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## MEDITATIE

### Dat Gods Volk Nu Zegge! . . . .

Dat Gods Volk Nu Zegge!

*Looft den Heere; want Hij is goed; want  
Zijne goedertierenheid is in der eeuwigheid.  
Dat Israel nu zegge, dat Zijne goedertieren-  
heid in der eeuwigheid is. Ps. 118:1, 2.*

Maar wat zullen we zeggen?

Nu, op dankdag van het jaar onzes Heeren negentien honderd twee en veertig?

Hebben we eigenlijk wel iets te zeggen, gelet op de omstandigheden, waar onder we thans moeten spreken? Als loven beteekent, dat we dankzeggen, en dankzegging blijdschap veronderstelt over weldaden en goede dingen, die we van de hand des Heeren hebben ontvangen, wat zullen we dan *nu* zeggen? . . .

Naar de beteekenis van het Hebreeuwsche woord wil het loven van den Heere eigenlijk zeggen, dat we de hand uitsteken, dat we met de hand aanwijzen al de goede dingen, waarover ons hart zich kan verblijden, dat we dus onze zegeningen tellen, één voor één; dat we voorts van die goede dingen spreken als gaven, die we hebben ontvangen, waarop we hoegenaamd geen recht hadden, die we alle hadden verbeurd; en dat we alzoo opklimmen tot den Heere onzen God, op Hem wijzen als den rijken en milddadigen Gever alles goeds, en voor Zijn aangezicht uitspreken den lof Zijns naams, en dien lof ook verheffen voor elkander, in eene groote gemeente, en voor heel de wereld.

Maar hoe zullen we dat *nu* doen?

O, 't Is waar, zolang we onze hand niet verder uitstrekken dan tot eigen kring, tot eigen land en volk, zullen we nog op heel wat "goede" dingen kunnen wijzen, ofschoon de hoorn des overvloeds toch

ook heel wat bittere vruchten uitwerpt. De malaise van enkele jaren geleden schijnt voorbij te zijn. Er is overvloed van werk, zoo zelfs, dat er geen handen genoeg zijn om het af te maken. Er is geen gebrek aan geld. Zelfs beweert men, dat in doorsnee genomen de Amerikaan zooveel geld in zijn zak heeft, dat er gevaar dreigt van "inflation". Het is waar, zij, die gewoon waren, om wat al te veel te eten en te drinken, worden ietwat beperkt in hun gulzigheid, maar er is overvloed van levensmiddelen. Wie wil, die kan ook nu nog wel "eten en drinken en vroolijk zijn" . . .

Maar ach! daar is die vreeselijke oorlog!

Wat zullen we *nu* zeggen?

Vele duizenden wisten ten tijde van de economische malaise, nog versch in het geheugen en nog nimmer genezen, niet wat ze op dankdag moesten zeggen. De wereld troostte zich met de gedachte, dat "de voorspoed om den hoek gluurde", en in de naaste toekomst ook wel om den hoek komen zou; die wat vromer deden meenden bidstonden te moeten organiseren, om den Almachtige te smeecken om toch welvaart en nijverheid terug te doen keeren in ons land. Maar eigenlijk wist men toch niet, wat men toen moest zeggen. En nu schijnt het, alsof de Allerhoogste heeft gelet op het geroep om voorspoed. Allerwege is er welvaart, de schuren zijn propvol, de wielen der industrie loopen snel, druk, dag en nacht. Maar *nu*?

Nu draait het alles om den oorlog! Nu is er voorspoed alleen omdat er instrumenten van dood en verwoesting tegen den vijand moeten worden vervaardigd. Nu worden onze zonen opgeroepen, om zich aan te gorden tot den stijd, om in verre landen den vijand te ontmoeten, en misschien nimmer tot ons terug te keeren.

En als we de hand uitsteken, om te wijzen op de "goede" dingen, die we mogen genieten, dan ontmoet die hand allerlei dingen, die we onder de "kwade" dingen zouden rangschikken, zeer bittere druppelen in den beker van genot en blijdschap!

Wat zullen we dan *nu* zeggen?

En ach! wat zullen we zeggen, als we ook hen verzoeken om zich bij ons sprekend en dankend gezelschap aan te sluiten, die nu reeds jaren in ellende verkeerden van wege den geesel des oorlogs, wier woningen verwoest zijn, wier kudde van "de kooi werd afgescheurd", die honger en kommer moeten lijden, die dooden betreuren, die zuchten onder den trotschen voet des tirans, die zullen moeten spreken vanuit concentratie-kampen en kerkerholten? . . .

Wat zullen we *nu* zeggen?

Zullen we bogen op paarden en wagenen, en roemen op eene zekere overwinning? Zullen we profeteeren van eene nieuwe wereldorde, waarin bestendige welvaart en volkomene vrijheid zullen heerschen, en de vrede nimmermeer zal worden verstoord door den wreeden vijand?

Doch dan spreken we immers niet *nu*, maar in de toekomst, en dan trachten we onszelven te troosten met wat nog niet is!

En wat ook in geen enkelen zin des woords werkelijkheid is, omdat het immers gegrond is op een woord van den mensch, wiens adem in zijne neusgaten is!

Maar Israel, de Kerk, Gods volk moet altijd spreken, mag nooit zwijgen, en moet iets zeer definitiefs te zeggen hebben ook over het *nu*!

Dat Israel *nu* over het *nu* iets zegge . . .

Wat zullen we dan zeggen?

Looft den Heere!

Want Hij is goed!

Want Zijne goedertierenheid is in der eeuwigheid!

Dat Israel, dat het huis van Aäron, dat de Kerk aller eeuwen, onder alle omstandigheden, in alle landen en plaatsen; in vruchtbare, maar ook in onvruchtbare jaren; in voorspoed, maar ook in tegenspoed; in tijden van vrede, maar ook als de geesel des oorlogs den rug der volkeren striemt; in tijden van blijdschap en vreugde, maar ook temidden van droefheid en smart; in gezondheid en krankheid, bij de volle broodkorf en in den nood des hongers, in leven en in sterven; als er geen vrucht aan den wijnstok is, en het werk des olijfbooms liegen zal, en de velden geen spijze voortbrengen, en men de kudde uit de kooi afscheuren zal; ja, ook, als alles bewogen wordt, en de bergen verzet worden in het hart der zee, en de hemelen worden opgerold als een dunne doek, en de zon verduisterd en de maan als bloed wordt, en alle eilanden uit hunne plaats gerukt worden, nu zeggen:

De Heere is goed!

Zijne goedertierenheid is in der eeuwigheid!

Looft Hem!

De Heere is goed!

Dat is en blijft waar wat er ook gebeure!

En dat mag zeker de harten van allen, die Hem

vreezen, stemmen tot blijdschap, tot blijmoedig vertrouwen, en tot waarachtige dankbaarheid.

Want ware dankbaarheid wordt zeker niet gewekt door het zien op de dingen dezer wereld. En dankzegging bestaat zeker niet daarin, dat we met den rijken dwaas bij volle schuren en welgevulden disch tot onze ziel zeggen: "Ziel! gij hebt vele goederen, die opgelegd zijn voor vele jaren, neem rust, eet, drink, wees vroolijk!" Maar wel is dat echte dankbaarheid, die gewekt wordt daardoor, dat we smaken, dat de Heere goed is; en het loven en danken van den Heere bestaat juist daarin, dat we uitdrukking geven aan de blijde ervaring van de goedheid des Heeren!

En die goedheid onzes Gods verandert nimmer!

Ze is aan de verandering der dingen, die gezien worden, niet onderhevig.

Daarom kan Israel dan ook altijd zeggen, ook *nu*, juist altijd *nu*, dat de Heere goed is.

Hij is goed.

Zeker, dat wil in de eerste plaats zeggen, dat Hij de is Goede, de volmaakte is in Zichzelve. Soms valt op deze beteekenis van "goedheid" alle nadruk in de Heilige Schrift. Maar ook dan, wanneer deze beteekenis niet op den voorgrond staat, is ze toch altijd de grond van alle zich aan ons openbarende goedheid onzes Gods. Hij is het inbegrip van alle volmaaktheden. Zijn wezen is goedheid. Want Hij is God. Hij is een licht, louter licht; en in Hem is gansch geen duisternis. His is waarheid, gerechtigheid, heiligheid, liefde en genade. 't Allerhoogst en eeuwig goed is Hij!

Maar daarom is Hij ook de overvloeiende Fontein aller goeden voor allen, die Hem vreezen.

En daarop valt in den honderd en achttienden psalm zeker alle nadruk. Het is van de goedheid des Heeren, zooals Gods volk die heeft ervaren en gesmaakt, dat Israel hier zingt. Hij is de Weldadige, de Zegenader, Die alles goeds schenkt aan degenen, die op Hem wachten, en die op Zijne goedertierenheid hopen. En, o, zeker! deze weldadigheid des Heeren, deze goedheid onzes Gods, zooals we die mogen ervaren in het ontvangen van Zijnen zegen, kan nooit gescheiden worden van Zijne eeuwige volmaaktheid. Alleen als de Goede is Hij de Weldadige; alleen als de Volmaakte is Hij de overvloeiende Fontein van alle heil. Maar dat neemt niet weg, dat in den psalm toch uitsluitend gewag wordt gemaakt van Zijne groote goedheid, zooals die door Israel gesmaakt werd in de menigvuldige weldaden des heils, die Hij over hen had uitgestort.

Looft den Heere, want Hij is goed!

Geeft Hem dank, want Hij overlaadt ons met gunstbewijzen!

Dat is de uitdrukking van blijde ervaring! Neen, het gaat hier niet over eene leerstelling, eene abstracte waarheid, het objectieve feit, dat de Heere goed is;

maar over Zijne goeheid, zooals die ons betoond werd, zooals ze over ons werd uitgegoten, zooals ze aan ons openbaar werd in een rijkdom van zegeningen!

Niets dan zegeningen. . .

Looft Hem, dankt Hem, prijst Zijnen Naam! Dat wil zeggen, dat ge in uw leven Zijne goedheid hebt gezien, en dat ge in heel uw leven niets anders ziet dan de goedheid uwes Gods over u. Echte, onvervalschte, onvermengde dankbaarheid en dankzegging en lof wil zeggen, dat ge weet en zegt, dat ge ervaart en uitdrukking geeft aan die ervaring, dat ge van den Heere uwen God nog nimmers iets anders ontvangen hebt dan het goede. Zoolang als dat niet in uw ziel leeft, kan van uwe lippen niet vloeien de taal der dankbaarheid, die den Heere behaagt. Hoe zult ge danken, als uw hart niet vervuld is met ware blijdschap in den Heere? En hoe zal uw hart van vreugde opspringen, als ge niet leeft in het bewustzijn het goede van Zijne hand te hebben ontvangen? Of ook, hoe zal uwe dankzegging onvermengd zijn, en uw lof van den Heere onvervalscht en Hem welbehagelijk als ge eenerzijds wel meent reden tot dankbaarheid te hebben, maar anderzijds dingen ziet, die u doen klagen en murmureeren? Is niet alles van Hem? Kwamen niet alle dingen u toe van Zijne hand? Is Hij niet de God, die over alles regeert, over oorlog en vrede, over krankheid en gezondheid, over droefheid en blijdschap, over dood en leven? En als ge dan weet en belijdt, dat alle dingen niet bij geval, maar van Zijne hand u toekomen, hoe zult ge dan toch Hem loven, en zeggen, dat de Heere goed is, tenzij ge ziet en smaakt, dat Zijne goedheid zich openbaart in al, wat Hij u toebeschikt?

De Heere is goed!

Hij is altijd goed!

Hij is u goed in alle dingen!

Alleen als ge dat inziet, gelooft, ervaart, kunt ge instemmen met het zeggen van het gansche Israel, van alle eeuwen, in alle landen, onder alle omstandigheden:

Goed is de Heer!

Looft Hem!

Ook *nu*!

Eeuwige goedertierenheid!

Daarin alleen ligt de grond van de belijdenis *nu*, dat de Heere goed, dat Hij Zijn volk, dat Hij u goed is!

Dat Israel *nu* zegge, dat Zijne goedertierenheid *in der eeuwigheid* is! Dat het huis van Aäron *nu* zegge, dat Zijne goedertierenheid *in der eeuwigheid* is!

Neen, anders zal het niet gaan.

Als ge het *nu* door het geloof en in het licht van Gods eigen Woord niet kunt zien als een moment in Gods eeuwige goedertierenheid, zal uw lof op de lippen u besterven!

In het *nu*, in het moment van het tegenwoordige, ligt al te veel ellende! Want hier liggen wij midden in

den dood, en de dood zit in heel ons bestaan en in elk moment. Hier zien we den toorn Gods van den hemel geopenbaard over alle goddeloosheid en ongerechtigheid der menschen. Hier zucht de gansche schepping, den vloek torschend. Hier bloeit maar al te dikwijls de vijgeboom niet, en ook in den bloeienden vijgeboom zit nog de dood. Hier is de onrust, lijden en smart, oorlog en pestilentie en aardbeving. Hier is het met smart neergebogen, van angst krimpde hart. En hier is, ook bij hen, die den Heeren vreezen, nog het lichaam dezes doods, dat hen altijd weer doet uitroepen: Ik ellendig mensch! . . .

Hoe zullen we dan *nu* zeggen, dat de Heere goed is?

Hoe zullen we dan *nu* Hem loven met dankzegging, omdat we niets anders dan het goede van Hem ontvangen?

Alleen doordat we het *nu* zien, door het geloof, als een moment van eeuwige goedertierenheid!

Een ander moment van diezelfde eeuwige goedertierenheid, waarvan ook het kruis en de opstanding van onzen Heere Jezus Christus momenten zijn. Want daarin is immers Gods eeuwige goedertierenheid geopenbaard, dat Hij Zijn eeniggeboren Zoon gegeven voor ons gegeven heeft in den dood, en Hem om onze rechtvaardigmaking uit de dooden heeft opgewekt. Goedertierenheid wil immers zeggen, dat al, wat in God is, met ontferming over ons bewogen is in onze ellende, omdat Hij ons van eeuwigheid heeft liefgehad. Goedertierenheid beteekent, dat God eeuwiglijk bewogen wordt door den wil en het goddelijk verlangen om ons te redden uit onzen nood, om ons den beelde Zijns Zoons gelijkvormig te maken in hemelsche heerlijkheid.

Die goedertierenheid is in der eeuwigheid!

Ze is eeuwig in God!

En dat wil ook zeggen, dat Hij in Zijn eeuwigen raad in betrekking tot alle dingen door die groote goedertierenheid bewogen werd!

Hij werd er door bewogen reeds bij de schepping der wereld. Toen Hij de grondvesten der aarde legde, had Hij reeds de eeuwige heerlijkheid van Zijn volk voor oogen. En heel de geschiedenis door wordt Hij door die goedertierenheid bewogen. Ze zit in elk *nu*, in elk moment der geschiedenis, in elk oogenblik van ons leven. En ze is het motief, het goddelijk motief van al, wat er in de wereld geschiedt, zoowel als van al, wat Israel, wat de Kerk aller eeuwen ervaart, en van al, wat u en mij persoonlijk op onzen weg ontmoet.

Dezelfde groote goedertierenheid, die Hem bewoog, toen Hij Zijn Eeniggeborenen in den dood des kruises inzond, zit in elk moment van uw leven, hoe donker het oog schijne!

Daarom is ook het *nu* eene openbaring van Zijne groote goedheid!

Daarom kan Israel ook *nu* zeggen: de Heere is goed! Want Zijne goedertierenheid is in der eeuwigheid!

Halleluia!

II II

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**EDITORIALS**

**Common Grace**

“Common Grace” is the subject of one of two papers read before a gathering of the “Calvinistic Philosophy Club”, and published in “The Proceedings of the Calvinistic Philosophy Club, 1941”. The price of the whole book, let me say this for those of our readers that might be interested to buy the mimeographed pamphlet of about one hundred and thirty eight pages, is \$1.25. Order by Edward Heerema, Goffle Hill Road, Midland Park, N. J. The first of the two papers that constitute the contents of the “Proceedings” is by Edw. Heerema on the subject “God in the theology of Schleiermacher”. It covers eighteen pages. The second paper is a discussion of the subject of common grace. It is in the latter that we are interested now. The author is Dr. C. Van Til, professor of Apologetics at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia. The paper covers no less than one hundred ten mimeographed pages, closely typed on large sheets.

As soon as we read about the publication of Dr. Van Til’s paper, we decided to let our readers know about its contents, and to discuss it in *The Standard Bearer*. And it is now several months ago that, through the courtesy of Van Til, I received a copy of the “Proceedings,” which courtesy I hereby gratefully acknowledge. In the meantime, I read the book carefully, and also placed myself before the question as to the best method to be followed in the discussion of a paper of this kind. The tone of the book, even though it is controversial, is calm and quite dispassionate. In this respect the book leaves a much more favorable impression of the activities of the “Calvinistic Philosophic Club” than the articles by Van Halsema in *De Wachter* would lead one to expect. Yet, it is not without a certain misgiving that I finally decided to discuss Van Til’s paper in *The Standard Bearer*. The reason for this is not that the subject Van Til discusses is not a familiar one with our readers. The contrary is, of course, true. But the discussion is garbed in the language of philosophy, rather than in that of Reformed Doctrine, or of theology, and I cannot expect that our readers generally are at all versed in that language. Since the paper was intended to be read before a philosophic club the author has not at all been careful to avoid philosophic terms and to express himself in the language of the people. As long as the author speaks about creation and providence, the probationary command, sin, grace, the trinity, God’s

**CONTENTS**

	Page
<b>MEDITATIE —</b>	
DAT GODS VOLK NU ZEGGE! . . . . .	97
Rev. H. Hoeksema.	
<b>EDITORIALS —</b>	
COMMON GRACE . . . . .	100
JESUS PRESERVES . . . . .	102
Rev. H. Hoeksema.	
BALAAAM THE SON OF BEOR . . . . .	106
THE COMING OF THE BLESSINGS OF ABRAHAM ON THE GENTILES . . . . .	108
Rev. G. M. Ophoff.	
DE ONVRUCHTBARE VIJEBOOM GEVLOEKT . . . . .	110
Rev. W. Verhil	
GEDACHTEN OVER DE C. L. A. . . . .	112
Mr. A. Hirdes	
IDOLATRY AND IMAGE WORSHIP . . . . .	114
Rev. L. Vermeer	
RELIGIOUS FREEDOM . . . . .	113
Rev. M. Schipper	
THE ORGANIC INSPIRATION OF SCRIPTURE . . . . .	118
Rev. H. De Wolf	

counsel, he speaks to all of us; but when he uses term as structural reality, the universal, the metaphysical, the moment, the negative and positive instance, he talks, as far as the average reader of our paper is concerned "ins blauen hinein". And this difficulty increases in view of the fact that the author employs some of these terms with an unusual connotation, so that one wonders sometimes whether he understands the author's meaning.

But I will make an earnest attempt to give a correct appreciation and honest criticism of Van Til's paper in simple language.

Perhaps, I better introduce this discussion by giving the reader a general idea of the contents of the paper.

In an introductory paragraph Van Til writes: "To the perplexing problem of common grace we do not pretend to give an adequate answer. It is nothing essentially new that we bring. We merely seek to introduce the subject for discussion." This we must, of course, bear in mind in our evaluation of Van Til's work. The author then presents his material under four heads: 1. A Christian philosophy of history; 2. Dr. A. Kuyper's doctrine of common grace; 3. The controversy on common grace; 4. Suggestions for further discussion.

As to the first part, Van Til would consider the common grace problem as a part or aspect of the problem of the philosophy of history. For us, who probably do not understand what is meant by "philosophy of history", and who are, besides, a little shy of that term "philosophy", this may be interpreted to mean that Van Til does not intend to consider the problem from the narrow viewpoint of the question whether or not God is gracious to all men, but views it as a very comprehensive doctrine, dealing with God's relation to and dealings with men and all things in time. In this he agrees with us. We wrote: (The Reunion of the Christian Reformed and Protestant Reformed Churches, p. 20): "The problem of so-called common grace concerns the question of God's attitude over against, and influence upon the whole of created things in their mutual connection, and their development in time, in connection and harmony with God's counsel in general, predestination with election and reprobation, the realization of God's eternal covenant, sin and grace, favor and wrath, nature and grace, creation and redemption, Adam and Christ, and it inquires into the position and calling of God's people in and over against the present world."

Perhaps, Van Til has something similar in mind when he would conceive of the problem of common grace as an aspect of the "philosophy of history." This, I take it, is an advantage. For though he and I may differ in our interpretation, we are, at least dealing with the same problem: a very comprehensive one.

The author then proceeds to explain what he understands by the philosophy of history. It deals with "facts". It makes an attempt to systematize the facts. It seeks to view the facts in the light of one pattern. Moreover, we are dealing with "history", and therefore with *time*, and, hence, the facts are viewed under the aspect of "change". Non-Christian philosophy may question the existence of such a universal pattern, in the light of which all the detailed facts of history, with their development and change, must be interpreted; but for the Christian there can be no doubt about this. "For him the most basic fact of all facts is the existence of the triune God. About this God he has learned from Scripture. For the Christian the study of the philosophy of history is an effort to see life whole and see it through, but always in the light of the pattern shown him in the Mount. He cannot question, even when he cannot fully explain, the pattern of Scripture, in the light of which he regards the facts of history." p. 2. I believe that I may interpret the meaning of all this to our readers in language which they have learned to use, by simply saying that a Christian attempts to understand all things in the light of God's counsel as revealed in the Scriptures.

Follows now a discussion of the difference between the attitude of the believer and the non-believer over against "facts". According to Van Til there are no brute facts. And not only in their respective interpretation, but also in their mere description of facts, the Christian and non-Christian differ fundamentally. The unbeliever assumes an attitude of autonomy: he makes his own facts, even as he describes. They really become facts through his description of them. He creates his own world. But for the Christian God and God only has definitory power in the ultimate sense of the word. The result is that the believer and unbeliever, as they interpret things, have nothing in common, they have a radically different conception of all things, even though they have all things in common objectively. "We conclude then that when both parties, the believer and the non-believer, are epistemologically self-conscious and as such engaged in the interpretative enterprise, they cannot be said to have any fact in common. On the other hand it must be asserted that they have every fact in common. Both deal with the same God and with the same universe created by God. Both are made in the image of God. In short they have the metaphysical situation common. Objectively both parties have all things in common while subjectively they have nothing in common." pp. 4, 5.

Here, I must confess, I do not feel as if I understand Van Til's meaning clearly, or rather, I feel that I do understand him, but I do not dare to be sure that what I feel he thinks is actually his full meaning. First of all, I do not quite understand why in this connection he speaks of "the metaphysical situation."

Could not what Van Til means be expressed much better by the "physical" situation? But what does Van Til mean when he says that the believer and the non-believer have absolutely nothing in common subjectively? We have always stated the matter of the antithesis thus, that men have all things in common except grace. In other words, the antithesis is not natural, but spiritual, it is a spiritual-ethical antithesis. Sometimes, as we read Van Til's treatise, we felt that principally and fundamentally he means the same thing and that he only expresses this truth in different language. But when we read other passages in his paper, we felt that this does not correctly express his meaning. In the first place, if that were his meaning, it would appear to me that the term "epistemological", which he employs frequently in this connection, is hardly to the point. Then, too, on another page he refers to a passage in my pamphlet "The Christian and Culture" as follows: "We cannot agree with the Reverend Herman Hoeksema when he says: 'That the square on the hypotenuse of a rectangular triangle is equal to the sum of the squares of its sides, is a mathematical truth, in the discovery and application of which man's ethical nature does not come to manifestation.' (The Christian and Culture, p. 170). Perhaps Hoeksema does not quite mean to have this statement stand without qualification. As it stands, and taken without qualification, it would compromise the Christian conception of history and therefore also of culture." p. 8. I cannot understand this criticism of Van Til on the supposition that he, too, conceives of the antithesis as being ethical in nature, the less so, because from the context of the statement of mine which he quotes, it becomes perfectly evident that I draw the antithesis through along the whole line, and only maintain that it does not become equally clearly *manifest* in all branches of culture. Literally I wrote: "And because of this the ethical contents of the products of modern culture are certainly corrupt. There are certain branches of culture that may be considered to lie at the periphery from this viewpoint. The spiritual ethical attitude of man hardly comes to manifestation and expression in them. This is true, for instance, in the so-called *exact* sciences. That the square on the hypotenuse of a rectangular is equal to the sum of the squares of its sides, is a mathematical truth, in the discovery and application of which man's ethical nature does not come to manifestation." etc. It was, therefore, merely a question of more or less manifestation, not of the actual existence of the antithesis. And, lastly, if Van Til refers to a spiritual-ethical antithesis, I cannot grasp his real meaning in the following quotation from his treatise: "When I say the grass is green and my non-believing neighbor also says the grass is green we must act 'as if' both meant the same thing. Interpretatively considered my neighbor and I mean

quite different matters." p. 18, 19. Now, it seems to me that if Van Til would have that statement to stand without qualification, he means much more than an ethical antithesis. To me, the believer and the unbeliever mean exactly the same thing when they say "the grass is green", and do not act on the basis of an "as if". Of course both can interpret the statement, so that the one relates the green grass to a chance world, in which man appears as the creator of his own universe, the other relates it to God as the Creator. But as soon as they do, they do not merely say that the grass is green, but express much more. And then they differ, of course. But the mere and bare judgment "the grass is green", without further qualifications, certainly signifies the same thing for both of them.

But of this I shall have more to say when I discuss Van Til's "as if" theory. Now I merely meant to say that I hardly dare to assume that I understand him correctly, and he would do me a service if he would attempt to clarify the situation for me.

H. H.

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## Jesus Preserves

The Scriptures constantly exhort the redeemed and delivered believer to be faithful, to fight the good fight, and thus to persevere even unto the end. Only he that endureth to the end shall be saved. Matt. 10:22. The believer must confess the name of his Lord and Saviour before men, for then Christ will also confess him before His Father which is in heaven; but he that denies Jesus before men him will Christ also deny before the Father in heaven. Matt. 10:32, 33. They must present their bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God; and they must not be conformed to this world, but rather be transformed by the renewing of their mind, that they may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God. Rom. 12:1, 2. They must abide in Christ, for only if they abide in Christ as the branch abides in the vine can they bear fruit. And fruit they are called to bear, for every branch that beareth not fruit he taketh away, but every branch that beareth fruit he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. John 15:1-4. They are exhorted to be stedfast and unmoveable, and to abound always in the work of the Lord. I Cor. 15:58. And they must cleanse themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit, and thus perfect holiness in the fear of God. II Cor. 7:1. They are the salt of the earth, the light of the world, and they must let their light so shine before men, that they may see

their good works, and glorify their Father which is in heaven. Matt. 5:13, 14, 16. They are called to put off the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and to put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. Eph. 4:22-24. They have a battle to fight, not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. And, therefore, they must take unto themselves the whole armor of God, that they may be able to stand in the evil day. Eph. 6:11-13. They are warned not to follow after the evil example of wicked Israel, that were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized unto Moses, in the cloud and in the sea; that did all eat the same spiritual meat, and drink the same spiritual drink, but with whom God was not well pleased, for He overthrew them in the wilderness. I Cor. 10:1-6. They must not harden their hearts, as in the provocation, Heb. 3:7-9; nor refuse Him that speaketh, Heb. 12:25; but they must rather lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset them, and run with patience the race that is set before them. Heb. 12:1. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall we not escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven. Heb. 12:25. They are called to work out their own salvation, Phil. 2:12; and to make their calling and election sure, II Pet. 1:10. The Church is admonished to repent, and to do the first works, lest Christ come and remove the candlestick from its place, Rev. 2:5; and to hold fast that which she has, lest any man take her crown, Rev. 3:11. Everywhere the believer is admonished to fight, to watch and pray, to be faithful unto death. The crown of glory is held before him, but it is offered as the prize, at the end of the road, when the fight is finished, and the victory has been won.

That prize is, indeed, sufficiently precious to be the object of all our longing and aspiration. It is worth the fight. The hardest battle is not too hard, the most complete self-denial is not too great a sacrifice, the deepest suffering is not too much to endure, for the attainment of that prize. In fact, all the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us. The prize is the crown of life. It is the inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away. I Pet. 1:4. Here all things are corruptible. Destructive forces eat into our bodies, into our very existence, and to them we finally succumb. And even though we are not destroyed by corrupting agencies from without, we fade and die away. For our strength is very limited, and when it is spent we wither as the flower of the field, that flourisheth for a moment, but is soon faded. Nowhere is there anything perfect. Never

can we present anything to God that is without spot or blemish. But that inheritance is without corruption: it is subject to destruction no more; it is unlimited in strength and life: it never fades away; it is characterized by everlasting perfection: it shall be defiled nevermore. And the reason for this incorruptibility of the eternal inheritance is that it is rooted in, has its center in the resurrected Son of God! And the heart of it all will be the perfected fellowship of friendship with the ever blessed God in His heavenly tabernacle. For we shall see Him face to face, and know even as we are known. I Cor. 13:12. The tabernacle of God shall be with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. Rev. 21:3.

But will the believer ever attain to this goal? Or rather, can he ever be sure in this life that he will enter into that glorious rest that remains for the people of God? There are, indeed, those who teach that this assurance is impossible. Once a believer, they say, is not necessarily always a believer. The fact that you have the faith today is no guarantee that you will have it tomorrow. There is a falling away from grace, the branch in Christ may be cut off and cast away. And, therefore, one can never be sure that he will actually inherit the blessed hope of the children of God. Only he that endureth unto the end shall be saved. But even as your acceptance of Christ was an act of your own will, so your abiding in Him depends ultimately on your own choice and continual strife to fight the good fight. All we can do, therefore, is exhort one another daily to enter in at the strait gate, and to be faithful even unto death, that no one take our crown. If you persevere, you shall be saved. But if you fall away from grace, which is certainly possible, you will be cast into outer darkness even though for the present you are a believer in Christ.

And, indeed, if in the ultimate sense of the word it depends upon the believer himself whether he shall remain faithful and persevere unto the end, and whether he shall enter into the glory that is set before him, he not only cannot be sure of ultimate victory, but, on the contrary, he may be sure of absolute failure and final defeat. He certainly cannot fight the good fight in his own strength. He is weak and the enemy is strong. He is, indeed, reborn. He is in Christ, and he is become a new creature; old things are passed away, and all things are become new. II Cor. 5:17. He is born of God, begotten again unto a lively hope, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. But he is all this only in principle. He is not yet heavenly, though he seeks the things that are above, but he is still of the earth earthy. Nor is he perfect in the sense that he is without sin. On the contrary, even the very holiest of believers still has but a small beginning of the new obedience, and he bears about

with him his old nature, the body of this death, and the motions of sin are still in his members. He is often a mystery to himself. For what he does he allows not; for what he would that he does not; but what he hates, that he does. He knows that in his flesh there dwelleth no good thing, for to will is present with him, but how to perform that which is good, he finds not. For the good that he would he does not, but the evil which he would not, that he does. O, he has a delight in the law of God, according to the inward man; but he also beholds another law in his members, warring against the law of his mind, and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin which is in his members. And so he may well cry out daily: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Rom. 7:15-24. How shall this wretched man ever attain to the final goal of the inheritance, if to remain faithful depends on the choice of his own will?

Besides, this Christian, that is so utterly weak and miserable in himself, is passing through the enemy's country. And the enemy is strong. There is the world with its lust of the flesh, and lust of the eyes, and pride of life, the mighty world with its manifold temptations, always on the alert to make the Christian stumble and fall. There are the pleasures and treasures of this world, that have a strong appeal to the earthly and carnal nature of the Christian, and that easily ensnare him. There is the power of the lie, the false philosophy of this world, that would confuse his mind, entice his heart, cause him to apostatize from the faith, and allure him into the direction of corruption and death, away from Christ. And then there are the sufferings of this present time. For the world hates him, even as they hated Christ: the servant is not greater than his master. And the more the believer is faithful in this world, and confesses the name of Christ in word and in deed, the more that world will manifest its hatred. To be faithful to Christ means that we must expect persecution. It may cause us loss of name and position, of our place in the world, of liberty and life. And back of this world and working through it is the devil; and there are a veritable host of spiritual wickednesses with him in high places. How, then, shall the believer remain faithful even unto the end? If his perseverance depends in the last instance on himself, he will surely fail. He cannot run the race and reach the goal. The final victory will never be his!

But thanks be to God, Who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus saves! This means, as we have seen that He is our Redeemer. He gave Himself a ransom for many. He offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice for sin. And by His perfect obedience even unto the accursed death of the cross he blotted out the guilt of our sin and obtained for us eternal righteousness. He purchased us free.

That is redemption. Jesus saves! That means, too, that He delivers us from the power of sin and the dominion of death, and translates us into the state of the liberty of the children of God. so that we hunger and thirst after righteousness, come unto Him, Who is the Bread of life, embrace Him by faith and are saved. He is our Liberator! Jesus saves! That means no less that He preserves us by the power of His grace, so that we can never perish, but shall surely attain to the goal of the eternal inheritance. How could it be different? How could God's sovereign election fail? "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?" Or, how could they ever perish, for whom Christ shed His precious blood? Did He, then, suffer and die in vain? Is His perfect obedience, then, not efficacious to clothe them with an everlasting righteousness? God forbid! "For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." Rom. 5:10. Or how should they utterly be lost for whom Christ intercedes with the Father in heaven? For "it is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." Rom. 8:34. And "he is able to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Heb. 7:25. For he prays: "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me." John 17:24. He prays, and His prayer is heard. And upon His prayer there flows a continual stream of grace out of God, through Christ, unto His people, keeping them and preserving them even unto the end. For he saith: "I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." John 6:38, 39. And again: "My sheep hear my voice. and I know them, and they follow me. And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." John 10:27-29. Jesus saves! He redeems, He delivers, and He preserves all His own even unto the end!

It is plain, then, the believer in Christ is perfectly safe, no matter how mighty and numerous the enemy may appear to be. By being kept in the hand of Christ



he is in the Father's hand. whence no power can pluck him. Through Christ He is kept in the power of God. For thus also the apostle Peter instructs us, when he writes that the inheritance is reserved in heaven "for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." I Pet. 1:4, 5. In the power of God they are kept, guarded, protected, saved. Hence, they are secure. For the power of God is omnipotence. God is almighty. And that does not merely mean that He is more powerful than all creatures, so that He can overcome them; but it implies that all power is His, also the power that is in the creature, so that they cannot stir but by His will. Even the devil and all the powers of darkness exist and move only by His power. In the last analysis we always have to do with the power of God. If we are kept in that power, no creaturely power can ever harm or destroy us. Moreover, that power of God is guided by infinite wisdom. It is not a blind power, a power that is strong enough to save, but that may pursue the wrong course, and make mistakes. On the contrary, God is infinitely wise. And in everlasting wisdom He ordained all things before the foundation of the world. And He so ordered them, that all things in time, in heaven and on earth, concentrate in and revolve around the glory of God in Christ, and the salvation of His Church. It is in the power of that infinite wisdom that believers are kept. Hence, they may be sure that all things work together for good unto them that love God: even the powers of darkness in spite of themselves. And, finally, that almighty and allwise power of God in which believers are kept, is motivated by eternal and unfathomable love, by the love which He revealed when He gave His only begotten Son unto the death of the cross. And He that gave His Son, and delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Rom. 8:32. Surely, they that are kept in that power of God are kept safely: they shall never perish. Jesus saves!

But we must try to answer one more question. We started by calling your attention to the frequent exhortations in Scripture that require of the believer to fight the good fight, to be faithful and to endure unto the end. The Christian must persevere in order to attain to the goal of his final salvation. But now we found that God preserves him safely in His own power, and that he can never perish. What, then, is the relation between this perseverance on the part of the believer, and this preservation of the Christian in the power of God?

There are those who answer this question by saying that also in his being preserved by God's power, the believer is first. O, they admit, sometimes in the strongest terms, that the Christian could never gain the victory over sin and the world in his own power.

He can do nothing of himself! If he were left to himself, he would surely perish. It is all of grace! And they admit that Jesus must preserve us, if we are to be saved. But, they say, in the last analysis the believer must will to receive this preserving grace, he must seek it, desire it, pray for it, in order to receive it. But this grace is not irresistible. One can forfeit it. A believer can apostatize, and fall from this grace, Christ is willing to save us, and to preserve us day by day in the midst of the world. But we must be found willing continuously to receive this grace. God's mighty hand will keep us, but we must hold His hand. It is not difficult to understand that if this were the truth, the case with the Christian would be hopeless. God's almighty power would be of no avail, for the simple reason that its operation and efficacy depend upon the will of man. If in the midst of a storm tossed sea a ship is anchored, and a strong, steel chain connects the ship with its anchor, but in the chain there is just one link of slender silk, how strong is the cable? Is it of any avail that all the rest of its links are of solid and unbreakable steel? Is not the chain exactly as weak as that one slender link? Or if we, in our own strength, must hold the hand of God, does it avail anything at all that the hand of God is omnipotent? But surely, that is not the meaning of the Word of God when it assures us, that no one can pluck us out of the hand of the Saviour, and that we are kept in the power of God unto salvation. God is first, not we. He preserves us, and then we persevere. Salvation never depends upon the will or power of man. Jesus saves!

Nor does the relation between God's preservation and our perseverance warrant any one to say that he can afford to be passive, or to continue in sin, that grace may abound. The statement that God holds our hand, not we His hand, is also liable to misunderstanding. It certainly does not mean that God's preservation makes of the believer a "stock and block", one who simply permits himself to be carried into glory passively. If this were the case, all the exhortations in Scripture to the effect that we must fight the good fight and persevere to the end, would have no meaning. The very opposite is true. God's power of preservation in Christ is surely first, sovereign, irresistible. But it is a power of grace. It is a power that does not remain external to us, but goes through us, becomes our own. It is in that power that we can stand and fight the battle. God in Christ gives us faith, and we believe; He gives us repentance, and we repent; He gives us understanding and we discern the truth; He sanctifies us daily, and we hate sin and love His good commandments; He is working within us to will and to do of His good pleasure, and we work out our own salvation; He preserves us by grace, and we persevere. It is all of Him, nothing of us. And so we are

able to say triumphantly with the apostle: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loves us. For I am persuaded, that 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 us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Rom. 8:35-39.

H. H.

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## Balaam, the Son of Beor

Balaam knew God. He had insight into God's character. As appears from his prophetic ebullitions, he was aware that Jehovah is the God, unchangeable, almighty, wise, just and good, that, in Balaam's own words, God is not a man, that He should lie, neither the son of man that He should repent: that, hath He said, He shall do it. Nu. 23:19. There was present to Balaam's consciousness the election of God's people, its blessed and immeasurable extension, and the salvation in life and in death prepared for the righteous.

Yet Balaam did not belong to the Israelitish people. His dwelling place was Pethor, situated on "the river of the land of his people—the Euphrates" (Nu. 22:4). He speaks of himself as having been brought by Balak "from Aram out of the mountains of the east". And at Deut. 23:4, it is asserted that he was of "Pethor of Mesopotamia", which is Aram.

Pethor, if it may be identified with Pitru, was about 400 miles from Moab. This meant for Balaam a three or four weeks' journey.

Balaam was thus a Mesopotamian, as was Abraham. This goes far in explaining Balaam's acquaintance with Jehovah and with the blessed prospects of the righteous. During the time that intervened between the flood and the calling of Abraham, Mesopotamia was the home of the true church. For, not far to the east of this land, in Armenia, where lie the mountains of Ararat—the mountains upon which the ark had rested—Noah, the father of the new humanity, lived out his life to spread among his descendants the knowledge of the special revelations from Heaven that had been given to God's people. It is these revelations, or at least the remnant of these revelations, present also in Balaam's heart and mind, that formed the foundation of his prophetic discourses. Balaam

was thus, through the years, prepared for this final task of blessing Israel—blessing him as the inspired agent of God, who proclaimed the word that the Lord put into his mouth.

But there must have been also another source from which Balaam derived his knowledge of the God of salvation, namely, the report of the great things which God had done in the deliverance and leading of His people, which had spread far and wide and which God had made to produce a deep impression on all the neighboring tribes. Balaam was prepared to welcome the report and turn it to his own selfish ends, if possible.

Thus, there were two sources of Balaam's knowledge, to wit, these primeval revelations which were preserved more fully and clearly in his native region than elsewhere and these reports.

Balaam thus lies within the primitive revelations, the religious light which Melchizedek also represents. Yet he was a wizard. He sought enchantments (Nu. 24:1). He appears, so far as his intentions are concerned, as a devourer of God's people. The inclination to curse Israel was mighty in him. He was entirely without *true* fear of God. His heart was not with God but with his idols. Gold was his god. He is thus to be regarded as a representative not of the primitive church but of heathendom, in particular of Balak, the king of Moab, by whom he was brought from Aram to defy Israel. He is a representative, is Balaam, of the world, i.e., of that antichristian power, that is pitted against God and His anointed and that through the ages makes war upon the saints. In Balaam this power was brought forward to bless Israel. And bless Israel it did and this contrary to its character and deep-seated and abiding inclination.

Herewith has been answered the question how Balaam is to be regarded, as a true seer or as a wizard and a false prophet. In common with all the true prophets of God, Balaam spoke only God's Word, at least on the one occasion of his being summoned by Balak to curse Israel. But, being a thoroughly profligate personage, one who, had he been made to follow his own inclination, would have cursed Israel, it will not do to classify him with the true prophets of God. The latter loved God's people, delighted to bless them, and were thus, as to their inclinations, in hearty agreement with the word of blessing that God spake through them.

But if Balaam was a child of darkness, and he was this assuredly, why did he trouble himself about God at all? Is it characteristic of the ungodly, whose every thought is that there is no God, to inquire after His will? Balaam did so. Instead of coming to Balak at once, he had his messengers remain over night, that he might receive instructions from the Lord. The Lord subsequently forbids him to go. Balaam is

obedient. "Get you unto your land," said he, in the morning to the princes of Moab, "for the Lord refuseth to give me leave to go with you." Over and over, as we have seen, did he say to Balak, that he could not go beyond the Word of the Lord his God, to do more or less. When the Lord stood in his way, he expressed a willingness to return, if his going displeases the Lord. Why should he be concerned whether, in his going, he is pleasing to God, if he hates God, if every impulse under which he acts is thoroughly wicked? To be sure, the explanation is not that God, by a general operation of His Spirit (common grace) and without changing Balaam's sinful nature, created and sustained in him a holy principle of well-doing and that it was from this principle that he acted in ascertaining God's pleasure. There was no such operation of the Spirit of God in Balaam.

But we are still confronted by the question why, if Balaam cared nothing about God, he yet allowed himself to be deterred by the prohibition to curse. The answer is Balaam's reply to Balak. "I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more (Nu. 22:18). Must I not take heed to speak that which the Lord hath put into my mouth (23:12)? All that the Lord speaketh, that must I do (23:26). If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the commandment of the Lord, to do either good or bad of mine own mind; but what the Lord sayeth, that will I speak (24:13)."

Conspicuous in these replies are the sentence elements, "I cannot . . . I have no power . . . I must take heed . . . I must do . . . I cannot go . . ." In a word, Balaam feels that he *cannot* curse. He is aware that he *cannot* do otherwise but bless Israel. What may have been restraining him to curse and constraining him to bless? If Balaam were a child of the light, the answer would be: His love of God and of His command. But Balaam was a child of darkness. So the answer to the question just put is: With the power, i.e., the Spirit of God upon him, Balaam could will not to do otherwise than bless Israel and this in his carnal dread of God. But we also detect in Balaam's discourses the fervent language of rapturous inspiration, a soul borne away as it were in spiritual vision. Balaam, in a word, was carnally fascinated, charmed, by certain aspects of Israel's blessedness. This is not to be regarded as something unusual. Christ in one of His parables speaks of persons who, though they be devoid of the life of regeneration, yet, hearing the word, anon with joy receive it. It was also through Balaam's carnal elation of soul, awakened by the Spirit through the truth, that the Spirit rendered him wholly subservient to the will of God that he speaks God's Word. Balaam *could not will* to curse. He *had* to bless. It is plain however that it is incorrect to say that God compelled Balaam to utter

blessings, though he willed to curse at the very moment of his speaking. That he cursed went contrary not to what he willed to do at the moment of his speaking but to his fervent and abiding desire. With the power of God upon him, he *could not will* to follow his corrupt inclination to curse, so that, in blessing Israel, he remained a free agent.

The reason, then, of Balaam turning to God is plain. Aware of his being God's power he turns to God not because he is interested in God's will but because he knows that he cannot curse unless God put into his mouth the word of cursing.

What then is the significance of Balaam's blessing Israel. This is plain. Consider that, as was shown, there is nothing that Balaam would rather have done than to curse Israel. Balaam craves the "reward of unrighteousness". He lusts after gold. To what horrible extremes he goes in his attempt to induce God to give him his way with Israel! And when all his efforts to tempt God, to carry out his evil plans by superstitious practices, prove unsuccessful, how he aids the heathen king and his subjects in their destructive hostility to the people of God, that the gold that he had thus far failed to gain, might still be his. Yet this wicked man, this son of perdition, blesses Israel over and over in fervent language of rapturous inspiration. What can be the explanation of this? The only possible explanation is God. End with Balaam in Balaam, and the man remains an unanswerable question. The power of God was upon Balaam. Verily, it is God who blessed Israel through Balaam. Balaam, in blessing Israel, is not his own; he is God's. This can be the only reason of his blessing Israel, being, as he is, a son of perdition, one who would place the very elect under the everlasting ban of God, that he might have his gold. Balaam, therefore, his *blessing* God's people, forms the conclusive, the most astounding evidence, that Israel is blessed of God indeed! If a man, who is a prophet, and who loves God's people, blesses them, this people might still question whether they are blessed of God. But how can Israel now doubt that he is the blessed of the Lord, seeing that he is blessed by Balaam?

So does God, now that his people are about to address themselves to the task of warring His warfare for the possession of the promised land, provide His people with the indisputable evidence that He is for them and that in Him they have the victory. This is the significance of Balaam's blessing Israel.

The report of Balaam's blessing Israel was spread far and wide. Thus also for Israel's enemies, Balaam formed the conclusive evidence that God was for this people.

One more remark. Improve upon Balaam, say that in blessing Israel he acts upon impulses that are noble, and this by virtue of a common grace operative also

in him, and you completely destroy his significance for the Israel encamped in the plains of Moab in particular and for the church of God in general. Balaam's significance is exactly his being a man altogether devoid of noble impulses, his being devoid of grace, and his blessing Israel notwithstanding.

But did God then not restrain in Balaam sin? Did God not make it impossible for him to follow his own corrupt inclinations to curse? God did so indeed, but through Balaam's own carnal dread of God and his sinful joying in certain aspects of Israel's blessedness and thus not through certain noble impulses worked in him by God's Spirit.

But wasn't Balaam's blessing Israel a good work? As an act of Balaam it was an abominable work, as it sprang from carnal fear and a wicked elation. But why put the question thus? Why not bring to the fore the real issue by putting the question thus. Was not Balaam's blessing Israel a holy work on his part? We can play hocus pocus with the term *good* but not with the term *holy*. I wonder if any of the exponents of common grace would answer the question, so formulated, in the affirmative? Let me put the question thus: Is there to be found either in the natural man (the reprobated) himself or in any of his works an element of holiness, sinfulness, however small?

But we have not yet fully explained the significance of Balaam. Certainly the speech that rises from Balaam's doing is also this: that God "watches over his people with a paternal care, keeping all creatures so under His power, that not a hair of their head can fall to the ground without His will".

But there is more. The doing of Balaam, his blessing God's people despite his strong inclination to curse them is also prophetic of certain last things. At the appearing of the glorified Christ every tongue, thus also the tongue of the wicked—of that anti-christian power, now pitted in the ethical sense against God and His Son and His people, shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord and also that His people are the blessed of God. Of this Balaam's doing is prophetic.

O. M. O.

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## The Coming of the Blessings of Abraham on the Gentiles

(The Spread of the Gospel in the First Three Centuries)

Wrote Paul in his epistle to the Galatians: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: . . . that the blessings of Abraham

might come upon the Gentiles." The last clause of this scripture is the statement of a purpose, which began to be achieved shortly after the ascension of the resurrected Christ. It is the coming of these blessings on the elect of God among the gentiles in the first three centuries of our Christian era that forms the subject of this essay. We arrange our materials under the following two points: (1) The fact as such; (2) Its cause.

In treating this subject, historians in general speak of the spread of Christianity. But because this term is being used today as the signification of the worldly culture and civilization of the christianized nations of the earth, I avoided it in the formulation of my theme.

All the aforesaid blessings are included in the salvation of Christ, which consists in the forgiveness of sins on the ground of Christ's atonement, deliverance from the dominion of sin, and life everlasting. These blessings come on men through the immediate wonder-working power of God's grace in men and through the preached gospel of Christ as sanctified to their hearts. So, treating our first point consists firstly in taking notice of the spread of the gospel among the gentiles in these first three centuries and secondly in inquiring whether the number salutarily affected by the preaching of it may be said to have been small or large.

(1) The first part of the earth to which the gospel was carried is Asia. The apostles themselves preached it in Palestine, Syria, and Asia Minor. According to a legend, the apostles Thomas and Bartholomew brought it to India. But it is more likely that this was done by the Christian teacher Pantaenus of Alexandria, who journeyed to that country about 190. In Egypt, more particularly, in Alexandria, the Old Testament Scriptures were translated into Greek two centuries before our era, and through this version the teachings of the Old Testament Bible were spread throughout the Roman-Graeco world. According to an ancient tradition, the gospel of Christ reached Alexandria through Mark the Evangelist. From Lower Egypt it was carried to Middle and Upper Egypt and the neighboring provinces before the year 236.

The gospel was preached in proconsular Africa i.e., in those provinces of Africa governed from out of Rome, before the close of the first century. It spread rapidly over Mauratania and Numidia.

It was from Jerusalem that the gospel reached Rome and from here it spread further and further west to all the cities of Italy before the year 255. By the year 177 it had already penetrated southern Gaul (Modern France), coming hither in all likelihood from the East.

Spain became acquainted with the gospel probably before the year 150. Paul one purposed to journey to Spain and Clement of Rome affirms that he preached

there. But there is no evidence of his labors in Spain recorded.

Already in these centuries, just when is not known, the gospel was conveyed to those parts of Germany that belonged to the Roman empire and even to Britain at the close of the second century.

We do not now occupy ourselves with the conversion of the barbarians of Northern and Western Europe as this did not commence before the fifth and sixth centuries.

The gospel-preaching in those lands reached by it in these first three centuries bore fruit, just how much may be estimated from the statements occurring in the writings of the church fathers of this time and from other recorded facts.

There is the statement of Justin Martyr, who wrote about the middle of the second century: "There is no people, Greek or Barbarian, or any other race, by whatsoever appellation or manners they may be distinguished, however ignorant of arts or agriculture, whether they dwell in tents or wander about in covered wagons — among whom prayers and thanksgivings are not offered in the name of the crucified Jesus to the Father and Creator of all things". There has come down to us a writing of Tertullian, who labored a half century later, in which he addresses the heathen: "We are but of yesterday, and yet we already fill your cities, islands, camps, your palace, senate and forum; we have left to you only your temples." It is evident on the surface of these and similar statements of other fathers, that we have to do here with rhetorical exaggerations. Though God had His people also among the higher and educated classes, the statement, for example, that the Roman senate and forum were filled with them runs contrary to fact. But it is fairly certain that at the end of the third century, the gospel was being received and rejected and God's people persecuted, in every province and every city of the Roman empire. There is an edict of Maximian, in which he asserts that "almost all" had turned against the worship of their ancestors and embraced the new sect. In the middle of the third century, the church of Rome alone, according to Eusebius, had one bishop, forty-six presbyters, seven deacons with as many subdeacons, fifty readers, and fifteen hundred widows and poor persons under its care. It might indicate that this church numbered some fifty or sixty thousand members. If so, about one-twentieth of the population of the city affiliated with this brotherhood.

At the close of the third century, the numerical strength of the Christians in Spain, North Africa and Egypt must have been considerable. In 306 the council of Elvira, Spain, numbered nineteen bishops. A synod of eighty-seven bishops assembled at Carthage in 258, and in 308 the Donatists held a council of two hundred and seventy bishops in this city. In the year 235, at

a council of Alexandria, the different parts of the land of Egypt were represented by twenty bishops.

The number of Christians at this time is a matter of pure conjecture, there being no statistics. The estimation of this number consequently varies with different writers. Perhaps the estimate that sets the number at one-twentieth on the average at the time of Constantine (306) is most nearly correct. This number would include those who were christians in name only so that it continued to be true that the genuine people of God formed but a little flock. But fifty years latter the whole population of the civilized world which was then commensurate with the Roman empire was nominally—mark you, nominally—Christian. This is looked upon by historians as a astonishing fact. Yet the fact is not at all astonishing, considering the changed condition—the cessation of persecution and the great favors bestowed upon the church by the mighty Constantine surnamed The Great.

It was said at that time by the enemies of the truth that the Christians formed a sect composed almost entirely of the dregs of the populace—of peasants and mechanics, of boys and women, of beggars and slaves. This and similar statements coming, as they did, from the adversaries of God's people, doubtless are overdrawn. Yet they agree pretty well with Paul's description of the social status of God's people of that day: "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence" (I Cor. 1:26-29). But the poverty of the poor and the misery of the oppressed do not as such, apart from the wonder-working power of God's redeeming grace in the hearts of the poor and the oppressed, incline them to the reception of the gospel. In themselves the poor are as ill-disposed toward the gospel of Christ as are the rich and the noble. The apostle rests with the phenomenon, which he sets forth, in God. "God has chosen . . ."

Until the time of Constantine, the circumstances of the people of God were hard indeed. As Christians they had no legal standing in the Roman Empire. First they were despised as a Jewish sect, then slandered and persecuted as treasonable innovators so that, confessing Christ, they were always exposed to the punishment of confiscation and death.

(2) The cause of the coming of Christ's blessings on the gentiles. Here we mean to inquire after the cause of the gentiles' receiving the gospel. What is

this cause? The question shouldn't be hard to answer. Yet historians in general have difficulty with it. They speak not of cause but of causes—"the causes of the success of Christianity". As to what these causes may be there is no agreement among them.

The progress of Christianity is traced to the following causes: the zeal of the Christians; the belief in future rewards and punishments; the power of miracles; the morals of the Christians; the compact church organization. Other causes mentioned are: the intrinsic excellency and remarkable adaptation of the gospel to the wants of the times in the Old Roman Empire; the internal evidence of apparent fulfillment of recorded prophecy and miracles to the truth of Christianity; the internal evidence of satisfying the acknowledged need of a redeemer and sanctifier, the goodness and holiness manifested in the lives of the believers; the perfect teachings and example of Christ, etc.

Assuredly, the teachings of Christ are perfect, the doctrines of the Bible are true, Christ did set a perfect example—how could it be otherwise—the zeal of these early Christians was great and their morals pure. However, to trace the cause of the progress of Christianity to the perfection of Christ's teaching and to the intrinsic excellency of the gospel and to its remarkable adaptation to the wants of the gentiles, is to make it impossible for one's self to explain the rejection of the gospel by the great majority of men of the Gentile world; is to tacitly assume that, apart from God's regenerating and sanctifying grace, the gentiles wanted this gospel, were aware that they needed it and thus were also waiting for it; is thus to assume that apart from this grace, the gentiles were good men and being the good men that they were, felt themselves attracted to God's good gospel. This is actually the prevalent view.

Man, being dead in sin, hates God's good gospel. So, the cause of the progress of Christianity is God, the power of his wonder—working grace in His elect. The gospel enters in here as means—God's means, and as such, certainly, the gospel as preached and as dwelling richly in the hearts of God's people, producing in them fruits worthy of repentance—a godly conversation—is of greatest significance, of significance not as a cause but as God's means—a means without which the church could not be gathered. This God's people must always be mindful of.

That historians seem to be at a loss how to explain what they are pleased to call "the success of Christianity", shows how events and movements in time will baffle us if, in our reasonings about these events we fail to take cognizance of the fact and truth that through God, from God and unto God are all things.

G. M. O.

## De Onvruchtbare Vijgeboom Gevloekt

Markus 11:13, 14

Zullen we de beteekenis verstaan van dit vloeken van den vijgeboom, dan dienen we vooral te letten op den tijd en het verband, waarin deze woorden staan. Het is thans het begin van de lijdensweek. In het stille Bethanië had de Heiland Zich met Zijne discipelen teruggetrokken. Van daar uit heeft Hij twee Zijner discipelen naar Jeruzalem gezonden, opdat zij het veulen, voor den Koninklijken intocht bestemd, Hem zouden brengen. Als dan ook aan dit bevel voldaan is, gaat de Heiland, rijdende op het veulen, de stad binnen, onder het Hosanna geroep der schare.

Het was wel indrukwekkend geweest, die zoogenaamde eere Hem gebracht. Men heeft daarmede uiting gegeven van de hoop van Israel, gelijk blijkt uit het feit, dat men in Hem zag de opvolger van het Davidisch Koningschap.

Doch de vreugde was al even spoedig verdwenen en duurde niet eens tot in den laten avond. Het was een van die nationale opwellingen, den Joden niet vreemd, als de groote feesten gevierd werden. Het had even goed een andere meester kunnen overkomen, van wien men de gedachte koesterde, dat hij Israel in eere zou herstellen en plaatsen aan de spitse der volken. Het duurt geen week en men zal hetzelfde doen, als er gekozen moet worden tusschen Jezus en Barrabas. Jezus doet aan dit aardsch gedoe niet mee, wil er niets van weten en keert daarom des avonds terug naar Bethanie.

Karakteristiek merkt Markus op, 'En Jezus kwam binnen Jeruzalem, en in den Tempel; en als Hij alles rondom bezien had, en het nu avondstond was, ging Hij uit naar Bethanië met de twaalven'. Het was Hem niet ontgaan in stad en Tempel, hoe het er bijstond met het Israel van dezen tijd. Raadplegende de gegevens der andere Evangelisten, was Zijn ure nabij en werd dat in stad en Tempel openbaar. In de stad, want de Oversten des volks zochten Hem te dooden. In den Tempel, want deze was een kuil der moordenaren gemaakt. Het feit van de Koninklijke intocht ten spijt, zeide Hem: Het einde nadert met rassche schreden.

En te midden van dat alles staat het vloeken van den vijgeboom.

Maar waarom toch dit vloeken?

Als Hem hongerde, ziet Hij den boom groenend van bladeren, doch geen vrucht.

Wie en wat stelt deze vijgeboom voor? Hebben we hier te doen met een wonder of met een gelijkenis, of met beiden? En de verklaring die er in Markus bijstaat, maakt het niet makkelijker voor het beter verstaan wat hier eigenlijk geleerd wordt: Want het was ook de tijd der vijgen niet.

Behalve deze moeilijkheden zijn er nog andere. Allereerst, we komen voor de vraag te staan, wist Jezus dan niet, dat er aan dezen boom geen vrucht was? Hij wist toch, wat er in den mensch was en wist ook, als Hem nu hongert, dat er geen voedsel was te verwachten van dien boom? Zóó nu de vraag gesteld, komt ge onwillekeurig voor de vraag te staan, moesten de discipelen denken of gedacht hebben, dat Jezus hun Heiland waarlijk vrucht verwachtte, maar nu valt dit tegen.

We gevoelen direct, dat dit in het geheel niet overeenkomt met wat we van Hem lezen in de Evangelien. Het zou immers, om maar iets te noemen, tekort doen aan de Waarheid in Zijn binnenste? We mogen, maar ook kunnen we Jezus zoo niet bezien, noch ook willen Hem zoo beoordeelen. We gaan, ook al zouden we niet in staat zijn een verklaring te geven van deze geschiedenis, nooit dien weg op. Dat is voor het geloof onmogelijk en de gedachte er aan vinden we Gods-lastering.

We gelooven niet alleen, dat Hij de Waarheid sprak, doch dat Hij ook de Waarheid was, waarom het dan ook voor alle dingen vaststaat, dat Hij in alles wat Hij sprak en deed, waarachtig was.

De tweede moeilijkheid is de toevoeging van den Evangelist, 'Want het was de tijd der vijgen niet. Omtrent de beteekenis vandeze woorden bestaan verschillende verklaringen, die eigenlijk op geen enkelen hechten grondslag staan en noch door de Schrift, noch door hen, die deze plaatsen hebben bezocht, worden bevestigd.

Men heeft gemeend, dat er waarschijnlijk winter-vijgen verwacht konden worden. Wintervruchten, een overblijfsel van de ingehaalde oogst, die de koude doorstaan hadden. We behoeven hier niet lang bij stil te staan. Niemand verwacht een overgebleven vrucht van een vorige dracht, als de boom wederom teeken geeft van een nieuwe vrucht. Jezus is dan ook niet slechts teleurgesteld met den boom, omdat er niet een soort nalezing was te vinden, doch omdat er geen vrucht is in overeenstemming met het blad dat daarvan sprak.

Anderen willen, dat er nu alreeds de mogelijkheid bestond, dat de allereerste vruchten er zijn konden van het voorjaar—het was nu einde Maart of het begin van April. Terwijl men dan ook al weer direct er aan toevoegt, dat, ook al ware er vrucht, er dan geen rijpe, doch ongerijpte vrucht te verwachten was. Iets dat ook niet hielp om den honger te stillen. Maar hoe men nu ook verder verklarenmoge, feit blijft, dat Markus met nadruk zegt, 'want het was den tijd der vijgen niet. Dat op zichzelf is afdoende, schoon de moeilijkheid blijft. En wie dat uit het oog verliest moet dan ook wel tot de slotsom komen, dat deze woorden niet kunnen beteekenen, wat zij ons willen en bedoelen te zeggen.

Beginnen we dan aleerst maar met de woorden zelve.

Het was niet de tijd der vijgen, schoon er wel bladeren aan den boom zaten. Als we dus vragen, het stond toch wel vast, dat er geen vrucht te verwachten viel, dan is dat absoluut waar. Maar, het is ook waar, dat die boom, aangaande zichzelf, het getuigenis gaf, dat hij vrucht dragende was. Hij gaf dan ook den moede en hongerige voorbijganger de uitnoodiging, kom! en rust een weinig onder mijn schaduw en verfrisch u, door tot verzadigens toe van mijne vrucht te eten en te genieten. Dat, dit niet verwacht kon worden, werd door het gebladerte weersproken.

Het is dan ook met het oog op die pretentie, het zich voordoen alsof er vrucht te genieten viel, dat de Heiland dezen boom nadert. Zeker, het was weliswaar nog niet den tijd er voor, maar de boom was zijn tijd vooruit. Hij gaf het getuigenis, gij moogt dan bij de andere boomen nog geen vrucht vinden (die stonden daar kaal, wellicht slechts in knop), maar bij mij wel.

Aldus blijft er geen moeilijkheid over. Het ging er slechts om, wat die boom aangaande zichzelf openbaarde.

Wie wordt met die boom ons hier geteekend?

Het antwoord ligt voor de hand, als we slechts op het verband letten. Gelijk alreeds werd gezegd, het was de lijdensweek. Christus was zich haastende naar Tempel en stad. Hij kwam tot Israel, om wat Stad en Tempel afbeelde te vervullen. Door den arbeid Zijner ziel, zou het mogelijk worden voor Israel, om waarlijk volk van God te zijn. Doch de Zijnen namen Hem niet aan. Wilden Hem niet als Hij Jeruzalem binnen komt en in den Tempel verschijnt. Aan het lijden en sterven van den Knecht des Heeren was op geenerlei wijze behoefte. In eigenwillige godsdienst, ging het alles op. Zij *waren* het volk uit Abraham, schoon niet in het geloof van Abraham deelende. Zij hadden hun Tempel en dienst van Jehova en behoefde geen vervulling van het geen slechts typisch in geheel de bedeeing der schaduwen lag afgebeeld.

Het was vooral in de dagen der omwandeling van en Heiland, dat dit legalistische van hun godsdienst tot openbaring kwam. Jezus predikte gerechtigheid, zonde, schuld, oordeel, doem en vloek en nimmer ontbrak het in die prediking aan de vermaning, om tot Hem te komen en van Hem alle hulp en heil te verwachten. Dat door Hem alleen de weg geopend werd om tot den Vader te gaan. Doch Israel verliep in zijn godsdienst in Pharezeistische werkheiligheid en sloot de noodzakelijkheid van verzoening door het bloed des Zoons van God buiten.

Zij waren Gods volk en Abrahams zaad en kende Hem niet. Zij zagen niet en wilde niet zien, de noodzakelijkheid van Zijn menschwording, van Zijn lijden en sterven, dat te komen stond, doch in plaats daar-

van, hielden zij zich krampachtig vast aan menselijke inzettingen en geboden, waardoor het mogelijk was de zaligheid te verdienen. Daarom stonden zij, als groene boom, onder de volken. Had Jehova niet Zijne wetten aan hen bekend gemaakt en den kinderen Israe's Zijne daden? Die deed Hij aan geen ander volk.

Dat de eigenlijke vrucht door hen niet kon worden voortgebracht, doch wachte op het werk van Vorst Messias kwam in hen niet op. Het volk des Heeren, dat was Israel alleen.

Het was niet den tijd der vijgen.

Neen, dat er geen vrucht was, is niet het groote bezwaar. Daartoe kwam de Zoon van God in gelijkheid des zondigen vleesches tot Israel. Maar Israel wilde Hem niet en wat erger is, wierp Hem uit, zich verheffende, dat het zonder Hem, toch Gods volk was. Wel vertooning, doch het wezen outbrak.

Uit dien boom zal dan ook niet langer vrucht zijn tot in der eeuwigheid.

En het is daarom, dat de discipelen op den dag daarna zien hoe die boom niet slechts wat bladeren verliest, doch verdort tot in den wortel toe.

Schielijk, gaat het Woord des Heeren in vervulling, in verband met den boom en in verband met hetgeen waarmede die boom vergeleken wordt.

Israel was zeer zeker, tot op dit oogenblik de drager van de beloften Gods. Aan geen volk was de bijzondere openbaring gegeven. Alszoodanig, moest dan ook de zaligheid uit Israel voorkomen. Doch het geheel der openbaring sprak dan ook in zeer duidelijke taal, dat dit alleen mogelijk was, door den Messias. Stad en Tempel, Priester en Offerande, het moest alles uitloopen op en vervuld worden door den Beloofden Middelaar. Er was geen ander licht, dat in de Godsopenbaring scheen.

Maar Israel, verwierp, in eigen gerechtigheid, Hem, Die alleen redden kon en waardoor Israel alleen be-teekenis had en volk van God kon zijn.

Met de Messias verwerping, houd dan ook dat volk op, om drager te zijn van de beloften Gods, die ja en amen zijn in en door Christus Jezus alleen.

Wel mag de man van het duizend jaar hier leeren, dat de Heiland hier de zaak van Israel ons als een hopelooze zaak doet zien. En op de vraag, maar waarom dit nu juist op dit oogenblik aan de twaalven geopenbaard ligt het antwoord voor de hand.

Allereerst, zij zullen de dragers zijn, van nu aan, van die openbaring, waarvan Christus niet alleen het middelpunt, doch ook de vervulling is. En in de tweede plaats, ook voor de Apostelen was het beslist noodzake lijk, dat ook zij zich zouden afwenden van hetgeen geen vrucht kon dragen, breken met hunne Judaistische ideeën en hunne vrucht alleen uit Hem gevonden worden.

W. V.

## Gedachten Over De C. L. A.

Bij het lezen van de Standard Bearer werd ik eenigszins teleurgesteld daar er niet getracht werd om schriftuurlijk bewijs te brengen voor het *bestaan* van de C.L.A. Nu heb ik misschien niet alles gelezen wat hierover geschreven is. Wel ben ik het eens met het antwoord dat Ds. C. Hanko geeft aan Mr. Gritter. Ook kan ik wel verstaan dat de voorstanders van de C.L.A. geen schriftuurlijk bewijs brengen, want dat is er vanzelf niet. Maar daar het de naam van Christelijk moet dragen, zonder dat het daar schriftuurlijk recht op heeft, dat gaat toch een beetje te ver. En dan is mijn vraag, van waar heeft zij recht van bestaan ontvangen? Zeker niet van de Kerk van Christus, die zou zulk een macht niet kunnen geven. Het kind Gods mag en moet bidden, "Geef ons heden ons dagelijksch brood", maar iemand die moedwillig zijn arbeid heeft neergelegd, waarbij hij zijn dagelijksch brood verdiende, en dat om reden dat een member van de C.L.A. niet door zijn baas werd behandeld zooals hij dat wilde, kan deze bede van het volmaakte gebed niet bidden. Ook kan hij daar niet biddende in de picketlijn staan met de bede, "En vergeeft ons onze schuld gelijk ook wij vergeven onze schuldenaren". En dan anderen ophouden in een picket-lijn opdat ook zij het afgebeden brood van den Heere niet kunnen verdienen, door de van God ingestelde weg. En dan tevens in een woordenstrijd zich mengen met diegenen die het recht voor hebben.

Ja broeders ik weet wel dat het veel gemakkelijker is om lid te worden van een genootschap, dan om als een Christen te leven. Ja, ik weet het wel, de toestanden worden moeilijker, vooral als wij met die breede stroom niet mee willen. Dan worden wij gehaat. En dat is hetgeen Jezus ons beloofd heeft namelijk dat wij gehaat en vervolgd zullen worden om Zijn's Naam's wil. O hoe heerlijk indien wij die genade van Hem mogen ontvangen om dat lijden gewilliglijk te dragen. Want dan strijd *hij* de strijd. En dan zullen de vijanden wel tijdelijk over ons triumfeeren, gelijk zij dat over onzen Heiland gedaan hebben, maar dan storten zij ten laatste van hun top van eer, in eeuwige verwoesting neer. En nu is het de vraag is het uit het geloof, óf uit het ongeloof dat iemand zich aansluit bij zulk een *Association*, en dan is het meest al dwang omdat het geloof en de moed ontbreekt. Is niet het geloof zonder de werken een dood geloof? Jacobus 2:17.

Wat is dan het werk voor God's volk? "Gehoorzaamheid is beter dan offerande, en opmerking dan het vette der rammen." I Samuel 15:22. Is het nu zoo dat wanneer een Christen verdrukt wordt door zijn baas, hetzij door te harden arbeid, of te weinig loon, dat hij dan eerst naar God gaat en zijn toestand in het



gebed den Heere bekend maakt, en als dat niet helpt, dan maar naar de union. Is het nu zoodat iemand zich bij den union aansluit om anderen te helpen, of heeft zoo iemand in de eerste plaats zichzelf op het oog?

En dan is het antwoord, om *elkander* te helpen.

Indien iemand een Christen tot baas heeft dan heeft hij geen union noodig, maar een Christelijke bespreking over de toestanden, wat die ook mogen zijn. Heeft hij een goddelooze baas dan spreekt God eerst die baas aan en toont hem welk een oordeel hem te wachten staat wegens zijn goddelooze handeling en de onderdrukking van Gods volk. Dat vind men duidelijk in Jakobus 5:1-6. "Wel aan nu, gij rijken! weent en huilt over uwe ellendigheden, die over u komen. Uw rijkdom is verrot, en uwe kleederen zijn van de motten gegeten geworden; Uw goud en zilver is verroest; en hun roest zal u zijn tot eene getuigenis, en zal uw vleesch als een vuur verteren; gij hebt schatten vergaderd in de laatste dagen. Ziet, de loon der werklieden, die uwe landen gemaaid hebben, welke van u verkort is, roept; en het geschrei dergenen, die ge oogst hebben, is gekomen tot in de ooren van den Heere Sabaoth. Gij hebt lekkerlijk geleefd op de aarde, en wellusten gevolgd; gij hebt uwe harten gevoed als in eenen dag der slagting. Gij hebt veroordeeld, gij hebt gedood den rechtvaardige; en hij wederstaat u niet."

De reden dat ik die verzen ten volle heb overgeschreven is omdat God hier in heilgerechtvaardigheid zijn gramschap aankondigt aan deze verwoepene goddeloozen. (En dan kan nog een man als de leeraar van Prospect Park, wanneer hij tracht te preken over die zes verzen, wel tot driemaal toe uitroepen, welk een 'common grace' zulke personen van God ontvangen hebben. Maar als dat 'common grace' is, dan is alle goddeloosheid 'common grace'. Ja dan is zelfs de verdoemenis 'common grace', want ziet, zij moeten nu alreeds huilen en weenen om de ellendigheden die over hun zullen komen.) Zij hebben loon terug gehouden, dat is loon waarvan de Heere hier getuigt dat het de werklieden toe behoort. Ja zij hebben veroordeeld en gedood, (is dat 'common grace'), en het geschrei van de werklieden is gekomen in de ooren van den Heer Sabaoth. Ziet zij hadden zich het gebed van Gods volk onwaardig gemaakt, en de reden van dankbaarheid ontnomen. Tot dusver enkele woorden tot de onderdrukkende werkgevers, alsook het oordeel van God hun aangekondigd.

Maar dan welk een troost in de volgende verzen. Ziet hoe zacht en liefelijk God Zijn volk aanspreekt in vers 7. "Zoo zijt dan lankmoedig, broeders! tot de toekomst des Heeren. Ziet, de landman verwacht de kostelijk vrucht des lands, lankmoedig zijnde over dezelfde, totdat het den vroege en spaden regen zal hebben ontvangen. Weest gij ook lankmoedig, versterkt uwe harten; want de toekomst des Heeren genaakt. Zucht

niet tegen elkander, broeders! opdat gij niet veroordeeld wordt: ziet de Rechter staat voor de deur. Mijne broeders! neemt tot een voorbeeld des lijdens en der lankmoedigheid de profeten die in den naam des Heeren gesproken hebben. Ziet wij houden hen gelukzalig, die verdragen; gij hebt de verdraagzaamheid van Jakob gehoord, en gij hebt het einde des Heeren gezien, dat de Heere zeer barmhartig is en een Ontfermer. Jak. 5:7-11. Ziet, broeders, hier heeft God gesproken, en er is hier geen sprake van om lotsverbetering te zoeken bij de menschen. Ja, zelfs wordt er op gewezen in vers 9, "Zucht niet tegen elkander, broeders! opdat gij niet veroordeeld wordt." God wil hier geen C.L.A. als rechter hebben, maar wil Zelf oordeelen. God als rechter staat voor de deur.

Ja, broeders, zoo gaat het altijd. De arbeiders van Mattheus 20 waren ook ontevreden met het doen van den heer des wijngaards omdat hij goed was. Zoo vinden wij het ook weer in Mattheus 21:33-41. Hier wilden ook de landlieden regeeren over het goed van den landheer. En zoo vinden wij het overal. En nu staat de zaak niet zoo, dat iemand niet naar een betere positie mag uitzien, want dat is volkomen zijn recht. Maar de slotsom is deze, niemand heeft het recht om door een zoogenaamde organisatie zijn positie te verbeteren, want ook die machten van de werkgever zijn daar van God gesteld. En daarom zou ik het geen C.L.A. durven noemen dewijl het mij meer op D.L.A. gelijkt.

Maar dat wij allen van nature zeer geneigd zijn om ons lotverbetering in ons zelven :f in de macht der menschen te zoeken, dat moeten wij toch iedere dag tot onze schande erkennen. O dat wij het meer voor God mochten belijden en met den apostle uit roepen, "O ik ellendig mensch, wie zal mij verlossen uit het lichaam dezès doods". En dan om een lotsverbetering te zoeken buiten God is zoo gevaarlijk, ook wanneer wij op iemand anders vertrouwen, hetzij op een association :f organisatie. Dan komen wij terecht bij de eerste lotsverbeteraar, zeker de ongehoorzame, de ontevredende Lucifer, de groote Engel des lichts, die volkomen rein uit de handen zijner Schepper werd voortgebracht, maar ontevreden wierd en ook wilde heerschen over het goed van Zijn Heer, en strijd zocht te voeren tegen Michael. Daar vinden we de eerste groep, de eerste union, om hun eigen recht uit te werken en te willen heerschen over God. God van den troon stooten en zelf regeeren. En waar heeft Satan zich eigenaar van gemaakt door het recht in eigen handen te willen nemen? *Van den toorn Gods en de eeuwige verdoemenis.* Hier hebben wij het begin van een union buiten God. Hier is de Anti-christ, en der moet zijn loop loopen. En dan vinden wij die geheel Gods Woord, altijd zoekende wat hij verslinden, totdat wij tot dat tijdperk wij nu met rasse schreden tegemoet

meer zullen kunnen koopen of verkoopen tenzij wij het merkteeken van het beest hebben. Dan heeft de union zijn volle macht ontvangen over 'capital en labor'. Daarvan leert ons de Schrift, indien die dagen niet verkort werden, geen vleesch zou behouden worden. Moge God ons genade geven om te strijden tegen al wat in het teeken van het beest staat. O God wees ons genadig en help ons, om Uws Naams wil.

A. H.

## Idolatry and Image Worship

Upon first impression, when reading this theme, we might think that "Idolatry" and "Image-Worship" are one and the same thing. This however is not the case. Surely there is close connection, even as there is close connection between all the commandments of God, yea, of the entire word of God. Even as God is one, so His entire revelation one. Yet there is a great distinction, also between Idolatry and Image-worship, which becomes apparent immediately upon reading of the two commandments in the table of the Law of God. The very fact that God has commanded first of all: "Thou shalt have no other Gods besides Me", and then the other command: "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, etc.," already reveals to us, that God Himself willed the distinction and commanded two distinct laws under Israel to be heeded by the people of the Lord. If both idolatry and image-worship were one and the same, He would not have distinguished between them. Also in the commandment prohibiting image-worship, the Lord adds something that is not found in the first commandment, n.l., 'for I the Lord am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers unto the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me, and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love Me and keep my commandments'. Very evident from God's Word therefore that in this essay we deal with two distinct sins.

The first question of course naturally arises: "What then is the distinction between Idolatry and Image-worship?" This question we would answer first of all by pointing to the essential nature of the first commandment, to have **NO OTHER GODS BESIDES Him**. This command is so essential that without it there can be no other commandments. It brings to our mind that there is but **ONE, ONLY, TRUE** God. If we neglect the command to serve, the one, only, true God, would be a transgression against all the commandments of the word God gives. In

other words, if we transgress this first commandment, we have no longer the one, only, true God left. We have rejected the source and essence of all religion. Then there is really no true religion left. O surely we would then serve other gods. We would then place our trust in any other thing, but not in God. Therefore the command to "have no other Gods besides Me", brings to our mind and consciousness the fact that to have anything or anyone else besides the one, only true God, is idolatry. The supposition in this first commandment is plainly that if you do not serve the one, only true God, and Him alone, then you are automatically already serving an idol. If you do not have God, who is God, then you are an idolatrous person.

This brings us to the second point we wish to make plain, namely, that since the rejection of God in Paradise by the representative head of all mankind, Adam, every man born of woman, actually does serve an idol. Not merely among a few of the heathen peoples, such as in dark Africa or Asia, or among the Philistines or Babylonians, but also among the so-called civilized countries and the tribes of Israel. Man is by nature an idolator. He cannot possibly withdraw from idolatry and be neutral. He cannot reject idolatry, and decide to have no religion. He cannot be an atheist. There is no real atheist anywhere. For man cannot escape himself. And himself is so formed and created that he is adapted to serve, trust and obey. This is indelibly impressed upon man, who is created in God's image. So that man's whole nature continually cries out for and seeks and finds one in whom he can place his trust and thus serve such a one. Therefore man, directly upon leaving the service of and trust in God, seeks another god. Besides, not only does his nature cry out for a god to serve, but all things also proclaim to him that he must trust in God. Everywhere man goes or lives, he is reminded of his dependent condition, as creature. The whole world about him tells him that he is not its creator, nor its sustainer. Man is dependent on rain and sunshine, on health and strength, electricity and power, heat and cold, yea the very ether waves in the air to carry his voice to his fellow man. All this impresses on him the undeniable fact that he is a dependent creature and not the creator of things. Finally also many things proclaim to him the curse under which he labors and must work to gain his daily bread. Pestilence and illness, destruction and storm and wind and hail, yea death itself are revealed daily to man. Then in the feeling of his helplessness, he automatically turns for help to another.

In consequence of this all, man serves the idol, which is not first of all the shaping of an image, but is the acknowledgement of some power within me or outside of me, on which I would then rely and trust,

either absolutely or next to the only, true, living God. This sin may and usually does develop into the shaping of an image that can be seen with the eye, and which man then calls his god, but it need not necessarily be thus. Even without the shaping of the image, man can and is a worshipper of idols. We cannot always see the idols. It is always first in the heart of man, The trust and dependence in another power, other than God, is spiritual idolatry. It is the denial of the only, true and living God.

Image-worship, in distinction now from idolatry, deals with Gods revelation, and is positively the construing of a false conception of God. Let us attempt to make this plain. As was said, idolatry is the placing of trust and confidence in, and service of, some power, other than God, but image-worship construes an IMAGE of that power, which is derived from the creature. That creature may be a creature in heaven, or on earth or under the earth, nevertheless it answers to the conception of that power which man serves. And this image is worshipped, and is therefore called image-worship. An image worshipper then has a creature for his god, a creature he can see and speak to, a creature like unto himself, for himself is also a creature. He has then a creaturely god, whom he can shape and form as he pleases. In other words he has a god who is dependent on man, conforms to man, pleases that man, and in reality is subservient to man. This of course deprives God who is God, of all His attributes. This image-god, or imagined god, is not Eternal, Wise, Good, Righteous, Omnipresent, nor Omniscient. He is simply a creature-god, essentially like all creatures. And this image worshipper does not know, and hence refuses to know, trust, love or obey the living God. Because of this image-worship, God, who is God, punishes this sin, according to Romans one, with even greater sin, and brings to light the absolute foolishness of the image worshipper. The latter begins to fall down, in worship, before all manner of beasts and creeping things. His mind is darkened and he is completely closed to the knowledge of the only, true God. Thus this wicked man is not even scientist anymore. He cannot search for true wisdom and knowledge. He cannot analyze the beginning and end of things and judge of them in their true worth. Nothing (except grace) will bring him to the knowledge of the truth of God. His wisdom is but foolishness to God. He has rejected God, and substituted another in His place, which is but an idol, and now he also conceives of his own god, in a creaturely way and as a creature, and worships the image. Whether we see therefore the golden calf of our Israel, or the forms that haunted the Greek Olympus or the half bestial shapes of Egyptian mythology, or even the silver dollar of America with its inscription: 'In God we Trust', all of these are but images served, when man does not

serve the one and only true God of heaven and earth.

From this description of idolatry and image-worship, it becomes evident that the only deliverance from both, is to know the only true God rightly and serve Him according to His Own revelation of Himself. To know the only true God rightly is to know that He alone is God and there is no God below, above, or besides Him. He alone is God, the Eternal, Self-sufficient, Alone Wise, Good and Righteous One. Therefore it is the height of sin and foolishness to trust any other. He alone must be trusted and served. To Him alone must submission be made and to no other. Glory can and may be given only to that Rightly known God. And this all must be done of course, with the whole heart, mind, soul and body of man. There may be no division in the life of the creature. He may not nor can serve that only true God partly and also serve any other power partly. He may not serve God on Sundays and serve another god during the work-week. But completely man must serve that only true God. This he must also do anti-thetically, that is, opposing all other worship that militates against and is not in harmony with the service of that only true God. This of course can only be accomplished in Christ Jesus, Who did RIGHTLY KNOW THE ONE TRUE GOD, TRUSTED IN HIM ALONE AND SUBMITTED TO HIM TO GLORIFY HIM PERFECTLY, with all His mind and body, soul and strength, and that continually. He who is implanted into Him becomes in principle again a worshipper of God and not of the idol.

Secondly, image-worship can only be rejected when we recognize and acknowledge God's own revelation of Himself. Surely, no one can determine how God is except God Himself. The finite and creaturely mind of man cannot reach up and search out the invisible God and all His glories. Therefore it must needs recognize and acknowledge the revelation of God. Wherever God reveals Himself, whether in the Scriptures or in nature or in the history of all things, man must acknowledge that God is revealing Himself. For this one only true God HAS revealed Himself, by speaking of Himself in all things. He speaks in nature and that Divine speech created and upholds and sustains all things, even today. Also God has spoken of Himself directly, in language that is plainly (intelligently) a revelation of Himself in the Scriptures. And this Scripture centrally speaks of the Christ, the Only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. To that revelation of God, centrally in Christ the Son, man's mind must be submissive and man's will must be in subjection. Then the man of knowledge and of science opens his mind to the truth of God, which reveals the marvelous things of God and His work to him, and he becomes truly a scientist. This too, by the way, only makes of a School, a CHRISTIAN School, and only

makes of a union, a CHRISTIAN union. All other schools or unions are idolatrous and worship the image of the creature. Then also does man's will become submissive to that revelation of God, centrally in Christ, and he will exclaim: "Not my will, but Thine be done". He will then deny himself, take up the cross and follow humbly the Christ of God, and in doing this he will be humbly doing the will of God, who alone is God.

This all of course, is done merely of grace, never of ourselves. Ourselves remain, outside of grace, proud and exalting ourselves in maintaining our foolishness over against the revelation of the only Wise God. We remain idolators and image-worshippers. Hence we must keep His commandments alone and though we now see Him and worship Him as in a glass darkly, and that glass is His Word of Revelation, yet by and by we shall see Him face to face and know Him as we are known, in Christ Jesus the Lord.

L. V.

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## Religious Freedom

Some people call it sentimentalism, while others call it patriotism, and still others something else; but whatever you may want to call it, we got quite a thrill out of seeing the famous Liberty Bell preserved in the historic Independence Hall in Philadelphia. The old bell once hung in the belfry of the Old State House, and was rung when the Continental Congress declared the independence of the United States in 1776. On it are inscribed the words. "Proclaim Liberty throughout all the land to all the inhabitants thereof." We were also deeply impressed concerning the large crack the old bell is said to have received in 1835. The thought could hardly be suppressed as we looked at that old cracked bell that we were looking at the symbol of liberty with a crack in it. And isn't the crack just as symbolic as the bell? Men have tried to preserve this symbol of freedom, even attempting to fix the crack. So liberty, the thing symbolized, men seek to preserve it, and when attempts are made to crack that liberty men use every effort to restore the soundness of the liberty they wish to preserve. National freedom is always in constant threat of being cracked. That has been the history of our nation since its inception. Even today, so it is said, we are in the war now raging struggling to keep our freedom. National freedom, as we understand it, is the right of a nation to live and move and have its being according to laws of its own prescription without any interference from without or within. As soon as that right is menaced, there must necessarily follow disturbance and possibly war.

Now, of course, we do not intend in this essay to

broaden out on or to defend the subject of national freedom. We merely mention it in passing to show that this freedom as all other freedoms is something to be safe-guarded and defended as a precious possession. We are interested primarily in the subject of freedom of religion.

This freedom is not to be confused with another liberty closely related, known as Christian Liberty. A very sharp distinction can and should be drawn between the two.

Christian liberty, on the one hand, is the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free. The christian by nature is bound in shackles of sin and death. He is free only to sin, and such 'freedom' is his bondage and slavery under a vicious tyrant, the prince of darkness. However, Christ Jesus came into his prison-house and loosed him from these bands, delivering him from his prison and filling his heart with the peace which surpasses all understanding. So that, though all the world with the devil and his hosts accuse him, he stands free before the Judge of heaven and earth Who justifies him and sanctifies him and transforms him into the image of His Son. The christian, therefore, possesses in and through Christ a liberty which can never be dissolved or taken away from him.

Religious freedom, on the other hand, is something of which the christian can be deprived. Like national freedom, religious freedom is something which is constantly threatened and demands an ever vigilant defense. It is even possible that he will lose it after a strong defense. In fact, the christian is forewarned in the Scriptures that he will ultimately lose it.

By religious freedom, we understand the privilege of the christian as well as the Christian Church to exercise his or its religious convictions. Every attempt from without to check the exercise of his christian principles, and every attempt to stop the Church institute from conducting its services and christian practices, is an attempt to destroy religious freedom and bring it into slavery.

There is another point here that should not lightly be passed over when we speak of religious freedom. There is much talk these days about religious freedom. In fact, one of the four freedoms mentioned by our government for which we are supposed to be fighting is the freedom of religion. Now the question arises: what is to be understood by this freedom? Is it a freedom according to which the christian may exercise his christian principles unmolested? So that he may worship God according to the dictates of His Word, and may freely speak of His truth, airing the truth before all with whom he comes in contact, even instructing his children in his Scriptural principles? Or does it mean that men may worship God if they want to and if they prefer not, that is their privilege? When you read the papers and listen to your radio on

this subject, you can hardly escape the conclusion that it is the latter which is commonly referred to as religious freedom. All men are created equal and no one can force his religion on another. Man is perfectly free to have religious convictions or he is free not to have them. All this goes under the term religious freedom. If this is the freedom we are fighting for, let us be aware that we are striving for a pseudo-freedom. One cannot escape the fact that should he defend such a freedom he would be, to mention only one example, promoting the cause of advanced Atheism. For under this conception of religious freedom the ungodly atheist has as much right of his ungodliness as the christian to worship God. The question cannot be suppressed what right does the christian have to defend and what basis does the government have to expect that christians will defend a freedom which gives the atheist license to curse the christian's God or even to deny Him? We must have nothing of this 'religious freedom'.

Religious freedom, therefore, according to its true meaning, is the freedom to worship and serve the Only True God as He would be served.

Just as any true citizen of our country desires the freedom to live unmolested our constitutional rights with no forces of tyranny to disrupt our national unity and way of life, so the christian desires to serve his God as God has revealed Himself and dictated in His Word. And just as freely as he desires to exercise his christian principles, so freely also would he defend the right of religious freedom.

Recently we heard one of our leaders declare in a public lecture on the subject of 'Religious Freedom and Youth' that there are chiefly three ways our religious freedom is threatened and endangered. We can do no better than re-state them. Religious freedom is endangered by the church, the state, and society.

It may seem strange that religious freedom should be threatened by the church, and yet we have only to look at the history of the reformation to see how this is possible. The Roman Catholic Church denied the freedom of interpreting the Scriptures by the laity. The common member of the Church was denied the Spirit-given power to know the truth and to interpret it. The Scriptures itself declaring that the Spirit of Christ would lead the Church and therefore also the individual believer into all the truth and that therefore he had no need that anyone teach him for they would all know. This religious freedom was denied the believer, thus bringing him into bondage to the Church. The reformers, on the other hand, defended the freedom of the believer to interpret the Scriptures in the light of the Word of God. We can also conceive of more instances where the Church stands in the way of religious freedom. It is our conviction that where you have an ungodly majority

in the institution, and the cruel aspect of lording it over the faithful minority takes place, you have religious persecution within the Church and freedom of religion is destroyed. And certainly also in our day where the nominal Church modernizes in doctrine and practice, the result will be a concerted effort to shackle the religious convictions and expression of conviction of the children of God who may yet be found in her confines.

Unto the state has been given the power of the sword to punish the evil and to defend the good. But if that state and that sword rests in the hands of godless men who care not for God or His Word, it is easily conceivable how that such a state is a constant threat to the religious liberties of its subjects. The violent death of some of the apostles will serve as an example of what the godless state can and will do to shackle the religious freedom of the christian. History is replete with examples of like character.

Society also is a potential enemy of religious freedom. The striking thing about this dangerous instrument threatening religious liberty is that it is not regulated by an God-given sovereignty, but is a law unto itself. By mass onslaught of public opinion therefore it ruthlessly takes things into its own hands and often becomes the occasion for countless religious persecutions. In our day, one of the most reckless demonstrations of power of society to shackle religious freedom is witnessed in the ever increasing torture of the christian laborer by the hands of godless unions. It appears that the christian laborer is no longer free to live his convictions in the sphere of industry. With a mighty sledge-hammer stroke, these godless organizations have apparently nullified the constitutional rights of our citizenry to earn a decent livelihood in occupations of free choice, through boycott and other brutal means of force. While at the same time they surged as a mighty avalanche into control of industry, dictating their godless policies and enforcing them in such a way that it is in many instances humanly impossible for a christian to continue labor while he would maintain his christian principles.

It is our deepest conviction that after this present conflict the latter enemy of religious freedom will take on added momentum. By this we do not mean that the other enemies of religious freedom will cease functioning. No indeed, they will always be a constant menace. But we fear especially the effects we believe the present war will have on the labor situation. It is an undeniable fact that in the last five years labor unions have gained tremendous footholds in industry and even in government influence. And it appears that, though temporarily labor unions have been considerably toned down and regimented into the war

effort, this apparent willingness to cooperate is with a view to making more stringent demands for recognition when the time is ripe. And those of us who have a little knowledge of what awful influence and power these godless organizations cast against the man of christian principles now, will also no doubt draw the same conclusions we have concerning the future, namely, that the position of the christian will be increasingly difficult to maintain.

How shall we be able to meet these threats? What shall be our attitude in respect to them? Shall we give up our principles and save our hide? Shall we perhaps keep our mouths still and let the enemies rage? Or shall we take up force against them to maintain our rights and privileges?

Even now, christian, you must answer these questions in calm conviction, ruled by your christian principles. You shall therefore not fear these evil forces that would destroy your religious liberty, but face them boldly with your spiritual weapons. No, we will not use carnal weapons of force, for ours is not a carnal warfare. We shall lift up our voices in earnest protest against them basing all our arguments strictly on the Word of our God Whom only we would serve. We shall not give in one inch to save our skins or to gain an extra slice of bread. By the grace of God, we shall hold to our religious convictions, even in the face of superior physical strength maligned against us. Being confident of this that He Who is with us is greater than all those which are with them. Being aware also of this that the Lord has not promised us religious freedom, rather, He has said: "in the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good courage, I have overcome the world." Remember too, that the time is coming when we shall lose our religious freedom, for we shall not be able to buy or sell without the mark of the beast. It is not at all impossible that this triple enemy of religious freedom will ultimately combine all his forces to remove us out of our place. But what of that, so persecuted they the great cloud of witnesses who have gone on before us. And so an abundant entrance shall be given to the faithful into the joy of their Lord.

M. S.

## The Organic Inspiration of Scripture

There are two things about Scripture which the reader who is acquainted with the Word of God cannot help but notice. The first thing is its external diversity. In the first place, the Bible is divided into two main parts, the Old and the New Testament, of which the first part is by far the larger. Moreover each part is composed of many individual books which, although they may be divided into various categories, such as e.g. historical, prophetic, etc., are nevertheless in many respects unlike each other. These books are in turn written by many different authors in respect to whom there is a great diversity in family background, education, occupation and geographic location. There were shepherds, fishermen, kings, priests, prophets, a tentmaker, a doctor, etc. Some were unlearned, "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled." Acts 4:13. Again, their writings were composed under many contrasting circumstances; sometimes in persecution and in prison, sometimes in the fields as they watched their flocks and herds, sometimes in times of war, in captivity or in poverty and adversity, sometimes in times of peace, in plenty and prosperity. Finally, one will notice that the various books of Scripture were composed in different periods of history that covers a great many years. So, when viewed from an external point of view, Scripture presents a picture of great diversity.

The second thing that becomes apparent to the studious reader of the Bible is its internal unity. Although Scripture is composed of many different books written by many authors of contrasting character, disposition and personality; and although its composition covers a period of many years, there is nevertheless, an inherent harmony and unity of thought that pervades throughout. There is one central, grand theme, one central Figure dominating the one progressive line of thought, namely, God, as the God of our salvation in His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, through Whom and unto Whom all things were made and exist, Who is also the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last, the fulfillment of all promises, the present Reality and the Hope of things to come. Christ is the center of the Scripture; about Him all things revolve, as well in the history of the world as in the history of the Church of all ages; yea, all things in heaven and on earth exist with a view to Him and will reach their final consumation and indestructable unity in Him, in a new heaven and a new earth. That such is really the case is plain from the Old and New Testament and the relation which they sustain to one another.

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Spirit of grace, do thou descend;  
 Envy, and wrath, and clamor chase;  
 With thy mild influ'nce quench these fires,  
 And hush the stormy winds to peace!

The Old Testament, with all its signs, types, shadows and promises, points to Him as the One Who was to come; on almost every page we see the shadow of His cross as the God-ordained means of reconciliation. The New Testament, with its record of fulfilled promises and its divine testimony concerning the reality of an everlasting righteousness and a promise of eternal life, points back to Him as the One Who has come and now sheds abroad the light of fulfillment, by which He gathers and guides His redeemed Church, His Body, and brings her to final glory in the day of His coming when we shall be made like unto Him and dwell forever in His blessed presence and, all things having been united in Him, God shall be all in all. And so we see that the Old and The New Testament fit together; the Old looks forward to the New, while the New is the fulfillment of the Old. This is especially plain from the Epistle to the Hebrews which constantly refers back to the Old Testament and goes into detail to show how the Old Testament has been fulfilled by the promised Messiah, the incarnated Word, our Lord Jesus Christ.

From the above it has become evident that Scripture, although composed of many books, which form a unity in themselves is nevertheless an organic whole. It is complete in that each book bears a definite relation to the rest of the books of the Bible and all serve to enhance the one great theme of God's wonderful work of salvation in Christ. There is, moreover, also progress in the divine Record. We are constantly being led through the various stages of preparation and development to the reality and the final realization of that work of God. This wonder of Scripture's harmony and unity is enhanced when we realize that many of these authors were not aware of the writings of the others and certainly had no idea that their writings would sometime become a part of one great Book. There is no evidence to indicate that they were aware of the fact that each was serving, by his particular work, in collaborating to develop one grand theme, thus to produce the written Word of God. This makes the Bible, more than ever, a wonderful Book. We cannot help but be amazed at such a phenomenon! And the question arises, how is this possible? How is it to be explained?

It must be plain that this miracle of Scripture cannot be explained from the point of view of mere human reasoning. The wisdom of man could never produce such a marvelous Masterpiece of diversity and unity. Therefore, also, the wisdom of human reason cannot give a suitable explanation for the Bible, not even by juggling the order of the various books in the canon, denying accepted authorships and ascribing to the books different dates of composition. It defies all human reason and gives evidence in itself of the wisdom and work of God; only the hand

of God could devise such a wondrous work. And the means which God used to accomplish this wonder is referred to as organic inspiration.

It will not be necessary in this connection to enter into a detailed discussion concerning the concept "inspiration" and its relative concept "revelation". It stands to reason that all inspiration is at the same time revelation, although all revelation is not inspiration. By inspiration we refer to that work of God whereby He through His Spirit enters into the heart and mind of a divinely ordained and prepared individual and so wholly controls him that the word which he speaks or writes is the revelation of the infallible Word of God. This is not necessarily the case with revelation which often takes place through the instrumentality of dreams, visions, direct communication, etc. However, we are not interested at this time in revelation or inspiration as such but in "organic inspiration". Scripture itself witnesses of the fact that it is given by inspiration and we find no need of proving that fact, since to deny it is to deny Scripture itself. And Scripture itself also witnesses of the fact that that inspiration is organic. We do not find this testimony in one distinct passage or verse of Scripture but rather in the whole Bible itself. The very fact that Scripture is an organism, an organic whole and not a compilation of unrelated books, is the result of organic inspiration. That is undoubtedly the principle idea of organic inspiration. For that reason we dwelt for some time on the inherent unity of Scripture. That beautiful unity can only be explained in the light of organic inspiration. To understand this we must not forget that all God's work is one organic whole because it is the unfolding and realization of His counsel. In that counsel He has determined to bring to final glory a people which He has foreknown and He determined to do that through the deep way of sin and grace, saving them out of darkness and death through the death of His Own Son Whom He would send into the likeness of sinful flesh. That people forms the Body of Christ and is therefore a living organism. Now, that people of His Covenant develops throughout all the ages and becomes known as a peculiar people in the midst of a world of sin and darkness; they are brought into His light and are led in His way and continue to develop until the day of His coming.

In harmony with this organic work of God with a view to the salvation of His Church in Christ, is the organic way in which God reveals His Word to that people. The Christ, who is the center of all God's work, is also the center of His revelation; He is the Word become flesh. And even as the organism of the Church in Christ develops organically in history, so also there is a constant growth and development of God's revelation, organically, that agrees and keeps

pace with that great work of God in Christ.

Thus we get what we call the Bible.

In this light we can understand that God also prepared, in history, certain individuals whom He had ordained to be organs of revelation. This preparation comprehends their whole life, their birth, parents, family life, education, occupation, etc., as well as the period of history in which they should live and work. He prepares a Moses by educating him in the place of Pharaoh and the lonesome plains of Midian. He prepares a David to write many psalms by leading him through many various experiences of life, of that of a shepherd as well as that of a king. And so we might continue to mention many more examples but we trust that this will suffice.

Finally, to organic inspiration also belongs the fact that God used these men in such a way that their personality and character, their disposition and temperament, were not negated but rather served as a means in the work of inspiration. They were not machines but men. They also spoke and wrote as men without being aware of the fact that their words were the fruit of the infallible guidance of the Holy Spirit and formed a part of the whole objective revelation of God's Word, the Bible. This accounts for the difference in style and composition. John speaks as he meditates, while Paul reasons and debates. David, the poet, composes and sings psalms, while Solomon, the man of wisdom, writes many proverbs. And through it all the Spirit worked to produce exactly that which God desired to reveal. The human authors served as mere organs through which the Spirit worked. The Scripture is therefore in no sense of the word the product of men. It is solely the product of the Holy Spirit.

Marvelous is the work of God!

H. D. W.

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IN MEMORIAM

The consistory of the Protestant Reformed Church of Orange City hereby expresses its sympathy with a brother office-bearer, Mr. Chas. Bergsma, in the loss of his mother

MRS. A. BERGSMA

May our heavenly Father comfort and sustain as He alone can do.

The Consistory of Orange City

How sweet, how heav'nly is the sight,  
When those who love the Lord,  
In one another's peace delight,  
And so fulfil his word!

O! may we feel each brother's sigh,  
And with him bear a part:  
May sorrows flow from eye to eye,  
And joy from heart to heart.

Free us from envy, scorn, and pride;  
Our daily wishes fix above:  
May each his brother's failings hide,  
And show a brother's love.

Let love, in one delightful stream,  
Thru ev'ry bosom flow;  
And union sweet, and dear esteem,  
In ev'ry action glow.

Love is the golden chain that binds  
The happy souls above;  
And he's an heir of heav'n, that finds  
His bosom glow with love.

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IN MEMORIAM

On Thursday, Nov. 5, 1942, the Lord took unto Himself in her sleep our mother and grandmother,

MRS JENNIE HANKO

at the age of almost 70 years.

The assurance that all the suffering of this present time is not worthy to be compared with the glory she now shares before the throne comforts us in our bereavement.

Mr. & Mrs. N. Bolt  
Mr. & Mrs. P. Kladder  
Mr. & Mrs. R. Helder  
Mr. & Mrs. C. Van Dyken  
Mr. & Mrs. B. Woudenberg  
Mr. & Mrs. O. Vander Woude  
Rev. & Mrs. C. Hanko  
and 30 grandchildren.