zin, omtrent de wijze van het spreken Gods, if dit wel kon uit het oogpunt van den ernst der zaak, nooit het doorslaand bewijs zijn, maar moest dan uit andere Schriftuurplaatsen worden aangetoond worden. En we meenen, dat dit juist zeer wel kan bewezen worden, anders ware ook het spreken van Elia en de profeten te veroordelen.

Bovendien ligt daar toch niet de oplossing. Het gaat er in het geheel niet om *hoe* de Heere sprak over

de val in zonde, maar wel *wat* Hij ons daaromtrent over meedeelt. Trouwens, of deze woorden zijn gesproken in Adams tegenwoordigheid, zoodat ook hij de ironie van zijn eigen daad zag, is niet zeker en komt ons voor, dat dit niet het geval was.

Een andere verklaring, die eigenlijk geen verklaring kan geheeten worden is, dat Adam en Eva nu het kwaad proefondervindelijk kenden, zooals zij in den staat der rechtheid het goede kenden. Dat zegt natuurlijk niets en komt bovendien geheel en al in tegenspraak met den tekst. Wie de tekst in haar geheel leest zal bemerken, dat de Heere maar niet zegt "De mensch weet en kent nu ook het kwade", maar, de mensch is onzer gelijk geworden, is onzer één geworden kennende het goed en het kwaad. En dan niet zoo dat de mensch slechts meent Gode gelijk geworden te zijn, maar dat de Heere dat zegt. Willen we dan vasthouden, dat de mensch proefondervindelijk het kwade kent, dan komen we bij de verklaring van den tekst toch wel voor een vreeselijk feit te staan, want hoe dan te verklaren, dat hij nu het kwaad kent, zooals God het kent? Niemand zou dit zoo durven zeggen of ook maar durven denken. Dat is, zonder ook maar van iemand eenige tegenspraak te hooren, absoluut onmogelijk en zelfs niet denkbaar.

Wij volgen de verklaring van Calvijn niet en nog veel minder de hier boven genoemde. De Heere spotte niet met Adams kennis aangaande goed en kwaad. Dat geeft, wat betreft de tekst, ook geen bevrediging.

Wij gelooven, dat de tekst op geheel iets anders het oog heeft. Als we de vraag stellen, had Adam alreeds kennis van goed en kwaad voor den val? dan is ons antwoord, ja!! Willen we dat niet, dan blijft er alleen dit over, dat Adam tenslotte in een val liep, die hij zelf niet zag. Dan ging het den armen mensch misschien wel heel slecht af, maar dan zag en voelde hij het niet vooruit. Dan is er van moedwillige overtreding en moedwillige ongehoorzaamheid geen sprake meer.

Daarom, hoe en op welke wijze kende Adam het goede en het kwade? Ons antwoord is heel eenvoudig, de Heere had het hem geopenbaard.

Aangaande goed en kwaad had de Heere, door Zijn verbod, een voorstelling gegeven voor het verstand van onze eerste ouders, dat Hij, de Heere, goed en wat Hij kwaad noemde en wat daarom ook goed en kwaad moesten zijn voor Adam en Eva. Godsdienst nu, maar ook in het Paradijs, is een dienst aan God, naar Zijn wil en met de verwerping van alles wat met dien wil Gods in strijd is. Hun verstand moest daarom ook oordeelen aangaande Gods verbod, omtrent het eten, of niet eten van den Boom der kennis des goeds en des kwaads. Neen, de zonde is niet, dat Adam en Eva oordeelde deze vrucht is goed, ja begeerlijk tot spijze. Zji konden heel eenvoudig geen ander oordeel vellen, omtrent de vrucht van den verboden boom. Sterker nog, dat moest hun oordeel zijn. Het verstand der

eerste menschen kon onmogelijk tot een andere conclusie komen. Ware dit niet zoo, dan was het hoofdelement, van wat verzoeking verzoeking deed zijn, verdwenen. Verzoeking toch is nooit anders dan, om den weg der gehoorzaamheid moeilijk te maken. Wel verstaan, niet om dien weg onmogelijk te maken.

Doch het resultaat behaald door de verstandsoverlegging, moest nu door s'menschen willen gewild worden in verband en in harmonie met den wille Gods. Wat die wil was, werd hun te voren geopenbaard in het "Gij zult daarvan niet eten".

De wil daartoe bezaten zij, om te willen in overeenstemming met den wil des Heeren. Daarin lag ook feitelijk al hun levensgeluk besloten. Er was dan ook in hen het zielsvermogen om te beslissen in overeenstemming met het uitgevaardigd gebod, omtrent den boom der kennis des goeds en des kwaads. Zeker, de mogelijkheid dit te verliezen was daar, maar dat neemt toch niet weg, dat het de eerste menschen inspanning nam, om zich los te werken en subjectief te besluiten tot den gruweldaad der overtreding. Het was hen meer eigen, in verband en overeenstemming van hun aard als schepsel, te kiezen voor dan tegen God. En het is tamelijk zeker, dat het hen nog al wat tijd heeft genomen, om tot de daad van zondigen te geraken.

Neen, in het bewustzijn dier beide menschen was het niet een vraag, wat Gods wil was. Het was bij hen glashelder wat God gezegd had en wat het Goddelijk gebod was. De beeldrager Gods heeft niet alleen zelfbewustzijn, maar kan ook zelfbepalen wat hij doen zal en wat hij doen moet. Daarom bepaalt hij dan ook bewust, bij het licht en oordeel des verstands, zoowel als bij het licht der openbaring Gods. Hij moet en kan subjectiek kiezen voor God en voor Zijn gebod. Maar hij moet dat doen met de verwerping van alles wat zich ook tegen die openbaring moge stellen.

In dien weg alleen komt het tot een kennen van wat goed en van wat kwaad is. Dat is, in den weg van zelfverloochening laat de mensch zich door zijn God onderwijzen en richt dan vervolgens het leven in naar den wil, den eisch of het gebod Gods. Zijn God is niet alleen het hoogste goed, maar ook de Creterion van alle goed. Zoowel als van alle kwaad.

De tekst bedoelt dan ook te zeggen, de mensch heeft Mij terzijde geplaatst en gaat nu zelf bepalen van wat goed en van wat kwaad is. Of om het eenigzins anders te zeggen, de tekst leest dan: Kennende het goed en het kwaad wil zeggen: kiezende bij zichzelf en voor zichzelf besluitende, is de mensch ons in dit opzicht gelijk geworden, dat hij zelf vaststelt, wat goed en wat kwaad is.

Naar de hoofdgedachte krijgen we dan dit, dat de mensch Gods absolute Souvereiniteit aantast, Hem naar de kroon steekt. Hij gaat God zeggen, dat hij zich niet langer wil laten gezeggen, wat goed en wat kwaad is. En de mensch wil dan ook, door den weg

van afval, de grens uitwisschen tusschen den Schepper en het schepsel. Wat de maatstaf zal zijn, waarnaar geheel het leven moet worden ingericht, wordt bepaald door den mensch en hij ontzegt God het recht om hem daarvan rekenschap af te vragen.

Dat was de weloverdachte en de door den mensch gewilde, zoowel als door hem begeerde zonde in het Paradijs. Dat deed hij met zijn volle bewustzijn.

Zóó nu is het nog met iedere zonde.

Dat hij, de mensch, zelf bepaalt en bepalen zal, wat goed en wat kwaad is, tegen het licht en het getuigenis der Godsopenbaring in.

W. V.

Intermarriage

According to Webster, an intermarriage is a marriage between two families, nations, or tribes—hence, strictly speaking, any marriage may be called an intermarriage. However, this is surely not the implication of the subject as assigned to me in this essay. The current usage of the term emphasizes the latter part of the definition—"between two nations or tribes". Intermarriages, then, refer specifically to "mixed" marriages, whereby persons or families of different faiths are united in the bond of matrimony.

Intermarriages are a common phenomenon. This is surely true in the midst of the world. There one discovers no regard for the Divine purpose of the marriage bond. The thought is ridiculed that a man and a woman, according to the apostle's words in his epistle to the Ephesians, together form "one flesh", adapted to each other, to strengthen and comfort and supplement each other in the continuous struggle against the spiritual powers of sin and darkness. Neither does the world have an eye for the development of God's covenant, that the bringing forth and the covenant training of children is a basic purpose of the Divine institution of marriage. Hence "mixed" marriages are often the rule rather than the exception. Differences of language and of religion are not considered. Natural impulses, rather than natural and spiritual adaptation, dictate the course of procedure. The spiritual need of one another, rooted in the fear of God and the spiritual struggle against the common enemy, is not known.

That intermarriages are a common phenomenon is also applicable to the church. This surely is true of the church in general, the church according to her broadest manifestation. The young lady of Reformed persuasion and the young man of Arminian or Baptist and Premillenarian tendencies do not consider their difference in viewpoint of the truth an obstacle to their entering into the state of matrimony. Whatever

one's conception of the Word of God may be is not considered vital. And, must also our churches not cope with this same situation? In this connection we would remark that intermarriage is not unavoidable. Neither is it in itself to be condemned. In certain instances, particularly in our smaller churches, our young people have no other choice, are compelled to look to other pastures. Consequently the subject of intermarriage is particularly timely as far as our Protestant Reformed Churches are concerned.

The danger and great evil often involved in and resulting from these intermarriages are readily apparent. We must remember that, also in the sphere of matrimony, God works organically, in the line of generations. One selects his friends from his associates. This is an indisputable fact. Neither must this be considered an accident. We believe, do we not, that the Lord brings young people together. This is true not only as far as their courtship is concerned. But it is truer still with respect to their natural, psychological adaptation. Unity of faith is not the only requisite for a happy married life. Every believing young man cannot be the husband of any believing young woman. They must also be psychologically adapted to each other. Personal characteristics are elements worthy of consideration. Hence we believe that couples are created for each other. And it is Divine providence that we "find" each other. This must surely live in the consciousness of our covenant young people. Consequently, marriage must never be considered a "hit or miss" affair. Prayerfully, we seek him or her who, according to the good pleasure of our God, has been appointed and created for us. Even so, however, the marriage state is usually consummated between persons of the same faith in the covenant line of generations, who have long been associates.

Neither is this operation of God difficult to understand. It is but natural to seek our "mate" among those who are like us. Besides, unanimity of faith is certainly a requisite for a successful married life. This is surely imperative as far as the mutual relation is concerned between a husband and wife. United in matrimony they must jointly face the various problems of life, fight the good fight of faith, and cope with all the powers of sin and darkness, within and without. It is, e.g., rather difficult to conceive of a happy, spiritually ideal married life between a young lady of Reformed persuasion and a young man with premillennialistic tendencies. Is it not a fundamental requisite for a married couple, who have vowed to travel through life together, that they at least have their eye on the same goal, and know exactly whither they are journeying? And, surely, the chiliast views that goal in a different light than he of reformed faith. My conception of the city which has foundations must determine my walk in the midst of the world, my hope and

faith. The premillenarian conception of the heavenly Jerusalem, if such a conception exists (?), surely does not compare with the reformed view of that glorious future. And so we could go on. Strange companions indeed must be the young man of reformed belief and the young lady of arminian tendencies. How shall the never sure and always doubting arminian comfort and strengthen and exhort him who knows that in this life one can make his calling and election sure?

Besides, unanimity of faith is also a basic requirement as far as the training of our children is concerned. This hardly needs any elucidation. Is it not our calling to train them in the way they should go, to prepare them for their place and calling in the midst of the church and also of the world? Are we not obligated to rear them in the fear of the Lord, instruct them in the blessed truths of Holy Writ? Is it not imperative that parents themselves agree concerning the truth shall they be able to instruct their children? Surely, it cannot be considered conducive to their well-being when contrary faiths and beliefs are held before them. Consequently, the Lord operates organically also in the sphere of matrimony, and brings young people together who know each other as of the same household of faith. Besides, that oneness of faith is a basic requirement for marriage is clearly taught in Scripture in the Divine narrative of Isaac and Rebecca.

Bearing this in mind, it is not difficult to foresee the great evil which can accrue from a mixed marriage. The mutual relation between a husband and his wife will surely be affected. To maintain his or her own belief will invite trouble and dissension. Hence quite often a common understanding is sought and reached with the result that the issue is silenced, and neither party is a comfort and spiritual support for the other. To the danger to which the children of such an intermarriage are exposed we have already called attention. Rather than confuse them by each parent attempting to inculcate into them his or her own particular belief, instruction is often entirely neglected. These children are the pitiful victims of such an unholy alliance of parents unequally yoked. And, the covenant of God is profaned. What should be a marriage unto the glory of God's Name, purposing his praise and the development of His covenant in the midst of the world has degenerated into the matrimony of two persons who utterly fall short of the purpose for which this holy ordinance of God was instituted. And inasmuch as God establishes His covenant organically in the sphere of the truth, the generations of such unholy alliances will ultimately be cut off from the line of the covenant—only, we will be required to give an account before the living God for having occasioned this severance of the covenant bond.

Is there any remedy against this danger? How must these intermarriages be explained? We know

that the usual result is not necessarily that the young man accompanies the young lady, that the "weaker sex" triumphs over the "stronger". The opposite also occurs. What does happen is that that person gains the "victory", who has received the weaker instruction in the truth. If a young man and a young lady marry, without the parties involved arriving at a just understanding of the truth, the result will almost invariably be that he (or she) who received the truer instruction in the Word of God will capitulate to his (or her) companion in marriage. Why is this? The reason for this lies in the very nature of the case. Fact is, already during their courtship the truth of the Word of God never was the paramount issue. How could it have been? Spiritual adaptation to each other, i.e. that they are adapted to each other in the struggle for the development of God's covenant, was not the dominating factor. They permitted natural impulses and attractions and affections to be of greater importance than the Divine purpose of marriage. The truth was sacrificed already from the very beginning. Consequently, this being true, how could the truth and the development of God's covenant become the dominating issue when they finally entered into the marriage state? And I think we may say without fear of contradiction that the sanctity of the marriage bond is little understood today. Young people who love the truth of God, who would live unto the glory of God, will surely think twice before entering a marriage state which will not be conducive to the glory of God's name and the furtherance of His cause in the midst of the world.

How, then, can this evil be avoided? On the one hand, the instruction which our children and young people receive at home is of paramount significance. We, as parents, must manifest an active and spiritual interest in our children. We must provide them with the very best Christian instruction. The truth in all its beauty must be held before them. Emphasis cannot be laid upon this too strongly. Apart from the fact that our children must not receive their instruction in the public institutions of the world, also the Christian training of our boys and girls must be definite, specific, Protestant Reformed. And when our boys and girls begin to reach the age of discretion, they must be instructed also in the purpose of matrimony. I repeat: we, as parents, must take an active interest in our children and young people, also in their associations and fellowships. They must know that a young man must seek a young lady in the fear of God, in order that also in the state of marriage God's Name may be glorified and His covenant established.

On the other hand, as far as our young people are concerned, they must seek each other in the truth. To be sure, intermarriages as such are not to be condemned. Particularly in our small churches they cannot always be avoided. And surely we would not main-

tain that under these circumstances our young people should not engage in these fellowships beyond our own sphere. However, the love of the truth must dominate. This does not mean that a Protestant Reformed young man should not at certain intervals attend Divine worship where his friend is wont to worship, although this should not become a "fifty-fifty" proposition. We must surely proceed from the conviction that to us the truth has been entrusted as to none other, that we surely have the most glorious insight into the Word of God. And if then we attend services elsewhere we should avail ourselves of this opportunity to emphasize the difference between our proclamation of the Word of God and its preaching elsewhere. But, unanimity of faith must be attained. If this is impossible we should consider the truth more precious than marriage, convinced that the one can never be blessed without the other. Natural affection must certainly be subservient to spiritual adaptation. Where the latter does not exist the former must not occur. Let us seek each other in the fear of God and the love of His Word and Cause. Where love reigns, the true love of God in Christ, God will commend His blessing.

H. V.

The Value Of Expository Preaching

Expository preaching is today rapidly on the decline. I think I can safely say that never in the history of the Church has the pulpit become such a means for the public as in our day. Tell me what is *not* treated on the pulpit today in modern circles, and I'm sure that I would receive an answer much quicker, than if I asked what *is* treated on the pulpit. Social problems, political, moral, economic, international and many others are treated there and supposedly solved. Even the discussion of a popular Holywood movie star with all his Godless vices and immorality finds a place on it. And this is no exaggeration. All that on the pulpit, the Divinely ordained means for the preaching of the Word. How tragic! Yet how true and characteristic of our day and age—the last days. Truly the devil appearing under a cloak of righteousness and as an angel of light.

We can readily see and understand that such certainly is not expository preaching. Nor is a roaming through Scripture expository preaching, or the narrating of stories, or the discussion of current events. Expository preaching is something entirely different. But let us not deceive ourselves by thinking that our preaching is perfect and that we are exalted above

the danger of falling into such wandering roots. Do we not sometimes also hear a clamor in our own circles for a different kind of preaching? Not, of course, that this trend of thought and clamor is the same as the above mentioned modernistic preaching, but is wrong nevertheless. What I am referring to is the cry: the sermons are too deep, we don't understand them, let's have more practical preaching. About this I want to say a few words. In the first place that it is true that the sermons of the minister must not "go over the heads" of the congregation, i.e. the congregation in general. A minister must not strive to show how deep he can delve into Scripture, but must attempt to bring the Word to his flock so that it can understand it. He must preach in such a way that the congregation as a whole can comprehend his message. Secondly with such clamors we do well to examine ourselves first of all. Do we perhaps sit in church, thinking and expecting the sermon to just be "poured in", without any effort on our part? If so, then the sermons are always too deep, and the minister is quite sure to be accused of such too. The Sabbath day in reality is also a day of work for the congregation. There must be the proper preparation, and an exertion on the part of the listener to understand. We may not sit in church as in an easy chair. I've heard people remark already that they were somewhat tired after the services. Not due to special physical weakness, but because they made a serious attempt to follow the minister, and understand the word brought. Thirdly, we must have practical preaching, to be sure. The Word of God must be applied to the congregation according to her needs and conditions. And failure to do this is a serious lack.

But if this outcry for more practical preaching, not too deep, means more superficial, more light preaching—then it is something different. And I think that this sometimes is the meaning of this demand. But my answer too would be entirely different, for such I'm sure is positively wrong. Then we are on the wrong path because such preaching certainly eliminates expository preaching.

What is expository preaching? It is preaching that exposes the Holy Scriptures. It is preaching that expounds, unfolds the Word of God. With expository preaching the text is explained, with its phrases and words. In other words it is what we may also call exegetical preaching. Or as the Holland language has it, preaching that is characterized by "tekstverklaring". But we must not confuse expository preaching with other kinds of preaching, with series preaching, character preaching, doctrinal preaching, practical preaching, etc. Expository preaching is not another kind next to these, but must be the foundation of these. All of these must be expository preaching, i.e. based on exegesis. Even true practical preaching is expository.

tory preaching. To elucidate still more, expository preaching is the opposite of topic preaching (preaching on a certain topic). With topic preaching a text is hung on the topic and the sermon is a sermon on the topic, not on the text, and often everything but the text. While expository preaching is preaching that "sticks" to the text, then the minister is bound to the text and brings nothing else. We feel and know, of course, that this kind of preaching we must have.

The standpoint of the expository preacher is always that Scripture is the Word of God, and that God's Word only can comfort and edify. He proceeds from the viewpoint that man's word can never do such. Therefore he comes with God's Word and not with his own imaginations and ideas. Always and again he asks: what does Scripture say, what does the text say? Scripture is his sole authority and guide, and he lets that Scripture speak to his sheep. To understand this and the following, we must bear in mind that Scripture is the revelation God, in Christ. It is the one most beautiful revelation of Himself revealing Himself in all His virtues, wisdom, power, marvelous and manifold grace, faithfulness, love, holiness, wrath over against sin, etc.; His works and His ways. The revelation of God in Christ Jesus. This we find in every book of Holy Writ. That revelation God gave to us in various ways in times of old. In history His dealings with the children of Israel, by means of theophany (direct revelation, through an angel, e.g.,) prophecy, visions, direct inspiration, etc. This one complete revelation He has caused to be preserved and kept for the church of all ages. Therefore He has caused it to be written, yes in human language. In human language, our language, so that we can understand it. Unto that end Divine inspiration. II Tim. 3:16; II Peter 1:21. Holy men of God were moved by the Holy Spirit to write His Word. Having been moved by the Spirit they wrote nothing but the Word of God, not their word and God's word. They wrote only God's Word, wrote as God moved them in every chapter, sentence and word. We believe in plenary inspiration, i.e. that Scripture is the Word of God only and entirely. Even so that God has put every word in its place, every "and" and "but", every jot and tittle. And so God is revealed. And He has done that in the most perfect way, so that in the products of these inspired men we have the highest and most perfect revelation of God. It is but natural then, that by changing this Word or interchanging words, the revelation is lost.

That one complete revelation we have in the one book called the Bible. In the Bible, God's revelation in human language, we have all those virtues of God revealed, His works and ways. And that Word is unfathomable; we can go into the depths (even though we usually don't go very deep) but we never reach the bottom. Scripture is inexhaustible. Never will the

last word about it have been said.

But shall we now ascertain the meaning of this revelation, written in human language, two things are necessary. In the first place that we understand the language in which it is written, and secondly that we interpret and explain it. So it is with every piece of literature. To understand the writings of someone else we must know that particular language, and be able to interpret and explain it in our own minds. So here with God's Word. Exactly that the expository preacher does. He knows the language (in a special way the original languages) comprehends the contents and then interprets it. That he does with every sentence and phrase and word of the treated portion of Scripture. And the result—he begins to unfold that rich revelation of God. In that way he has the key to the bottomless mine of God's Word. But what also has become evident now is that he can bring God's Word, those riches, *only by means of interpretation*, by means of exegesis, or expository preaching.

The value of such preaching is evident.

If not done, then in plain words the Word of God is not brought. The preacher that fails to exegete does not and cannot bring God's Word. His sermons are characterized by roaming through Scripture from Genesis through Revelation, or he comes with human words and ideas, the daily problems, current events, etc. And no wonder. More than one candidate of the ministry of the Word has felt himself placed before a tremendous problem: how can I bring the Word twice every Sunday, 52 Sundays per year, and bring something new each time? The answer is—expository preaching. And if he doesn't do that he doesn't bring the Word. Remarks are sometimes made that in much of the preaching of today the Christ isn't brought. Why not? No expository preaching. God reveals Himself in Christ throughout Scripture. But he who fails to interpret that Word, naturally fails to preach the Christ. But the tragic part of it all is that the church then goes astray. It is remarkable, yet easy to be understood, that as soon as the church forsakes this kind of preaching she wanders off. History has taught that time and again. The pulpit has become the place of bringing most everything but the revelation of God in Christ. Sometimes then it is seen that there is a big defect in the church, and people call for revivals, or there is a reaction of Pietism. But they fail to come to expository preaching.

But the church thrives and is safe only with this kind of preaching. And again, no wonder, for then the Word is preached, and the Word of God always has its positive effect. It never returns void. By such preaching the riches of the Word is unfolded. It is a key of the kingdom of heaven. Heaven is opened to the believers. God speaks to their penitent hearts of the justification in Christ, of His unfathomable love, and

satisfies the thirsty and hungry souls. But by such preaching it is also closed to the ungodly. For, remember, expository preaching brings the Word of God, the complete Word of God; therefore the preacher also comes with woes, and the terrible and righteous wrath of God upon the unbeliever. Expository preaching and expository preaching only is a savor of life unto life for the believer, but also a savor of death unto death for the wicked.

The value of such continual preaching is that it brings us everything of the Word of God. It brings God's sovereignty, and man's total depravity; it causes more humiliation, continually causes us to see our misery, but also to taste of that glorious redemption, but also to express our gratitude. The effect of such preaching is faith, and a stronger faith, for faith is by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. Humanistic preaching does not work faith. Moreover, it works love, gives us hope, comfort, a desire to walk in the way of sanctification, and praise to our God. And last but not least it rightly divides the word of truth, II Tim. 2:15. Expository preaching is an absolute necessity for the maintenance of the truth. Its effect is the edifying of the body of Christ till we all come in the unity of faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. Eph. 4:12, 13. And finally, "That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works", II Tim. 3:17.

In conclusion, the value of expository preaching is so great that it is indispensable. By it the truth is kept, the church thrives and manifests herself as the body of Christ. And finally glory to our God, for His Word then returns to Himself.

J. B.

Communism

In this essays we do not contemplate speaking about a nationality or a certain country in particular, but we will confine ourselves to the "ism", the "tenet", or the ideology called communism. This ideology of communism is defined in Webster's dictionary, "as a scheme of equalizing the social conditions of life; specifically a scheme which contemplates the abolition of inequalities in the possession of property, as by distributing all wealth equally to all, or by holding all wealth in common for the equal use and advantage of all."

First of all, let us not fail to notice that from a

superficial viewpoint, Communism is very attractive, especially to the masses of people in distinction from the few aristocrats of society. For the masses of people are often in poverty and must work in the sweat of their brow to earn their "measure of wheat for a penny and their three measures of barley for a penny". Especially when the oil and the wine of the rich must not be touched. If then in times of poverty anyone proclaims the tenet of Communism, which proclaims the "abolition of inequalities of life" and the inequalities of the possession of property by distributing all wealth equally, then it indeed appeals to the masses. When the masses of people then must sweat to earn even their bare existence, and the rich wallow in luxury, there would be nothing better than that the rich would share with the poor their riches and "the rich would not be quite so rich and the poor would not be quite so poor". Surely we can very well understand that Communism makes headway among the masses of people, especially in times of depression and poverty. Were it not for the principles of Christ, we personally would undoubtedly be very communistic, for also the undersigned can speak of dire poverty when he was first in America, and his father had to take care of a family of nine, with wages that ranged from 6 to 8 dollars a week. Surely Communism appeals to the flesh of the masses of people.

Secondly it should be noted that superficially Communism is very idealistic. Did not the Scriptures teach the same, when it pictured to us the first believers after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, as they laid their gifts at the feet of the apostles and the latter distributed to everyone according to his or her needs? And did not those who possessed property, sell that property in order that the poor would have no needs, and everyone would be taken care of? It surely is unbelievable that only one suffered want or undue poverty at that time of the New Testament Church, wherein the sharing of wealth seemed to be the very basis of the life of the believers. If that is established, is it not Christian to adopt the Communistic principles of "share the wealth", and "holding all wealth in common for the equal use and advantage of all"? Surely the principles of Communism seems very idealistic and should be adhered to by all Christians.

Yet the strange part of all is the fact that just those nations, which have adopted communism, are also the most godless nations on the face of the earth. It was not many years ago that all the world stood aghast at the godless practices of Communistic Russia. Organizations were set up in that country, with the name: "The Society of the Militant Godless" whose aim and purpose was solely to make propaganda against all religion. All faith and knowledge of the Most High God had to be abolished. All believers had to be severely persecuted. *And this was countenanced not only but*

supported by the government itself. Russia openly declared war upon the Most High God. I fully realize that such truth is distasteful to the present rulers of our own government, for our country is allied with Communistic Russia, against the Axis Nations. However we merely note this to prove the point that, whereas seemingly Communism is Scripturally idealistic, in reality and practically it opposes God and His Christ, as well as His chosen people.

We wish to go just a step further. According to the definition of Communism it is plain that every scheme of equalizing social conditions of life, and holding all wealth in common for the equal use and advantage of all, falls under the term Communism. In other words, the use of property for all men, and the advantage of all men, is contemplated in Communism. *Man* becomes the theme of this so-called ideology. All efforts or schemes that are *of the people, by the people and for the people*, are therefore principally Communistic. Therefore we may conclude, on the basis of Webster's definition, that whether you name Communistic Russia, or Fascist Germany, or Imperialistic England, or Democratic America, we see in them all the principles of Communism. It is the principle of *man*, who has his number given in Scripture as 666, possessing no seventh day of Rest, having no peace with God, rejecting the Christ and persecuting the saints.

Over against this Communism Scripture teaches a communion of Saints, consisting of two main principles. First, that all and everyone who believes, *being members of Christ*, are in common partakers of Him, and of all His riches and gifts; secondly, that everyone must know it to be his duty, readily and cheerfully to employ his gifts for the advantage and salvation of other members. Thus our fathers expressed themselves in the Heidelberg Catechism.

This implies first of all that man by nature is not a member of Christ, hence also is not a common partaker of Him, and therefore also not a partaker of any of the riches and gifts of Christ. Man is an enemy of Christ and of His riches and gifts. In opposition to Christ and the believers therefore, man seeks to utilize the earth and its fulness and equally distribute it to all men, yea, to the advantage of all men. This is impossible. There is no advantage in the earth and its fulness to all men. The earth and the very ground tilled by man, is cursed for man's sake. How then can this earth and its fulness be used to the advantage of all men? This is easily recognizable in Communistic Russia. The equalization of all earthly things brings man ever deeper under the curse, and deepens his hatred of God and His Christ. That is why the "Society of the Militant Godless" can prosper in Russia, and in 1931 already number over three and a half

million members. The equalization of all possession of properties *can not work to the advantage of all men*, for all men are enemies of God and of his Christ, and works against sinful man for evil.

Secondly, Communism does not recognize the Sovereign rights of the true owner of property. It does not even recognize the Sovereign God in all its scheme and practice. Scripture abundantly states that God is Creator of all things that are, move, or have any being. That therefore He alone has sovereign claim to all things under the heavens. To Him alone belong the cattle on the thousand hills. Those cattle on the thousand hills are apportioned by God alone, and all property and possessions are administered by millions upon millions of stewards, appointed of God, to use it all, *not of the people, by the people, and for the people, but of God, by God, and for God*. No man has right in himself, and God gives to the one administration over ten talents, to another five talents and to another one talent. God does not distribute equally to all men, for "the rich and the poor meet together; the Lord is the Maker of them all."

Thirdly we must remember that the ideal communist state, in so far as men will have all things in common, shall be the inheritance of the saints in the day when all things shall be made new. Not all men shall enjoy that state, it is true. Outside of that perfect state, shall be the dogs, the sorcerers, the whoremongers and whoever loves the lie. The wicked shall be cast into outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. They shall not inherit the heavens, but also the earth shall be completely taken from them and being made new, shall be given to the meek. Then the heavens and the earth shall be ruled by righteousness and all the saints shall dwell in perfect communion and shall enjoy for use and advantage of all, the new creation. This, however, will be the state wherein the Most High shall rule sovereignly and graciously over all, and from that principle will the saints also have all things in common. This will be possible, for then the earthy will be no more, and the saints will no longer be plagued by earthly-mindedness, for it will all be heavenly. God will then, in His Christ, through His people, rule over all the works of God's hands. Everything will be for the advantage of all, to the glory of the Triune God.

A faint picture of this glorious state is pictured to us in the early Christian Church, immediately after Pentecost. We read: "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and mind; neither said any of them that ought of the things they possessed was his own; but they had all things common. Neither was there any among them that lacked, for as many of them as were possessors of lands or houses, sold them and brought the prices of the things that were sold;

and laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need". This beautiful picture of the ideal Christian communist state, was possible only because of the great love of Christ, from which the believers lived at that time. Nay, this was the very opposite of the so-called communism of our present day among the nations. Today the principle of the world is FORCE. In Russia the State collects all and thus divides. In reality it is no different in our own country. The State taxes those who work and pays out to those who do not work. Today's communism has the poor man saying to the rich: *You must share with me.* But in the church of Christ immediately after Pentecost it was the principle of love. There was no forced giving, nor did the poor demand. Only we read that those who possessed lands or houses sold them. *The voluntary gift of love* was the rule. This rule was in turn born from the principle that: "neither said any (of them) that ought of the things he possessed *was his own*". The believers confessed God's ownership of all things, and that they were but stewards in the house of the Lord, to distribute according to the needs of the saints.

This ideal condition could not last on earth it is true. The terrible reality of an Ananias and Sapphira, with their deceit and lies, revealed all too plainly that the ideal was not yet reached in the church on earth. Also the dispute between the Christian Hebrews and the Christians from Greece, about the daily ministrations, revealed that such an ideal condition could not be maintained. The "having all things in common" condition of the church was and remains an ideal, to be fulfilled only when all things have become new. Until then the church must needs support her poor, and thus reveal the mercies of Christ our Lord. And only the love of Christ can minister this mercy to the poor and needy. Therefore Communism as it manifests itself today is thoroughly to be condemned and the poor among God's people must also be poor in spirit, and with the saints of God must look forward to the day when God will make everlastingly rich all those who hope in Him.

L. V.

:—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.

PLEASE do not send notices to the printers.

News From Our Churches

Having read the pamphlet, "The Christian Reformed Church" what it teaches, written by Rev. H. Baker, Missionary at large, of those churches, I would like to make a few comparisons with that, in connection with our own Churches.

In his introduction, the Reverend makes plain that this Church was established in the United States of America in the year 1857; and that its historic confessions originated soon after the great Reformation of 1517. They are the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dordt.

The Missionary begins with God, and that is a good beginning indeed. God must be the center of our whole life, and it must be the predominant factor in all our activities to serve him. Now, the Christian Reformed Churches teaches that God is One, three in persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. That the Bible is pre-eminently His self-revelation from which men learn to know God unto their salvation and His glory.

Creation is no Evolution; but all things were created by the Almighty God, and governed by Him. Man in Creation is a rational, moral, and immortal being, by nature totally depraved.

Christ is the Saviour, the Son of God; equal to the Father in all things. The law is the divine revelation of His will for all rational creatures, and it serves to bring man under the conviction of sin and to lead him to Christ.

On page 9 we read: that to all who hear the gospel, God offers salvation in the way of faith and repentance. The Rev. draws the conclusion that that is so, out of the gospel narrative, Mark 1:15; Mark 16:15. Now the Rev. Baker should know by this time that God is God and no man, and He never offers anything, and at any rate not in the plan of salvation, for it is a free-gift of God's grace merited by Jesus Christ; and if God had it only in His hand, there is not a sinner who will ever grasp for it. And Mark 1:5; 16:15 do not teach an offer of salvation, but it comes with the demand, preach the gospel and repent ye and believe. Neither do you find it in the confession, nor in the catechism; neither in the Canons of Dort.

It is good Reformed doctrine to say that Regeneration consists in the implanting of the new life in man by God through His Holy Spirit. Conversion is not a mere reformation of habits but a change wrought by God, and by faith the sinner relies upon the promises of God and thus embraces Jesus Christ who is an Atoning Substitute for the sin of mankind. We are justified on the basis of the finished work of Jesus Christ, and sanctified by the Holy Spirit, and therefore enabled to live a godly life.

The Chr. Ref. Church also teaches that God elected

a people unto eternal life, and that there is an eternal security for that people in Christ, who is their Intercessor, so that they can never fall away from faith and grace. They also maintain that there is an invisible Church which consists of all true believers, and that this invisible Church becomes visible in the fellowship of those who profess the true religion. They baptize children of believing parents, and the Lord's Supper is for them a sign and seal of the broken body and the shed blood of Jesus Christ. They also warn to live a christian life in the midst of the world, and prayer is for them the chief part of the thankfulness which God requires of His children.

Now, if some members of the Chr. Ref. Church read this, they will say: what is the matter with this doctrine? Are we not sound in our Creed? Why is it that some say that we are connected with Arminius and Pelagius?

Well' my dear Chr. Ref. readers, it is this way: The Rev. Baker is not honest in his dealings with you. He should have written: In 1924 the Chr. Ref. Church had a controversy with some ministers of our Church. We knew they were Reformed, but we could not use them anymore and so we deposed them, and also their consistories, and now they name themselves Protestant Reformed; which they are. Of course we had to add some to our confession. Only three points. They are in short: 1. That God is gracious to all, and more particularly in the preaching of the Word. God wants all men to be saved. We have proven this from Scripture, and from our Confession. However, the Prot. Ref. brethren maintain that that doctrine is false. They say, there is no general offer of grace. God chose His own and them only, and for those Christ suffered and died. God worked all things after the counsel of His will. For the Reprobate the outward preaching of the gospel is no more grace or favor but a savor of death unto death.

2. The second point teaches that God sustains sin in the life of the individual, and in society. He restrains the devil and all our enemies, that without His will they can do us no harm. Now, our opponents say that Scripture and our Confession do not speak of a restraint of sin, but by His power and providence God governs all things, and gives to all His creatures existence, power and talent, and so there is room for the development of sin and grace in the organism of the human race.

3. In the third point our Synod declared: that the unregenerate though incapable of doing any saving good, can do civic good. There are glimmerings in man of natural light, whereby he retains some knowledge of God. He knows the difference between good and evil, and God renews the heart, influences man so that he is able to do civic good. However, the Prot. Ref.

Churches maintain that neither our fathers, nor Scripture teaches that the natural man can do any good; for all that is not of faith is sin. I refer you in particular to the "Drie Scheuren In Het Fundament Der Gereformeerde Waarheid."

Maybe some of our readers will say, why bring this up again? Why not live in peace together? Because the Rev. Baker is of the opinion that his church is as sound as when it was established in the year 1857, and that is not the truth. It is misleading. If this was correct then there would not be Prot. Ref. Churches today. In 1857 the brethren in the Chr. Ref. Churches were sound in doctrine. In 1924 they knew the truth as yet, but they thought more of the doctrine of Common Grace.

S. D. V.

(To be Continued)

NOTICE

Young men aspiring to the ministry of the Word in our Churches and desiring admittance into our Theological School are requested to appear before the Theological School Committee at its next meeting, June 1, 1942, in the Fuller Avenue Church parlors. Aspirants must present a certificate of membership and recommendation from their consistory and also a certificate of health from a reputed physician. Application for financial support can be made directly to the Synod.

The Theological School Committee.

NOTICE

The Consistory of the First Protestant Reformed Church wishes to call to the attention of our churches that Synod will meet D. V., on Wednesday, June 3, 1942 in the parlors of the Fuller Ave. Church. This is to be preceded by a prayer service on Tuesday evening, June 2. The President of the former Synod, Rev. H. Hoeksema, will preach the sermon on this occasion.

The Consistory,
of the First Prot. Ref. Church,
G. Stonehouse, Clerk.