

# THE STANDARD

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## MEDITATION

### At Zarephath

*And the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there; behold, I have commanded a widow woman to sustain thee. So he arose, etc.*

*I Kings 17:8-16.*

Arise! . . . .

So he arose!

Elijah was he that stood before God, Whom in all his activity and appearance he represented on the earth, and as such he was the obedient servant, waiting for and acting upon the Word of the Lord.

For the Word of the Lord he had waited at Cherith.

There the ravens had brought him his food every day. And there he drank out of the brook. And for a considerable period he must have remained there, in complete oblivion, far from the scene of action. For "after a while" the brook dried up. And the sight of that drying brook might have filled his soul with anxiety, and might have rendered him impatient to depart from Cherith. Drying brooks are serious causes for worry if they are our only means of sustenance. And many of us leave our Cheriths, and depart from the Word of the Lord for far less significant reasons than drying brooks. Not so Elijah. It was by the Word of the Lord that he had been sent to Cherith. There he must abide until that same Word would bid him depart.

And the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, Arise! . . . .

So he arose!

Unquestioning obedience!

For to Zarephath the Word of the Lord directed him this time. And he arose and went to Zarephath.

A strange call this; one, perhaps, which Elijah would rather have declined. For was not Zarephath situated between Tyre and Zidon, the country of the enemy, the very center of the worship of Baal. Must he, then, leave his people, and turn to the land whence the worship of Baal had been introduced into Canaan?

Must he, without whose word there never would be rain again upon the land, now forsake the people of Jehovah, and, perhaps, leave them desolate? . . . .

But the Word of the Lord had come to the servant: Arise, get thee to Zarephath!

So he arose and went to Zarephath.

Significant sign!

Elijah and the widow of Zarephath!

A sign similar somewhat to that of Jonah the prophet!

For thus the Lord Himself, whose forerunner and type the prophet was, interprets this incident to the supercilious citizens of His home town, when He preaches to them "the acceptable year of the Lord."

O, indeed, they gave Him witness and wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of His mouth. But they knew Him as Joseph's son, and that was sufficient for them to reject His Word. And they would say unto Him: "Physician, heal thyself! Thou wouldst come to us, thou, son of the carpenter, to preach the gospel to the poor, while we are not poor; to heal the brokenhearted, while there are no brokenhearted in Nazareth; to preach deliverance to the captives, while we are all freemen; and recovering of sight to the blind while we all see clearly; to set at liberty them that are bruised with chains, while we never were subjected to the yoke of bondage? . . . .

"Physician, heal thyself! Come with better credentials than fair speech, and the wonders which, according to rumor, thou performedst in Capernaum, do also

here in thy country, that we may believe thee!"

"Show us a sign!"

Always a wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and always the same sign is given unto them, the sign that was given them more than once in the past, but which they were too blind to read; the sign which the Lord, Whose sign it was, interpreted to them, and which was fulfilled when the kingdom of God was taken away from them through His death and resurrection!

Did they not know that Elijah was sent to the poor widow at Zarephath? Did they not know that he was thus sent to the heathen widow, and away from Israel, at a time when the heaven was long shut up, and when there was great famine throughout the land? . . .

They knew the fact, and they hated to be reminded of it.

But had they never inquired as to the reason why the prophet that stood before God had been sent out of the land of Israel to a heathen woman at such a time of distress? Were there, then, no poor widows among Israel, that the labors of the prophet had to be extended to heathen women? O, indeed there were! There were many widows in Israel at that time, and they were all in distress. That was not the reason why the prophet received the call to go to Zarephath!

But his departure from the land of Israel was a sign and a threat to Israel!

For the Word of the Lord was inseparably connected with the prophet Elijah, and with Him departed that Word! It was the Word of blessing in a double sense: the Word that must reopen the heavens to give rain upon the earth; but also, and that was far more serious though immediately related to the former, the Word of God's covenant with Israel, the Word of salvation!

His departure from Israel was the departure of that Word!

It was a sign of blessing, indeed, to the Gentiles that knew not God; a sign of that sovereign grace of the Most High that was in no way bound to the nation of Israel; of that sovereign dispensation of God that would always be merciful to whom He would be merciful, and that would harden whomever He pleased to harden.

For, right in the heart of the dominion of Baal, God had one little chosen vessel, poor and forgotten, but precious in His sight, that must be blessed by His everlasting mercy through the Word of the prophet!

And a threatening sign that Israel's house would be left desolate was given to the generation of that time, and to the wicked and adulterous generation of all times!

Elijah and the widow of Zarephath!

Amazing sign, indeed!

A severe test!

To this the poor widow was subjected at once.

Must not he that would enter the kingdom of God wholly trust in the Word of the Lord, and have regard for the things that are not seen, rather than for the things that are seen?

Must he not always seek the kingdom of God first, believing that all things shall be added unto him?

Already the heart of the poor widow had been prepared for the trial and the choice, both by the knowledge of Jehovah, the God of Israel, of Whom she had undoubtedly heard, and by the mysterious operation of the efficacious Word of God in her heart. For that she knew Jehovah is evident from her oath: as the Lord thy God liveth! O, indeed, she professes Him here as Elijah's God, whom she at once recognized as the prophet of Jehovah. She dare not say: Jehovah, my God! But she heard of Him. She was aware of the fact that it was by His Word that the windows of heaven were shut, and that the famine devastated the earth, and had also invaded the very dominion of Baal. And she believed that He is the living God! More than that: she swears, not rebelliously by Baal, but humbly and believingly by Jehovah, the living God! And that her inmost heart had been prepared for the test by the mysterious, efficacious Word of God is implied in the Word of the Lord to Elijah: I have commanded a widow woman to sustain thee!

No, this does not necessarily mean that God had spoken to the widow explicitly that He would send a prophet to her, and that she was to take him under her roof and shelter and feed him. This is not even probable. For not only does the first reaction of the woman belie such an interpretation, but the command of Jehovah to the widow was also similar to the command which, before this, the Lord of hosts had issued to the ravens. The Word of His power had directed the ravens as a command to bring food to the prophet at Cherith; that same Word of power had mysteriously and efficaciously prepared the heart of the woman to be obedient to the command of the living God as soon as it would come to her through the mouth of His servant.

And is it not always thus?

When the Lord opens the heart, when His efficacious Word has wrought its mysterious, regenerating wonder in the inmost soul of man, he is able to hear and to obey the calling Word.

Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink!

Thus came the Word of the Lord to the woman, who, at the very moment when the weary prophet reached the gate of the city, was there, not indeed to meet and to welcome him, but to gather a few sticks for the

preparation of a last meal!

Fetch me a little water!

This first command did not overstrain her faith. Water could, evidently, still be had, even though the famine had spread to Phenicia. And though there cannot have been an abundance of water, the woman was ready enough to comply with the request of the prophet. Was she not preparing her last meal? And what good would water be to her, more water than she needed to quench her present thirst and moisten her dying lips?

And bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread! . . .

That was hard! Impossible it seemed; or, at least, extremely unfair a demand. And pathetically she cries out: As the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am gathering sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it and die!

Yes, but the Word of the Lord stands!

Fear not; go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son! Only, now the Word is accompanied by the promise: For thus saith the Lord God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth! It is the promise of the Wonder that will save him that believeth, and, therefore, the promise that can be embraced only by faith!

First me! . . . .

First the kingdom of God! . . . .

First unconditional obedience! . . . .

And then, when according to all human calculation and reasoning there should be nothing left of the meal and the oil, then make for thee and for thy son! And to perform this super-rational act, cast thyself upon the apparently impossible promise of the Wonder: when there should be nothing left, there will be enough!

It is always thus!

Always we stand before the same alternative as the woman of Zarephath. It is the alternative, not, as it is sometimes stated, between the thing certain and the thing uncertain. For there is nothing more certain to him that believes than the promise of God, even though all reason and all experience witness to the impossibility of its realization. But it is the choice between the seen and the unseen, between our word and the Word of God, between the kingdom of God and the things of this world, between the temporal and the eternal. . . .

Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness!

Perhaps, we are inclined to argue (for our deceitful heart always argues against the Word of God!)

that the woman's test was not so severe as ours, that she had not much to risk, that she could easily gamble with the handful of meal and the little oil, as a venture rather than as an act of faith. But what have we, what have you or I to risk, except the same little handful of meal, and the same small amount of oil in a cruse? Are not the things that are seen temporal, do we not fly away, and do we not die tomorrow? And are not the things of the kingdom of God eternal?

Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness!

Yes, the test is severe; it was so for the woman; it is so for us.

But severe for the flesh only! For faith embraces the promise, the promise of the wonder!

The never failing promise!

Blessed wonder!

Glorious realization of God's faithful Word of salvation!

Only a little moment, a sign of the Wonder the widow of Zarephath witnessed of it at the time. More she would see and taste of it, no doubt, as the days flew by that she sheltered the prophet under her roof.

For a wonder she witnessed indeed!

For she obeyed the Word of God through the mouth of Elijah, and they that believe and obey are never put to shame. She and the prophet, and the entire house of the widow, ate many days. And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by Elijah.

Was the meal gone and the cruse of oil empty after each supper she prepared for them all, and did she find the barrel and the cruse replenished every morning? Or did the quantity of her supply of meal and oil remain unaltered, no matter how often she used of it? Either may have been the case. But whether the one or the other appeared as the form of the wonder, each time she dipped into the barrel of meal and poured out the oil from the cruse she performed an act of faith, relying on the Word of the Lord. And every day she found that the Word of the Lord abideth forever, faithful and true!

Out of the hand of Jehovah she lived!

And what is more blessed than the peace of a heart that may daily trust and taste that the Lord is good!

And in that partial wonder did she not approach the Wonder of which her constantly replenished, never diminishing supply was a sign?

Soon He would come, Who would take a few loaves and a couple of fishes in His mighty hands, and with them feed thousands!

The Bread of life! Heavenly Manna!

Satisfying forever!

H. H.

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## EDITORIALS

### Common Grace

4.

Van Til's philosophy of the "Moment" is really the basic and essential part of his philosophy of history in as far as he makes an attempt to find room for the theory of common grace. His conception of common grace is not different from the current view of this theory as, for instance, adopted by the Christian Reformed Churches in the "Three Points". In this respect it is literally true what he wrote in the introductory paragraph of his book: "To the perplexing problem of common grace we do not pretend to give an adequate answer. It is nothing essentially new that we bring." The difference between his work and what has been offered before on this subject must be found in the method of approach. He does make an attempt to demonstrate the truth of "common grace" in a new way. That the conclusions of "common grace" are, in the main, correct, he never seriously doubts. But he set out to give the theory a new basis, or rather, to demonstrate its ground in a new light. This new method of approach, this new light, is philosophical rather than theological, rationalistic rather than exegetical. Never does Van Til argue from Scripture. Even that which he presents as the most fundamental principle of his philosophy, the most basic startingpoint, "the ontological trinity," remains rather remotely in the background throughout the book. But in as far as he develops his history of philosophy in order to demonstrate the plausibility of "common grace", his conception of the "Moment" occupies a very important place in that philosophy. Hence, we well take time out now to criticize that conception.

Van Til agrees that we can properly understand the meaning of history only if we view the "Moment", all things in time, on the background of God's eternal counsel. But the more I tried to get into his way of thinking and studied his philosophy of history, the more I became convinced that he fails exactly on this most important point. To me, to view all things on the background of the eternal counsel of God, means that every "moment" is eternally in God's eternal purpose, and is, in that eternal purpose, related as means to an end to every other "moment", while all the "moments" of history are related as means to the ultimate end: the highest revelation of the glory of God in the realization of His eternal covenant in Christ Jesus, the firstborn of every creature and the

## CONTENTS

	Page
MEDITATION —	
AT ZAREPHATH .....	169
Rev. H. Hoeksema.	
EDITORIALS —	
COMMON GRACE .....	172
THE HOPE OF HIS COMING .....	174
Rev. H. Hoeksema.	
MARTYRDOM UNDER THE ROMAN EMPORER .....	168
Rev. G. M. Ophoff.	
HET OVERSTELPTE HART .....	181
STIL TOT GOD .....	183
Rev. G. Vos	
THE INFALIBILITY OF OUR ENGLISH BIBLE .....	185
Rev. R. Veldman	
THE PERSPECTIVE OF MATT. 24 .....	189
Rev. P. De Boer	
RADIO BROADCASTING AND MISION WORK .....	191
Rev. C. Hanko	

first begotten of the dead. For "known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world." Before the mind of God are all things as they will be in the new heavens and the new earth, but also all the "moments" of history as by His infinite wisdom He has designed them in relation to the end, and they are thus before His divine mind, and in His sovereign conception *eternally*. Even time itself, and all that develops in time, is eternally in Him. With Him there is "no variableness neither shadow of turning." Creation and Paradise, Adam and the state of righteousness, sin and grace, Christ, the cross, the resurrection, the exaltation, the elect and the reprobate, all things in their beginning, their development, and their final consummation, are before His divine mind, in His eternal good pleasure, in their proper relationship to one another from everlasting to everlasting. The elect in their glory, and all that must lead to their glory; the reprobate in their utter desolation, and all that must lead to their damnation,—all have their place in that good pleasure of the Most High unchangeably and forever. How otherwise could the Scriptures say that "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*"? Or how could it possibly be said that "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel"? Nu. 23:21. And this also implies that it is not the "moment" that determines the attitude of God, either to the elect or to the reprobate, but that it is His own good pleasure that sovereignly determines His attitude to the creature in the "moment". This to me is the meaning of viewing the "Moment", and all "Moments" and "moments" against the background of God's eternal counsel.

Had Van Til really done this, he could not have said that God assumed an attitude of grace toward the elect and reprobate in Moment A., in Adam in the state of righteousness; nor that also the reprobate in that Moment were good, and performed good action in Adam ("a commonness of good action in official capacity"; and a "commonness in good up to a certain point between believers and non-believers"); nor that after the fall God hated both the elect and the reprobate; and that now, because the end is not yet, and the elect, are not yet perfect, neither the reprobate utterly damned, there is still a commonness in God's attitude of grace toward both. For, in what Van Til calls Moment A. the elect and reprobate do not as yet exist historically as such, they were not yet born, neither had they done good or evil. Rom. 9:11. Hence, historically there could be no common attitude of God to the elect and the reprobate. Nor did they perform any good works, unless Van Til means to imply that the

good works of Adam before the fall were imputed to the elect and to the reprobate, to all men. And if Van Til really wants to view Moment A., the state of righteousness in the light of, or on the background of the counsel of God, then he will have to see Adam, the father, the head, the root of the human race, as the first elect in Christ, who could be placed before the antithesis, disobey and fall into sin, yet fall on Christ and be saved. And then Van Til will have to view all God's dealings with Adam in Paradise in the light of that counsel. The state of righteousness and the tree of life, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and the so-called "probationary command", and the fall of the first man Adam must be viewed in that light; they all belong to God's dealing with Adam according to His eternal good pleasure. It is not clear from Van Til's book just what place he gives to sin in the light of the counsel of God, and in the dealings of God with Adam. He speaks of Moment A., the state of righteousness and of Moment B., the state of things after the fall and in Christ. But, viewed in the light of God's counsel, what is the relation between the two Moments? How do we advance from Moment A. to Moment B.? The advance is made through the fall and disobedience of the first man Adam. But how about that "moment" of sin, when viewed on the background of the counsel of God. Shall we say that God willed Adam to fall? Or shall we prefer the statement that God permitted Adam to fall? I far prefer the former statement, for God is the Lord. But whether you prefer the one or the other, the point is that the fall of Adam is eternally in the counsel of God as a "moment" fixed by His sovereign decree. Well, then, when God realizes this eternal "moment" of His counsel in time, and so deals with Adam that he falls into sin and death (a statement to which even the weakest Reformed man will not object), did He so deal with Adam in His love or in His hatred of Adam? Was it eternal love that motivated God in planting the tree of knowledge of good and evil, in issuing the "probationary" command, in arranging for the temptation through the serpent, or hatred? Van Til proposes that God loved Adam before the fall, and that He hated him after the fall. How did God consider Adam in His own dealings with Adam that led up to the fall? If we would view all things in the light of God's counsel this question must needs arise and ought to be answered. Now, my answer, and I am persuaded that it is the answer of Scripture, is that God loved Adam with an eternal love, not as Adam but as the first elect in Christ; that, moreover, there was an entire Church, a multitude of elect in Adam's loins; and that all God's dealings with Adam were absolutely motivated by that sovereign love of God to Adam and to the Church that was in his loins in Christ. He loved him as elect in the state of righteousness. He loved him when He so controlled all things that he fell, and He



loved him as an elect after he had fallen. For, according to the election of grace, Adam fell upon Christ. There was, then, never a moment in Adam's existence that God hated Adam.

And the same is true of the elect. Indeed, when one views Adam in Paradise in the state of righteousness, in the light of, on the background of God's eternal counsel, he stands there, too, as the father of all the elect, as the progenitor of the Church according to the flesh. The Church was in his loins. And God loved Adam as the progenitor of that Church, no doubt but He also loved that elect Church in him. Even Christ, according to the flesh, was in Adam's loins, for Christ is "the son of. . . Adam, the son of God." Now, when God caused that Church in Adam to fall into sin and death, did He do so in His love or in His hatred? In His eternal love. And when that Church in Adam had fallen, did He hate or love that Church, and did He deal with that Church, even immediately after the fall, in His love or in His hate? In His love. For He had provided some better thing for that Church than the first paradise. He had prepared for them a city. He loved the elect in Adam before the fall, He loved them in the fall, He loved them after the fall. And mark you well, this is not an abstraction, as if it were thus only in God's eternal counsel, but this eternal love was in every "moment" of God's dealings with His Church. You may object that they, nevertheless, became "children of wrath, even as the others". We have no objection to this. God's holy wrath is kindled against all sin, in the elect and in the reprobate. But do not forget, that if you view this wrath of God against the elect's sin on the background of God's eternal counsel, it is a wrath of love, a wrath that is borne to the end in their stead by Christ Jesus their Lord.

And how about the reprobate? They also were in Adam's loins. And, if we are to believe Van Til, God loved the reprobate in Adam in the state of righteousness, and after the fall He hates them. But when he states this, he surely does not look at the "Moment" on the background of God's counsel. Fact is, that he considers God's attitude to the reprobate entirely in the light of the "Moment". Van Til emphasizes that, in order to find a solution of the problem of "common grace" we must lay greater emphasis than heretofore on the element of time. It is my opinion that he does this to such an extent that he carries the element of time into God's counsel itself, and that he lets that element control and determine the attitude of God to the elect and to the reprobate. But in this way, he very really presents God Himself as changeable. God changes His attitude as the "Moment" changes. I am quite sure, of course that he is far from intending to teach that there is variableness in God. But in his presentation of the "Moment" he nevertheless, makes God change His attitude repeated-

ly. Yet, this is quite contrary to the Word of God. Fact is, that God hated the reprobate in the loins of Adam in the state of righteousness, in the event of the fall, and after the fall. And all His dealings with them are motivated by that sovereign hatred of His good pleasure. "For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth; it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." And it is not difficult to see, when you view history on the background of the counsel of God, that this sovereign hatred of God's good pleasure, is the motive of all God's dealings with Adam in the state of righteousness and after, that is, as far as the reprobate are concerned. For it were better for them that they had never been born!

H. H.

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## The Hope of His Coming

The Word of God fixes the eyes of hope of the children of God upon the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ as the consummation of all things, and the final realization of all God's promises to them. For salvation does not consist in this that God saves out of this world a number of people and takes them to heaven, but in the establishment of the kingdom of heaven, the new heavens and the new earth in which righteousness shall dwell, and in which the tabernacle of God shall be with men. This was the real contents of the promise given to the saints of old, and to the realization of this promise they looked forward. For they "all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims in the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had an opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city." Heb. 11: 13-16. The prophet Isaiah speaks of the kingdom of perfect peace, that shall be established by the Branch growing out of Jesse's roots, a new world-order in which "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopards shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp,

and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." Isa. 11:6-9. And even through that Old Testament prophet the promise was announced: "For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind."

In the New Testament, as we might expect, this promise assumes a much clearer form. Frequently the Lord speaks of the kingdom of heaven. And although it is true that this kingdom is often spoken of as already present in the spiritual sense of the word, yet its consummation and perfection is a future hope. For in the end the Son of man shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and "then shall the righteous shine forth in the kingdom of their Father." Matt. 13:43. And He speaks of "the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory", and when also the apostles "shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." Matt. 19:28. And in the figurative presentation of the final judgment we hear the King say to those that are at His right hand: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." It is a kingdom in which all things shall be subdued under Christ as the Head of all things, "and when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all." I Cor. 15:28. For it is the eternal purpose of God "that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth." Eph. 1:10. And "we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." II Pet. 3:13. And on Patmos the seer beholds "a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea." Rev. 21:1. And he "heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is 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. And God shall wipe away all their tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new." Rev. 21:3-5.

But how shall these things be? In what way shall this final and eternal kingdom of God be ushered in? It certainly will not come in the way of gradual development of the present world. There is, indeed, also a kingdom of this world. It had its beginning in the fall of the first Adam, who was king over the earthly creation, in order that at the pinnacle of creation he might be the servant and representative of God; but

who rebelled against his sovereign, and subjected himself to the devil, the prince of this world. And this kingdom develops throughout the ages. With all the means at its command it strives for its consummation. It is a kingdom without God, and without Christ, the kingdom of fallen man, subjecting the things of this present world under his feet, in science and art, in culture and civilization, and pressing them all into the service of sin. But it is not in this line that the kingdom of God must be expected to come. On the contrary, it is in this line that the first sin, committed in paradise, will bring forth its final fruit, so that the measure of iniquity shall be full in the kingdom of Antichrist, whose number is six hundred and sixty-six. In fact, none of the grand and imposing products of modern invention and civilization shall ever enter into that kingdom of glory. For, even apart from the fact that the kingdom of this world is governed by the law of sin and death, while the kingdom of God is under the law of the Spirit of life, the former is earthly, while the latter is heavenly. And the fashion of this world shall pass away, even so that "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." II Pet. 3:10. Through that final world conflagration nothing of the proud works of man shall pass into the kingdom of heaven. Babylon shall bring nothing into the New Jerusalem. The kingdom of God has nothing to do with a new world-order man may establish in the earth.

On the contrary, the expectant gaze of the believers is directed upward to heaven, and out of the heavens they expect that kingdom to come. "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." Phil. 3:20, 21. It was the attitude of the people of God under the old dispensation. Always they cried: "Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow at thy presence." Isa. 64:1. And the heavens did rend, and He did come down, when the Christ-child was born in Bethlehem, and the Word was made flesh, and dwelled among us. In Him the kingdom of heaven was seen in its beginning. And He battled His way into His kingdom, and established it on the foundations of the everlasting righteousness of God, through the blood of the cross. He went away again into the heavens, leaving the disciples behind Him, still gazing upward into the heavens. Once more the heavens rent and again He came down, on the day of Pentecost, this time in the Spirit. But still all things remained the same as before, and still the promise is not fulfilled. And all the more because they now have the firstfruits of the Spirit, the

children of the kingdom groan within themselves, together with the whole creation, as they wait for the adoption, to wit the redemption of their body. And, therefore, we are still looking upward into the heavens, expecting that the heavens will rend once again, and that our Lord may appear in all the power and glory wherewith He is clothed at the right hand of God, in order to establish His kingdom for ever! Not in the way of gradual development, but through the final wonder of the coming of the Lord will the kingdom of heaven be ushered in.

Of this coming of the Lord all Scripture testifies. Already Enoch in predeluvian times prophesied: "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him." Jude 14, 15. And all the prophets speak of the day of the Lord. "For, behold, the Lord will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire." Isa. 66:15. Joel cries out in amazement: "Alas for the day! for the day of the Lord is at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come." Joel 1:15. And again: "Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe; come, get you down; for the press is full, the vats overflow; for their wickedness is great. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision. The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining. The Lord also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the Lord will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel." Joel 3:13-16. And the last chapter of the Old Testament speaks of that day as follows: "For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall." Mal. 4:1, 2. The Psalms, too, sing of this coming of the Lord: "For he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth." Ps. 96:13; 98:9.

And the New Testament holds this coming of the Lord before the eyes of believers as the object of their hope. Frequently, the Lord Himself speaks of His coming again. "For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so also shall the coming of the son of man be." Matt. 24:27. And again: "But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." Matt. 24:37. Or, more

fully: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." Matt. 24:29-30. The angels bring the message to the amazed disciples on Mt. Olivet, as they stand gazing up into heaven: "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." Acts 1:11. And so the apostles preach and teach. To the vain philosophers on Mars' hill Paul proclaims that God commands all men to repent, "Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance to all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." Acts 17:31. And he speaks of the day "when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel". Rom. 2:16. And again: "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God." I Thess. 4:16. He speaks of retribution upon the enemies of the church, but of rest to the believers "when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." 11 Thess. 1:7-9. The entire book of Revelation is really an elaboration on the theme: "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so Amen." Rev. 1:7. He testifies: "Surely, I come quickly, Amen." Rev. 22:20. And in the hope of His coming the Church of all ages responds in faith: "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." Rev. 22:20.

Upon this final coming of the Lord, then, the hope of the Church is fixed. The Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God come in the flesh, born of a virgin, who was crucified, dead and buried, raised from the dead on the third day, was received into heaven, and who sitteth at the right hand of God, the same shall come again, to judge the quick and the dead, and to finish the work the Father gave Him to do. In this literal sense of the word we believe that He shall come again. This does not mean that we entertain a carnal or earthly conception of His coming, or, in fact, that we make bold to form a conception of His return at all. His advent will be the final wonder. This must never be forgotten. It is this that is overlooked by those coarse mockers, who propose to demonstrate the impossibility of Jesus' being seen by every eye at His



coming, by pointing out that the earth is round. But this is also forgotten frequently by professing Christians, that have a rather carnal conception of His coming and of the kingdom He is coming to establish. It is the resurrected and glorified Lord, that is coming again. His coming will be an appearance. It will be revelation. He is coming, literally and personally, but not in the sense that He is returning to our earthly existence, but rather in order that He may make us and all things like unto Himself, and to take us unto Himself, that we may forever be where He is.

There has been, and there still is, a good deal of speculation as to the time of Christ's return. And we know that this speculation is vain in as far as it concerns the day and the hour of His coming. This, however does, not mean that we know nothing about that time. The contrary is true. We know, for instance, that we must not expect the coming of the Lord in the way of a gradual improvement of the present world, or of a steady growth of the true Church, and a universal spread and acceptance of the Gospel. If this were the picture held before us in the Bible, the trend of development in the world would be quite disappointing. Rather must we expect times like our own. For there shall be wars and rumors of war, and the end is not yet. And nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines and troubles, but these shall only be the beginning of sorrows. Mark 13:7, 8. We know, too, that the time preceding the coming of the Lord, shall be characterized by a great apostacy, for "men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy" and "lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof." II Tim. 3:1-5. The world in those days shall be characterized by carelessness and indifference, carnality and joy in the things of the world, for it shall be as in the days of Noah, when men were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the flood came and destroyed them all. Matt. 24:38. Also in this respect the biblical picture of those days offers a striking resemblance to our own age. O, the world can assume a beautiful mask of piety, especially in our own land. We pray and give thanks and speak ever so piously. But be not deceived! More than a form of godliness it is not. For lewdness and corruption abound. There is drunkenness and adultery, and the divorce courts are crowded, and make light of the sacred tie of matrimony. Profanity, cursing and swearing in the camps of our armed forces, by officers and privates, are so proverbial that Christians called to the colors must daily vex their soul with their ungodly speech. But at the same time, on certain occasions, the world cloaks itself in a garb of piety that might almost deceive the very elect! We are very definitely

taught that before the coming of the Lord "the man of sin" must be established, during whose reign there shall be great tribulation for the people of God, so that they shall be persecuted to the death, and they shall not be able to buy or sell, unless they adopt the mark of the beast. II Thess. 2:1-12; Rev. 13. We know, moreover, that the devil must be loosed for a season, that he may deceive the nations that live on the four corners of the earth, and I see the beginning of this in the waking up of the heathen orient, with its hundreds of millions. Rev. 20:1-10. And, finally, we know from the Bible, that the day is near, always near, that this is the "last hour", and that Christ does not tarry; there is no delay or restraint: He is coming quickly! I Pet. 4:7; I John 2:18; Rev. 22:12, 20. If, in view of all this, we look about us in the world, we may certainly say, without attempting to predict anything as to the day and the hour, that our own times convey the urgent message: "The end of all things is near; be ye therefore sober and watch unto prayer!"

That coming of the Lord is the object of the hope of all the people of God, unless they are so entangled in the things of the world, that they would rather have Him tarry, or, perhaps, have Him stay away altogether. They long for that coming. They live in the expectation of that coming. They pray for it, and, principally, all their prayers are conditioned by the hope of this coming. For they know that peace and righteousness will never be established in the world, until after that great day of the Lord. With a view to that coming they earnestly strive to keep their garments clean, and to purify themselves, in order that they may see Him as He is. In the expectation of that hope they are willing to be strangers and pilgrims in the world, and to dwell in tents. And in the power of that hope they are able to suffer tribulation patiently. It is that hope that sustains and comforts them in times like the present, when the world is full of confusion and there is destruction on every hand, when the place of the true Christian, who would be faithful to his Lord, becomes narrower by the day, and when the Church apostatizes from the truth of the gospel. For they know that these things must needs come, and the end is not yet. And not only do the saints on earth look forward to that day, but also the glorified saints in heaven long for the day when God shall judge in righteousness, and shall avenge the blood of His saints upon them that dwell on the earth.

But why do they hope so earnestly for that coming of the Lord? Chiefly, because it will be the perfect revelation of the glory and righteousness and justice of God. The cause of the Church in the world is the cause of the Son of God, and the cause of the Son of God is the cause of God. That cause is despised, trampled under foot, mocked, defeated, blasphemed in the world throughout the ages, ever since the fall of the first Adam, and the entrance of sin in-

to the world. The Word of God is always contradicted. The Lamb is always slain. Christ is always crucified by wicked hands. The blood of the saints is always shed. The cause of God's covenant always suffers defeat. But that cause shall have the victory, and all the powers of darkness shall be put to shame forever. Christ, who was once the suffering servant, despised by all, shall then become revealed in all the glory and power the Father gave Him, and every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that He is Lord. He shall be publicly justified as God's righteous Servant. And with Him all the saints of all ages and out of every nation shall be justified. For they shall be publicly, before the eyes of all, adopted as sons of God in glory. Their bodies shall be redeemed from the power of the grave, and made like unto the most glorious body of their Lord. Each one of them shall take his proper place in the grand whole of the body of Christ, and add his own share to the glory and beauty and blessedness of the whole. And there will be a new creation, a new heaven and a new earth, a heavenly creation, of which Christ will be the head, the Lamb will be the light, and the glory of God will be the everlasting beauty. Then God's tabernacle will be with men, and in His light shall we see the light in heavenly perfection for ever. And with Christ we shall reign over all the new creation, in peace and righteousness, as servants of the living God that He may be all in all! That is the contents of the hope of Christ's coming. And in that hope the church prays fervently: Come, yea, come, Lord Jesus!

H. H.

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## Martyrdom Under the Roman Emperors

Having passed in review this martyrdom and having noticed its causes, let us now regard its significance. Before occupying ourselves with this last phase of our subject, it may be well at this juncture to confront the question whether there are available a sufficient amount of reliable materials out of which to construct the lay of the story of this early martyrdom and of Christianity in general in the first, second, and third centuries. These materials are at hand. For the earlier years, that is, from A.D. 33 to *circa* A.D. 100 they are the New Testament Scriptures — the gospels of Matthew, of Mark, and Luke, the Acts of the apostles, and the epistles with the exception of those written by John, for the years A.D. 33 to *circa* A.D. 80 and for the last two decades of this century the gospel, the letters, and the Revelations of John, who lived and taught and wrote at Ephesus until A.D. 99 or 100.

In addition to the writings of John, we have a few compositions from men who were disciples of the apostles and who, in some instances, outlived them by many years. For the second and third centuries the compiler of Church History gets most of his assistance from the literary productions of the Church Fathers. From Pagan writers he gets little and yet much. What he has from these writers is a history of the civilization and culture of the Roman-Graeco world.

Among all these source-materials, which are copious, none, of course, can compare for reliability with the Holy Scriptures, they being infallible Word of God.

Examining these Scriptures, we find that several of their number contain clear references also to this early martyrdom. But as the Canon of the scriptures was closed *circa* A.D. 100, these references can be only to persecutions that precede this date. Yet they are, on this account, none the less invaluable. As in these references we have to do with God's infallible word, they serve us as an unerring standard in determining the degree of veracity of the testimony of these other source-materials respecting the trials and sufferings of God's people in these early centuries. Let us then have regard to the testimonies of the Scriptures referred to.

Paul explains to his readers that they have reasons to glory in tribulations also, Rom. 5:3. The brethren of the church in Philippi must not allow themselves to be terrified by their adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, "but to you of salvation, and that of God. For unto you it is given in behalf of Christ, not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for his sake" (Phil. 1:28, 29). The Thessalonians became followers of Paul (and his companions), and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost: so that they were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. Thes. 1: 6, 7. So did they become followers of the churches of God which in Judea "are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews: who hath killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us (I Thess. 2:14, 15). He, Paul, is bound to thank God always for these brethren, so that he glories in them in the churches of God for their patience and faith in all their persecutions and tribulations that they endure: which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that they may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which they also suffer: seeing that it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble these brethren. They are to rest assured that when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, He shall take vengeance on their adversaries. They shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, II Thess. 1:4-9. It was the persecution of the Church by the

pagan authorities that occasioned the exhortation of Paul to the effect that Timothy and his flock pray "also for kings and for all that are in authority." Timothy must not conclude that kings, *as a class*, are reprobated because so many of their number were troubling the church, 1 Ti. 2:1-3. He is further exhorted to be partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God, 2 Ti. 1:8, and to be mindful of the saying: "For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him; if we suffer we shall reign with him; but if we deny him, he shall also deny us." 2 Ti. 2:11, 12. The brethren to whom the epistle to the Hebrews is addressed, took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing in themselves that they had in heaven a better and enduring substance. Heb. 10:34. This same author includes in the cloud of witnesses by which his readers were compassed about also those "who had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea moreover of bonds and imprisonment; they were stoned, they were sawn assunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (of whom the world was not worthy.) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth" (Heb. 11:26-28). These same brethren (to whom this epistle was written) are exhorted to remember them that are in bonds with them: and them which suffer adversity, "as being yourselves also in the body" (Heb. 13:3). Finally, let them boldly say, "The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me" (Heb. 13:5b). For despising the poor James rebukes his brethren in this language, "Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats? Do they not blaspheme that worthy name by which ye are called?" Jas. 2:6, 7. Further on, at Chap. 5:6, he flays these same rich for condemning and killing the just, who does not resist them. The strangers to whom the apostle Peter addresses his epistle are in heaviness through manifold temptation, 1 Pet. 1:6. They must think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try them, as some strange thing happened to them: but rejoice, inasmuch as they are partakers of Christ's sufferings, 1 Pet. 4:12, 13. The brethren of the church at Smyrna are told that the devil shall cast some of their number into prison, that they may be tried, Rev. 2:10. Babylon, the mother of harlots, is drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus, Rev. 17:6.

Babylon is the world versus the church, the kingdom of God—the world not of any particular period only but of all ages. In John's day, Babylon was the Graeco-Roman empire as concentrated with its nameless pollutions in the city of Rome. That in the vision of John it appears as drunken with the blood of the saints indicates, assuredly, that of those who held fast the name of Christ the number slain was great.

In their totality, these scriptures bespeak wide-

spread and severest persecution. And such, as was seen, is also the testimony of the church fathers. What these scriptures also tell us is that the Epistles including the Revelation were directly addressed to the church in persecution, that the hope and the comfort which they hold forth is for a people—the people of God—in tribulation. And the lesson of history is that only when the church finds itself in the crucible of affliction are God's people especially ready to live by the promise and to know that their Redeemer liveth. It is then that faith is strong and hope lively.

The question is frequently asked why the world kills God's people only intermittently, why it is not laying violent hands on them today. There is still persecution of the faithful yet not in this form, at least not in our western hemisphere. Is the world today less wicked than the world of the Roman Caesars? The world today is just as wicked, just as unwilling to forsake its abominations and turn to the living God to be saved in the blood of His crucified and resurrected Christ, thus just as intolerant of and antagonistic to the truth and to God's people, just as selfish and selfcentered, superstitious cruel and inhuman. Then why is the church not being troubled by the world now? One could point to more than one reason perhaps. Yet the longer this question is pondered the clearer it becomes that the only satisfying answer is: God does not will.

He is not turning the hearts of the Egyptians to hate His people. But it may not be long now. There are foreboding signs. I think now of the thousands upon thousands of priests of the Greek Orthodox Church in Russia slain by Stalin. I think of Hitler's active and cruel opposition to the church in Germany. I think, finally, of the rising tide of Communism in Europe and on our own continent.

As yet, men need not pay with their lives or with all their worldly goods for holding fast Christ's name. It costs little to bear the name "Christian." In general there is willingness to pay but little. Rather than sustain the smallest material loss, the preference is to be unequally yoked with unbelievers. There is little desire to live from right principle. The studied attempt is to steer life's course clear from the troubles and disturbances incident to confessing Christ's name before men. When sin is exposed and rebuked in the pulpit, anger kindles and the church is forsaken.

The day in which we live is indeed evil. The love of many has waxed cold. There is wide-spread falling away from the truth. The denial of the fundamentals of the Christian religion is considered scholarly in many a Christian circle: and the community of churches who still want to be known as Reformed are devitalized by insipient Modernism. The carnal element in the church is loud-mouthed and occupies the place of influence. What would happen today if all the pains, which iron and steel, fire and sword, rack and

cross, wild beasts and beastly men could inflict, were again employed to induce the Christians to deny Christ's faith? Would Cyprian, were he still living, again be amazed and appalled at the sight of so many faithless members of the church rushing to the temples of the pagan gods to burn incense at the heathen altars to escape the loss of their goods or free themselves from the penalty of death?

Sceptical writers have expressed the view that the martyrdom of those early centuries, that steadfastness of God's people in persecution, their remaining faithful unto death, forms no evidence that Christians, in distinction from other men, are the people of true virtue. In support of their view, these writers point to the persecution of Christians by Christians in the later middle ages, and in the 16th century. They point us to the fiendish scenes of the papal crusades against the Albigenses and Waldenses, to the massacre of the Huguenots and to the persecutions of the Protestants by the Duke of Alva. But Christianity is not responsible for the crimes perpetrated in its name by the anti-Christian powers within the walls of Zion and bearing the name "Christian".

We should have nothing but sympathy with the heroic faith manifested by these early martyrs. Wrote the historian Lecky: "The most horrible instances of torture were usually inflicted, either by the populace, or in their presence, in the arena. We read of Christians bound in chains of red-hot iron, while the stench of their half-consumed flesh rose in a suffocating cloud to heaven; of others who were torn to the very bone by shells, or hooks of iron; of holy virgins given over to the lust of the gladiator or to the mercies of the pander; of two hundred and twenty-seven converts sent on one occasion to the mines, each with the sinews of one leg severed by a red hot iron, and with an eye scooped from its socket; of fires so slow that the victims writhed for hours in their agonies; of bodies torn limb from limb, or sprinkled with burning lead; of mingled salt and vinegar poured over the flesh that was bleeding from the rack; of tortures prolonged and varied through entire days. For the love of their Divine Master, for the cause they believed to be true, men, and even weak girls, endured these things without flinching, when one word would have freed them from their sufferings. No opinion we may form of the proceedings of priests in a later age should impair the reverence with which we bend before the martyr's tomb."

Now finally a word on the significance of this early martyrdom. In the foregoing article on this subject I wrote: "these persecutions were God's work—a work in which the heathen functioned as His agent but on this account none the less responsible. Now both God and the heathen had their own designs. If we be willingly ignorant of the latter—of the designs of God—all our inquiring after the true significance of this

early martyrdom is a fruitless occupation. What has weight here is not so much why the heathen persecuted the church, but why God willed that they should."

The answer to this question is again contained in Holy Writ. The apostle Paul glories in tribulations also, because he knows that tribulation worketh patience; and patience experience; and experience hope, Rom. 5:3. The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews tells his readers that God chasteneth His people that they might be partakers of His holiness; that chastening afterwards yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby, Heb. 12:10, 11. And according to the apostle Peter God's believing people are now for a season, if need be, in heaviness through manifold temptations that the trial of their faith, being much more precious than of gold that perishes, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ, Pet. 1:6, 7. There are more such scriptures expressive of the same sentiment; and in their totality they form the answer to the question why God willed that early martyrdom and what he accomplished through it, and so set forth its true significance.

But we are still confronted by the question, what significance this early martyrdom had for the church of subsequent ages, what its meaning is for us. Why did the church of this Dispensation at the very outset of its career and for three long centuries thereafter, have to pass through that valley of the shadows of death. Another question is: Why did God so arrange His providence that persecution in this violent form finally ceased? This last question is to be answered thus: The church has need of periods of "stillness" for intensive and sustained study of the Scriptures and for the expression of the truth of Holy Writ in proper form. Further, it is in the need of "stillness" also for the extension of God's kingdom through the preaching of the Gospel unto all creatures. But what was first of all necessary is that the church come into the possession of the conclusive evidence that the gates of hell do not prevail against it; that the faith of God's true people is indestructible, and that real christianity is indeed the fruitage of the wonder-working power of God's sovereign grace. And it also first of all had to be demonstrated unto the church how true it is that if believers walk as children of the light before the face of the godless, the world does not know them. It was God's will that through the ages His people steadfastly fight the good fight of faith and continue their pilgrim's journey to the everlasting destination, which is the Father's house, only as armed with this amazing evidence of the indestructibility of their faith.

As we have seen, that age of early martyrdom was already interspersed with brief periods of "stillness". Then, when persecution again would break out, many apostatized. This, too, was made to come to pass that

the church of the centuries that followed might be aware that in times of quiet there are always to be found in the church many who say they are Christians but are not.

G. M. O.

## Het Overstelpe Hart

(Psalm 61)

't Kan soms stormen in ons hart. Een beeld ervan zien we in de zee, wanneer zij bewogen wordt door groote stormen.

Een overstelpt hart is een hart waarin het stormt. Het harte kan dan zijn inhoud niet langer beheerschen: hoog verheffen zich de baren en de golven in dat hart. Overstelpt: het hart loopt over in geschrei.

Zoo verging het David in dezen psalm. Iets dergelijks vinden we in psalm 42. En 't schijnt alsof beide psalmen gemaakt zijn in hetzelfde tijdvak, namelijk, toen hij vluchtte voor het aangezicht van zijn zoon Absalom. In beide psalmen wordt gezongen van het verlangen naar God en Zijn dienst. In beide psalmen glinstert het geloof ten slotte. Ik zal God, mijn God, nog loven, zingen we in den twee-en-veertiger. En hier weet David, dat hij ten slotte toch tot in der eeuwen eeuwigheden in God's hut zal verkeerren.

O God!

Zoo begint David zijn psalm.

Die uitroep kan gedaan als men vol is van de genade Gods en bij het licht van die genade de schoonheid en lieflijkheid van God te zien krijgt. Dan roept men het O God! in verwondering en bewondering.

Doch dat is hier het geval niet.

Hier is het een schreeuw van een geprangd hart.

Dat kan men merken uit het volgende.

Hoor mijn geschrei!

Zoo spreekt men gewoonlijk niet. Dit gebed is een ongewoon gebed. Meestal zijn we kalm als we bidden en het beekje van ons leven kabbelt rustiglijk en vrediglijk daarhenen. Dan bedenkt men zijn nooden en behoeften en gaat men tot den Heere om Hem al die nooden en behoeften bekend te maken. Of men zag de deugden Gods en in aanbidding buigt men zich neder om het den Heere te vertellen, hoe schoon en hoe goed en hoe lieflijk Hij is. Daar zingt men: Aanbiddelijk Opperwezen!

Doch soms kan het stormen in het hart en wordt het hart overstelpt in het binnenste van ons. Dat zijn meestal bange tijden. Het werd benauwd. Er scheen geen uitkomst meer en de vreeselijkste gevaren dreigden. Dan *bestormt* men den troon der genade.

Zoo was het met David hier.

O, David weet wel, dat de Heere alles ziet en alles hoort. Daarom bedoelt hij dan ook niet dat de Heere onverschillig is tegenover hem, wanneer hij zegt: Merk op mijn gebed! In die uitdrukking geeft hij uiting aan zijn grooten nood. Hij wil er meer zeggen: Heere, het staat er bang voor met mij en zonder Uwe wonderen en almachtige uitredding ga ik onder.

In plaats van tot God te gaan vanuit het hart des lands, waar de koning Israels zijn eigen plaats had onder de feestvierende menigte, moet hij nu kermen van het einde des lands; inderdaad, het is zelfs buiten de grenzen van het land in het over-Jordaansche Mahanaim.

En dan volgt een beschrijving van zijn begeerte. Hij wil door God geleid op den rotssteen.

Altemaal beeldspraak, doch zoo doorzichtig, dat het niet moeilijk valt om te raden naar de beteekenis van dien rotssteen.

De rots is God. Dat had immers David wel gelezen in het onvergetelijke lied van Mozes? (Deut. 32:4).

Daar lezen we: Hij is de rotssteen, wiens werk volkomen is, want alle Zijne wegen zijn gerichten; God is waarheid en is geen onrecht, rechtvaardig en recht is Hij!

Daar bidt David om in zijn benauwdheden. Wijsheid van het kind van God.

Wijsheid, want die den rotssteen bezit is veilig tegen alle stormen. Wijs, want dan is alle werk volmaakt en af. Daar kan men rusten en belacht men alle stormen van duivelen, menschen en de vreeselijke machten van zonde en verderf.

David wist, dat God's werk van eeuwigheid tot eeuwigheid altijd af is. Dat lijkt wel anders zooals wij er tegen aan zien. Dan schijnt alles verkeerd te gaan, ook met Gods werk. Dat is zelfs zoo met het werk Gods in de schepping en onderhouding aller dingen. Er is koude en hitte, honger en gebrek, vuur en vlooden, lawine en verwoesting ter rechter- en ter linkerhand. De oceanen verheffen zich, zoodat haar golven bruisen; de wolken breken en er komt een groote vloed op aarde die alle menschen en dieren verzwelgt. En toch weten we door het geloof, dat alles zich beweegt en roert of stil staat in ijskoude verstijving naar den raad des Heeren Heeren. Geen stofje dat zich grilliglijk beweegt in den gouden stroom van 't zonnelicht, of het beantwoordt aan het gebed des Heeren. Als de mensch wandelt en glimlacht, of als hij rauwelings brult en kermt en gilt in vreeselijke smart, zich krommende in den dood: het is alles de openbaring van de Rots, wiens werk volkomen is. 't Is af.

Zoo is Hij ook de Rots in verband met 't nieuwe koninkrijk.

Die openbaring ligt vast aan Jezus. Daarom wordt Jezus dan ook de Rots genaamd. In Hem kwam tot



openbaring dat God een wonderlijk werk deed. Op Hem komen neer de fundamenten van een koninkrijk, dat tot in alle eeuwigheid zal pralen in schoonheid die niet uit te spreken is.

En alles helpt om dat Koninkrijk tot zijn allerschoonste ontplooiing te brengen. De duivel en goddelooze menschen ook. Satan vaart in Judas, zoodat er een menschenkind kan zijn die Jezus verkoopt voor 30 stuks zilvers. Ook moeten er kooplieden zijn die het walgelijk bod aannemen. En overpriesters grijzen in 't flikkerend licht. Doch het werk Gods in Christus Jezus is volkomen. Alles gaat naar den raad des Heeren Heeren. Als de atmosfeer rondom Golgotha bewogen wordt van den grooten stem en het Lam Gods zijn bangste ure kent, zegt God: Het is wel! Dat is Mijn welbehagen. Als degenen die van Christus zijn, zich krommen onder de felle slagen van den zweep en het roode bloed zich mengt met slijk uit het vonzige kerkerhol, dan zegt dat volk: God is de rotssteen wiens werk volkomen is: deze martelaarskroon is Zijn liefelijke raad over ons. Komt laat ons psalmen zingen temidden van bloed en smarten. En Paulus en Silas zongen en baden. Ja, mijn broeder, Gods werk is altijd af.

Ziet ge dat, dan zijt ge zalig onder alle omstandigheden.

Kunt ge nu begrijpen, dat David juist nu vraagt om tot den rotssteen geleid te worden?

Neen, duizendmaal neen, daar kon hij zelf nooit komen.

Die rotssteen is te hoog. We kunnen er niet bij.

Neemt het hart van het werk Gods en dan zien we Golgotha. Kunt ge er bij dat Jezus weggeworpen wordt in eeuwige diepten van Godsverlating om doemwaardige menschen te redden? Kunt ge er bij, dat gij naar den hemel moet en millioenen anderen naar de hel? Kunt ge het verstaan, dat God in eeuwige liefde Zich naar U toebuigt om alle dingen mede te doen werken ten goede? O Heere, machtig vele zijn de sommen van Uw rekenkunde. Die kennis is mij te wonderbaar: ik kan er niet bij. Ontwaak ik, zie, zoo ben ik nog bij U! O God, mijn God!

Leid mij dan tot dien rotssteen, Heere! Neem mij bij de hand, mijn Vader, en breng mij langs het vloekhout naar Uw hart. Dan ga ik rustend zingen en zingend ga ik werken tot in der eeuwigheid. Ook zal dit mijn werk mij nooit vermoeid of mat maken. 't Zijn de uitgangen van het volmaakte werk der rots. 'k Mag Gods werk werken. "Hier wordt de rust geschonken!"

Let er verder op, dat David zijn bede grondt op Gods werk in het verleden. Hij wist, dat God zijn God was. Hij zegt: Leid mij tot den rotssteen die te hoog is voor mij, want Gij zijt mij een toevlucht geweest, een sterke toren voor den vijand. En dat is wijsheid. Hij wist, dat als men eenmaal door God bemind wordt, zulk een min tot in der eeuwigheid

duurt. Wijsheid, want hij vat God aan op Zijn beloften. God had hem schoone beloften gegeven in het verleden en hij weet, dat God nooit terugkeert van Zijn eenmaal gesproken Woord.

Zoo kan hij voortvaren van kracht tot kracht. Luistert maar; hij verstout zich en zegt: Ik zal in Uwe hut verkeerren in eeuwigheden!

Mijn vrienden! dat is de hemel der zaligheden. Hooger, heerlijker, lieflijker kan het niet. Als ge in Gods hut komt, dan wordt ge overstroomd met alles wat ge naar Uw diepste wezen behoeft. Daar in die hut Gods wordt den acht-en-zestigsten psalm ten volle vervuld: Hij overlaadt ons dag aan dag met Zijne gunstbewijzen!

De hut Gods werd in het Oude Testament afgebeeld door den tabernakel en later door den tempel Gods in Jeruzalem.

De hut Gods is Zijn woning. Daar voelt God Zich thuis. Daar verwacht Hij Zijn gasten. Daar zal Hij die gasten onthalen op vet vol mergs. Daar is men verzadigd. Een volle beek van wellust maakt daar een ieder dronken van de liefde Gods.

Ziet om U heen in die hut. Als ge aandachtiglijk die hut Gods bestudeert zult ge langzamerhand leeren, dat het hart van die hut de arke des verbonds is. En het eigenlijke van die arke is het verzoendeksel. Doch ook dan zijn we er nog niet. Temidden van kolommen van wierook komt daar de hoogepriester. Ziet sterk op dien man. Hij heeft een bekken met onschuldig bloed bij zich. Ziet hij besprengd dat verzoendeksel met bloed.

Ziet nu vooruit en ge zult het Golgotha in 't oog krijgen, want daar is die besprenging voleind. Golgotha, o Golgotha! gij zijt de besprenging van Jezus' bloed. En door die besprenging wordt de hut Gods geopend voor arme zondaren. Om te zingen tot in eeuwigheden. Daar wordt men gekoesterd door de liefde Gods en is men veilig onder "het verborgene Uwer vleugelen!"

Ja, David wist dat hij daar deel aan had. Luistert maar naar hem; hij zal er van verhalen. God had gehoord naar zijn geloften die hij geuit had in 't verre verleden. Zelfs als een knaap was hij naar God gegaan om het Hem te vertellen, dat het zijn hoogste begeeren was, Hem te dienen. Ook had God die geloften aangenomen en verzegeld. Hij had David gegeven de erfenis van het volk die den Heere vreezen. En dat was Kanaan. Samuel was gekomen met zalfolie en, tegen de berekening van alle menschen in, had hem tot koning over Israel gezalfd. Dat was het werk Gods geweest. En de werken Gods zijn onveranderlijk en eeuwig vast. Daarom: ik ga naar Gods tente. Ik ga wonen met God.

Hij mag dan zuchten en zweeten in Mahanaim. Er zullen andere dagen komen. Gij, Heere, zult dagen tot mijne dagen toedoen. Ik, David, zie de blijde toekomst. Ik zie het zaad des konings. Zij zullen tot in

eeuwigheid op den troon van Israel's volk zitten.

Ziet David dan verder, steeds verder in de toekomst, dan ziet hij een Zoon des Konings! En dat is Jezus! Hij ziet de Koning der koningen en den Heer der heeren.

En die Koning "zal eeuwiglijk voor Gods aangezicht zitten". Daarom kan David bidden om goedertierenheid en waarheid met het oog op dien Nazaat. Sprak Johannes later niet van het heugelijke feit, dat met Jezus "genade en waarheid" kwam?

En dan zal 't gaan.

De rol des boeks komt te voorschijn en de volkeren worden opgeschreven. De engelen Gods zingen de reïnen van een hemelsch lied. Bij 't schrijven Gods van elken naam, zingen zij: Deze en die is daar geboren.

Ja, dan zal 't gaan.

Dan kunnen we ook het lied beëindigen. Dan zingen we de slotakkoorden met David, slotakkoorden die in de eeuwigheid geen einde kennen: "Zoo zal ik Uwen naam psalmzingen in eeuwigheid!"

Ik denk soms, dat dit de reden is, waarom zoo vele van Gods kinderen op hun sterfbed vragen om een laatste lied: de sterfkamer lijkt wel op de hut Gods. Men zingt dan: 'k Zal eeuwig zingen van Gods goedertierenheiden!

En de engelen Gods die gereed stonden om de moegestreden ziel naar huis te brengen, zingen de reïnen.

't Werd stil in David's hart.

G. V.

## Stil Tot God

(Psalm 62)

Het is vandaag de laatste dag van het jaar en ik moet over psalm 62 wat schrijven. Dat komt mooi uit. Als men psalm 62 kan zingen als zijn eigen geloofsbelijdenis aan den avond van het jaar is men gelukkig.

Stil tot God.

Bij 't bestudeeren van dezen psalm worden we herinnerd aan een anderen psalm. Wilt ge dien psalm even lezen? 'k Heb het oog op Psalm 39. Daar is ook sprake van een stilzwijgen tot God. Evenwel werd die stilheid geboren uit andere overwegingen dan hier het geval is. In Psalm 39 bezingt David zijn ongerechtigheid en dwaasheid. En onder de slagen van God wordt zijn binnenste hart heet. Dan komt hij tot het besluit: Ik ga stil zijn. Ik wil zelfs niet spreken van het goede. Doch dat kon hij niet uithouden. Toen sprak hij met zijn tong. In Psalm 39 klaagt

David over zijn groote zonde en dwaasheid en daar is hij bang, dat de Heere hem zal zetten tot een smaad des dwazen.

Doch in dezen psalm is David stil tot God, omdat hij geleerd heeft, dat God het maken zal. Het is dezelfde stilheid als waarvan Jesaja spreekt: "... in stilheid en vertrouwen zoude uwe sterkte zijn. ...". Hier luisteren we naar de zachte stilte van een hart, dat uitgeweend is, waar de stormen tot rust gekomen zijn, en waar het kind Gods als een gespeend kind rust bij zijne moeder. Leest Psalm 131:2. Daar vindt ge dezelfde gestalte als hier: "Zoo ik mijne ziel niet heb gezet en stil gehouden, gelijk een gespeend kind bij zijne moeder!"

Men denkt, dat David in dezen psalm zijn hart beschrijft, nadat hij tot rust kwam van de hevige worsteling in het geval van Absalom's verraad en vervolging. We weten het niet. 't Kan best waar zijn, vooral als we letten op vers 4 en 5. (Diegenen welke de teksten nazien in hun Engelsche bijbels denken er aan, dat er bijna altijd een of twee verzen verschil bestaat tusschen tekstaanwijzingen in den Engelschen en Hollandischen bijbel). In die verzen zegt David immers: "Hoe lang zult gijlieden kwaad aanstichten tegen een man? Gij allen zult gedood worden, gij zult zijn als een ingebogen wand, een aangestoten muur. Zij beraadslagen slechts om hem van zijne hoogheid te verstooten; zij hebben behagen in leugen; met hunnen mond zegenen zij, maar met hun binnenste vloeken zij. Sela".

Uit die verzen blijkt, dat David alreede Koning van Israel was toen hij dit lied dichtte; en ook, dat hij in dezen psalm getuigt van het complot om hem van dien troon te Jeruzalem af te stooten. Uit dit alles blijkt, dat het best mogelijk kan zijn, dat er sprake is van Absalom's verraad en vervolging.

Toen is David naar God gegaan met zijn geweend en zuchten. Het had eerst gestormd daar in zijn binnenste. We kunnen zelfs merken, dat het gevaar bestond om terug te vallen in dat krampachtig snikken en weenen voor God, want in het zesde vers moet hij zijn ziel toeroepen: "Doch gij, o mijne ziel! zwijg Gode!"

En hij had ook de overwinning behaald, daar in het diepe hart. Want als de stilte intrad na den storm, is die stilte zoo groot, dat hij zeggen kan: "Immers is mijne ziel stil tot God!" Er bestaat geen twijfel aan; de stilte is volkomen.

Hoe zit dat nu? De zaken zijn niet veranderd; Absalom en zijn trawanten haten hem nog; ze beraadslagen nog steeds tegen David; er bestaat nog steeds het complot om David te onttroonen. Hoe kan David dan zeggen: Immers is mijn ziel stil tot God?

Het antwoord ligt in het tweede gedeelte van dat eerste vers. Daar staat: "van Hem is mijn heil."

Daar zit alles in om ons gerust te stellen.

In dat eerste vers hebben we den geheelen psalm in 't klein. Alles wat verder volgt in den psalm werd

gedicht om 't te verklaren.

Van Hem is mijn heil.

Heil is dat ge alles hebt wat ge waarlijk behoeft en noodig hebt om gelukkig te zijn. David had geleerd, nadat hij zijn hart uitgeweend had tot God, dat de Heere alles doet en alles geeft met het ééne doel, om ons gelukkig te maken voor tijd en eeuwigheid.

Maar nu moeten we gedurig leeren, dat het pad naar verrukkelijke, hemelsche blijdschap en ware tevredenheid en stilte, een pad is van lijden en smart. Toen Paulus de verschillende gemeenten die hij gesticht had, later nog eens bezocht, verkondigde hij hen allen, dat "wij door vele verdrukkingen moeten ingaan in het Koninkrijk Gods". Hand. 14:22.

Het fundamentele voorbeeld hebben we immers in Jezus Christus, onzen Heere. Voor Hem was het pad naar den hemel één groote verdrukking. We zijn geneigd om te vragen: Moet dat nu zóó? Neen, niet zóó als Jezus. Als dat zóó moest kwamen we nooit in deze hemel. Maar wel zóó, dat ons pad naar den hemel loopt over deze noodige vereischten: "die verloochene zichzelf, neme dagelijks zijn kruis op zich en volg Mij!"

Dan komen er tijden, dat ons hart snikt en ons vleesch bijkans bezwijkt.

Doch dan lokt een barmhartige Vader ons naar Zijn hart en bij dat hart brengen we dan alle tranen. Luistert naar Job: "mijn oog druipt tot God!"

Is dan de verdrukte kerk uitgeweend en heeft zij haar hart voor Hem uitgestort, dan schildert die Vader voor het roodbekreten oog het beeld van Zijn eeuwige liefde en trouw. Dan ziet die kerk, " 't Vast gebouw van Uwe gunstbewijzen!" en dan wordt het stil. Daar heeft de kerk geleerd, dat niets ons kan scheiden van de liefde Gods die daar is in Christus Jezus den Heere. Daar ziet David, dat Absalom en Achitofel en alle hunne trawanten niets vermogen tegen den gezalfde des Heeren. Daar ziet David, dat al zijn heil klaar is, af is, van voor de grondlegging der wereld. Daarom wierd David stil tot God. Er was niets meer te schreien, te snikken, te klagen. Er waren geen ongeduldige vragen meer, of het roepen: Waak op, Heere! en zie toch hoe het er bij staat! O neen. David zag, dat zijn heil van den Heere was.

En die Heere?

Wel, leest het volgende vers maar. Dat zal U het antwoord geven.

Weer dat veelbeteekende "Immers". Immers is Hij mijn rotssteen, en mijn heil, mijn hoog vertrek, ik zal niet grootelijks wankelen."

Ja, God is de Rotssteen. Hij is waarheid, rechtvaardigheid en recht. En Hij is dat onveranderlijk. In die waarheid en rechtvaardigheid en recht heeft Hij een werk gewrocht, dat de eeuwen zal verduren. En David mocht zien, dat hij in dat werk begrepen was. In dien rotssteen zag hij, dat de Heere *hem* liefhad, *hem* bewaarde, *hem* leidde door smart en

tranen tot eeuwige verheuging.

Dat was immers zóó! Daarom moest dat zóó en niet anders.

O als we dat maar mogen weten, dan wordt het stil.

Dat is dan ook de reden waarom David eenigzins in ongeduld zich richt tot zijn vijanden om hen te vragen waarom en tot hoelang zij kwaad aanrichten zullen tegen een man. Hier bedoelt hij zichzelf mede. Hij heeft het gezien, dat dit volk trachtte om hem van den troon te stooten.

Ongeduldig, zich verwonderende over hunne dwaasheid, vraagt David die vrage. Want David heeft in de armen Gods gezien, dat al hun arbeid ijdel is. Hoe zou het ook kunnen gelukken? Luistert: zij hebben behagen in leugen; met hunnen mond zegenen zij, maar met hun binnenste vloeken zij!

Hoe vreeselijk is die beschrijving van de goddeloozen. Want dat zijn zij. Dit zijn goddelooze menschen. Ik weet wel, dat God's volk óók zondigt. Doch hier is het verschil tusschen die God dienen en die Hem niet dienen. De goddelooze spreekt niet alleen den leugen, neen, hij heeft de leugen lief. Dat is niet zoo met Gods volk: zij haten de leugen, zij haten hun eigen liegen het meest; daarom haten zij zichzelf, om der waarheid wil.

Merkt er op, dat onmiddelijk na de beschrijving van deze goddelooze menschen die David beschrijft in hun goddeloos woelen, hij gevoelt, dat het noodig is om zichzelf te sterken in zijn God. Zoo spoedig wij ons moeilijk pad weer zien, is het noodig om onszelf er aan te herinneren, dat al onze sterkte en al onze verheuging in God is. Daarom volgt er: Doch gij, o mijne ziel! Zwijg Gode; want van Hem is mijne verwachting. Hij is immers mijn Rotssteen en mijn heil, mijn hoog vertrek, ik zal niet wankelen. In God is mijn heil en mijne eer; de rotssteen mijner sterkte, mijn toevlucht is in God!

Let er op hier, dat David's heil niet alleen in God is in den zin, dat God dit heil en eeuwig geluk voor David heeft uitgedacht, gewrocht en voor hem bewaart, doch ook, dat voor het genieten daarvan noodig is, dat men vanuit de smart, het snikken, de vijanden zijn vertrek neemt in God. Dat men vlucht van al die dingen naar God. Zóó is God ons een toevlucht.

Zoo kan David zelfs een raadsman worden voor al Gods volk.

Luistert slechts: "Vertrouwt op Hem te aller tijd, o gij volk; stort ulieder hart uit voor Zijn aangezicht; God is ons een toevlucht. Sela."

Zoo is Davids leven een baken in de zee met al haar stormen en orkanen. Temidden van de machten der zonde en des vleesches, de wereld en de geestelijke boosheden in de lucht, komt de roepstem tot ons: Vertrouwt op Hem te aller tijd! 't Maakt geen verschil of ge leeft in dagen van voorspoed of van tegenspoed: ga door 't geloof naar Uw Vader en vertelt Hem alles

wat er in Uw hart stormt en raast. Stort dat hart voor Hem uit. Ge kunt nooit de schoone stilte ervaren vooraleer dat harte ledig is aan zorgen en benauwdheden. Vertelt Hem alles wat U angstig maakt en bekommert. En als dat hart ledig is, zal Hij het vervullen door U te geven een klaar gezicht op den Rotssteen, de Rots der eeuwen die van geen wanklen weet. Dan zult ge zien, zooals David, dat alle dingen mede werken ten goede voor allen die den Heere liefhebben, het volk dat naar Zijn eeuwig voornemen daartoe geroepen is. En dan zal het ook Uwe belijdenis zijn: Immers is mijn hart stil tot God! Hij is mijn toevlucht. Dan mogen de stormen voortgaan en dan mogen de goddeloozen woeden; geen nood: we zijn aangekomen in den rotssteen en alles staat veilig. Niets en niemand kan ons scheiden van de eeuwige liefde Gods die daar is in Christus Jezus, onzen Heere.

Een andere weg is er niet.

Gaat toch niet naar de gemeene lieden, dat wil zeggen, het volk wiens naam zelfs verkondigt, dat zij gelijk zijn aan een damp die ras verdwijnt. Want zoo staat het er in het oorspronkelijke. Zij zijn, zooals het de tekst zegt: zonen van roode klei en daarom een ademtocht gelijk. Met nadruk staat de naam Abel vooraan in het vers, Abel, de naam van Eva's tweede zoon: een ademtocht. Wat voor heil is er te wachten van een ademtocht?

Gaat ook niet naar de zonen van een mensch, dat wil zeggen, dat volk hetwelk nog wat schijnt, de groote lieden, hetzij in naam en aanzien of in kracht en macht. Doet het niet, want die zijn niet meer dan een leugen. De gedachte is blijkbaar, dat de belofte van naam, aanzienlijkheid, kracht en macht van dat volk bedriegt: ze kunnen U ten eenenmale niet redden van Uw nood en smart.

Ook moet ge niet trachten om Uzelven te helpen in allerlei verkeerde wegen. Bij voorbeeld, moet ge niet trachten om sterkte te verkrijgen uit booze onderdrukking van Uw naaste of door te rooven en te stelen. Uw begin is dan al zonde en ge zult nooit het gewenschte doel bereiken. Voor ge den strijd begint met zulke booze middelen zijt ge het al verloren.

En als de Heere U alles wat aardisch en lieflijk en schoon is als in den schoot werpt, moet ge ook niet rusten en vertrouwen in dien ongestadigen rijkdom. Dat is óók dwaas. Zet Uw hart niet op de dingen van het stof. Daarin is geen hulpe en verlossing.

Wat dan?

Ge moet scherpelijk luisteren.

God heeft éénmaal gesproken. En nu moet gij tweemaal luisteren. Eens als de openbaring Gods naar U toekomt in het Woord, dat gewis en zeker is; en eens als dat Woord in Uw hart weerklinkt, toegepast door des Heeren Geest. Hier is stem en echo. Een dubbel getuigenis.

En in dit verband zegt die stem al maar door:

"Dat de sterkte Godes is!" Ja, daar zijn we ook mee begonnen. Hij is de Rotssteen, Zijn werk is volkomen.

En dan zal 't gaan.

Dat is uw werk: vertrouwt op Hem geheel en al!

En weest maar niet bang voor de goddeloozen, want het slot zegt: "Gij zult een iegelijk vergelden naar zijn werk."

Komt Uw werk, dat van voor de grondlegging bereid is, opdat gij daarin zult wandelen, in het gerichte Gods, dan zal Hij naar Zijn goedertierenheid over U vergelding doen. Gij krijgt genadeloon op genade werken.

En komt het goddelooze werk van de vijand in 't gericht, dan zal Hij toorn beloonen op hun toornig werk.

Ja, zoo is het: Immers is mijn ziel stil tot God. Als ik stil ben, heel stille, dan hoor ik het ruischen van het eeuwige lied der liefde.

En dat lied is de hemel, het is verrukkelijk schoon!

G. V.

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## The Infallibility of our English Bible

*An object of faith.*

That the Bible as we have it today is indeed the infallible Word of God, our only and complete rule of faith and conduct, essentially different from all other writings in history, we apprehend only by faith.

Never do we come to this conviction in the presumptuous way modern theology imagines it should be reached. According to the latter it is not scholarly and scientific and proper to approach the Bible with a priori prejudices in the matter. In seeking to determine the real character and value of Scripture we should approach it with an open mind, examine its history and contents without bias, and by way of impartial reasoning, logical argumentation and application of accepted literary principles seek the answer to the vital question: Is the Bible actually the Word of God, hence infallible? Or is it merely a wonderful guide, though the product of mere men, and hence fallible and subject to all the principles and methods of the human critic?

This position, however, is just as impossible, spiritually and psychologically, for those who advocate it as for the child of God.

Modern scholars themselves cannot assume such an unbiased standpoint, for the very position and method they suggest already evidences an a priori conviction that the Bible is *not* the Word of God. By seeking to approach it as they do any other literary product,

they begin by placing it on the level of all human works. That certainly betrays partiality. Note, if the Bible is God's Word it can be apprehended as such only by faith; it can never be placed in one category with all the literary products of man and submitted to a common type of investigation and literary criticism. He who insists on doing the latter begins with the assumption that the Bible is *not* the Word of God.

By the same token no Christian can assume the impartial position which modern theology presumes to require of him, for even as the ungodly cannot escape the bias of their unbelief the Christian cannot ignore the power and testimony of his faith. That faith determines his whole approach by giving him the spiritual, a priori assurance, the spontaneous conviction of heart, that the Bible is the Word of God, and therefore infallible.

This assurance of faith is the fruit of the gracious operation of the Holy Spirit in the heart. Not that there is not also an objective testimony of the Spirit in the Word itself, for there is. How could Scripture be the Word of God without itself giving testimony to this fact? From cover to cover it is one grand testimony to its divine origin and dignity. To that testimony we must give ear, always listening rather than presuming to investigate. Doing this we shall discover these same Scriptures to be the answer to all our questions. From every possible point of view they leave nothing to be desired. Let the modern critic tell us, what an infallible revelation from God should contain, which is not contained in our Bible. That objective testimony in the Word finds its counterpart in a subjective testimony of the Spirit in our hearts. The two together supply the full conviction, that our Bible is indeed the Word of God.

Consequently, in this essay we are not asking: Is the Bible the infallible Word of God? Neither are we going to attempt to reason the modern critic into submission. After all, a deaf man cannot be persuaded of the harmony of a grand symphony; not because the harmony is not there to be heard, but the hearing is not there to receive the harmony. Our sole question is: *How* is the Bible the infallible Word of God? In which wonderful way of divine grace did God give unto us and preserve for us this Bible so that it was and always remained His infallible revelation unto us?

#### *Infallible inspiration.*

The Scriptures were given unto the church in the way of divine, infallible inspiration. That applies, I know, to the original, individual books of the Bible, but that is the ultimate reason, nevertheless, why also our Bible of today is undoubtedly the infallible Word of God.

Inspiration is that work of the Holy Spirit in and

upon and through the minds and wills and hearts of human instruments, whereby these were enabled, divinely moved to speak and write the Word of God infallibly. Its character is manifest from such oft-repeated formulas as "All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord *by* the prophet", Matt. 1:22, and "as He spake *by the mouth of* his holy prophets", Luke 1:70. By virtue of this divine work God is the real author and spokesman, while using men as the instruments of His revelation.

This inspiration is verbal and plenary.

It is not so, that only the thoughts of Scripture were inspired while it remained for the secondary authors to put these thoughts into their own form and language, as a man might give his secretary the gist of a letter he wants written, while leaving he rest to her own judgment and ability. In this way all would be lost, whereas thought and word and inseparable, the latter is the vehicle of the former, and the former comes to us only in the way of the latter. If the one is not infallible the other can never be. Besides this entire presentation is utterly unworthy of God. A man, for the sake of time and convenience, might leave much to the discretion and ability of his secretary. After all, she may have more ability in certain things than he. God, however, never works in such a haphazard and slipshod manner. He doesn't in nature. Here He works out all things Himself to the minutest detail, and all is absolutely perfect. Whatever is of man is crude and extremely imperfect by comparison. The point of the finest and sharpest needle, when seen under a microscope, appears dull and irregular as a rusty nail. It is the work of man. God's work is marked by absolute perfection. The sting of a bee may be examined under the most powerful microscope without detecting the first evidence of imperfection. Shall that God, then, whose works in nature are marked by such infinite perfection, be less careful and precise when it comes to His self-revelation in His written Word? Shall He permit that revelation of Himself in Christ to be in part the work of man? Shall He inspire only the thought, while leaving the expression of the thought to the discretion and ability of the mortal, sinful creature?

No, inspiration, to mean anything, must be verbal and plenary. The authors of the several books were wholly under the influence of the Spirit. Each word, each letter was divinely inspired. For that reason Scripture can build whole arguments, base entire doctrines on a single word, or the mere form of a verb, or even on a single letter. In Luke 20:37 Jesus Himself bases the truth of the resurrection and life eternal on a single word, on the fact that God spake to Moses, long after Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were dead, "I am (not "I was") the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob."

More could certainly be said about this wonderful



work of divine inspiration but for the present purpose this is not necessary.

That the Scriptures, the original manuscripts, were thus infallibly inspired is clearly the claim and testimony of *Scripture itself*. Generally speaking it is certainly true, that all the Scriptures claim for themselves the right to be regarded as the Word of God, not of man. Therefore it never argues, but simply demands faith and obedience. Always it comes with the authoritative "thus saith the Lord". Undeniably, the Bible is the infallible and authoritative Word of God, or it is the most shameless, impudent, blasphemous hoax the world has ever produced, for it certainly says concerning itself, that it is the Word of God.

How plainly the Old Testament Scriptures claim this for themselves. Moses and all the prophets speak and write in the assumption that they are speaking and writing the very Word of God. How else shall we explain such expressions as, "God spake all these words, saying," and "thus saith the Lord", and "the word of the Lord came to me", and many others? How else could Isaiah say, "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord speaketh"?

And that this self-testimony of the Old Testament Scriptures is sealed as true by the testimony of the Incarnate Word of God Himself, our Lord Jesus Christ, who will deny? Repeatedly He quotes the Scriptures and always as the last word, the end of all dispute, the only rule of faith and conduct. If we believe in Christ as the Son of God we must also believe in the divine inspiration of Moses and David and the prophets. Deny the latter and you must needs deny the Christ and brand Him an imposter and a liar, or at best a simple individual who was as foolish and misdirected and superstitious as the rest of His day. Modernism, so boastful of its consistency, cannot possibly respect the Christ, even as a mere man of wisdom and truthfulness, while denying the divine character of the Scriptures.

Likewise, who can deny that the Apostles of the new dispensation give to the Old Testament Scriptures this same testimony? Listen then to Peter. "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, . . . . Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scriptures is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." 2 Pet. 1:19-21. And what does Paul tell us? "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness". 2 Tim. 3:16.

And what of the New Testament Scriptures? Jesus left us no writings of His own, but elected and qualified His Apostles to be His witnesses after His departure. To them He gave special gifts for this purpose, espe-

cially the Spirit, Who would bring all things to their remembrance, John 14:26, even reveal the things to come and lead them into all the truth, John 16:13. When the Apostles, therefore, testify of Christ, also in their writings, it is not they themselves who testify; but the Holy Spirit, Who came to glorify the Son and take it all out of Him, speaks through them. Therefore Paul can be so convinced that he is proclaiming the Word of God, that he writes to the Thessalonians, "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God, which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe." 1 Thess. 2:13. Therefore all the Apostles attach eternal life or death to the acceptance or rejection of their testimony.

#### *Infallible canonization.*

Granted now, that the individual books were divinely inspired and revealed by God Himself, how do I know that the Bible as a single volume, as a collection, is as such the infallible Word of God? After all, the Bible was not given as a whole. God did not give us by way of divine inspiration a single book, but through the secondary authors He gave us a number of individual writings. Moreover, it is likely, that there were more inspired writings than just these, writings which have since been lost and which never were received into the Canon. Who collected these writings, and separated them and united them into one volume? How was this done and what determined this work? How do we know that the Bible as we have it now is the complete and perfect Word of God? Are we certain that books have not been left out which should have been included? Can we be positive that some were not included which were not inspired by God at all? Are we sure, that exactly these 66 books, no more, no less, no others, constitute the infallible Word of God?

Beginning with the Old Testament Scriptures we note, that the individual writings were collected and united into a single volume by the church of the old dispensation. In this work the church, though divinely led, was not divinely inspired. This gathering of the individual books into the one volume, the Old Testament Canon, had already been completed at the time of Jesus' sojourn on earth. The Old Testament Canon was closed approximately 3 centuries before the incarnation. Hence, when Jesus was on earth, there were not only a number of individual scriptures, but there was a Bible, the Old Testament Bible, just as we have it today. That is evident from the fact that both Jesus and the Apostles repeatedly allude to the Scriptures as a whole. Besides, history records it as an indisputable fact, that the Old Testament Canon was closed long before the advent of the Christ. Now this is vital, because it means that Jesus Himself can give us the

answer to the question: Is the Old Testament, as we have it today, the Word of God? Surely, if the Old Testament Scriptures were not the pure and perfect Word of God, if there were books in the Old Testament, which should not be there, our Lord *would have told us*. Instead, in all His teaching He clearly testifies, that not only the individual books were divinely inspired, but these same books, as collected and canonized by the church of the old dispensation, are the infallible Word of God. Hence, not only does the factor of inspiration bear His seal, but also that of canonization by the church. This is possible only on the assumption, that the church, in collecting the individual writings and placing them in a single volume, was guided infallibly by the Holy Ghost. The same applies to the testimony of the Apostles. When they speak of the Scriptures, "the law and the prophets", they speak, not of a group of isolated writings, but of the Old Testament Bible, the same as we have today. Of that Bible Paul says, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God", and Peter testifies, "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

Now the history of the New Testament is exactly the same as that of the Old Testament Canon. Also these books were separate manuscripts originally. Gradually, however, their real significance dawned on the church, they were treated with reverence and regarded as canonical, until finally they were added officially to the Old Testament Canon into what is now our full Bible. The point is: the New Testament Scriptures were gathered in exactly the same way as were the Old Testament Scriptures, on which Christ Himself has set the stamp of His approval. Jesus Himself assures us that God has willed to give us His infallible Word in no other way.

#### *Infallible preservation.*

Finally, granted that all this is true, how about the fact that we no longer possess the original manuscripts, but have only copies and translations, marred by human errors and imperfections? Does this not make it impossible to regard the Bible as we have it today as the infallible Word of God?

The fact as such cannot be gainsaid. As far as we know all the originals are lost. What we have now, also in the so-called "originals", are not originals at all, but only copies. In these copies numerous errors will be found. We would expect nothing else, when it is given to fallible men to copy and recopy. There are, by the way, thousands of such manuscripts, copied from earlier manuscripts by Jewish scribes and devout men from time to time; approximately 4000 of the New Testament only. In all of these New Testament manuscripts approximately 150,000 variations occur.

Does all this mean, however, that our Bible is no

longer the Word of God?

Consider first, that some of the Greek manuscripts we have today are already 1500 years old. These might well have been copied from copies made from the original writings of the Apostles themselves. There need not be many steps in between. The oldest Hebrew manuscripts today are about 1200 year old. These could well have been copied from manuscripts already in existence at the time of Jesus on earth.

Consider, too, that those who transcribed the Scriptures worked with the utmost care, even to the point of superstition, in copying their Hebrew manuscripts. They counted not only all the words, but all the letters. They noted how often each letter occurred. A sheet in which an error was detected was destroyed at once, so fearful were they of making a single error. The writer pronounced aloud each word before it was written, and never was a word written from memory. After the work was completed each new copy was thoroughly checked with the original. So scrupulously did these copyists work. In spite of all this, errors did creep in. This can be the better understood in the light of the fact, that the Hebrew manuscripts had no vowels, that there was no spacing between the words originally, that there was no division into chapters and verses, and all the manuscripts in those days were written by hand. It is a marvel of history, that the Bible reached us so marvelously correct as it is today. Even so, note, that 95 percent of the variants in all these numerous manuscripts have no weight at all, and that 95 percent of the remaining 5 percent have but little significance. Does it change the Word of God, for instance, that our Bible has "we" instead of "us", or a past tense instead of a present? The best of authorities assure us, with respect to the New Testament, that the variations introduced by copyists which are of any importance at all, effect less than 1/1000 of the entire text, and that not one of them affects a vital doctrine. To which we may add, that with so many ancient manuscripts to consult, an error in one is invariably detected and overruled by the overwhelming evidence of all the rest. Thus there is nothing in all those variations to cause any alarm at all.

Consider, finally, that the Old Testament Canon of which Christ and the Apostles spoke, was also composed of copies. Then, too, the originals were lost. Those copies, too, were marred by human error and fallibility. Yet, our Lord honors the Old Testament Canon as the Word of God, and speaks of the Scriptures as "Moses and the prophets", though they were only *copies* of Moses and the prophets. This should end all argument and be our crowning assurance, that the Bible we have today is indisputably the infallible Word of God, the sure and undeniable revelation of our covenant Jehovah in the face of Jesus Christ, our Lord.

R. V.

## The Perspective of Matt. 24

I don't know just where Edna St. Vincent Millay was standing when she penned the beautiful description,

"All I could see from where I stood  
Was three long mountains and a wood;  
I turned and look the other way,  
And saw three islands in a bay."

I said that I did not know where she was standing when she wrote this beautiful description. I do know however that to see exactly that scene you must stand where she stood. You cannot stand on one of the mountains or on one of the islands and see that whole scene as she saw it. There is only one place to see it and that is to stand exactly where she stood.

In a similar way a proper understanding of Matthew 24 demands that you stand where Christ stood, you must view the future not from the year 1943 but from the year in which our Lord was crucified. You must to some extent place yourself in the disciples' position, you must imagine yourself a Jewish follower of Christ having heard His words to the effect that Jerusalem shall be left desolate, you must place yourself *before* the destruction of Jerusalem, *before* the crucifixion and resurrection. And there in that place, from that vantage point you must listen to Christ's discourse on the last things. You must see Jerusalem's end coming with all its awful woe, you must hear the distant roll of the thunder. Only then can you catch the right perspective.

According to the context Jesus had just ended His terrible woes upon Jerusalem that killed the prophets, He had just stated that all the righteous blood shed from Abel unto Zacharias the son of Barachias should come upon this generation, their house should be left desolate. Now Jesus went out and departed from the temple. As they were leaving the temple and Temple Hill (the last rays of the sun were reflecting upon are temple very likely) the disciples pointed out to Him the buildings as they stood there in all their glory. It was as though they meant to say, How can this destruction come, come upon that beautiful house of God? Jesus answered, See ye not all these things? a question which does not mean at all, of course, to call their attention to the temple building; it rather means to ask, Don't you see all this woe and doom hanging over the temple and Jewish nation? over the nation that had rejected the Saviour and within two days would seal their rejection by nailing Him to the cross. Thus it is that Christ also adds, "Verily, I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down."

And so the Lord and His disciples slowly moved on and came to Mt. Olivet. From that hill they could

perhaps view the temple still better, and perhaps even a large section of the city. Privately they now come to Him and asked, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world? The question consisted of two main parts: the first regarded the time when these things of which He had spoken should take place; the second, consisting of two parts, what shall be the sign of Thy own coming and (together with it) of the end of the world. The discourse that follows in Matt. 24 comprises the answer to the twofold question of the disciples.

Now the great question before us is, What is to be the proper perspective for understanding the signs Jesus gives? Or to put the problem in other words, What is the proper method of interpretation to be applied? Was Jesus only speaking of the destruction of Jerusalem, or was Jesus also speaking of the time just prior to His second coming which we now realize was to follow only a long time after Jerusalem's destruction? Or was Jesus perhaps only speaking of the end time of the world as it still lies in the future? Do parts of the discourse only refer to what is now at the present time still future, while perhaps other parts have been fulfilled?

Hodge in his *Systematic Theology*, Vol. III, pages 798-800 cogently summarizes the various views and briefly evaluates them. He states, "There are three methods of interpretation which have been applied to this passage. The first assumes that the whole of our Lord's discourse refers to one question, namely, When was Jerusalem to be destroyed and Christ's kingdom to be inaugurated; the second adopts the theory of what used to be called the double sense of prophecy; that is, that the same words or prediction refer to one event in one sense, and to a different event in a higher sense; the third assumes that one part of our Lord's predictions refers exclusively to one of the questions asked, and that other portions refer exclusively to other questions."

The first of these above mentioned views or perspectives is to our mind definitely out. It refers everything in this chapter to the overthrow of the Jewish polity, the destruction of Jerusalem, and the inauguration of the Church. In that case the chapter has historic interest but it has nothing to say of the future. All that it says is fulfilled, was fulfilled when the Jewish nation met its fateful end and the Church spread out. Even the sign of the coming of the Son of man in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory has no meaning for us. This interpretation is rationalistic, modernistic.

The second interpretation sees in Matthew 24 and its predictions a double sense, that is, a nearer and more distant fulfillment. According to this view the disciples believed that the three events of the destruction of Jerusalem, the second coming of Christ and the end

of the world would come at one and the same time. Thus the Lord answers them without separating the different subjects from one another. He keeps the whole before his mind, and takes the long range of prophecy. The Lord then takes one great end in hand and speaks of all else and what is preparatory only so far as it stands in connection with that end and appears as one of its elements. As Isaiah's description of Israel's deliverance from captivity was so framed as to answer both to the redemption of the Jews from their captivity in Babylon and to the greater redemption by the Messiah, so too Jesus' discourse on the last things in Matthew 24 is couched in terms that have a fulfillment in the final end of the world. Everything accordingly that will be fulfilled fully and finally in the advent time of Christ's final return had its counterpart in the destruction of Jerusalem.

There is a third method of interpretation. According to this the three individual parts of the disciples' question are each answered in a separate portion of the chapter. Some parts, for example, vss. 15-28 deal with the destruction of Jerusalem; others deal with the time just prior to the world's end, vss. 4-14; still others deal with the very coming of Christ in glory vss. 29-31.

To my mind the second of these views must not be discounted. It is indeed true that prophecy is never history and that historical details given in advance; prophecy always looks ahead and speaks of the more distant future in one breath and in the language of the prophet uttering it. It speaks in the known terms of the distant, as e.g. Isaiah speaks of the New Testament Church as Israel, etc. Prophecy reaches out always to the end, and it can do that since every end is a forerunner and type of the final end. Jerusalem's destruction and the woes with it is not chronologically one with the final end of the world, but ideologically they are inseparable and the one is a part and forerunner of the other. Certainly what Christ says in this chapter of the end-time is true of the end of the world as well as of the destruction of Jerusalem. An abundance of Scripture could be quoted to show that the conditions prior to Christ's final return will be as pictured here in Matt. 24. Why then should we limit these predictions to Jerusalem's end alone?

However, the third view that some portions of the chapter refer more particularly to the end of Jerusalem and others more particularly to the end of Jerusalem ought to be allowed to stand. In the case of prophecy this is more frequently true. And it seems to me that the chapter itself suggests this quite readily. In the verses 4-14, then, I should say Christ speaks primarily of the signs presaging his final coming. There will arise false Christs and deceive many, there shall be wars and rumors of wars, famines, pestilences and earthquakes in divers places. These are signs in the world in general, ever present but multiplying as the

final end draws near. Then there are the signs within the Christian community itself—persecution, falling away, false prophets within the fold, lawlessness. Still—to our encouragement—Christ assures us that the gospel shall be preached in all the world, be it for a witness. Only then can the end come, but then it shall come. Now certainly the gospel can hardly be said to have been preached in all the world, except in a very limited sense, when Jerusalem was destroyed in the year 70 A.D.

In the vss. 15-28 it seems to me that the Lord more particularly speaks of the destruction of Jerusalem. Then the Romans came and wrought frightful vengeance upon the Jewish nation. The horror of that event is well-nigh indescribable. At that time the Jewish Christians fled to Pella in Perea across the Jordan. If the Lord had not remembered his elect from the Jews in those terrible days, and shortened those days for their sake, the destruction would not have stopped until all the Jews, Christians and unbelieving Jews, had been wiped out. In that time some did shout that the Messiah had come (according to the conception of the Messiah the *wicked* Jews had). Jesus warns them not to go forth to the desert to find Him. He will not appear at any particular place. When He comes the Son of man will come as lightning cometh out of the east and shineth to the west. They will not have to go here or there to find Him, He will come in great glory visible to all when He comes. Those that proclaim themselves Messiah's and beckon the people to rally round them whether in the desert or in a secret chamber are false Christs, only the wicked will follow such leaders, as eagles only swoop down to devour the carcase, rot alone will seek rot.

Of course, even these conditions applicable as they were to the Jews of that time, will be applicable in a sense to the end-time.

Finally, the vss. 29-41 speak more particularly of the actual moment of Jesus' full and final coming. After the tribulation of those days, typified in the days of Jerusalem's destruction and fulfilled in the end-time, immediately after that, Christ shall appear and gather His elect. The children of God must therefore read the signs of the times and know when these foretokens come to pass that the actual day of Christ's second advent is at hand, that the summer of grace is at hand. However, the exact day and hour no one knows, nor need we know. We must watch, and therefore Christ adds that those days just preceding His return will be days in which we will need to be watching. For as it was with the wicked world in Noe's day, so shall it be then. And when Christ comes, only they will be taken unto Him who as Noah are righteous and walk with God, the others will be abandoned.

Watch therefore and be ye ready. And read the signs of the times, for they multiply even in our day.

The day of the Lord is at hand. The summer of grace is nigh.

P.D.B.

## Radio Broadcasting and Mission Work

Radio broadcasting is the latest, most up-to-date form of mission work. It has this great advantage that it knocks at the door of hundreds, or even thousands of homes at the same time, and gains admittance wherever there is interest in religious programs, thereby reaching many that could hardly be reached in any other way.

There is a wide variety of such programs on the air particularly on Sunday, so that a simple turn of the dial frequently carries the listener from a Jewish to a catholic, from a denominational to an undenominational broadcast of various faiths.

One cannot help but marvel as he listens to some of these programs, particularly to those on a nationwide hook-up, that such superficial and empty messages can appeal to a sufficiently large audience to warrant their remaining on the air from week to week and from year to year. This does not speak very well for the spiritual appetite of the religious elements of America, but does reveal a rapid growth of the apostate Church.

Nor can a person help but feel that mission work frequently is understood to mean nothing more than "winning souls", rather than proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the glad tidings unto the praise of the God of our salvation.

But rather than writing about mission work in general through the channel of the radio, I would rather limit my subject to radio broadcasting in connection with our mission work as Protestant Reformed Churches. I do this even though fully aware of the fact that I can write only as an interested observer who has taken no active part in radio work itself, nor in the various discussions held on this subject in committees and in our Synodical gatherings, but who only looks on from the sidelines.

As most of us know, the matter of our own radio broadcasting has been a subject of discussion from various angles from time to time. And it is also well known that our churches are already engaged in radio work in no less than three different communities in our denomination. "The Protestant Reformed Hour" is in its second year over a station in Grand Rapids, while the Churches of Northwestern Iowa and Minnesota are also in their second season of broadcasting,

and our Redlands Church has also undertaken to broadcast on its own initiative.

These various efforts deserve our interest and our liberal support since there can be no doubt but that we have a distinct calling as Protestant Reformed Churches to make use of the radio as one of the available means for doing mission work.

Overagainst an abundance of superficial preaching, which is mainly even a flagrant departure from the truth of the Scriptures, man-centered instead of God-centered, it is our calling to tell the praises of the ever-living God by maintaining the absolute sovereignty of His Name. Particularly times like these present a definite challenge. Philosophies concerning a universal love and common grace of God, a love of man to man and the good that sinners do, must now suffer shipwreck on the rocks of internecine warfare. Times which challenge us to declare the sure sovereignty of God whose blessing is upon His people, and whose curse is upon the wicked.

By means of the radio we can also reach those who could not possibly be reached in any other way. Many people of Reformed persuasion are entirely held in ignorance or even misinformed about the teachings of our Protestant Reformed Churches. People who, nevertheless, have a sound, Reformed background and are even frequently aware of certain departures from the truth in their own churches. The radio offers an opportunity to teach them and acquaint them with our preaching.

Availing ourselves of this opportunity we can continue to fulfill our Mission mandate and at the same time we may be able to gain an open door for the more personal contact and labors of our missionary.

What many of our people may not know, is that the matter of radio broadcasting in connection with our mission work has been discussed at our last Synod and promises to appear on the agenda again this year.

The reason I state that many of our people may not know this is because our church papers have maintained an almost complete silence on all the actions taken on our last synodical gatherings. Anyone who was not present at those meetings hardly knew whether the Synod had even met. About three or four months later, when most of us had forgotten all about the meeting, the Acts of Synod finally appeared. Then the consistory members, who were privileged with receiving a copy of the Acts, and a few others who availed themselves of the opportunity to buy a copy, could acquaint themselves with the decisions that were made. All of which is conducive toward killing, rather than fostering the interest of our people in our synodical meetings.

Rather than offer an apology for this digression, I cherish the hope that in the future more consideration will be taken of the interest of our churches at large



in our broadest ecclesiastical gatherings.

But to return to the matter at hand, our last synod did consider radio broadcasting as one of the channels for mission work. The mission committee came with the recommendation that "our churches start radio broadcasting, regulated, supervised and financed synodically", with the purpose "to propogate our Protestant Reformed truth and in this manner further the cause of our church extension work."

This recommendation seems to have been accompanied by a "minority report" of the Western division of this committee, which differed with the Eastern division on the advisability of beginning radio broadcasting, synodically supervised, at this time. Their objections were that the radio broadcasting lacks the personal contact necessary in missionary endeavors, and that, to be successful, it would lay too great a financial burden upon our churches. They also objected that synodically supervised radio work would destroy all personal initiative to carry on that work in a local community. And finally, that this matter should not be imposed on the churches by a committee of the Synod, but should be brought to Synod by way of consistory and Classis.

The committee of pre-advise, appointed to investigate this matter and serve the Synod with advise saw two parts in the recommendation of the Mission Committee, and reported as follows:

"The first concerns supplementing the labors of the missionary by radio broadcasting to be done by the missionary in the locality in which he is stationed. We advise Synod to empower the missionary so to supplement his work as opportunity offers and as the Mission Committee deems advisable and financially possible. Such labor may indeed serve to prepare the field for further personal work and contact. It would also be missionary work in the full sense, since it is the calling of the missionary to preach God's Word to outsiders, as is the case over the radio."

The second matter deals with the question of our church entering the field of radio work even apart from the work of the missionary, and henceforth to bring all radio broadcasting in our midst under synodical supervision and support. The point here is, whether all broadcasting with which the name of our churches is used ought to be done synodically and not otherwise. We believe there are questions of principle involved in synodically supervised broadcasting that can be investigated and ought to be prior to our entrance into this matter. e.g. Is radio broadcasting ministry of the Word, even when done by a minister not called as a missionary? There are other questions, equally of a principle nature. We believe there is just reason to appoint a committee to investigate these principal questions. Besides, there is the matter of financing any radio work on a large scale. We suggest that Synod appoint a committee of five to study this

matter, and report to the next synod; and further, that this report be mimeographed, and copies distributed to all officebearers for study by the consistories, and by the classical bodies, prior to the next synod.

This advise was adopted by the synod, which means that the question of synodically supervised broadcasting is due to come up for discussion at the next synod at which time the committee on radio work will very likely be ready to report. We may hear more of this in the future.

In the meantime, the question arises whether the synod should not have approached the matter of radio broadcasting in connection with mission work from another angle. It even seems somewhat questionable whether the Mission Committee actually intended to place Synod before the question as stated by the committee of pre-advise "whether all broadcasting with which the name of our churches is used ought to be done synodically and not otherwise." And as the matter now stands, there is a possibility that our next synod may discuss the principal question without ever coming to a practical plan of action.

It is not difficult to conceive of other possibilities. For example, Synod could authorize the Mission Committee to consider the advisability of using the radio as a channel of mission work through some local consistory or group of consistories entirely independent from any radio projects that are being sponsored by local initiative.

The advantage of this would be that the mission work done by the Mission Committee through the means of the radio would in no way displace or interfere with radio broadcastings which are now the undertaking of local groups. To my mind, it would also remove any possible objection against synodically supervised broadcasting. And it would also be possible for us to reach new fields where there are as yet no Protestant Reformed Churches or where local groups could not possibly finance such an undertaking.

Whether the Mission Committee had this in mind or not makes no real difference; it is worth considering. Mission work through the channel of the radio is worthy of our wholehearted support.

C.H.

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The glory of His kingdom  
 Proclaimed abroad shall be,  
 That all may know His mighty deeds  
 And glorious majesty;  
 His kingdom is eternal,  
 His throne shall stand secure,  
 And His dominion without end  
 Through ages shall endure.