

THE STANDARD *Bearer* A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

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Meditation

Intercession

Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints. Eph. 1:15-18.

Striking intercession!

Striking from the viewpoint of the intercessor:
I also!

For the apostle himself is suffering in the flesh. He experiences that it is given him in the cause of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer in His behalf. For the Word of God and the testimony which he had, he is in bonds in Caesarea. As he writes these words, there is a chain about his wrist. . . .

Might it not be expected, then, that he would be so oppressed by his condition that his own needs were uppermost in his mind, and that he would request the church of Ephesus to intercede for him, to pray the Lord for a speedy release, perhaps; or, at least for grace that he might be strengthened to bear the cross?

But very remote from his mind are his personal sufferings. No word of complaint escapes his lips. He learned to be content in whatsoever state he might be. Earthly things sink into oblivion. His personal condition does not weigh heavily upon his soul. Nay more, he knows how to rejoice in his sufferings for Christ, and to glory also in tribulation.

And so, he is mindful of the church.

It is in behalf of her that his prayer ascends to the throne of grace.

Always! For he ceases not to give thanks and to mention them in his prayers!

Wonderful intercession!

Unspeakable riches!

For these the apostles pray in behalf of the Church.

For those things, he prays, which eye hath not seen, and ear hath not heard, and that have never arisen in the heart of man. Nor could they possibly be seen or heard or arise in man's heart. They are not the proper objects of perception. They do not belong to the world of our earthly experience. They lie beyond our present horizon; on the other side. . . .

Riches of hope and riches of glory unspeakable!

Hence, with a view to these riches, and earnestly longing that the church may lay hold upon them and possess them, the apostle prays that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, and that thus the eyes of their understanding might be enlightened.

For, to be sure, in order to apprehend the spiritual things of the kingdom of God, one must have the power of spiritual perception: the eyes of his understanding, not of his natural but of his spiritual understanding must be enlightened. That it is to this spiritual understanding that the text refers is evident from the original, which may be rendered literally: "the eyes of your heart". A man has eyes of the body, and the light of the body is the eye; but with these he cannot perceive the things of the kingdom of heaven: they are adapted to the things that are seen. He has eyes of the natural understanding, and these are the light of his soul: the remnant of natural light; but with these he cannot apprehend the spiritual riches of salvation, for even they are of the earth earthy. But a man by nature does not have "eyes of the heart". The natural man does not understand the things of the Spirit. They are spiritually discerned; and they are foolishness to him. Hence, in order to know and to possess the spiritual riches of grace, the eyes of one's heart must be enlightened.

And who shall enlighten the eyes of our spiritual understanding except the Spirit of God?

He is the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation. The Spirit of all wisdom is He. He searches the depths of God and knows all things. With the Father and the Son, He is the eternal co-author of that adorable wisdom, according to which all things were made unto and through Christ, Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature and the firstborn of the dead, and the eternal purpose of which is to unite all things in heaven and on earth in one, that is Christ. And, therefore, He is also the Spirit of revelation, that makes known the deep things of God which He searches out, and imparts them unto whomsoever He wills. And as the Spirit of wisdom and revelation He operates in the sphere of the knowledge of God, the knowledge that is eternal life, operates eternally, divinely, infinitely, within the relationship of the Trinity; operates as the Spirit of promise in the glorified Christ, the "quickening spirit"; and operates as the Spirit of Christ in the Church,—always active as the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the sphere of the knowledge of God, and imparting the deep things of God to the believers, taking them out of Christ (through the Word), and making the believers receptive for them, capable of apprehending them, enlightening the eyes of their understanding!

Wonderful Spirit of Christ, of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God!

And the apostle prays that he may be given to the Church, to the believers at Ephesus, to the saints of all times.

For He must be given. He proceeds, within the divine Family of the adorable Trinity, from the Father and from the Son: from the Father to the Son as the Spirit of the Father; from the Son to the Father as the Spirit of the Son. And He proceeds, too, from the Triune God to the glorified Christ, as the Spirit of truth, of life, of grace, of all the blessings of salvation; and from Christ into the Church, to impart all the fullness of Christ to her.

The Giver, therefore, is the Triune God, as the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, and, emphatically, as the Father of glory!

For, indeed, Christ is personally the Son of God, and as such He is very God, co-essential and co-eternal with the Father and the Holy Spirit. He is very God Himself. And God could not be said to be His God in His eternal divinity. But He is also the Christ, the firstborn of every creature and the firstborn of the dead, the incarnated Lord, Who was sent into the world, Who died on the cross, Who was raised on the third day, and Who was exalted at the right hand of the majesty of God; Who is the head of His body, the Church, the Saviour of His people, the head of all things, the Lord Jesus Christ!

His God, too, is God!

God ordained Him from before the foundation of the world; God formed Him and sent Him in the fullness of time; God delivered Him up on the accursed tree; God raised Him from the dead and exalted Him into the highest glory in heaven; God made Him Christ and Lord; and God gave Him the Spirit of promise, making Him the quickening spirit. . . .

He is the God of our Lord Jesus Christ!

And as such He is the God of our salvation, Who is able and purposing to bestow unspeakable riches upon His Church!

For He is the Father of glory, the implication of all infinite perfection, the shining forth of which is His glory; Who purposes from eternity to impart His glory unto a people that shall show forth His praises!

The God of our Lord Jesus Christ; the Father of glory; the God of our salvation,—He is the Giver of the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him. To that God and for that Spirit the apostle prays in behalf of the Church!

O, indeed, they had that Spirit, and they did possess enlightened eyes of the heart. Did they not believe? Had they not heard and embraced the Word of God? And were they not sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our redemption? . . .

Yes, but, first of all, that Spirit is a *constant* gift, must continuously be given, if the Church is to partake of His grace.

And secondly, it is the apostle's desire that the believers may increase in light of spiritual understanding.

That more and more they may possess the unspeakable riches in Christ!

Through the Spirit of wisdom and revelation.

Blessed Spirit of Christ!

Blessed hope!

For an object of hope are these unspeakable riches, the things which eye hath not seen, and ear hath not heard, nor have arisen in the heart of man!

And it is to that object of the Christian hope that the text refers in the words: "that ye may know what is the hope of his calling". And the glory and greatness and unspeakable blessedness of that hope is further described in the words: "and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints".

Words are accumulated, human language is, as it were, exhausted, in order to impress on us the great blessedness of this "hope of his calling" which is ours.

It is *his* inheritance, God's inheritance, that constitutes the object of the believers' hope. It is a precious possession, which God has ordained for them that love Him, which He has prepared through and in Christ Jesus our Lord, which in Him He has stored away unto "the last time", when it shall be revealed in

all its fulness and given into the actual possession of the saints. It is his inheritance "in", or rather, "among his saints". For the saints are those that are in Christ Jesus, that are given to Him before the foundation of the world, and that are ingrafted into Him by the faith which is the gift of God. To them the inheritance is promised. To the sphere of the saints it is limited. Outside of Christ and His saints this inheritance is not found, nor will ever be revealed. Already it is among them, for they possess it in principle, and they have the earnest of it in the Spirit: they are saved by hope. And soon it will be realized unto them, when their adoption shall be finished through the redemption of the body. . . .

Such is the object of the Christian hope!

It is glory! For the apostle speaks of "the glory of his inheritance in the saints."

Glory is always glory of God. For God alone is glorious. His is all the glory, whether it is in Him or whether it is found in the works of His hands. For God is good, the only Fount of all goodness, the implication of all infinite perfection. And glory is the radiation of that divine goodness, of infinite wisdom, knowledge, truth, righteousness, holiness, mighty power, mercy, grace, love. He is a light, and there is no darkness in Him at all. And his inheritance among the saints is, centrally, this glory of God, bestowed through Christ on them, so that they may be partakers of, reflections of His own glory! For they shall be like Him! Righteous as He is righteous, holy as He is holy they shall be; they shall know as they are known, and thus they "shall see Him as He is", face to face in heavenly beauty!

The glory of his inheritance in the saints!

Yes, but even so, the subject is not exhausted. Or rather,—for how could the subject possibly be exhausted—the language that may somewhat describe the object of this hope is not quite exhausted. And therefore, it must be added: "the riches" of that glory! For God is unspeakably rich in glory, and so is the glory of his inheritance among the saints. He is One, but manifold are His perfections, and, therefore, His glories as revealed to us. And when the inheritance shall be realized and fully revealed to them and in them, it shall shine forth in millions upon millions of saints radiating with the manifold glory of God. . . .

Riches of glory of the inheritance!

That is the hope, that is, the object of the hope of their calling!

Hope in Scripture may and often does denote the grace of hope, the activity of hoping on the part of the believers; it also may denote the object of this hope, the thing hoped for. The latter is the case here. The riches of the glory of God's inheritance *is* the hope of their calling.

Of *His* calling!

For it is all the work of God. He ordained them unto this hope. He prepared for them this hope. He redeemed them unto this hope. And He also called them unto this hope, unto the riches of the glory of His inheritance among the saints. He called them by the preaching of the gospel, and that gospel as well as its preaching is His. And, emphatically, *He*, not Paul, called them through that preaching. By His almighty Word, through the Spirit, He caused the Word of the gospel to resound irresistibly in their hearts, so that they were translated out of darkness into His marvellous light. And they were called unto this hope. For outside of the sphere of this calling there was no hope, no prospect, no inheritance, no way out. But God called them into his inheritance, so that they laid hold upon it, became heirs of it, were saved. . . .

The hope to which they are called!

The hope to which was given them the right, of which they became the heirs through this calling.

Glorious hope!

That ye may know!

That is the apostle's earnest desire: that they may know *what* is the hope of their calling, and *what* the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.

That is the purpose, the end, and, therefore, the contents of his prayer.

But do they not know?

O, indeed! Had not the apostle written to them, that they were blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ? Had they not obtained the inheritance? Were they not called unto the hope of the riches of the glory of God's inheritance among the saints? And were they not sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory? How, then, could it be that they did not know?

Still more!

The very fact that they did obtain the inheritance, that they were sealed with the Holy Spirit until the redemption of the purchased possession, and the very fact that they manifested in their walk and conversation that they were quite conscious of the hope of his calling, is the basis of the apostle's thanksgiving, and motivates his prayer for them. Does he not say: *Wherefore*. . . . having heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints"?

The fact that they knew gave the apostle courage to pray that they might know!

Might know always, constantly, through the Spirit: for only by the constant gift of the Spirit could they know.

And might know more and more, always more!

Until the day of full redemption!

And of perfect knowledge!

H. H.

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Editorials

Aangaande Moeilijke Schriftuurplaatsen

Een der rubrieken, die, zoo de Heere wil, in ons blad zal worden verzorgd onder de nieuwe regeling voor dezen jaargang, heeft tot kopstuk : "Moeilijke Schriftuurplaatsen".

Het is op dit oogenblik nog niet zeker of deze

rubriek door één of door meer onzer leeraren zal worden verzorgd. Voor dit nommer heb ik hiervoor nog geen copie. Het is misschien niet overbodig, om de ruimte, die hierdoor open bleef in ons blad, in te vullen met enkele opmerkingen over de eigenlijke bedoeling van deze rubriek. Tevens kunnen we dan het onderwerp eenigszins omschrijven en bepalen, en eenige wenken geven ten opzichte van eene mogelijke verdeling der stof, die in deze rubriek behandeld moet worden.

Eigenlijk is het kopstuk, zooals het daar staat, zeer breed.

Men zou immers onder "moeilijke Schriftuurplaatsen" al zulke teksten of gedeelten der Heilige Schrift kunnen verstaan, die niet gemakkelijk te verklaren zijn, de exegese waarvan veel inspanning en tijd vereischt.

En dan heeft men de teksten maar voor het grijpen. Zulke teksten zijn er legio. Ik meen, dat één onzer predikanten mij zeide, dat hij mij er terstond wel een vijftigtal wilde toezenden, waarvan hij gaarne eene verklaring zou willen zien in "The Standard Bearer".

Heel de Schrift is eigenlijk moeilijk te verklaren.

Exegese van Gods Woord is altijd een moeilijk werk, dat inspanning van krachten vereischt. Ik beschouw de verklaring van de Heilige Schrift dan ook altijd nog als het voornaamste werk van een bedienaar des Woords. Van den tijd, dien hij aan dit werk besteedt, zal het hoofdzakelijk afhangen of hij al dan niet een goed predikant zal zijn of worden. Hij kan wel met een meer of min grondige kennis van de dogmatiek van school komen. En die kennis der dogmatiek kan en mag hem ook wel dienen in de prediking des Woords. Maar zal hij op den duur frisch blijven, en den rijkdom van Gods Woord in de prediking laten schitteren, dan zal hij zich moeten zetten tot grondige exegese der Heilige Schrift. Hij moet dan niet in het begin der week zijn tijd verkwisten met allerlei bezigheden, om tegen den Zondag een tekst uit te zoeken, om er in der haast een preek over te maken. Ook moet hij zich niet laten verleiden om maar aanstonds naar commentaren te grijpen, en te vertrouwen op het werk van anderen. Hij moet uit de bron zelf putten. Nog veel minder moet hij zich vergenoegen met het werk, dat hij reeds verricht heeft in het verleden, en dat in oude preeken belichaamd is, die hij in andere gemeenten reeds heeft gepredikt. Als het goed staat met hem, dan zal hij na verloop van enkele jaren die oude preeken niet meer kunnen preeken, zooals ze daar gereed liggen, juist omdat hij zelf verrijkt is in de kennis der Heilige Schrift. Hij moet werken. Hij moet met de Schrift zelve werken. Zijn hoofdtaak als bedienaar des Woords blijft altijd exegese. En de verklaring der Heilige Schrift vereischt veel inspanning, geestelijke inspanning, biddend werk.

Want heel de Heilige Schrift is diep, en daarom is

de verklaring er van altijd moeilijk.

Weliswaar hielden onze vaders tegenover Rome vol, dat de Schrift gekenmerkt is door "perspicuitas", d.w.z., dat ze doorzichtig is. Ze bedoelden daarmee, dat ieder geloovige, in verband met het lichaam van Christus, de Schrift kan lezen en verklaren. Want allen hebben de zalving van den Heilige, en in dien zin hebben ze niet van noode, dat iemand hen leere. Rome leerde, dat de "leeken" eigenlijk de Schrift niet konden verstaan. Ze onthield dan ook den bijbel aan de gewone kerkleden. Alleen "de kerk" kon de Schrift verklaren, en de leden geloofden de waarheid, zooals deze hun door de kerk werd verklaard. En daartegenover handhaafden de reformatoren weer, dat de Schrift doorzichtig is voor ieder geloovige.

En wezenlijk is dit ook zoo. Wat tot de zaligheid van noode is te weten, kan ieder geloovige metterdaad wel uit de Schrift putten.

Maar dit wil in de eerste plaats niet zeggen, dat onze vaders nu de uitlegging der Schrift maar aan ieder persoonlijk bedoelden over te laten, los van de ambten en de bediening des Woords. Niemand komt individualistisch tot de Schrift. Hij zou het niet kunnen, al zou hij het ook bedoelen. Ieder geloovige staat in organisch verband met het lichaam van Christus, en gaat in den arbeid, die door de Kerk in het verleden aan de Schrift werd besteed, en door de Kerk in het heden nog altijd wordt verricht tot verklaring der Schrift, in.

En deze "doorzichtigheid" beteekent, in de tweede plaats, ook niet dat het gemakkelijk is om aanstonds de Heilige Schrift tot op den bodem toe te peilen, en dat er geen diepten zijn in Gods Woord, waarin men slechts door ingespannen arbeid kan afdalen.

De Schrift is doorzichtig, maar ze is ook diep.

De bijbel is doorzichtig, maar ge ziet er niet gemakkelijk dóór.

Zelfs is het waar, dat Schriftgedeelten, die op het eerste gezicht het eenvoudigst, het meest doorzichtig schijnen, en ook zijn, hoe langer zoo dieper en moeilijker blijken te zijn, hoe meer ge ze onderzoekt en oplettend leest.

Ik weet niet of ge die ervaring ooit hebt opgedaan met hetgeen door den apostel Johannes in de Heilige Schrift werd geschreven. Maar stel de proef maar eens op de som. Ge leest zijn brieven, en ge vindt, dat hij toch zoo heel eenvoudig kan schrijven. Zwarte taal gebruikt hij niet. Groote woorden zoekt ge bij hem te vergeefs. Als de student eerst Grieksch begint te lezen, laat ge hem eerst de brieven van den apostel Johannes vertalen. Dat is gemakkelijk lezen. Ingewikkeld is zijn zinsbouw ook niet. Het is bij hem heel anders dan b.v. bij Paulus. Die redeneert maar door. Bij hem vindt ge lange, samengestelde, ingewikkelde zinnen. Het ééne bouwt hij maar op het andere. Ge moet al uw verstand er bij hebben, om

hem te kunnen volgen. Daar zijn bij hem dingen "zwaar om te verstaan". Maar bij Johannes is dat heel anders. Hij redeneert eigenlijk niet. Hij beschrijft maar wat hij van de waarheid ziet. En als ge hem doorgelezen hebt, dan zegt ge: wat is die Johannes toch helder en eenvoudig!

Maar ge leest hem nog eens, en nog eens. En het wordt anders. Ge merkt, dat ge hem, ja wel had verstaan, maar ge had toch niet begrepen over welke geweldig diepe dingen hij eigenlijk schrijft. Hij schrijft maar over licht, leven, liefde, over een wandelen in het licht en gemeenschap met elkander, over het Woord des levens en het leven Gods, en ge begint te vragen: wat beteekent dit alles? Wat is eigenlijk licht? Wat is liefde? Wat beteekent het eigenlijk, dat God liefde is, en dat alle liefde altijd uit God is? En zoo gaat ge maar door. En ge komt ten slotte tot de erkenning, dat Johannes wel doorzichtig is, maar dat ge hem toch niet gemakkelijk dóórziet!

En zoo is het eigenlijk altijd.

Er blijven altijd diepten in de Schrift, die we nog niet hebben gepeild.

En dat verwondert ons natuurlijk niet. Want de Schrift is niet het woord eens menschen, maar het Woord Gods. Het is geen filosofie, maar openbaring, kennis Gods. Daarom kunnen we dan ook de Heilige Schrift altijd weer opnieuw lezen in onze gezinnen, driemaal daags, van Genesis tot Openbaring; we kunnen haar verder bestudeeren en met elkander bespreken op onze vereenigingen; we kunnen jaar in jaar uit naar de prediking luisteren van Gods Woord; en we worden het nooit zat. We zouden dit eens moeten probeeren met eenig geschrift van menschen, al was het ook nog zoo diep! Het zou ons ten slotte de keel uithangen! Maar met de Schrift is het juist andersom. Hoe meer ge haar ijverig en biddend onderzoekt, hoe rijker ze wordt.

Zou iemand dus te hooi en gras naar "moeilijke Schriftuurplaatsen" zoeken, dan liggen ze maar voor het grijpen.

Doch dat is de bedoeling niet van deze rubriek. Ze bedoelt niet tegemoet te komen aan luie predikanten. Die hebben we dan ook in onze kleine kerkengroep nog niet.

Maar in de eerste plaats zijn er toch verschillende teksten in de Heilige Schrift, die moeilijk te verstaan zijn, niet zoozeer om de diepte van gedachte, maar om andere oorzaken, hetzij dan de constructie van de zinnen, of onbekendheid met de omstandigheden, waarop ze in de eerste plaats betrekking hadden, of omdat de woorden meer dan ééne beteekenis kunnen hebben, of iets dergelijks. Denk maar, b.v. aan I Cor. 11:10: "Daarom moet een vrouw een macht op het hoofd hebben, om der engelen wil". Of aan I Cor. 15:29: "Anders, wat zullen zij doen, die voor de dooden gedoopt worden, indien de dooden ganschelijk niet op-

gewekt worden? waarom worden zij voor de dooden ook gedoopt?" Of, om niet meer te noemen, neem b.v. Filipp. 2:6: "Die in de gestaltenis Gods zijnde, geen roef geacht heeft Gode evengelijk te zijn".

En zoo zijn er veel meer teksten, beide in het Oude en in het Nieuwe Testament.

In de tweede plaats zijn er teksten, wier beteekenis oppervlakkig wel duidelijk schijnt, maar wier schijnbare beteekenis ons niet aan wil, omdat ze dan strijden tegen de *regula Scripturae*, de doorlopende leer der Heilige Schrift.

Soms schijnen zulke teksten juist heel duidelijk en zeer gemakkelijk te verklaren. En het zijn ook juist zulke teksten, waarvan ketters van allerlei gading gaarne gebruik maken, om hun verkeerde leer te staven.

Maar goede uitleggers gaan uit van het beginsel, dat de Schrift eene eenheid is, die ge maar niet te hooi en te gras kunt aanhalen, alsof ge een woordenboek voor u hadt, maar die gelezen moet worden in haar eigen licht en in haar eigen verband. De Schrift is het Woord Gods. Ze is de ééne openbaring Gods in Christus. Ze spreekt zichzelf niet tegen. Ze leert niet nu eens dit, en dan weer precies het tegenovergestelde. Is er dus een tekst, die schijnt in de druischen tegen de doorlopende leer der Schrift, dan is een goede uitlegger verzekerd, dat die schijnbare beteekenis de rechte niet is, dat hij den tekst niet goed verstaat, en dat hij zich dus moet inspannen om die rechte verklaring te vinden.

Vooraf gereformeerde Schriftverklaarders stonden sterk op dit beginsel. Ze lieten zich door het aanhalen van enkele losse teksten, zooals nog niet lang geleden Ds. Zwier b.v. deed om te bewijzen, dat Gods goedheid algemeen is, niet uit het veld slaan.

En ook zulke teksten zijn er niet weinige.

Ik vestig de aandacht thans alleen maar op I Pet. 4:6: "Want daartoe is ook den dooden het evangelie verkondigd geworden, opdat zij wel zouden geoordeeld worden naar den mensch in het vleesch, maar leven zouden naar God in den geest".

Om wat systeem in de bespreking aan te brengen, zou men deze groep van moeilijke Schriftuurlijke klassen kunnen indeelen.

Allereerst zijn er zulke plaatsen, wier oppervlakkige beteekenis zou strijden met de leer der Schrift, zooals die door heel de Christelijke Kerk wordt aanvaard. Denk maar aan die plaatsen in het Oude Testament, die schijnen te leeren, dat het graf het einde van alles is.

In de tweede plaats zou men hieronder zulke plaatsen kunnen behandelen, wier schijnbare beteekenis zou ingaan tegen de leer der Schrift, zooals die door de kerken van de Reformatie wordt verstaan tegenover Rome.

In de derde plaats vallen hieronder die teksten, die

schijnbaar strijden tegen de waarheid der Schrift, zooals die door Gereformeerden wordt gehandhaafd tegenover allerlei andere richtingen, Lutherschen, Baptisten, Pelagianen.

En eindelijk zijn er teksten, die met een schijn van recht in de laatste jaren tegen de waarheid der Schrift zijn ingebracht, zooals deze door de Protestantische Gereformeerde Kerken wordt beleden.

Op deze wijze zouden de schrijvers systematisch kunnen werken, en hun werk zou niet van belang zijn ontbloot.

Ze kunnen natuurlijk wel een ander schema volgen. Bovenstaande is slechts een suggestie.

Maar welke verdeeling van de stof ze ook de voorkeur mogen geven, hoofdzaak is en blijft, dat de verzorger van deze rubriek in ons blad veel kracht en tijd bestede aan het volbrengen van zijn taak.

Want exegese is geen gemakkelijk werk.

H. H.

Een Andere Basis?

In dit nummer van ons blad komt een ingezonden stuk voor van de broeders P. Alphenaar en B. Hoppenbrouwer, leden van de Protesteerende Eerste Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk te Kalamazoo, Mich. Het stuk bedoelt te zijn eene apologie of schuldbelijdenis van de broeders aan Mr. J. Hendriksen, ouderling bij dezelfde gemeente en scriba van den kerkeraad aldaar.

Ik heb dit stuk geplaatst, omdat ik overtuigd ben, dat de schrijvers het goede zoeken voor de kerken, met name voor de gemeente, waartoe zij behooren. Ze begeeren ernstiglijk de vereeniging van hun gemeente met onze kerken.

Overigens meende ik, dat het stuk als schuldbelijdenis eigenlijk niet op zijn plaats is in ons blad. De grond voor deze meening is, dat ik mij niet kan herinneren, dat de broeders ooit in het publiek, dat is in ons blad van Mr. J. Hendriksen gezegd hebben, dat hij ageerde, om de gemeente te Kalamazoo terug te leiden naar de Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken. Indien dit in het verleden wel geschied is, dan spijt het me, dat het mijn aandacht is ontgaan, en dat het gezegde in ons blad insloep, want persoonlijkheden, tenzij ze om wille van de zaak moeten geopenbaard worden, dienen te worden vermeden, ook in ingezonden stukken. Doch ik ben tamelijk zeker, dat ik in dit geval geen abuis heb. En dan behoort het stuk eigenlijk niet in ons blad. Schuld moet beleden worden, waar en tegenover wie de zonde werd bedreven, in dit geval tegenover Mr. Hendriksen en in den kring, waarin bovenstaande van hem werd verteld.

Doch, zooals we zeiden, we weten, dat het den

broeders om de zaak te doen is. Daarom stelden we hen niet gaarne teleur.

Bovendien houdt hun schrijven toch ook meer in dan eene apologie.

Er wordt ook gesproken over de door de broeders begeerde vereeniging van de Kalamazoo gemeente met onze kerken. En zelfs wordt de mogelijkheid uitgesproken van een anderen weg dan die tot dusver werd bewandeld, om tot die vereeniging te komen.

Het laatste komt voor in de slotparagraaf van het ingezonden stuk. En het is daarom op die paragraaf, dat we meer in het bijzonder willen wijzen in dit artikel. Dat we dit in het Hollandsch doen, ofschoon de broeders in het Englesch schreven, vindt zijn oorzaak in het feit, dat de hoofdartikelen voor dit nummer in de taal der vaders geschreven moeten worden.

Ik vertaal dus de bewuste paragraaf als volgt:

“Veronderstel, dat de heele zaak eens uit een anderen hoek wordt benaderd, en dat van beide zijden eene commissie wordt benoemd, om een schriftuurlijke en wettige basis uit te werken. Het moest toch niet moeilijk zijn voor Christgelooovigen om te vergeven en te vergeten, en het schijnt ook niet al te moeilijk om een weg te vinden. Wij hopen, dat de ouderlingen onzer gemeente hun plicht mogen verstaan, en den moed hunner overtuiging mogen hebben, zoodat wij en onze kinderen behouden mogen blijven voor de Protestantsche Gereformeerde waarheid.”

Tot dusver de broeders.

Nu wil ik in de eerste plaats uitspreken, dat ik het goed eens ben met het streven van de broeders, om vereeniging van hunne kerk met de Protestantsche Gereformeerde Kerken. En ik kan het ook wel verstaan, dat hun ernstige begeerte er hen toe dringt om te zoeken naar een anderen weg dan die tot dusver door ons werd ingeslagen, en die immers dood liep.

Dat zal toch hun bedoeling zijn. Als ze gewagen van een benaderen van de heele zaak uit een anderen hoek, dan bedoelen ze een anderen weg te kiezen dan die door onze synode werd gekozen.

Welke is die weg, die door onze synode in dezen werd bewandeld?

Wij waren overtuigd, dat de oorzaak van het gescheiden leven van de Protesteerende Eerste Gereformeerde Kerk te Kalamazoo moet worden gezocht in de zonde van haar leeraar, die daarin werd gesteund door zijn kerkeraad. Kalamazoo heeft ons opzettelijk, zonder eenige reden, die ze voor God zou kunnen verantwoorden, verlaten, toen wij nog minder krachten hadden dan thans, toen ze de zaak Gods, zooals wij die voorstaan, ernstige schade kon berokkenen, alleen omdat Ds. Danhof c.s. hun zin niet konden doordrijven.

In die zonde alleen ligt de oorzaak. De schuld ligt bij Kalamazoo.

Op die schuld heeft onze synode Kalamazoo gewezen. En ze heeft de gemeente aldaar vermaand om

die schuld te belijden.

Onzerzijds betuigden wij, dat wij gaarne door Kalamazoo wilden gewezen worden op eenige schuld, die volgens hun overtuiging op onze rekening zou moeten worden genoteerd.

En tevens betuigden wij onze gewilligheid om in den weg van belijdenis te “vergeven en te vergeten”.

We lieten den kerkeraad van de gemeente te Kalamazoo weten, dat we eene commissie hadden benoemd, die, bijaldien de kerkeraad zou mogen willen wandelen in den door ons aangewezen weg, met hem, den kerkeraad, verder zou kunnen confereeren.

De kerkeraad liet ons weten, dat hij hoegenaamd niet van plan was om den door ons gekozen weg met ons te bewandelen. Hij deed geen poging om zijn schuld te ontkennen, of te bewijzen, dat onze beschuldigen niet gegrond waren. Hij wees ook met geen enkel woord op eenige schuld, die wij mochten hebben in de zaak. Maar hij eischte eenvoudig, dat wij die beschuldigingen zouden herroepen. Alleen op die voorwaarde wilde Kalamazoo hooren van pogingen tot vereeniging.

Zoo staat thans nog de zaak.

Nu willen de broeders, die het ingezonden stuk schreven, een anderen weg inslaan.

De vraag is dus allereerst: is er wel een andere weg, die werkelijk tot het gewenschte resultaat kan leiden, en die in overeenstemming is met de Heilige Schrift?

Men zou verder kunnen vragen: indien er zulk een weg zou zijn, is die weg beter dan de tot dusver bewandelde? Doch die vraag is eigenlijk overbodig. Indien de weg door de broeders aangeduid Schriftuurlijk is, dan is er feitelijk geen andere weg.

Welken weg willen de broeders inslaan?

Als we hen goed verstaan, dan willen ze onvoorwaardelijk, zonder eenige voorafgaande belijdenis van Kalamazoo, een commissie benoemd hebben van beide zijden, die dan de zaak bespreken en een basis zoeken voor vereeniging.

Nu mogen we zeker wel allereerst opmerken, dat zulk eene commissie zeker niet zou kunnen worden benoemd vóór den zomer van het volgend jaar. Onzerzijds bestaat er zulk eene commissie niet meer. Ook zou niemand haar kunnen benoemen behalve onze synode, die echter niet weer vergaderd tot Juni 1942, zoo de Heere wil.

Doch dit is slechts een bezwaar van tijd.

Ik heb bezwaar van principieelen aard.

En mijn bezwaar is, dat zulk eene commissie de taak zou hebben, om naar een Schriftuurlijke basis voor vereeniging te zoeken, terwijl de eenige grond, waarop we zouden kunnen en mogen vereenigen zoo duidelijk is, in het licht der Schrift, als de zon aan den hemel.

Hetgeen de broeders voorstellen, zou zin hebben, indien de oorzaak van het gescheiden leven van de Pro-

testeerende Eerste Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk te Kalamazoo moest worden gezocht in eenig punt van verschil de belijdenis of de kerkenorde betreffend. Dan immers zou er hoegenaamd geen reden zijn, waarom men niet broederlijk zou kunnen samenspreken, en zou er alle reden bestaan om te zien of het confessioneel of kerkrechtelijk verschil niet uit den weg kon worden geruimd, en of we geen gemeenschappelijke basis zouden kunnen vinden.

Doch dat is hier niet geval.

We zijn het over die basis wel eens, voorzoover ik weet.

Confessioneel is die basis de Gereformeerde Belijdenis, bestaande in de Drie Formulieren van Eenigheid, met verwerping (tegenover de Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken) van de "Drie Punten".

En kerkrechtelijk staan onze kerken op den bodem van de Dordtsche Kerkenorde.

Dat is dus de zaak niet.

Het is hier een kwestie van zonde. En laat ons elkan- der toch goed verstaan: het is onze onwankelbare overtuiging, dat die zonde alleen bij Kalamazoo gezocht moet worden. Het is de gemeente te Kalamazoo, die gescheiden leeft, die zich om zondige oorzaken van ons afgescheurd heeft. Bij ons is daar geen twijfel aan.

Daarom is het ook onze vaste overtuiging, dat de Schriftuurlijke weg in dit geval duidelijk is, en dat het de weg is, die door ons werd ingeslagen.

En daarom kan en mag er ook geen commissie worden benoemd, die dan zou handelen alsof die weg niet duidelijk ware.

Het is natuurlijk mogelijk, dat de kerkeraad van Kalamazoo niet overtuigd is van schuld. Laat hem dan de zaak onderzoeken. Eene commissie onzerzijds is daartoe niet noodig. De officieele stukken spreken duidelijke taal. En bovendien zijn er ook te Kalamazoo nog wel broeders, die wel weten, dat de zaak zoo staat, als ik haar voorstel.

Maar overigens is de weg: schuld belijden en vergeven.

Een andere weg is er niet.

Zouden we toch een anderen weg zoeken en inslaan, we zouden den zegen Gods moeten derven.

De broeders schrijven, dat het toch niet moeilijk moest zijn voor Christ-geloovigen, om "te vergeven en te vergeten". Ik wil dit zoo verstaan, dat ze dit in den rechten zin bedoelen: die der schuldbelijdenis, waar schuld is.

En dan is het wel waar, dat het voor Christgeloovigen niet moeilijk *moest* zijn om te "vergeven en te vergeten". Het is ook waar, dat het voor Christgeloovigen *als zoodanig* niet moeilijk is om dat te doen.

Maar ach, de werkelijkheid is dikwijls zoo geheel anders! Ik bedoel nu met de werkelijkheid: het leven onderling van Christgeloovigen, die nog in het vleesch zijn!

Het is mijn ervaring, niet zoozeer, dat het moeilijk is om te vergeven, wanneer iemand oprecht zijn schuld belijdt, ofschoon ook dit nog soms op allerlei moeilijkheden stuit; maar dat het ontzettend moeilijk is om iemand tot oprechte schuldbelijdenis te brengen. Ook al overtuigt men iemand van zijn schuld, zoodat hij alles zal moeten toestemmen, dan wil dit nog volstrekt niet zeggen, dat hij zich nu ook oprechtelijk verootmoedigt en zijn schuld voor God en de broeders belijdt.

Diep treurig, zegt ge?

Ik stem het u toe. Maar werkelijkheid is het.

En ik ben tevens overtuigd, dat dit ook het geval is in de onderhavige zaak.

H. H.

The Triple Knowledge

EXPOSITION OF THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

II.

LORD'S DAY I.

3.

The Contents Of The Christian Comfort.

The question now is: what is that great good, the knowledge and consideration of which is sufficient to be a true and sole comfort in life and in death? The Heidelberg Catechism answers: "That I with body and soul, both in life and death, am not my own, but belong unto my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ." Here, too, one might easily be tempted to elaborate so as to anticipate practically the entire contents of the Catechism. He might set out to explain the meaning of "my faithful Saviour", and to set forth in detail what it implies to belong to Him, how one becomes His property, that God has given the elect to Him from eternity, that Christ purchased us to be His own by His precious blood, and that we are united by faith with that faithful Saviour. But, evidently, this is not the purpose of this first Lord's Day. It intends to be introductory, and as such it must be treated. And, therefore, the central idea must be clearly grasped, it must receive all the emphasis in our exposition, and all the details that are mentioned in this first answer must be used only in as far as it is necessary to set forth that central thought in all its significance. And that one idea is this: the fact that I belong to Christ is an all sufficient comfort to me in life and in death, a comfort beside which no other comfort is either necessary or conceivable! To belong to Christ means that all is well. He that is conscious of this relation-

ship to Christ considers all things, in life and in death, in the light of it, and evaluating things in that light, is quite sure that the evil of this present time, including death, must be subservient to the attainment of a great good that could not otherwise be realized!

Clearly and fully you realize the evil of "life and of death". You do not close your eyes to reality. You know that "life and death" are both "death". And there is no way out, as far as you can see. You realize your sin. You know that there is a load of guilt, increasing day by day, that make you damnable in the sight of God, worthy of eternal desolation. You know that you are hopelessly in the power of death and corruption, so that sin has dominion over you, and that you can never liberate yourselves from that slavery of sin. You know, too, that God is righteous and just, and that He is angry with the wicked every day. He will never excuse you or acquit you when you appear before Him in judgment. You realize that He judges you every day, every moment of your life, and that His sentence is always: "Cursed is every one that abideth not in all things written in the law, to do them!" And you say: "My sole comfort over against this crushing evil is that I belong to Christ!" And presently you lie on your deathbed. You feel how impotent you are in your struggle against that last enemy. But what is more, you clearly understand that even death is of God. You do not merely die somehow, according to some "law of nature", perhaps. No, death is the hand of God! God speaks in and through death. And He speaks the language of wrath: "By Thy wrath we pine and die". And in that last moment of struggle and anguish, when the chill hand of death chokes you, and the cold sweat of suffocation is upon your brow, the "murderer from the beginning", the devil, that "accuser of the brethren", reminds you of all your sins and transgressions, and brings them into causal connection with the fact of your death. He impresses upon your mind that death is indeed, the hand of God, and that it is the punishment for sin. He brings you before the tribunal of God, and shows you that you will never be able to stand before Him. Sorrows of death are compassing you and pains of hell get hold upon you. And you do not try to minimize the seriousness of the evil. You do not appeal to extenuating circumstances. You make no attempt to diminish the greatness of your sin. You agree with the tempter, that you are, indeed, damnable. But you do not despair. Facing the full reality of the evil that engulfs you, you say triumphantly: "But this is my only and all sufficient comfort, that I belong to Christ!"

Yes, an only comfort in "life and in death" it is that we belong to our faithful Saviour Jesus Christ!

It is your answer, too, in all circumstances of your present life. For life, too, "is nothing but a continual death". All things seem to go against you, and it

seems that your punishment awaits you every morning. There is "depression" in the land, and in vain do you walk the streets of the city to find employment that you may provide for your family. Whatever savings you were able to lay up for such times are soon consumed. You lose your home. You are forced to live on "relief", or on charity. What is your only comfort? That soon the evil days may be over and prosperity will return to the land? No, but that you belong to Christ! Sickness attacks your frame and day after day, week after week, month, after month, you travel a way of suffering. What is your only comfort? That there are physicians and means to alleviate your suffering; or that you may look forward to recovery? No, but your only consolation is that you belong to Christ! Death enters your home and takes away a dear child, tearing it from your very heart. And again, your only, mark you well, emphatically your only comfort is that you are not your own, but belong to your faithful Saviour Jesus Christ! War rages in the world, and the very foundations of the earth are shaken. Perhaps you are called to take up arms, or your sons are sent to the battle. What is your comfort in the midst of all this confusion and suffering of this present time? That the war may soon cease and peace be restored, and your sons return from the battle in safety? No, but your only comfort in all this is, that you belong to Christ! Your relationship to Christ is always sufficient!

But why is this true? How is this possible? What, then, is there in this relationship to Christ that causes it to be the source of such an all-comprehensive comfort? Who is this Christ, to Whom to belong means that all is well?

He is the Christ! That, in brief, explains fully why it is a comfort, why it is the only possible comfort, why it is an all-embracing comfort, to belong to Him. He is the Christ of God! He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature. By Him were all things created, that are in heaven and that are in the earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him. And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the Church, and as such he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all the fulness dwell; and having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven! Col. 1:15-20. O, but don't you see, why it is an all comprehensive comfort to belong to Him? He is Christ, the Lord! He is the Lord of heaven and of earth! God's Lord is He, the Christ, ordained by Him from before the foundation of the

world. He is the firstborn of every creature, and the first begotten of the dead! All things were created with a view to Him, to His revelation, to His final glory and victory! He is the Alpha, and also the Omega! Nothing exists that does exist, nothing moves that does move, nothing develops that does develop, nothing happens that does happen, whether light or darkness, whether sin or grace, whether the devil or antichrist, whether life or death, whether sickness or health, whether prosperity or adversity, whether joy or sorrow, whether war or peace, whether angels or principalities or powers,—nothing in heaven or in earth or in hell exists or acts but for Him! The very world is upheld by Him, governed by Him. All the lines of history converge in Him. He is the center of all things, the reason for all things, the pivot on which all things turn, in order that in and through Him all things might be to the praise of Him that created them! No, “things are not what they seem.” They may seem a hopeless chaos, vanity of vanities, encircled by death, from which there is no way out. But in Christ, God’s Christ, the Lord of life and of death, the Lord of all, they have their reason and their unity. And in Him all things, yes, absolutely all things must and do actually tend to the final and eternal state of glory, in which all things shall be united in Him and God will be all in all. For such was the good pleasure which God has purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth. Eph. 1:10.

Christ, the Lord!

The firstborn of every creature; *and* the first-begotten of the dead!

O, but do you not see that to belong to that mighty Lord, Who was revealed as Christ, the Lord, in the fulness of time; Who came into the world as Christ, the Lord; Who spoke as Christ, the Lord; Who suffered and died as Christ, the Lord; Who was raised from the dead on the third day as Christ, the Lord; Who ascended into the highest heavens, and is seated at the right hand of the Most High, as Christ, the Lord; Who has all, yes, absolutely all power in heaven and on earth as Christ, the Lord; and Who will come again in due time to judge the quick and the dead, as Christ, the Lord;—that to belong to Him, I say, is absolutely your only comfort in life and in death?

If you do not belong to Him, you are, in a sense, your own, with body and soul, in life and in death. In a sense, for still you are God’s, and strictly you have nothing you can call your own. To Him you owe your very breath and existence. And still He demands of you that you shall love Him with all your heart and soul and strength, that you glorify Him and be thankful. But you are your own in that you stand alone, at your own responsibility, left to help

yourself. You are outside of that whole, of that communion, in which Christ is the Lord. And still there is “life and death”. Still there is the load of guilt which you can never pay. Still there is the dominion of the devil and of corruption from which you can never liberate yourself. Still there is death encompassing you on every side. And in the midst of it all you are your own! Your lord is the devil, your god is your belly, your way is corruption, your end is destruction. And you have no answer to anything, no solution of the problem of existence, no way out of death, no comfort in either life or in death!

But I am not my own!

I belong to Christ, the Lord! And that means that He is *my* Lord in every sense of the word. It means that He owns me, and that I am His property, with body and soul, in life and in death, for time and eternity. It implies that He is responsible for me, for my body and for my soul, for my all in life and in death, responsible, that is, for me as part of that whole of which He is the appointed Lord, and which He must keep and preserve and lead into the eternal glory of His kingdom. It signifies that He is ordained to rule over me, and that He actually does have dominion over me, over my body and over my soul, my mind and my will, over all that I am and have, in life and in death, in time and in eternity! Christ, the Lord, is my Lord! It means that all things are mine; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death (yes, indeed, even death!), or things present, or things to come,—all things are mine. For I am Christ’s; and Christ is God’s! I Cor. 3:22, 23. It implies, too, that I am more than conqueror, through him that loved us, for neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate me from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus my Lord. Rom. 8:37-39. How could thy? Are they not all Christ’s? Do they not all belong to that scheme of things that is created unto Him, and that is all arranged to cooperate to the final revelation of Him, as my Lord, in glory?

Yes, indeed, a sure comfort it is that I belong to Him. For the fact of my relationship to Him as my Lord is not my work, nor of my choosing. It is of grace, of sovereign grace, and absolutely of grace only. It is a relationship that is rooted in eternity, in the unchangeable good pleasure of the almighty God Himself. For He is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He ordained Him Lord of all. It was His good pleasure that He should be the firstborn of every creature, and the firstborn of the dead, and that in Him all the fulness should dwell. It is He, too, that predestinated His own to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He should be the firstborn among many

brethren. He gave me to Him. He is my Lord from before the foundation of the world. He it was, Who sent His Son into the likeness of sinful flesh, and Who caused Him to die for me, an ungodly in myself, in due time. And my Lord purchased me at the price of His own precious blood. He it is, that established the unity between Him and me, by ingrafting me into Him by a living faith through His Spirit. And so I am assured that I belong to Him, and that nothing can separate me from His love. Christ, the Lord of life and of death, is my Lord forever; to Him I belong with body and soul. And that is my all sufficient, and only comfort in life and in death!

The Heidelberg Catechism enumerates the implications of this relationship somewhat in detail. He, Christ the Lord, is my faithful Saviour, who with his precious blood hath fully satisfied for all my sins, so that He is my only comfort over against the present evil of my guilt and damnable-ness before God: I am justified! He delivered me from all the power of the devil, so that he is no longer my lord, I am no longer his slave, and sin hath no more dominion over me. He preserves me according to the will of my heavenly Father, even so that no hair can fall from my head without His will, for He is my Lord and with body and soul I belong to Him! Nay more, He so governs me and all things,—for He is Lord of all—that they must be subservient unto my salvation! All things! Life and death, sin and grace, heaven and earth, the world and the devil, suffering and sorrow, angels and principalities and powers,—all things must work together for my good, because I belong to Christ, my Lord! And so, this Lord of life and death, Who is the firstborn of every creature and firstborn of the dead, assures me of eternal life! Even in this life which is nothing but a continual death, He assures me of life eternal in everlasting glory and perfection through His Holy Spirit! What a comfort! In the midst of guilt and condemnation I am justified, and know that there is no condemnation for them that are in Christ Jesus! In the midst of my present sin and corruption I know that I am delivered from all the dominion of sin and all the power of the devil! And while I still lie in the midst of death, I am assured of eternal life!

And gladly I acknowledge His lordship! Indeed, not as a response on my part to what He did for me, but as the fruit of His own work for me and within me. For He it is, too, Who as my Lord makes me His subject, and constantly makes me sincerely willing to live unto Him!

therefore, outside of this way the only comfort in life and in death cannot be my conscious possession.

It is this conscious possession of the only comfort in life and death, to which the Heidelberg Catechism refers in the second question and answer of this Lord's Day: "How many things are necessary for thee to know, that thou, enjoying this comfort, (or: in this comfort) mayest live and die happily? Three; the first, how great my sins and miseries are; the second, how I may be delivered from all my sins and miseries; the third, how I shall express my gratitude for such deliverance". It is, indeed, possible for one to possess this comfort in principle, without "enjoying it" consciously, or rather, without having this comfort as the deep, motivating principle of his whole life in the world. How often are we, in our actual life, far below the standard that is set up in the first question and answer of the Catechism! Yes, we are Christians, and we belong to Christ. We confess it, if we are asked, more or less hesitantly. And we believe that we have a comfort in death, that is: we hope to have a comfort when we die. But what becomes of "living and dying in this comfort"? Where is the manifestation of this "happy life-and-death" in our every day walk and conversation? Where is it, when we move about in the world, in our shop or office or on the street; where is it in our home life? Is the Lordship of Jesus Christ really the dominating factor in our life? You know better. If it were, that which is really the only comfort in life and death, that we belong to Him, would also actually occupy the only place in our consciousness; while now the reverse is often true: we have many comforts, and the only comfort is allowed to sink into oblivion, below the threshold of our believing consciousness. If it were, we would surely seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness first, always first, believing that all things are ours; while now we are often foolish and seek the things that are below. If it were, we would surely be more than conquerors, while now we often suffer defeat, and are afraid that the world will frown upon us! What, then, is necessary for thee to know?

Yes, comfort is also knowledge. Hence, we may be instructed in this comfort, instructed by the Word of God, and through instruction we may grow in the conscious and full possession of this comfort in life and death. Three things we must know, the Catechism teaches us, know with the spiritual knowledge of faith: our sins and miseries, and the measure of them; the way of our deliverance; and the expression of our gratitude according to the Word and will of God. Do not misunderstand the intention of the Catechism here. It does not mean that we must first learn to know all about our sins and miseries in order, then, to come to the knowledge of our salvation; and, when the latter is finished, enter into the knowledge of the expression

It follows that only in the way of this willingness to serve Him with a thankful heart, I can be conscious of His Lordship and of my belonging to Him, and that,

of our gratitude. The three things we must know do not successively replace one another; they are simultaneous. The Christian possesses this knowledge in its threefold fulness. Always he must know his sins and miseries; always he must know how he is delivered; and always he must know how he may express his thankfulness to God for such deliverance. They are three indispensable elements of the one knowledge. They are "the triple knowledge". And until the day of his death he must increase in this threefold knowledge. There is no end to it in this life. He never graduates. And the more he grows in true spiritual knowledge along the triple line of sin, deliverance, gratitude, the more he will approximate the high standard set up in the first question and answer of this Lord's Day and be able to say triumphantly: "This is my only comfort in life and death, that I belong to Christ my Lord!"

H. H.

Melchisedec and Christ

In this essay will be brought out the excellency of the priesthood of Christ as compared first with that of Aaron and second with that of Melchisedec. It will be made clear also that the priesthood of Melchisedec was a more excellent type of the priesthood of Christ than the priesthood of Aaron. As the performance of this task consists in attending to the argument of the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews concerning the above mentioned priesthoods, it is to this argument that we again turn. Briefly stated, it is this:

Jesus was made an high priest after the order of Melchisedec and thus, such is the implication of this statement of the writer, not after the order of Aaron (chapter 6:20b). The sacred writer goes on to give the reason. The priesthood of Melchisedec as compared with that of Aaron was "the better" (chapter 7:7). In what respect? In the following (vss. 1-3, of chapter 7): "(For) this Melchisedec. . . (being) without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the son of God; abideth priest continually." The meaning plainly is that Melchisedec is without father. . . and has neither beginning of days or end of life and thus abideth priest continually.

The writer goes on to provide his readers with still other evidence that Melchisedec, as compared with Aaron, was the better, "Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenths of the spoils. And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people

according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham: but he whose descent is not counted from them received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises. And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better. And here men that die receive tithes; but there he receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth. And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, payed tithes in Abraham. For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him" (vss. 4-9).

The substance of this reasoning is that Melchisedec was the better as compared with Aaron in that Aaron (Abraham) was blessed by Melchisedec and in that the latter received from the former tithes.

The unexpressed conclusion at which the writer arrives is that whereas the priesthood of Melchisedec was "the better" perfection could not possibly be by the Levitical priesthood. According to the sacred writer, the further proof of this is the very fact that another priest rose after the order of Melchisedec and not called after the order of Aaron. In the words of the writer, "If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron." And this is what took place actually, the sacred writer means to tell his readers. Another priest actually did rise after the order of Melchisedec. Thus the priesthood of Aaron was changed,—changed because perfection was not by it. It was transferred from Aaron to him who rose after the order of Melchisedec. And "the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law" (vs. 12).

In this verse the apostle declares what he intended by "the law" in the foregoing, which "the people received under the Levitical priesthood". It was the whole "law of commandments contained in ordinances" or the whole law of Moses in so far as it was the rule of worship and obedience unto the church. That law it was that followed the fate of the priesthood. And herein lies the moment of the controversy which the apostle has with his readers, the Jews. The question was whether the law of Moses was to be the rule in the church while it was to continue in the world. In the preaching of the gospel, that which most provoked the Jews is that there was inferred thereby a taking away of the typical, Mosaic institutions. This it was that enraged them. Even those who were converted to the faith of the gospel continued obstinate in the persuasion that the law of Moses was yet to continue in force. The writer wants to show them that they do wrong. This is the matter he enters upon in the 12th verse. That which he hitherto has insisted on in this chapter, is the excellency of the priesthood

of Melchisedec and thus of Christ, above that of Aaron and thus of the law. In pursuing his argument, he proves that the priesthood of Aaron was to be abolished, because, after its institution, there was a promise of the introduction of another, wherewith it was inconsistent. And herein he proves that the law itself was to be abolished, on account of the strict connection between the law and the priesthood and their mutual dependence on one another.

The writer now shows that the change of the priesthood necessarily resulted also in the change of the law, that, in other words, the rising of another priest, Jesus, after the order of Melchisedec, spelled the abrogation of the law, of the Mosaic institutions. "For he of whom these things are spoken, pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood."

The writer hereupon conclusively proves that there actually did arise a priest after the order of Melchisedec. His proof is God's own declaration by the mouth of the prophet (David), "Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec (Ps. 110:4). In the words of the writer, "And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest, who is made, not after the law of carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. For he testifieth, 'Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec.'" Thus the commandment was annulled indeed "for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof." "For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope; by the which we draw nigh unto God.

The writer concludes his argument was concentrating on the excellency of Christ in contrast to Aaron. "And in as much as not without an oath he (Christ) was made priest. For those priests (of the family of Aaron) were made without an oath; but this with an oath by him that said unto him, The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec. By so much more was Jesus made a surety of a better covenant. And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death: but this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able to also save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Such is the argument.

Let us now turn first to the priesthood of Aaron, second to that of Melchisedec, and third to that of Christ. Doing this, it will appear that the priesthood of Melchisedec was superior to that of Aaron and that therefore Melchisedec was a more excellent type of Christ than was Aaron.

The Priesthood of Aaron.

Aaron was priest but not king. In Israel the priest did not rule and the king was not allowed to give attendance at the altar.

Aaron, the priest in Israel, was with father and mother, with descent, having both beginning of days and end of life. This means that the names of his father and mother and the names of the persons that formed the genealogical line to which he belonged, and the day of his birth and the day of his death were described and entered upon record. The reason was that the priesthood of Aaron depended upon descent. Only the sons of Aaron might give attendance at the altar.

Further, the Levitical priest was made priest after the law of a carnal commandment, and thus not after the power of an endless life. What is meant is that the priesthood of Levi was of a kind imposed upon those who bore it by law. Whether the priest was spiritually qualified, whether he loved God and His service, the truth symbolized by this service, was not inquired into. Being a son of Aaron, he was compelled to be priest, and to acquiesce in his induction into office. His will was not consulted. He was not priest by choice. In truth, he was made priest "after the law of a carnal commandment." Many of these priests were godless men, hating and desecrating the service. "For the law maketh men highpriest which have infirmity."

Aaron further was made priest without an oath.

Then, he was not suffered to continue by reason of death.

Finally, perfection was not by the Levitical priesthood. It could not possibly be, as the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctified to the purifying of the flesh only.

As to Melchisedec, the following is recorded of him. He was priest of the most high God. He was priest. In this assertion, two things are included. First that he was truly and really a man, and not an angel, or the appearance of the Son of God, predictive of His incarnation. For "every priest is taken from among men", Heb. 5:1, of the same common nature with other men. So was Melchisedec a man, called out from among men, or he was not a priest. Second, that he had a call to his office; for he must fall under that other rule of the writer, "No man taketh this honour unto himself unless he is called of God," Heb. 5:4. Two things are certain of him negatively. First that he came not to his office by succession unto any that went before him, as did the Levitical priests after Aaron. He was not of any certain order, wherein were a series of priests succeeding one another. Second, he was not called or set apart to his office by solemn consecrations, for Christ had none of these.

He was priest "unto the most high God". This is the first time that this title is given to God in the Scriptures. The majesty, power, and authority of God

are intended. The most high God is the glorious God with whom is terrible majesty.

He met Abraham and blessed him. The benediction is fully expressed at Gen. 15:19, 20. "And he blessed him and said, Blessed be Abraham of the most high God, who hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand."

The second exercise of priestly power ascribed to Melchisedec, is that he received tithes of all, "To whom also Abraham gave the tenth of all." The expression "of all" is limited to the spoils which Abraham took from the enemy.

Besides being priest, Melchisedec was also king. The apostle argues from both the name and the title of this person, "First being by interpretation, King of righteousness, and after that also king of Salem, which is King of peace." The apostle first has respect to his proper name,—which is Melchisedec, and second to his title,—which is King of Salem. This is by interpretation, *king of peace*. This name and this title signify that he was a righteous and peaceable king, one that ruled righteously and lived peaceably. Further, he, Melchisedec, did not derive his right to be priest from his father or mother. It means that he was not made priest after the law of a carnal commandment but that he was made priest after the power of an endless life and by an oath, that is, by the right and power of the life of regeneration implanted in his bosom. His priesthood thus rooted in redeeming grace is thus the "priesthood of all believers". Thus, Melchisedec the *priest-king* was the new creature, God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus. This creature, spiritual man, is without beginning of days and end of life. This man abideth a priest continually. Said Christ, "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

Being the kind of priest he was, Melchisedec continued had an unchangeable priesthood.

Comparing the priesthood of Aaron with that of Melchisedec, it is plain that the latter was a fuller and more perfect type of the priesthood of Christ.

But Christ had a genealogy. He was with father and mother. His descent was recorded. The "role of his pedigree" is declared by two evangelists, the one tracing it to Abraham, the other to Adam. For it was necessary to bring out the truth of his human nature and the faithfulness of God in fulfilling His promise. Further Christ as to His human nature had both beginning of days and end of life, and both are recorded. However it is not of Christ absolutely that the writer treats but with respect to his office of priesthood. And herein all the things said of Melchisedec apply to Him. It was a new truth to the Hebrews that the Lord Christ was the only high priest of the church, so that all other priesthoods must cease. To them it was contrary to the law; and thus because

Christ was not of the line of priests, neither as to the father or mother or genealogy. But in this type of his, the sacred writer shows that all this was so to be. Christ had neither father nor mother from whom He might derive the right to his office; and this excluded him from any interest in the Levitical priesthood. He had no genealogy on the priestly line. He was not made priest after the law of a carnal commandment but He was made priest after the power of an endless life and by an oath. As the incarnate Word, He is the eternal and creative source of the life of His human nature. As to this nature He is the eternal recipient of grace, life,—a life by the power of which He is priest—the priest who in love and as laden with the sins of His people, sanctified Himself to God, through His obedience unto the death of the cross. Being the kind of priest that He is—priest by the power of an endless life—He abideth priest forever. The Levitical priesthood was one of succession, transferred from father to son; necessarily so, as those priests were not suffered to continue on account of death. But Christ, in that He continued forever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Therefore he is able to save "to the uttermost that come unto God by Him. We needed, says the apostle, just such a priest, one who is priest by the power of an endless life, that is, one who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.

But if Christ was priest, He was also king. In him the priesthood and the kingship are united. He is king-priest. For He is seated at the right hand of God and is clothed with all power in heaven and on earth. He is the highest king in heaven and on earth. King of kings is He and Lord of lords. And He is the only highpriest in God's house. Because He is priest, one who in love wills to consecrate all to God, He may be king to rule over all God's works. And all His people partake of His anointing, through which they, too, became a kingly priesthood. In the sanctuary of their hearts they consecrate themselves and all things unto God. Christ is the King of righteousness. He founded His kingdom and merited it in the way of right through His offering Himself up unto God as the Lamb without spot or blemish. He is thus also the author, cause, and dispenser of righteousness. He is the righteousness, sanctification, wisdom and redemption of His people. And thus He is also the king of peace. He made peace in His blood, peace with God and peace among His brethren. G. M. O.

NOTICE

All announcements such as Obituaries, Weddings, Anniversaries and the like must be sent to the Treasurer, Mr. Ralph Schaafsma, with the fee charge of one dollar else they will not be placed.

THE BOARD.

O God Mijn God

(Psalm 43)

Sommigen denken, dat Psalm 43 een voortzetting is van den 42sten Psalm. De reden ligt voor de hand. Ze gelijken veel op elkaar. Er zijn uitdrukkingen die in beide psalmen gevonden worden. Er zijn zelfs verzen in die geheel en al of ten deele gelijklopend zijn.

Men getuigt, dat in sommige handschriften de twee psalmen als één psalm voorkomen.

Ik zou niet verder willen gaan, dan het beweren, dat beide psalmen door denzelfden dichter gemaakt zijn. Taal en stijl van beiden zijn gelijk. En als Psalm 42 duidelijk zijn oorsprong als van David verdraagt, moeten we ook houden dat deze psalm door dien Godsmann gedicht is.

Psalm 43 is schoon. Als een Goddelijk kleinood schittert hij tusschen de lofzangen Israels. En de schoonste glinstering bewonderen we in den kreet die een oneindig verlangen vertolkt en welke we ook boven dit opstel verhoogden: O God, mijn God!

David is in nood.

Hij heeft een twistzaak. Hij wordt omringd door het ongoedertieren volk; en, meer in het bijzonder, heeft hij het te kwaad met een zeer bedriegelijk en onrechtvaardig mensch.

We weten niet wanneer dezen psalm gedicht is. 't Zou kunnen passen op de periode toen David door Saul vervolgd werd. Misschien ook op de periode toen hij vluchten moest voor het aangezicht van Absalom, zijn zoon.

In elk geval beschrijft het een periode wanneer hij ver van het heiligdom des Heeren verwijderd in ellende om moest zwerven. Hij wil teruggeleid door God naar Zijn tabernakelen.

Ondertusschen moet hij veel lijden in een twistzaak.

Het goddelooze volk heeft het op hem gemunt. Door liegen en bedrog heeft men onrecht gepleegd tegenover hem, den gezalfde des Heeren.

Ook is David er van overtuigd, dat hij onschuldig is. Dat is overduidelijk, want hij durft zijn twistzaak aan God voorleggen ter onderzoeking en oordeel. Meer nog; hij is zóó overtuigd van het recht zijner zaak, dat hij zijn twistzaak herkent als de twistzaak Gods. Ze is zóó rein, dat hij er zijn God voor spannen durft.

Een heilige jaloerschheid bekruipt ons bij het zien van zóó groote eerlijkheid en oprechtheid. Wat zuiver bedoelen, wat schoone en blanke oprechtheid lag ten grondslag aan zijn streven!

Wij spraken van *durven* in verband met David's roepen. En terecht. O, we weten het: zoo vaak is onze zaak een strijden voor onszelf, of erger nog: een woelen van goddeloosheid en dwaasheid. Dan lijden we ook, doch het is niet om der gerechtigheid

wille. Later, veel later, zou Petrus zeggen: zulk lijden is geen zaligheid!

David kenschetst zijn vijanden als het ongoedertieren volk; en meer in het bijzonder denkt hij aan een bedriegelijk en onrechtvaardig mensch.

De eerste trek toont ons den harden mensch, de mensch die goddeloosheid gieriglijk bedrijft. Ze hebben schik van hun kwaad, ook dan, wanneer het slachtoffer zich kromt en schreien moet. Ze kunnen lachen als de broeder door hun goddeloos woelen in de diepte komt. De Duitschers noemen dat *schadenfreude*. Iemand die schadenfreude heeft is een ongoedertieren mensch.

Die trek verraadt zijn helschen oorsprong. Zoo doet ook de duivel. Hij is niet alleen een menschenmoorder van den beginne, doch hij heeft schik in zijn moorden. En het vergaat zijn kinderen alzo. Ook zij lachten als hun slachtoffer kreunt van smart.

De vreeselijkste openbaring daarvan beluisteren we rondom het vloekhout, op Golgotha's kruin opgericht. Een schaterend Ha! Ha! weerklinkt als Jezus zweet, bloedt en schreeuwt in oneindige smart.

De tweede trek is bedrog. Sprak ik zooeven van den duivel? Welnu, wie denkt niet direkt aan dat vreeselijk wezen als ge van bedrog hoort? Bedrog is het eigen werk des Satans. Zoo ook zijn handlangers, David's vijanden.

Men heeft over David gelogen; men heeft een fundament gelegd in hetgene dat niet is, in hetgene dat een verwringen is van het ware en het goede. Voorts is men op dat bedriegelijke fundament gaan bouwen. Men richtte een zaak op tegen David. En zulk doen, zulk kwalijk bouwen, zulke actie op de leugen is dan onrecht, de derde trek van 't goddelooze volk.

Dat kan niet anders. Dat moet dan wel het einde zijn van zijn geknoei. Onrecht is het kromme, het van Gods wet afwijkende. Zijn huis wordt dan een verwrongen spektakel.

Doch David lijdt ervan. Er kwam een twistzaak. Van zijn zijde blanke oprechtheid en van de zijde der onderdrukkers: bedrog en onrecht. Het resultaat was tweërlei: aan de eene zijde, een schreiende, lijdende knecht des Heeren; en aan de andere zijde, het ongoedertieren volk, of: de lachende en spottende beneden rondom hun slachtoffer.

Doch David spreekt van sterkte. Hij geeft de reden aan, waarom hij verwacht dat God zich aan zijn zijde zal scharen. Die reden is: Gij, o God, zijt immers de God van mijne sterkte?

O, dat is God aangrijpen ter overwinning. Als ge zóó moogt arbeiden en zóó moogt bidden, dan moet God Zich gewonnen en overwonnen heeten. Denkt aan Jakob! Hij vermocht tegenover God en heeft Hem overwonnen.

David wil zeggen: Heere, wat ik gedaan heb kwam

tot stand door Uwe sterkte. Het was Uw Heiligen Geest en de wijsheid van Uw Woord hetwelk in mij gistte tot uiting. Toen heb ik gedacht en gesproken, gewrocht en gedaan. Nu valt men mij daarom lastig, doch het is Uwe zaak! Daarom die wondere bede: Twist dan ook mijn twistzaak, want ze is vrucht van Uwe sterkte. Ze is Uwe!

Doch nu komt David tot een verkeerde conclusie. Hij spreekt voorts: Dat zoo zijnde, waarom verstoot Gij mij dan? Ik heb toch niet anders dan Uw zaak voorgestaan? De lieden die het mij aan doen zijn Uwe vijanden. Zij haten mij en bespotten mij omdat ik Uwe zaak bepleit heb. Maar waarom openbaart Gij U dan niet tegenover mijne wederpartijders? Waarom ga ik in het zwart vanwege des vijands onderdrukking? Zie, Heere, hier is mijn moeilijkheid: Ik doe het goede en wordt verdrukt! En zij doen het goddelooze en zij lachen! Waarom, O God, doet Gij zulks?

En dat is verkeerd van God oordeelen.

Straks zal David zichzelf bestraffen als hij neerblijkt op zijn terneder gebogen ziel. Hij zal zichzelf bestraffen en aanmanen om op God te hopen.

Doch eerst wat anders.

Nadat hij het den Heere verwijt van zoo vreemd te handelen, gaat David aan 't bidden. O, hij weet wat hij behoeft.

“Zend Heer Uw licht en waarheid neder!” Ik kan best begrijpen, dat de psalmberijmers er aan toegevoegd hebben straks: “dan klimt mijn bange ziel gereeder, enz.”

David had tot dusver benauwing en onderdrukking genoten. Het was donker voor zijn zielsoog. Daar-tegenover vraagt hij den Heere om licht en waarheid.

Des Heeren licht is het inbegrip van alle Zijne deugden, het volle deugdenbeeld. Te spreken van licht is figuurlijk. Het beteekent leven, eeuwig, glorieus, verrukkelijk leven met God. Daarom zingen we zoo vaak van het levenslicht. “Het licht dat van Zijn aanzicht straalt!”

En die atmosfeer wordt alleen de onze door de waarheid. Alleen als de zuivere relatiën en betrekkingen door God om en in onze ziel gespannen worden, alleen dan leven we. De waarheid zal U vrijmaken! Alleen als het kromme recht gemaakt wordt, het hobbelachtige tot een vallei en het bergachtige tot een vlak veld, alleen dan is er sprake van leven met God. Die door de vlakke velden rijdt; Zijn Naam is Heer der Heeren!

Daar vraagt David om. Als hij geleefd had in onzen dag, zou hij gebeden hebben: Heere, geef mij Jezus of ik sterf! Johannes heeft immers gehoord, dat Jezus zeide: Ik ben de weg, de waarheid en het leven?

David heeft behoefte aan Jezus. Want het is Jezus die het vriendelijk aangezicht is van God, door middel van de waarheid gewrocht. Ingaande in de krom

getrokken relatiën en betrekkingen waarin Hij Zijn volk vond is Hij aan 't buigen en wrikken gegaan, aan 't vervormen en bouwen, totdat er een ander fundament kwam, dan wij gelegd hadden in de leugen en het bedrog.

Doch 't kostte Hem Zijn leven. De waarheid zijnde heeft Hij, naar 't vergen van het onkreukbare recht Gods, Zijn ziele uitgestort in den dood. Doch 't fundament werd gelegd in Zijn hartebloed.

Daarom vraagt David. Zend, Heer, Uw licht en waarheid neder!

En als dat mag gebeuren aan David, dan zal 't gaan. Dan zullen zij hem gaan leiden.

Dat zit zoo: dat leven van Gods liefde en gunst, genade en ontferming, alsmede de waarheid, de juiste betrekkingen tegenover God en menschen, worden den stervelingen geschonken door middel van Geest en Woord. Voorts vervullen die hen, bruisen en werken in hen tot openbaring van de vrucht der gerechtigheid. Ge kunt geen leven en waarheid in U hebben en niet uitbreken in de goede werken. Dat leven en die waarheid zullen U onwederstandelijk leiden. De psalmberijmers spraken immers van een “gereeder” geleid worden?

En, wonder van genade, wat gaat het dan voorts van kracht tot kracht! Let maar op David. Hij weet hoe het dan met hem zal gaan.

Eerst, leven en waarheid zullen hem leiden tot den berg van Gods heiligheid!

Berg is ook figuurlijke taal. Elke berg heeft een duidelijke sprake, een dubbele sprake. Een berg is een profetie. De bergen vertellen het ons als in een lieflijk lied, dat de Heere ons met de aarde en den hemel zal verhoogen tot in het nieuwe Jeruzalem toe. Van die verhooging is nu nog maar een klein beginsel bij ons. Alles was nu gezien wordt, alsmede alles in den hemel die nu is moet straks vergaan om plaats te maken voor de vervulling van alle bergen. De bergen roepen het U luide toe, dat God ons in eeuwige armen omhoog zal trekken, om ons tot in alle eeuwigheid dicht bij Zich te hebben. En opdat wij een erve van God zouden zijn. Opdat wij Hem eeuwiglijk toegeweid zouden zijn. Daarom is het een berg van Gods heiligheid. Heilig wil zeggen: toegeweid aan God! En, tweedens, de bergen spreken U toe van 't onwankelbare dier verhooging.

David zegt voorts dat hij dan geleid zal worden tot Gods woningen.

God woont eeuwiglijk. Men woont waar men thuis is, waar men rust, waar men geniet. En nu heeft God gewild om Zijn Eigen Huis voor ons open te zetten, zoodat wij met Hem mogen wonen.

En dan op dien berg en in die woning is een altaar. En dat spreekt ons van het Offer, van het Bloed, van onuitsprekelijke liefde en gehoorzaamheid; dat altaar spreekt ons van Jezus, het Aangezicht van God. In die

Jezus schittert het zooveen vermelde Deugdenbeeld. Al het lieflijke in God straalt van dat Aangezicht. Ziet daarom sterk op Jezus!

En, let er op, dat altaar is Gods altaar. Het schaapje dat op dat altaar bloedde is het Lam van God. Het schaapje dat op dat altaar bloedde is het Lam van God. God heeft Zijn eeuwige liefde in dat schaapje aan ons laten zien. Wilt ge het van liefde zingende hart van God zien, dan moet ge sterk op Jezus zien. Hij heeft ons immers Hem verklaard?

En nog steeds leiden het leven en de waarheid onzen schreienden poëet.

Want nog is het einde niet.

Dat leven en die waarheid brachten hem op den berg, in het Huis Gods en stond hij vóór het altaar Gods.

Nu komt een troongeest snellijk gevlogen om David een gouden harp te geven. Dat moest, want Davids hart is tot berstens toe vol. Zijn vingeren tasten naar de snaren.

En hij begon zeer vroolijk te zijn.

De psalm noemt het blijdschap der verheuging en het leven van God.

Blijdschap der verheuging: wat opeenstapeling van termen! Blijdschap en verheuging is de uiting van zaligheid, geliefden. Het is die staat, waarin de diepste nooden van Uw wezen vervuld zijn. Hebt ge wel een gehoord van spijze en vroolijkheid? Ja, als ge gegeten hebt, vol zijt en verzadigd, dan plooit zich het gelaat, dat trekken de weefsels van spieren en zenuwen, dan wordt er een glimlach op Uw gelaat getooverd. Straks wordt Uwen mond vervuld met lachen.

En wat mag dan wel het thema zijn van al die blijdschap der verheuging? Hoe komt het, dat de blijdschap in 't harte de vrucht geeft van verheuging op 't gelaat en den jubel in den mond?

Het antwoord verklaart ook den titel dien we kozen voor dit stukje. Het thema is *O God, mijn God!*

Nu moeten we nog even met schaamte in 't harte onze ziel bestraffen: O, mijn ziel wat buigt ge U neder? Waartoe zijt ge in mij ontrust?

Nog even mij zelf bestraffen om dan weer te eindigen: want God zijt immers mijn God!

Het thema der liefde 't welk Jezus meenam in den diepten der hel: Mijn God, Mijn God! G. V.

not be discussed at length in this brief article. Reno, Nevada, is fully as notorious as are Crown Point or Valparaiso in Indiana.

However, we would emphasize the evil inseparably connected with this divorce situation. Firstly, what is principally the divorce? What constitutes its sin? Before we discuss any evil results let us discuss the evil itself. Principally, the divorce is a godless denial of the Divine institution of marriage. A holy marriage purposes the glory of God and the development of His covenant. It acknowledges the Scriptural truth that man may not part asunder what God hath joined together. This Scriptural axiom must be understood not only in the sense that the Lord brings a young man and a young lady together. It means more. The marriage between two persons (we refer now to a holy marriage) is a work of God. The Lord hath joined them. Fact is, a happily married couple are adapted to each other. This adaptation is not only physical but also psychical (as pertaining to the soul). Not any Christian young man can be the husband of any Christian young lady. The mutual affection between them is rooted in a wonderful adaptation to each other. And this adaptation is a matter of Divine creation. Hence, it is true of a God-fearing marriage that the Lord hath joined together. A true marriage must and shall certainly acknowledge this fact. Besides, God hath created man, male and female, with the obvious purpose of the bringing forth of children. And it is surely the calling of matrimony to bring forth children and instruct them in the fear of God's Name. The development of God's covenant must therefore be uppermost in our hearts and minds. The divorce is certainly a repudiation of this Divine institution of marriage. It simply denies its Divine character and purpose. It recognizes marriage merely as a means unto the satisfying of carnal lusts and desires. Man would use the Lord's own institution for his own sake. This is, of course, *the* evil of divorce.

Secondly, the immediate result of the divorce is the disruption of the family unit and, inseparably connected with this, the crushing of all sense of authority and responsibility as far as the children are concerned. The casting adrift of the children by either one or both parents will always remain one of the tragedies of any divorce action. And this must invariably lead to the destruction of all sense of authority and responsibility. Fact is, the parent is the Divinely appointed person to exercise authority over the child. This lies in the very nature of the case. No one knows the child better than its parent. Besides, we receive our children from God. Hence, the root of all authority is the home, and the fifth commandment which deals with authority is addressed to the children and, by implication, also to the parents. If then the parent shuns this calling, engages in a divorce action,

The Divorce Evil

The existence of the divorce evil, particularly in our "democratic" country (democratic also in a spiritual sense of the word), need not be established. It is an indisputable fact. In some circles divorce is almost as common as marriage. And it can be obtained on almost any conceivable ground. This fact as such need

thereby repudiates his responsibility to govern his child, the inexorable result must be the disregard and ridicule of all authority and obedience.

Thirdly, inasmuch as the divorce is the wicked denial of the Divine institution of marriage, it must wreak havoc with mankind. Of course, also from the spiritual viewpoint of the development of God's covenant, the divorce is disastrous, because in its sphere the development of God's covenant does not take place. The Lord does not exercise covenant-fellowship with an adulterous generation. But, it is also disastrous for mankind and society in general. Adultery and fornication, the uncontrolled satisfying of the lusts and passions of the flesh work destruction also upon the body. This needs no further elucidation. And who will foresee and determine the havoc which it must wreak on society!

Already the attempt has been made to nullify even the necessity of obtaining a divorce. We undoubtedly remember that not long ago companionship marriages were advocated, permitting one man to have three "wives", finally choosing that one who most appealed to him. Why then not discard the entire institution of matrimony? What now takes place secretly and is regarded as transgression must take place openly, before every eye, without being viewed as transgression of the law. The inevitable consequence of this will be that marriage as such will no longer exist. Government then shall take all children under its protection. And the result must be the extinction of the independent family unit and that men and women will exist as animals, doing things which are unheard of even in the animal world. Abolish the restraint which the Divine law of matrimony now places upon the passions and lusts of men, and they will reveal themselves in all their unbounded passion for the lusts of the flesh. This was true, ages ago, in the Roman empire. We need but be reminded of the apostles words in the first chapter of his epistle to the Romans. And is it not true in Germany today that men and women are urged to bring forth children without regard for the institution of marriage, and that the government assumes control of their training and instruction? Disregard and abolish also this law of God, and who is able to describe the chaos which must inevitably follow?

What may we safely assume to be the root of this evil of the divorce? What is the spiritual principle which dictates this unbridled godless course of action? We should bear in mind that two streams of thought are in violent conflict here with each other. On the one hand we recognize the maintaining of the Scrip-

tural principle that what God hath joined together man may not part asunder. On the other hand we have those who advocate Free Love, who would view marriage as a contract which can be made or broken as man himself sees fit to do so. It is well that we understand this correctly. We perceive here the spirit of the gospel over against the spirit of revolution. And when we speak of revolution we refer to revolution in the profound, fundamental sense of the word as over against God. On the one hand we have the people of the living God, who acknowledge the sovereignty of Jehovah also as it determines the relationship of marriage. They profess the principle that the Lord hath joined together, that God joins man and wife together for the purpose of the glory of His Name and the development of His covenant, and who would therefore subject their natural adaptation to each other to the service of God and the glory of His Name and covenant. This undoubtedly characterizes a marriage which is concluded in the fear of God's Name, irrespective of that other Scriptural truth that our marriage must serve as a picture of God's covenant-relationship with His people in Christ Jesus. It would maintain the cardinal truth that of God and through God and unto God are all things, that we are creatures and therefore servants whose sole calling it is to be witnesses and the party of the living God. Directly opposed to this principle is the law of sin. Sin is fundamentally rebellion against Jehovah. It is man's wilful refusal to acknowledge any other authority and sovereignty than his own. It refuses to be servant and would be lord. It refuses to be engaged exclusively in the obedience of the will of God, and purposes to seek self and the satisfying of his own carnal lusts and desires. And the natural man applies this godless principle also to the relationship of matrimony. He rejects that God has joined together. He would have all things revolve about the free-will of man. He will take as his wife whom he pleases. He will marry her exclusively for his own sake, merely to satisfy himself. And the result will be that, having married her for his own sake, he imagines it to be his privilege also to reject her if such action be convenient for him. His own will, we note, is for him the sole determining factor. This is the root, the basic principle of the divorce evil.

However, we would also point to evils which are present in the church of God, and which in principle are not to be distinguished from this evil so common in the midst of the world. To be sure, the divorce as such cannot be regarded as a threatening danger within our own churches. The principle that man may not part asunder what God has joined together is surely observed and maintained among us. Yet it behooves us, in the midst of the adulterous world wherein we have a name and place, not to adopt an attitude

of smug complacency and self-satisfaction. Let us who are of the day walk as children of the light also in connection with this phase of our Christian calling. Besides, there are evils to which also we are continually exposed and against which we must ever be on our guard. The godless principle that marriage is concluded not for the sake of God's Name and His covenant but to satisfy ourselves in some form or another is, I fear, in greater or smaller degree, also present in the church of God. And, surely, we are not immune to it.

There is, for example, the danger which our present national defense program presents to us. It cannot be amiss at this point to be reminded of the statement of a certain judge in our land who predicted that our present mobilization would result in a tremendous increase in divorces. Young men decide to marry with the avowed intention of escaping the draft. Their marriage was therefore hasty and superficial. The result will be that they will rid themselves of this bond as hastily and as superficially as it was concluded. Let us not fall into the same error. If it be the will of God that we be drafted, let us believe that God will also keep us in camp. Never may we use the Lord's own institution merely as a means unto our own end.

There is still another evil to which I would call attention, which, I believe, follows in principle the pattern of the world. It will happen that young married couples place their own earthly needs and luxuries above the development of God's covenant. Covenant young men and young women enter then into matrimony. The understanding has been reached, however, that they shall not have children for some time. It is advisable, so they conclude, that they first "get ahead" in this world. The young lady as well as the young man continue to work. They have no intention of setting up a home. They draw up a list of the things they presume to need and must first obtain. Quickly, however, the "needs" on this list are replaced by luxuries. Furniture and a frigidaire should be secured first—of course, the newest and most modern. Then they set their hearts on a car and possibly a home. And in the meantime the cause of God's covenant and church must wait. Children involve us in expense. Also in a decided curtailment of our own personal likes and enjoyments. Would it not be advisable and spiritually more honest to remain single rather than enter into the state of marriage before God and then proceed to nullify its true significance? Doing so, it surely cannot be said of us that we preserve the sanctity and purpose of the marriage vow, that we consider the development of God's covenant our solemn obligation before God. Are we then not drifting along with the tide which is continually growing stronger round about us? And should we not

rather struggle against this ever increasing menace and not become entangled in the divorce evil to which we all in principle are exposed?

How can we successfully combat this evil? Firstly, we can be preserved from this menace only by the blood and Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ. The sanctity of the marriage bond can dominate our heart and life only through grace. Only then, when we have learned to sacrifice ourselves, to view ourselves as servants of God, have therefore learned to bow the knee before the living God out of Whom and through Whom and unto Whom are all things, is it possible to fight against our own lusts and desires and subject them to Him Whom to know is life everlasting. And, in connection with this, we must bear in mind that the strength to continue in this struggle is ours only through fervent prayer. From God alone must be our expectation.

Secondly, let us apply this true principle of the marriage bond to our own family life. This implies that we shall bring up our children in the fear of God's Name, train them in an atmosphere where the spiritual development of God's covenant is predominant. And, although we cannot make one child of God by instructing him in the knowledge of the Lord, we have His promise that He will operate with His Spirit where His Name is revered. The Lord will then establish His covenant with our children. And instructing them in these things, in the measure of course that they come to years of discretion, also they will view these matters as through the grace of God and assume the marriage vow in humble trust and dependence upon the living God. Thus our covenant seed will be preserved, God's covenant will be established, and God's Name will be glorified.

H. V.

Education Among Israel

Definition of the Subject.

It is but proper that at the outset our subject be defined. The subject as it reads is already limited. In this essay our subject says we will not treat of "education" generally, but of education as this historically existed and as it was an institution in Israel. True, even thus defined, our subject has significance for the general concept "education" and for the practical task of educating our children in our day and world. This we hope to point out in its own proper place.

Speaking of "Israel" one can think of the whole church of God, both in the Old and New Testament

dispensation. Thus Paul speaks in Gal. 6:16 of the "Israel of God. It here refers to the church of God as to its elect nucleus. But the term also has a somewhat different application in Scripture, and then refers to the theocratic nation of Israel, called out of Egypt under Moses, and established in Canaan, the land of promise.

Thus defined "Israel" can be and has been viewed in the different stages of its national existence. In our study in this essay we wish to ignore this distinction, and look at Israel in its entirety as it lived and moved in the dispensation of the types and shadows under the revelation of God's Covenant.

A second element in our subject, which must not be overlooked, is the term "education". Education has been defined "as the sum-total of those processes whereby society transmits from one generation to the next its accumulated social, intellectual and religious experience and heritage" (Dewey). There are elements in this definition with which we disagree, and there are also elements lacking, when viewed under Biblical perspectives. But in the main this definition will serve our purpose as a working principle.

Having determined the meaning of "education" we believe it in order to call attention to the following elements which are present in all education. (1) The subject matter. (2) The Educator. (3) The Educated (the pupil). (4) The technique of the actual imparting of education. In this essay it is more particularly to the "subject matter" that we wish to call attention.

Method of Acquiring the Data.

Before calling attention further to the subject proper, we feel that a word is in order as to the method of acquiring the data. There are only two possible sources. The one is by the way of empirical research, studying the hieroglyphics etc. of that day and age. The other is that recorded in the inspired Word of God.

The former of these two sources yields little or nothing for our purpose. We do not believe that to be the God-ordained way for us to arrive at knowledge of the education in Israel. The "education" that we are studying lies beyond the pale of secular history. Parchments and the writings on stones and other objects yield next to nothing. At best they are scanty and fragmentary, and can only aid us when they are compared with, and explained in the light of the Scriptures. Were we to take these fragmentary notices as sources, and had we time to study them, they would at best have inferential value, and would lead, uncontrolled by Scripture, to the wildest speculation. Proof of this we have in the Critical Schools of the 19th century.

We do well, and are on safe terrain only when we go to the Scriptures, the written Word of God.

This does not mean that Scripture is an encyclopedia of the educational courses given in Israel. What we know must be gotten from passages specifically teaching us these matters, and from passages and the joint-testimony of Scripture from which legitimate inferences can be made.

This requires a comparative, synthetic study of the data of Scripture. In as far as others have left us the product of their endeavours along these lines we can and should make use of them, and thus benefit from their labors.

Education's Formative Place in Israel.

Upon collecting the data having bearing on the subject under consideration, we could not escape the conviction that "education" had a most important place in Israel. Indeed it was of cardinal, primary importance in their religious, national-theocratic life.

The educating of the children and youth in Israel was directly an institution of Jehovah. This is implied in what we read in Gen. 18:19 where God's Word speaks of Abraham's relation to his children and posterity as a patriarchal teacher. Thus also is the implication of the Lord's injunction to Moses as recorded in such passages as Exodus 10:2; 13:8-10; Deut. 4:9; 11:18, 19. Further this is evident from many Scripture passages stressing the importance of instruction, teaching and teachers. Instruction is valued as one's life, Prov. 4:13; 6:23, and because of lack of instruction and wisdom one dies, Job. 4:21. Again Scripture emphasizes that it is the truth that makes man free. John 8:32.

Above all else, Israel might not live by "cunningly devised fables" as did the heathen, listening to the tales and folk-lore of their fathers. Neither might sorcery, exorcism, witch-craft guide and influence them in life. To prevent them from being carried to and fro by every wind of doctrine positive instruction was the order of the day. Except for this instruction, Israel would sink away in the bottomless mire of superstition and idolatry. Through the God-instituted educational functionaries Israel must learn the meaning and implication of its worship, types, symbols, history; must learn to appreciate its own peculiar place in the world, and its relation to God.

Consequently there was no room in Israel for "private interpretation". None might serve God in his own chosen way. Ever and anon the call is: to the law and the testimony. If they speak not according to this word, there is no morning for them. Is. 8:20.

Subjects on Israel's Educational Curriculum.

Speaking of the "curriculum" we do not mean to imply that Israel had a curriculum in the modern technical sense of the word. It is extremely difficult, if not wholly impossible to determine in how far the educa-

tional material was classified in Israel. It is doubtful whether they had any in the sense in which we have it now.

This does not mean that a careful study of the Scriptures would not allow us to conclude which subjects were definitely taught, when this same material is cast under the technical educational headings of our day. Doing this latter we are confident that the following subjects must have been taught in Israel: Reading, writing, history, music, symbolics or typology, hygiene, ethics and civics. It is also possible to add astronomy to this list. We do not pretend that this exhausts the list, but we believe that it quite well covers the field.

To begin with "reading" and "writing" permit us to remark, that we can safely infer that this art must have been quite general in Israel, even though not as general as in our day. In fact, this must have been emphatically the case in the tribe of Levi. These had the work of writing the law, and teaching the same to the people. There were no printing presses, and books were scarce. Paper was not yet invented. This made the art of writing necessary. Of this there can be little doubt.

An interesting incident showing the scarcity of the book of the law we have recorded in II Chron. 34:14-21.

It may be well in this connection to remember that Israel was not an uncultured horde. Though children of their time, they were of high civilization. Their life in Egypt must have been influenced by the "learning of Egypt". It was in Egypt that "writing", (thus it is commonly held) was first developed. Fairbairn in "Typology" Vol. II, p. 190 has the following interesting notation: "How alphabetical writing was invented, or by whom, or whether it was not transmitted from the ages before the flood, and might consequently be claimed by each of the more eminent races or nations, that afterwards arose, as their own, these are still unexplored mysteries and likely to remain such. The opinion is now very prevalent, that the inventing belongs to Egypt and grew out of a gradual improvement of the original hieroglyphic or picture-writing."

Since one hypothesis is as good as an other we feel free to submit the following. We feel that the various languages all originate not from before the flood, but from the time of Babel. And that Moses, evidently the first to write in the Hebrew characters, and schooled in all the learning of the Egyptians was able to write in characters in the Hebrew language.

However this may all be, the consideration of the limited supply of books and writings sheds some light on the method of teaching employed in Israel. It was in all probability oral teaching. A great deal of memorization must have been required of the children and students. Naturally those who received oral instruction did not need to learn to read and write.

The course in "history" which could be given in Israel, was from the very nature of the time in which they lived, not as broad in scope and rich in data as in our day. In secular history we speak of ancient, medieval and modern history. In biblical history we have the history not only which Israel studied, but also much which at that time belonged to the future. These they could not study, but rather they could only look forward to them in hope.

The history that Israel studied was that of their own fatherland. They studied in this connection the birth of their nation and the unique character of their theocratic commonwealth. History study must have been for them not the mere knowledge of facts, but the unfolding of the plan of God; the bringing into review of the mighty deeds of Jehovah in which He saved them as a people, and gave nations in the place of their soul. The true and pious Israelite could listen to this history with the pride of theocratic patriotism, and with fear for God's majesty lest he "fall out" because of unbelief.

Then there was the subject which we have captioned "symbolics". Israel lived under the law contained in ordinances. Its life was full of symbolic teaching. Think of the Passover, circumcision, the candlestick, the altar, the priest's clothing, the Pillar of Cloud, Manna, water from the Rock, the rainbow. Thus there was the symbolism of colors, stones, numbers, dimensions. And all this had to be taught and understood in its God-given meaning.

All this was not so much dead data, but a living integral part of their spiritual religious life. There must have been a close relationship between Israel's "history" and the "symbolics" that was taught. The symbolism was interwoven with the mighty deeds of God in the past, present and also the future. This is, by way of example, very clearly seen in Exodus 13:8-10. Here God explicitly declares that the symbolism of the "passover" may never in their minds be disjoined from the historical last plague of God upon Egypt's firstborn, and from the "passing-over" of the angel of death over Israel, God's firstborn son "called out of Egypt". More instances could be cited, but space forbids.

"Music" must also have been taught. Proof for this statement is hardly necessary. Israel was a singing, victorious people. Their song and praise was expressive of Jehovah's mighty deeds. Scripture leads us to believe that there was a great development in the field of music. It was especially David, the "sweet-singer" in Israel who did much in this field. The singing in the temple, both vocal and instrumental was raised to a high plane. And why not? Was this singing not typical of the singing of the true Israelites before the throne of God in the heavenly house not made with hands? The fact that there was progress

in this field, does not preclude the fact that Israel also sang and had instruments when they came out of Egypt. Think of marching and singing Israel (Psalm 68) in the desert at the Red Sea, and at the walls of Jericho. This was music not merely for euphony and symphony, but for the praise of God. Psalm 150.

"Ethics" and "hygiene" were also taught. In Israel these subjects were closely connected. The former was the motive of the latter. This is a point, the importance of which cannot be easily overstressed, and should by all means never be lost sight of. The hygiene taught in Israel was not based on empirical-scientific research. Cleanliness and purity of body was part of the ceremonial ordinance and was required for God's sake. Thus "hygiene" was a principle, ethical matter, and not a matter of utility and other humanistic motives. The body, to put it in New Testament language, is "the temple of the Holy Spirit". For a further study of the connection between ethics and hygiene see Lev. 12:1-5; 15: 2, 3, 16; 17: 15; 18:6-18; 19:22; 22:8.

"Civics" also was a subject taught in Israel. This covered quite a wide field. The laws for civil life must have been taught and known by the people, else their whole national-theocratic existence would mean nothing. These laws we find recorded in the Pentateuch.

Conclusions.

In the first place we wish to remark, that our conclusion will not be wider than our discussion. Such conclusions having bearing on the parental character of teaching, will fall outside of these remarks.

1. It is very evident from this brief and sketchy study of the subject, that all teaching in Israel was theocentric. It all ended in God. History dealt with God's mighty deeds. Symbolics dealt with the form of God's revelation of His covenant. Music was the medium of expressing God's praises. Cleanliness was elevated to the notion of ethical purity.

2. Education was not an end in itself, but was subservient to prepare the children for their place, their peculiar position in the world, in the service of God.

3. As such education was a child of its time, but in its ground-work it is the pattern according to which Christian education today should still be conducted. If this latter has in some measure become clear we feel that this essay has not been without positive fruit.

G. C. L.

IN MEMORIAM

The consistory of the Protestant Reformed Church of Bellflower, California, hereby wishes to express its sympathy to our brother, Elder John Buma, in the loss of his wife

LUBERTHA BUMA

mother of seven children, at the age of 38 years.

May the Lord of all grace comfort the brother and his children in this their bereavement.

The Consistory of the Bellflower Prot. Ref. Church,

L. Doezema, Pres.

J. Bekendam, Vice, Pres.

How And What To Read

In a country where illiteracy is rare and education is not only within the grasp of almost every child but even literally forced upon them, it might seem superfluous to suggest, as my subject does, that there not only might be but actually are some, yea many, who do not know how to read.

One need not be necessarily illiterate to know not how to read. In fact, the majority of people who read have never mastered the art. Most every one is able to pick up a book or newspaper and assimilate its contents, but not everyone knows how to read.

Reading is an art. Ernest Legouv  , a French teacher and lecturer on the subject, asks and answers the question as follows: "Is reading an art at all? Many doubt it. Some deny it. My opinion I give without the slightest hesitation. A careful study of the question for at least thirty years, aided by numberless and varied experiences, has convinced me that it is an art, a real art, but as difficult as it is real, and as useful as it is difficult."

Reading is an art "which entails the powers of sharing and understanding the thoughts and sympathies of great men and women who have left books as signposts on the road of culture, to guide those who stumble along the way." (Henry Guppy on the Art of Reading).

I shall have occasion in the sequence to call your attention to the fact that these "sign-posts" must be true sign-posts for us or we had better ignore them altogether. But the fact remains nevertheless that as far as the art of reading is concerned, it consists chiefly in the ability to grasp and share in the thought of the author of the material to be read. Did it ever strike you that on the shelves of a library which is worthy of the name you will find that the secular intervals of time are abridged and that generations of men meet on a single shelf. Then if you look more closely, you shall discover that all the leading facts of life are there, the differences between men and men, with all the differences between the ages and ages of the world. If our minds are properly attuned, we shall hear the laughter and the sobs of mankind, and we shall understand as perhaps never before, something of the labors of mankind, of their successes, of their useless sacrifices of which there are so many in history, of the idle dreams with all their mischiefs.

At the same time we shall discern something of the power of books to, as it were, annihilate space and time, and, like a "magic carpet" transport us into regions the most remote. It is possible by their aid to witness unharmed the great catastrophies of the world. It may be even that though you are deprived of the opportunities of travel and exploration and yet through the medium of books be privileged to rove the dark

continent of Africa with the Scottish explorer, David Livingstone, or with Johanna Veenstra into the heart of the Sudan.

The world of books is our common heritage, but before we can enter into it, we must gain possession of the key that unlocks it, and that key is the art of reading.

It is hardly reasonable, therefore for anyone to expect to be able to pick up a piece of work, the result of years of thought and experience, and hope to find in it relaxation for idle hours. Anyone who intends to read in the real sense of the word must first rid his or her mind of the idea that reading is anything but a strenuous exercise of the brain, calling into action all the appreciations of mind with the faculty of imagination.

And this art of coinciding your thoughts and your understanding with that of the author whose literature you read is an art that needs to be cultivated. Nobody cares for it to begin with unless he is a prodigy. It is never too late to begin. I have talked with people about the matter of reading the Standard Bearer or other good literature. A very common expression you hear amongst our older people is, "I have no desire to read because I cannot read. If I had only started when I was younger, I might have acquired the habit." Now it is true that the great readers of the world began very early, and that what we read in early life impresses the mind more deeply than what we read later. Nevertheless a real love of reading may come late in life. It is related of a man of affairs, who had wanted all his life to read, and had collected a fine library for the time when he should have leisure to enjoy it, that he found to his dismay, when the opportunity for which he had long waited came with his physicians order to take a few years rest from business, he could not read, because he had never learned how, and was unable to keep his mind fixed on the page. He had thought that man could read just as easily as he could walk, but he discovered that it was an art, and with shame he had to confess that he had never cultivated it. The tools were within his reach, but he could not use them. If we wish to care for reading, we must begin to read and go on reading until we really care for it.

However, when we begin to read we should read slowly and deliberately, just as a pedestrian setting out on a long journey starts at a moderate pace, quickening it as his muscles get into full play, and as his limbs become accustomed to the exercise. This suggestion may not be favorable to rapid reading at first, but it will insure thorough reading. It is not the multitude of books that gives wisdom, it is not how much we read that should concern us, but how much we retain. On the other hand, it is true that the more you read the faster you should read, and good readers are quick readers. Accordingly, professor Cavanaugh, the Psy-

chologist, in his observations on the subject of the pace at which we read remarks that many, perhaps most, people read too slowly, and could by a conscious effort speed up their reading by something like 50%. And paradoxical as it may appear, quicker reading is more efficient. The quick reader understands and remembers better than the slow reader. Quick reading leads to alertness of mind. Tests have been made and have shown that the quickest readers are best at answering questions on the subject-matter of their reading. Masters in the art of reading also exhort to reading aloud. The reason for this is that the ear as well as the eye collaborates with the mind in the activity of reading and serves to aid us in remembering what we read.

Moreover, the art of reading is not yet perfected unless you are also able to read critically. Fundamental as it is to enter into the spirit of the author, this does not mean that one slavishly mumble the words of the author and cry 'amen' to his every conclusion. The only Author to whose Word we shall say 'Amen' is God alone. Though you may exegete His Word and with finite minds seek to analyze it, you may never hold that Word in suspicion. But for the rest the artful reader will inquire with a free exercise of his mind. You should therefore read good literature "with the admiration of intelligence and not with the wonder of ignorance." The result will be that your art of reading will broaden into the refined accomplishment of 'skipping and skimming'. By this we mean, you will be able to detect the useless and uninteresting and corrupt literature which is swamping the markets. Many people read a book principally with the object of getting through it. They reach the word 'finis' with the same sensation of triumph as the Indian felt when he had added a fresh scalp to his belt. This is not proper. The accomplished reader is he who speedily detects and chooses the material he really desires to read.

What is it that we should desire to read? But isn't also this question superfluous? Should this question be asked of people whose world and life view is generally reformed and particularly Protestant Reformed?

I believe the question is not only proper but also timely. We are coming into that season of the year when more than any other we have time and occasion to read. The long winter nights keep us inside and are more opportune for reading and study than the hot, sultry days of summer. Church society life is sliding into full swing, and demanding preparation through reading and study. And not only does the season of the year lend itself to the justifiability of the question, but the time in general in which we live, the time of great world events and a time of much difference of opinion and creed.

In times such as these there is noticeably also much

literature to be had. Literature that is good and bad. 'Sign-posts' that are true and false. Books and papers also that present deceptive mixtures.

What shall we read? Well, the reformed man knows the answer. The covenant young man and woman also knows the answer. The little children of God's covenant should be instructed in the answer if they do not already know it.

We shall read with joy only that with which not only our minds and understanding can coincide with the author's, but also our hearts. That literature only we will seek to read which shall build us up first of all spiritually and then intellectually. And though we cannot help but read much of the "stuff" that floods the mart, concerning that we shall say: 'my soul loatheth it'. And my children shall have 'bread' and 'not stones' to eat.

For you realize that we have not said enough when we described the art of reading. Reading for us is not merely a natural, intellectual activity of the mind and eye, mouth and ear whereby we assimilate the thoughts of others and criticize them. But reading for us is also a spiritual matter. The unregenerate reader may be intellectually of world renown but spiritually he rejoices in corruption even when he reads. The child of God reads also intelligently, and develops his intellectual powers but spiritually-principally he rejoices only in the good. Should he nevertheless still find a delight in the corruption, it is not he that does so, but sin that dwelleth in him. From this sinful delight he must be converted and repent. In respect to this we shall all have to be admonished.

It is therefore proper not only to ask the question: what shall we read? but it is also proper to answer it by pointing once more to that which is good. That which is supremely good is the Scriptures which are able to enlighten the mind of our understanding to such a degree that all other literature will be judged in its light. And he who delights himself in reading the Scriptures will also be interested in developing in the truth as it has been formulated in our creeds by the Church in all ages. The good reader, Reformed reader, will apply the principals of reading described above also to these. Need I remind you also how beneficial it is to read our Church periodicals, the many books and pamphlets of delightful reading materials?

Most naturally, for us, first things come first and therefore we should also follow the order just as we prescribed it above. Only then, when there is time waiting on our hands should we broaden out in our field of reading materials. Then no harm is done or evil perpetrated if we peruse a history book, a recommended novel or even a magazine, the possession of which will not cause you to blush when your minister or elder comes for a visit.

M. S.

Contribution

September 23, 1941

An Apology to Mr. J. Hendriksen.

We express our regrets for having said that Mr. Hendriksen was secretly working for a union with the Christian Reformed Church and hereby make public the apology offered to him by us. Mr. J. Hendriksen is scribe of the Protestant Christian Ref. Church of Kalamazoo, and it was especially for the fact that he as scribe of this congregation has put two ministers of the Chr. Ref. Church and a student of Calvin Seminary on the pulpit in the absence or disability of the minister of said congregation, that also we were of the opinion that he was working towards leading us back to a denomination with whom we differ in principle and consequently cannot unite. Mr. Hendriksen has with Mr. A. Woltersom also an elder and witness in full agreement at the home of P. Alphenaar agreed to the fact that we, as the congregation of Kalamazoo, being doctrinally and spiritually one with the Protestant Reformed churches, should be united and should seek this reunion on a scriptural and legal basis.

These statements were made in the capacity of an elder on official business. We were very much and happily surprised by this attitude and we are very hopeful that this reunion will be accomplished, for we know that the other elders take the same stand and the congregation with very few exceptions, has long been hoping and praying for this, and only recently a petition to this end, signed by sixty-two members in full communion was presented to the consistory. Pray, who or what is standing in the way then?

Is the door still open as far as the Protestant Reformed Churches is concerned?

Suppose that the whole affair be approached from a different angle and that a committee from both sides works out a scriptural and legal basis. It shouldn't be difficult for Christ-believers to forgive and forget and it doesn't seem too difficult to find a way. We hope that the elders of our congregation may know their duty and have the courage of conviction, so that we and our children through the grace of God may be preserved for the Protestant Reformed Truth.

Yours for true Christian Fellowship,

B. Hoppenbrouwer.

P. Alphenaar

IN MEMORIAM

The Consistory of the Protestant Reformed Church of Bellflower, California, hereby wishes to express its sympathy to our brother, Mr. Dangermond, in the loss of his wife,

MRS. DANGERMOND

May the Lord of all grace comfort the brother and the family in this their bereavement.

The Consistory of the Bellflower Prot. Ref. Church,

L. Doezeema, Pres.

J. Bekendam, Vice, Pres.