

THE SPIRIT OF THE AGE

Concerns About Decisions of Synods of the Liberated Churches in the Netherlands

Columnists, editors and writers are much more inclined to discuss the serious concerns they are confronted with than to highlight the positive developments they may encounter. To curb this inclination we regularly search for positive developments that take place in and around the Church. Our recent publication of the personal impressions of Rev. J. Moesker about the discussions with the RCUS is an example of such an attempt. We are pleased and grateful about the positive developments and continue to pray for a blessing over this work. We rejoice with our brothers and sisters in Brazil who recently were allowed to establish a Reformed church federation. We are also gladdened when we can hear strong Reformed sounds from unexpected sources (see the recent article by Rev. S. Kang). At the same time we may not close our eyes to disturbing developments that confront us. To this end we feel obliged to direct attention to some decisions made by the Reformed (Liberated) churches in the Netherlands that give us reason for concern. We will let ourselves be guided in our comments by a letter written by a concerned brother and sister of the churches there.

Much has been written in the Dutch church papers about the decisions of recent Synods, but the letter by brother and sister M. Noorts of Berkel en Rodenrijs to the Synod at Leusden, while it was still in session, summarizes many of the concerns that have been expressed. The aforementioned brother and sister informed the Synod of Leusden that they would also be sending their letter to other church federations who have Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Dutch churches. In addition they made their letter available to any concerned persons.

Shall we remain Reformed or shall we be pulled along?

The main concern created by some of the decisions of Synod Leusden is that the churches are following the spirit of the age. The first example of this can be found in the freedom Synod gave to use a revised marriage form where specific tasks Scripture gives for husband and wife are not included. Biblical terms such as respect, obedience and submissiveness are also missing. As a result many of the young people are happier with the new form just because it is silent about many of the prescriptions for marriage in the Bible. In addition the Synod also concurred with the possibility of having the couple express their vows to one another rather than having the person leading the ceremony ask the questions. Whereas we believe that man and woman are brought together by the Lord it is more fitting to have the questions come from Him through the officiating minister of the ceremony rather than appear to be the well-intentioned and good commitments of each individual.

The decisions of Leusden regarding the marriage form parallel those made by Berkel - Rodenrijs about women voting. In both cases decisions made by the Church throughout the ages were set aside and a revised view was adopted without any reference to error(s) in the past. In reviewing the decisions of Leusden it becomes apparent that the brothers choose to refer to past decisions in an erratic manner or not at all. At various times Synods (also some since the Liberation) have decided against women voting, to revise the marriage form, and to drop Biblical provisions now missing. Yet these decisions were not referred to, let alone shown to be in error.

The fact that Synod decided that anyone in the congregation who leads the worship services might now administer the blessing is a further deterioration of the special offices. Respect for the worship services and the special office is only diminished in this way. The error of this direction is exacerbated by the fact that no Biblical grounds are provided for this decision.

Synod Leusden also dealt with Bible translations. It was aware that the Reformed Bible Foundation had argued against adoption of the Book of Acts in a proposed new Dutch version of the Bible by the Netherlands Bible Fellowship, and had recommended that the Liberated churches cease participation in this fellowship. Yet their words went unheeded. Synod decided to continue in the cooperation to come to a new Bible translation. Even though it is well known that some that are working on this translation do not regard the Bible as the Word of God, Synod willingly and knowingly placed the purity and infallibility of the Word of God in jeopardy. Equally disconcerting is the fact that Synod has permitted, under special circumstances, that the Good News Bible may be used in worship services. This is done while the Good News Bible has never been evaluated for its reliability, nor has it ever been reviewed by the churches. At the same time several writers have pointed out how unreliable it is and that in places it is in conflict with the Word of God.

On to a different matter! Synod approved the reorganization of the Theological University in Kampen while this was not asked for by any of the churches. Whereas the University used to be run by a Senate, a board of two men will now run it. This duo will be responsible for the academic level of education while the curators will be responsible for the reformed-ness of the education. In this way the unified approach between the education and its reformed character is torn apart. In addition it should not be overlooked that the theological university belongs to the churches and is not an entity unto itself that can bring re-organizational matters to Synod.

With regard to church unity matters Synod Leusden decided to establish sister-church relations with the Presbyterian Churches of Australia (PCEA) while the Free Reformed Churches in Australia (FRCA) - present sister churches of the Liberated Churches - do not yet have such a relationship with the PCEA. Beyond that the FRCA has requested the Liberated Churches not to proceed in this manner due to the concerns about an open pulpit and an open Lord's Supper table among the PCEA. In this matter Synod Leusden has acted contrary to its own Church Order, Article 83, where churches are forbidden to lord it over one another.

Also, in connection with the Lord's Supper, Synod decided that chaplains who are sent to war torn areas would be permitted to administer the Holy Supper there. This in spite of the fact that there would be people participating who are not members of the church. There would also be those who have not professed the Reformed faith. In addition, the supper would be celebrated without a worship service and without proper supervision of a consistory.

This decision was made in light of the fact that the present Dutch government does not recognize chaplains who do not administer the Lord's Supper. It is also in line with the present day ecumenical spirit of which an open Lord's Supper table is an important characteristic. Nevertheless this decision is in conflict with the Dutch church order articles 60 and 61 where the Lord's Supper is tied to the churches and proper church supervision of doctrine and life style.

With regard to national contacts with other Reformed federations, Synod Leusden decided to maintain the decision of the previous Synod not to engage in discussions with the Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken (NGK) due to fundamental differences. But at the same time Leusden did decide that it would be possible and permissible to declare local churches of the NGK to be true churches and to engage in pulpit and Lord's Supper exchanges. This decision makes a mockery of church federations where local churches are corporately responsible for what takes place in their federation. To refuse discussions on a federal level while admitting that local churches are true is akin to accepting as true on one hand what we reject as untrue on the other hand. Article 29 of the Dutch church order speaks differently when it declares that a true church rejects everything that conflicts with the pure Word of God.

Synod also deviated from the careful approach previous Synods had taken toward the introduction of new and additional hymns for use in the worship services. In the past emphasis had been placed on the priority of the Psalms for use in the worship services. Concern had also been expressed about the ease with which wrong understandings and teachings can creep into the churches by means of hymns. The fact that hymns are man made interpretations of God's Word and are often time-bound has been further reason to be careful in introducing many into the liturgy.

Synod's argument that the number of hymns made available for use is not of great importance but that the determining consideration is the number of hymns given for use in a particular service is spurious. As recent as 1975 deputies had recommended not to have a very large hymnbook that could compete with the Psalms. They suggested keeping the number of hymns under 50. When the final selection of hymns ended up being 44 there were still voices at that Synod that warned against such a high number. Once again these decisions and arguments were not properly or convincingly countered.

Brother and sister Noort also mentioned in their letter to Synod Leusden that the recommendation of Synod to the churches that the Lord's Prayer and the Votum could be sung to certain melodies was done without first showing that these could rightly be sung in the worship services. Nowhere in Scripture can such a practice be found, therefore a Biblically based argument for doing so should precede any recommendation to do so.

While one of the appellants who had accurately followed the church orderly method of appeal was told that he was abusing it, Synod itself ignored Article 30 of the Dutch Church Order that requires that only those matters that come to Synod via the churches will be handled by Synod. In one such case Synod decided that assistants in training for the ministry might preach in certain circumstances. This was not a matter that came on Synod's table via the churches.

With regard to the teaching of Rev. D. Ophoff of Nieuwegein Synod decided that it could not condemn his understanding that the Sunday as day of rest is not Scripturally based. He taught in a sermon that Sunday as a day of rest is nothing more than a human institution. Synod did suggest that it would be better to say that Sunday as a day of rest is based on a responsible choice by the Christian church. But by dealing with the case in this way the Word of God is sidelined. Synod only dealt with Rev. Ophoff's understanding of the matter and the real issue of Lord's Day rest was avoided.

When these selected decisions of Synod Leusden are reviewed a few worrisome themes can be noticed. A number of the decisions we touched upon only give increased freedom for individuals to worship according to their own interpretation. Decisions with regard to the change in the marriage form, women voting, Sunday rest and Bible translations all place emphasis on the need for variety in worship rather than a corporate unity of worship. Such an emphasis is consistent with the spirit of individualism in this present age.

As churches in Ecclesiastical Fellowship or in a sister-church relationship the Canadian Reformed Churches, the Free Reformed Churches in Australia and others must review these decisions and decide on a course of action. Will they by their silence acquiesce with these decisions or will they speak out in brotherly love and concern about the worrisome direction they see our Dutch brothers and sisters going? Shall we remain Reformed or will we be pulled along with the spirit of the age?

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The Unity of the Church

(Reformation Day Speech - Oct.31, 2000)

By Rev. J. Ludwig

[Part One of Two]

Introduction

I appreciate the opportunity and consider it a privilege to address you this evening. Given the alternative of staying at home to ward off ghosts and goblins with candy, this occasion, where we can reminisce about the Reformation is a real treat. That's the reason we have come together: to commemorate the Reformation of God's church in the sixteenth century. We gratefully remember and we deeply cherish this event because all of us - Free Reformed, United Reformed, and Canadian Reformed - trace our ecclesiastical roots back to those liberating days when the church, by the grace of God, threw off the Roman yoke and once again submitted willingly, joyfully and exclusively to the yoke of Jesus Christ. We love to reminisce about the Reformation, to study and discuss it, because it falls into the same category of events which Asaph described as "the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might, and the wonders which He has wrought" (Ps. 78:4). What took place in Europe and elsewhere was truly a "work of God," and therefore He deserves our praise and adoration. The Reformation testifies of the Lord's faithfulness to His own promise, "I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18). In the raising up of men like Luther and Calvin we see the loving care of the ascended Christ for His bride, whom He bought with His precious blood. He preserved her in the midst of heresy and abuse. He led her back to Himself and to His Word. He opened her eyes and heart to the revealed truth that there is one Supreme Bishop, the Lord Jesus Christ, that there is one faith, one hope, one baptism, one God and Father of us all.

It is that truth that I would like to touch on this evening: "The Unity of the Church." Perhaps you are thinking, "How is it possible to speak about unity in conjunction with the Reformation? Did not Luther's writings and actions result in a *divided* church? Instead of one church, there were now two: Roman Catholic and Protestant?" The reformers, however, were fully aware of the fact that, by breaking from the Roman Catholic Church, they were not starting another church of Christ. The Church of Rome no longer reflected the marks of a true church. It had become false by assigning more authority to itself and its ordinances than to the Word of God, by administering the sacraments as it pleased, and by persecuting those who led holy lives according to the Word of God. The faithful, who seceded, regarded themselves as the lawful continuation of Christ's church.

This did not make them become isolationist or sectarian in their thinking. One of the confessions, penned at that time, captured the burning desire of the Reformed people to seek and maintain the unity of the church. You find that expressed, among other places, in Article 28 of the *Belgic Confession*, a confession to which all of us wholeheartedly subscribe. There the church of the Reformation summarized God's Word as follows, "...no one ought to withdraw from it [the assembly of the redeemed], content to be by himself, no matter what his status or standing may be. *But all and everyone are obliged to join it and unite with it, maintaining the unity of the church....*" Guido de Bres and all those who embraced this confession were not stating something new. They were simply persevering in the faith once delivered to the saints. Article 28 is nothing more than an expansion of what the church expressed at the Council of Constantinople in A.D 381, namely, "We believe *one* holy catholic and apostolic church." Both creed and confession are not a formulation of human opinions but a summary of divine wisdom revealed in Holy Writ. I hope to come back to that Scriptural basis in a minute.

I began by mentioning the thankfulness we share in celebrating the Reformation. And yet this silver lining does have a cloud. Along with the joy, there is (or there ought to be anyway) a twinge of regret, a pinch of sadness. Why? Because we have members here of three *separate* federations of Reformed churches. The "splintering of Christianity" is painfully apparent at this gathering. We come together once a year to reflect on our common heritage, to socialize and mingle with one another, and yet for 52 Sundays a year we meet in segregation. Many of us literally cross paths as we drive to our own places for worship and communion on the first day of the week. We do not yet enjoy and experience what the author of psalm 133 sang about, "Behold how good and pleasant it is when brothers *dwelt* together."

Admittedly, unity discussions are taking place on the local and synodical levels of the United, Free and Canadian Reformed Churches. Committees have been established and meetings are taking place. But are we as diligent as we ought to be? If the unity of the church is something to which we are indifferent or cold, if it ranks as something nice but not necessary, does that not call for repentance? The catechism in LD 33 describes repentance as "the heartfelt joy in God through Christ and a love and delight to live according to the will of God in *all* good deeds." Well, this love and delight, which is part and parcel of our renewed life in Christ, is that transparent in our zeal to do God's will in the good deed of seeking the unity of the church? Can we honestly say that we are striving for that to the utmost of our ability? We all need to examine ourselves with the light of Scripture to see whether or not we are *willing* to heed the prayer of Christ, "Holy Father...I do not pray for these [my disciples] only, but also for those who believe in me through their word, *that they may all be one*, even as thou Father art in me, and I in thee...."(Jn.17: 20,21). An unwillingness to unite on the part of faithful churches living in the same city and sharing the same confessions constitutes sin against the letter and the spirit of Article 28 of the *Belgic Confession*. It is disobedience to the clear Word of our blessed God and Saviour. We have the apostolic command in Ephesians 4:3 where Paul says that we must be "eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." How eager are we?

The Centrality of the Church

On October 31st we commemorate the reformation, not of a social organization, but of an institution created and upheld by God: the church. It is not merely an appendix to God's work of salvation. It is the assembly where His saving work is applied, where the blessings of Christ's redemptive work are distributed. One of the reformers, Calvin, I believe, dubbed it "the workshop of the Holy Spirit." That does not mean that the Spirit's sovereignty is confined, that his power is limited to the church. He is able to turn the bricks of this building into living stones, into spiritual children of Abraham - if I might paraphrase the words of Christ. The point is, however, that God has chosen the church as the means and the place for working and strengthening faith, for transforming people in the image of the Triune God.

The church is the guardian of the truth. To her God has entrusted His abiding and living Word. She must teach it to the coming generations, defend it against heretics, spread it to the ends of the earth, hold it aloft for all to see and read (Ps.147: 1 Tim.3:15).

The church is the sole bearer of the keys of the kingdom - the preaching of the holy gospel and church discipline. Through them she opens the kingdom of heaven to believers and closes it to unbelievers (Matt.16:19; Lord's Day 31).

The church is the light of the world (Matt.5:14). Jesus tells us that in the sermon on the Mount. Instead of hiding our faith, covering the light, we have to let it shine, so that all men may see our good works and give glory to the Father who is in heaven.

In Revelation 12 Christ gave his servant, John, a breath-taking vision of the church. "A great portent appeared in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and on her head a crown of twelve stars."

Clothed with the sun. With that image we are shown the radiant and exalted position of the church. She reflects the light of the SON of righteousness.

The moon under her feet. This symbolizes her dominion. Think of Psalm 8. About man as the jewel of God's creation, David declares in that psalm, "Thou hast given him dominion over the work of thy hands; thou hast put all things *under his feet*." God-given rulership is meant by that expression.

And on her head a crown of twelve stars. This testifies of her triumph and endurance in the faith. As the ruling Saviour promised to the church at Smyrna, "Be faithful, and I will give you the *crown of life*."

So, taken all together, these creation motifs show that the church, as the mother of all believers, stands in the centre of the universe. Everything must serve for her development and increase. Moses spoke of that already in Deuteronomy 32, "When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance...then he fixed the bounds of the people *according to the number of the sons of God*." In a word: according to the church. The church is the hub of the world - everything is done for her sake. In Joshua 10, for example, we read that "the sun stood still...and the moon stayed" until the church took vengeance on her enemies.

Do you see how indispensable and central the church is? She is: the temple of the Holy Spirit, the pillar and bulwark of the truth, the gatekeeper of the kingdom, the light of the world, the centre of the universe, the apple of God's eye. That's why the Israelites in captivity in Babylon cried out, "Let my right hand wither, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth...if I do not set *Jerusalem* above my highest joy" (Ps.137:5,6). They considered the church above everything and everyone, even above their own family members, above the bond of flesh and blood.

Now considering this glorious position God has given to the church, considering that Scripture from beginning to end is about her salvation in Jesus Christ, it follows that we are obliged to be extremely conscientious about seeking and manifesting her unity.

The church has many attributes or qualities - all of which are received out of the hands of God. Besides her unity, there is her holiness and catholicity. We are most concerned for her holiness. On the last day the Bride will be presented without spot or blemish to the Father. We know that from Revelation 21. And yet that does not make us indifferent and slack about leading a holy life now. We take seriously the command, "Be holy as I the Lord your God am holy." We pray daily for the Spirit's sanctifying power in our life as churches. We do our best to exercise church discipline because we are deeply concerned about the holiness of the church. Why should it be any different with the unity of the church? Is unity less important than holiness? If we truly desire to be one than we must actively pursue that oneness. It is not enough to talk about unity. It is not even enough to pray for it. Discussion and prayer are necessary, but we have to go further. We have to DO what the Lord requires. *Ora et Labora* - prayer and work. For not every one who says, 'Lord, Lord' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of our Father in heaven. We confess that the Holy Spirit makes us living members of Christ, imparting to us what we have in Christ. And since Christ, in whose anointing we share, is not divided (1 Cor.1:13) His church should not be divided either.

Where are you?... the Knowledge of God

By Wayne Pleiter

Have you ever been to the Omni-max theatre? Did you experience the thrill of a lion chase through the heart of Africa, or were you dazzled by the savage beauty of the shark in the depths of the ocean? Perched high in a near vertical position, you are seated in the midst of a gigantic wrap-around screen with striking images that appear to leap out at you. The surround-sound music is dramatically powerful and the sound-effects are so realistic that you find yourself personally immersed in the unfolding spectacle. Indeed, your very presence becomes engrossed within the phenomenal three dimensional experience that is as remarkable as it is surreal. And so the Omni-max theatre lives up to its name – an *all-powerful* audio and visual performance for *maximum* theatrical enjoyment!

'*Omni*' is also a power invoking prefix that is used in three doctrinal concepts in theology. *Omnipotence*, *Omnipresence* and *Omniscience*. The first two concepts describe God's almighty power and infinite presence. The latter concept, God's Omniscience, which is the subject for consideration here, encompasses the infinite and overwhelming knowledge of our Eternal God.

Understanding the Knowledge of God.

When the series of God's creative acts concluded, we read in the opening chapter of Genesis that God was very pleased with all that He had created (Gen. 1:31). Thus we can imagine how much more pleasure God experienced when He crowned creation (Ps. 8:5), with Adam and Eve as His perfect image-bearers (Gen. 1:27). However, it wasn't long before the perfection of Paradise was polluted with the perversion of sin. Deceived by the slippery snake and exposed in their naked shame, Adam and Eve did what they taught us so well to do – run for cover and attempt to 'hide' from God. As we all know, the story doesn't end there. The Word of God reveals to us, in the cool breeze of the day God went for a walk through the garden of Eden. And it is then, that '*...the LORD God called to the man, and asked "Where are you?"*' (Gen. 3:8, 9).

'*Where are you?*' Doesn't it seem rather ironic, that our all-knowing God would ask this question? On the surface this simple question seems to expose the limitations of God's knowledge, but instead it communicates its profoundness. In questioning Adam and Eve, God is not wanting to know in which tree they are hiding. Rather, the question is deliberately directed to expose the fallen condition of their hearts. In this way God shows His gracious desire for their humble confession of sin and sincere repentance. So it is evident that underlining this simple and unassuming question is the revelation of God's eternal plan for our redemption! (Gen. 3:15)]

The Extent of God's Knowledge

So what does God really know? And what is the extent of His knowledge? While these questions are simple to answer, they are difficult to comprehend. Our Triune God is Omniscient, that is, God is all knowing. His knowledge is so comprehensive that it encompasses everything that is *possible* to know and is *actually* known. God's knowledge is also eternal, so that it extends to every detail of the past, present and future. As the scriptures say: '*Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world*' (Acts 15:18 KJV). It is clear then, that our almighty God has no need to learn, and indeed will never gain any new knowledge. To think God could possibly learn from one of His creatures would be blasphemous, for '*...who has understood the mind of the LORD, or instructed him as his counselor? Whom did the LORD consult to enlighten him, and who taught him the right way?*' (Is. 40:13, 14)

God's knowledge is also Sovereign in that He is perfectly acquainted with every living creature in the heavens above, on the earth beneath and in the waters under the earth. Even in the dark depths of Sheol, the light of God's knowledge shines forth, for '*...he knows what lies in darkness*' (Dan. 2:22, see also Ps. 139:8). There is no place to run and hide for '*the eyes of the Lord are everywhere, keeping watch*' over all the 'Adams' in the world (Prov. 15:3).

The knowledge of God also extends to the personal (and communal) relationship God sustains with His covenant children. This is beautifully captured in the psalm of King David:

'LORD, you have searched me and you know me.
You know when I sit and when I rise;
you perceive my thoughts from afar.
You discern my going out and my lying down;
you are familiar with all my ways.
Before a word is on my tongue
you know it completely, O LORD' (Ps. 139:1-6).

At the outset of the Psalm, David confesses that he cannot come before God with any delusion of hiding his personal sin, but rather he bares his innermost heart for inspection. But David learned his lesson the hard way. It was only when he was confronted by the prophet Nathan for his sins against Bethsheba, that he experienced the power of God's omniscience first hand. Indeed it is impossible to deceive the Omniscience of God!

And so it is that David can acknowledge that all the particular details of his life were known by his Father in Heaven – when he was asleep, when he woke up, or when he went out on his way. This is equally true for us today. Even our private deliberations and our unspoken thoughts are exposed before the counsel of God. There is no fooling God, for nothing escapes His knowledge. Indeed, God knows exactly what lives in the heart of every man (Matt. 9:4, Heb. 4:12).

Response to God's Knowledge

But how do you respond to the eternal knowledge of God? How do you feel when you know that *'nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight'*? Does it make you feel uncomfortable to know that *'everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of God'* (Heb 4:13)? If these questions cause you to feel uneasy, you can always do what is natural and follow Adam's example – run and hide in the trees of 'ignorance.'

This is exactly what all sinners do – they act as if there is no God, or at least a God who doesn't know everything. *'They seek to banish such a God from their thoughts'* (Attributes of God, A. Pink, Page 18). Why else would Cain think that there was no witness to his cowardly act of murder? Did Achan really think that God would not know about the stolen pieces of gold that he hid in the dirt? How could Judas the traitor ever imagine to get away with his plans of betrayal? *"'God does not see it,' they declare; 'The Most High does not know or care'"* (Ps. 73 stanza 3 Book of Praise).

Our reaction to the Omniscience of God should be one of faith, firmly founded on the standard of His Holy Word. Indeed the scriptures do confront us with the reality of our sin, and with the necessity for God's justice to be satisfied: *'They do not realize that I remember all their evil deeds. Their sins engulf them; they are always before me'* (Hosea 7.2). However, we may at the same time be comforted in the knowledge of God's infinite mercy. By faith we can confess the forgiveness of all our sins through the redeeming work of Jesus Christ. So it is, when the psalmist David contemplates God's infinite knowledge, he professes that *'...such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain'* (Ps. 139:6). Indeed the knowledge of God is too great for us to attain, too majestic for mere mortals to comprehend.

The Comfort of God's Knowledge

As you spend time meditating on the majestic truths of God's attributes as revealed in His Word, you begin to understand the immense comfort contained therein. Our Sovereign Lord is not an impersonal God. He is not some sort of eternal encyclopedia, filled with cold hard facts. Rather our Lord is the Covenant God who desires fellowship with us, so that we might enjoy an eternal relationship with Him. As the Holy Spirit writes in the prophesy of Hosea; *'For I desire ... the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings'* (6:6 KJV.) It gives God great pleasure when His covenant people study His infinite knowledge to His glory.

Even though our natural tendency is to run and hide from God, we therefore can be thankful that God has not remained hidden from us. For it was in God's infinite mercy and compassion that He went for a walk through the garden of Eden to look for our 'tree climbing' parents, Adam and Eve. They corrupted the covenant fellowship, and it is God who restores it. God's redemptive plan was completed in the sending of His only begotten Son. This new Adam did not hide from God's wrath, but took on the fruit of our sinfulness and was crucified on the tree on Golgatha. As a result of his sin, the first Adam tried to hide in the tree. And because of our sin, the second Adam would die on the tree. It was through His precious death that we received the forgiveness of our sins and were granted the opportunity to live with God in eternal blessedness to praise and glorify Him. (HC LD 3 Q&A 6) *'Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent'* (John 17:3).

Applying God's Knowledge in our Life

According to the teaching of Hebrews, Jesus Christ is our great high priest who understands and sympathizes with our weakness. And it is because of His compassion that we are encouraged to *'approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need'* (Heb 4: 14-16 also see BC Art.26). Likewise John Calvin writes that the effects of confessing the knowledge of God ought *'... to teach us reverence and fear; and to induce us, under its guidance and teaching, to ask every good thing from him, and, when it is received, ascribe it to Him'* (Book 1 Chapter 2:2). We do well to trust God's infinite knowledge and to seek His guidance in our time of need.

When we are confused about the decisions we have to make regarding our work situation or the state of our relationships, we can profess as Job did, that God *'knows the way that I take'* (Job 23:10). While we labor with which choices we should make, it is incomprehensible for us that God already knows the direction we will go.

Perhaps you struggle with depression, or your soul becomes faint hearted. We live in the assurance *'for [God] knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust'* (Ps. 103:14). Perhaps you are tempted with particular sins, or overcome with personal doubts. Then appeal to God: *'Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting'* (Ps. 139:23, 24).

Maybe you feel discouraged, for nothing seems to go right in your life, and you begin to wonder whether you heart is really in it anymore. So when somebody asks you in the midst of your struggles; "Do you love the Lord?", you may confess with the apostle Peter, *"Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you"* (John 21:17).

What comfort there is the confession that Christ's 'knowledge of our afflictions and adversities is more than theoretic; it is personal, warm and compassionate. Whatever may befall us, God knows and cares as no one else can' (A.W Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, page 89). Therefore, when our Heavenly Father asks, 'where are you?', we can be absolutely confident that in Christ, God knows exactly where you are. Indeed with adoration let us acclaim; 'such knowledge is too wonderful for me!' (Ps. 139: 6).