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MEDITATION

The Challenge

And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.

I Kings 18:21.

Ah, thou troubler of Israel!

Such was Ahab's greeting when, after three years and six months, he met Elijah, the lonely representative of Jehovah in the midst of apostate Israel.

Diligently, persistently the king had searched for the prophet of the Lord that had power to shut the heavens and to open them again. No nation or kingdom there was whither he had not sent to inquire after him. "And when they said, He is not here; he took an oath of the kingdom and nation", that they had not found him!

And now the prophet took the initiative!

He showed himself to Ahab!

A long time he had sojourned with the widow of Zarephath, content to wait for the Word of the Lord, and blessing with his presence the home of the Zidon-ian woman and her son. But finally, in the third year of his stay in the very stronghold of Baal, the Word of the Lord for which the prophet had patiently waited had come unto him, and commanded him to depart and to show himself to Ahab.

God would give rain again upon the thirsty land!

Not, indeed, as if the judgment of the drought and the resulting famine had produced the effect of a true repentance and return unto the Lord, either on the part of the wicked king, or on the part of the people.

The very first words that leave the king's lips when he met the prophet of the Lord reveal but too clearly that there was no thought of self-abasement in his heart, that, in fact, he was filled with bitterness and dominated by a spirit of rebellion. And as to the people, still they were halting between two opinions, being compelled to acknowledge the power of Jehovah, but nevertheless inclined to follow after Baal. Yet, God's time had arrived. The judgment had served His purpose. And woe unto those that are not led to repentance by the revelation of His divine glory!

And Elijah had obeyed the Word of the Lord, eager, no doubt, to resume the battle for the name of Jehovah.

And first, as he traversed the land of his fathers, he had met Obediah, one of the remnant according to the election of grace in Israel, a representative of the seven thousand that had not bowed the knee before Baal governor, indeed, of the house of Ahab, but fearing the Lord greatly; timid, perhaps, yet faithful, and deeply concerned about the cause of God's covenant, for he had protected a hundred prophets against the furious wrath and hatred of the wicked queen, and hid them by fifty in a cave, at the same time finding means in that period of scarcity to keep them alive! Between himself and his governor king Ahab had divided the land in search for possible provender for their beasts. And on his way Obediah met and immediately recognized the prophet that "standeth before God."

Struck with terror had he been at the command of Elijah: "Go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here!"

Would such a message not mean its bearer's death? Had not the king in his anger searched for the prophet everywhere? And would not, after Obediah had delivered the message to the king, the Spirit of the Lord carry the prophet once more to a safe hiding place? And would not the king in his fury slay the governor for having sent for him on a fool's errand? But had he, Obediah, not deserved a better lot? Did not the prophet know, then, that he had saved the lives of one hundred of the Lord's prophets, and fed them with

bread and water?

Yet, the prophet had insisted, and he had sworn by the living Lord of hosts that he would show himself that day to the king. And Ahab's governor had obeyed.

And so they met: Elijah that standeth before God, and the apostate ruler in Israel! And lo, the king speaks first: "Thou here, thou troubler of Israel? . . .

It must needs be thus, when the vain peace and prosperity of the wicked is disturbed and condemned by the representative of Jehovah's cause in the world, and hardening rather than repentance is the result. For, indeed, Elijah had troubled Israel when in the wilds of Gilead he had cried to Jehovah his God to shut the heavens, and to withhold the rain from blessing the thirsty land. Yet, his troubling had been but the act of the surgeon that firmly plants his knife in the festering wound to heal it. The deeper, the real cause of all the trouble in Israel were Ahab and his father's house, in that they had forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and followed after Baal! . . .

Thus the prophet replies.

And in the consciousness of his authority and power, he now orders the king of Israel to gather all the people of Israel, and all the prophets and priests of Baal on mount Carmel.

There the battle is to be fought!

There it is to be marvellously revealed that Jehovah is God alone!

The mighty Lord of hosts!

Bold challenge!

Follow ye whoever is God!

If it be Baal that is God, follow him!

But if it be Jehovah, then forsake Baal, and follow Him!

Thus rings out the challenge from the heights of Carmel to all the people that congregated on the mountain slope at the call of this strange prophet, lone, yet mighty champion of the cause of God's covenant in the midst of general apostacy.

He does not attempt to arouse them into a mighty revival.

He has nothing to offer.

He does not sweetly try to persuade them to turn back to Jehovah by holding before them the prospect of rain, as, he might have done.

He does not beg them to return.

He draws the lines. Sharply, distinctly, with a clear decision he brings to them the challenge: Choose now! It is either-or. Do not hesitate to serve and follow with all your heart whomever you profess to be God. But by all means let it be just one, not two. decide once for all who is God, and having decided

they must not hesitate to follow Him and Him only, with all their heart and mind and soul and strength!

A fair enough proposition!

It implies that someone is God! The question at Carmel is not whether there is a God at all. The possibility that the position of the fool, who says within his heart that there is no God, may, perhaps, also be correct, does not enter into the challenge. The prophet is not dealing here with atheistic philosophers, but with covenant people, that have become unfaithful, that have departed from the ways of Jehovah, and apostatized from the living God, but who strangely hesitate to be consistent, and to accept the full consequences of their apostacy. No, the question is not whether there be a God at all. It concerns rather His identity: Who shall He be, Jehovah or Baal?

It must be either-or!

But the proposition implies more.

It presupposes as self-evident, that whoever is God must be followed! You cannot simply ignore God! He is not a fellow creature, an object of your curiosity, or of your scientific investigation, or philosophic contemplation, which you may discuss in your university halls, or in your night clubs; whose identity you may, perhaps, establish, and having established it ignore Him for the rest. God is the Lord! He is your Sovereign, your Creator, your sole Possessor, unto Whom all things, for Whose sake you exist. If this be not so, He is not God! Hence, it must be self-evident that here you deal with a question of life and death. It is of profound practical interest. It concerns your very existence! A God must be followed. You must hear His Word and hide it in your heart. You must acknowledge Him as God, serve Him, obey Him, glorify Him. You must enshrine Him with fear in your deepest soul, and put all your confidence in Him, expect all good things from Him only!

If He be God follow Him!

Still more.

The challenge is very definite. It proceeds from the assumption, as being equally self-evident, that whoever is really God, must be followed wholly and exclusively. There can be no compromise between Jehovah and Baal. It cannot be "Both-And." It must be "Either-Or." If Jehovah be God, then the possibility that Baal also is God is excluded. If Baal be God, then Jehovah cannot be. For whoever is God, He is God! And God is One. There is none beside Him. He is surely the Incomparable! None can be likened to Him, if He is really God! And, therefore, He must be followed wholly or not at all! He is surely a jealous God, whoever He is! He will have the love of all your heart, or nothing at all. He will not divide His glory between Himself and another. He will have your entire devotion, your whole heart and Make up your mind, and act accordingly! They must

mind and soul and strength, or He will surely condemn you as godless, and strike you down in His wrath! He will have all your confidence, or curse you! You must expect all good from Him, or you must expect damnation!

Who is GOD!

Not an academic problem is to be solved at Carmel, but a question of life and death is to be answered!

Who is GOD!

Jehovah or Baal? Which shall it be?

Neither were unknown to the people. They are not unknown today.

Jehovah is the God of Israel. He is the God of revelation. He had manifested Himself to them in word and deed. He had redeemed them, delivered them from bondage, shown them His salvation. He had spoken to them through the prophets, and revealed Himself in the shadows. He is our God, Who revealed Himself in Christ, His cross, His resurrection, His exaltation, as the God of our salvation. He is the God that calleth the things that are not as if they were, and that quickeneth the dead!

And Baal is the god of the nations, of the world. He is the god, not of revelation, for he is not the living God, but of man's own invention. He is like unto them that make him.

If they follow Jehovah, they must keep His covenant, love Him, with all their heart, forsake the world, walk in a new and holy life, hope for His salvation!

If they follow Baal, they walk after the imagination of their own heart, love the lie, commit iniquity, pursue after the things of the flesh!

If they follow Jehovah they must forsake Baal; if they follow Baal, they must abjure Jehovah!

If they follow Baal, they must incur the fierce wrath of the living God!

If they follow Jehovah, they must expect the fury of Baal's power in the world!

If Jehovah is God, follow Him!

If Baal is God, follow him!

Tremendous challenge!

Choose ye!

Be no longer double hearted, two-faced, unstable in all your ways!

How long halt ye between two opinions?

Indeed such was the condition of the people gathered there on the slopes of mount Carmel. Such is the state of many would-be Christians throughout the ages. Such must be the state of mind of those that try to decide the question as to who is God from the utility standpoint.

Between two opinions they halted.

The opinions were: Jehovah is God—Baal is God! Not, indeed, as if both are actually opinions, mere considerations of the mind, inventions of human im-

agination. Baal is God—this, indeed, is mere opinion, a thought that arises from the wicked heart of man, who always stands in enmity over against the living God, and prefers to invent his own idol. But Jehovah is God,—this is the everlasting truth, having its source in the mind of the living God Himself, and revealed to His people through His Spirit and Word. But they, the apostate people, treated both as if they were mere opinions: the one was the opinion of their fathers, and of their prophets; the other was the opinion of the Phoenicians.

And between these they halted in their actual life!

They attempted to maintain both. They did not openly deny that Jehovah is God; but they professed that Baal is God also. They tried to serve Jehovah, and they would also follow after Baal. And the result was that they presented a most miserable spectacle, more miserable, in fact, than the heathen round about them. They halted between two opinions! Though, of course, in reality they served Baal, yet they did not quite give him the full confidence of their heart. They were like all those, that profess Christ, but never can make up their mind, whether they will serve God or Mammon!

Unstable in all their ways!

Halting between two opinions!

And the cause of this double heartedness must not be sought in their ignorance, as if they actually did not know that Jehovah is God, and that Baal is a mere invention of the wicked human heart. This is never the case. They had the knowledge of Jehovah, and Baal was, on the very face of him, a lie, a wicked invention.

The cause was their sinful heart!

Pride, covetousness, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life,—these could be satisfied in the service of Baal; never in the service of Jehovah! All the great nations of the world round about them claimed that Baal is God: why not adopt this opinion? They were ashamed of their narrow minded position! Besides, Baal had become the State religion, the "Beast". To confess that Jehovah alone is God, and to follow after Him, to reject Baal, and condemn his worship, meant that one could not be Caesar's friend. The prophets were persecuted to the death! It was safer to compromise, and to acknowledge that Baal is also God!

Yet, on the other hand, they were afraid of Jehovah, of His power and just judgment. They desired to remain the objects of His favor. Double hearted men like to go to heaven, while they love the world. . .

And so they halted between two opinions!

And when the bold challenge of Elijah rang over the hills, the people answered him not a word!

Choose ye this day! It is either-or!

Silence!

H. H.

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EDITORIALS

Common Grace

6.

We cannot possibly call attention to every detail in Van Til's work for I am afraid that I would weary the attention of our readers too much by doing so. As an illustration of Van Til's meaning when he speaks of the "paradox", and his application to the matter of "common grace", therefore, I will make just one other quotation. The writer is discussing Point I, 1924, and particularly Dr. Schilder's appraisal of its meaning over against Zwier. He writes:

"The point of logic raised by Schilder is of a similar nature. Zwier replies that something more should have been said on the subject. Again we agree. It is one thing to say that our Scripture exegesis must seek to be consistent. We must, as far as we are able, interpret according to the analogy of faith. It is another thing to say that our interpretation must accord with logic as that is generally taken. If the second statement is not to be out of accord with the first it must refer to a genuinely Christian-theistic conception of logic. It may perhaps be said that much of the abstract reasoning of Hoeksema comes from his failure to distinguish between Christian and non-Christian logic. We do not mean, of course, that the rules of the syllogism are different for Christians and non-Christians. Hoeksema refers to the idea of insanity, saying that sin has not made us insane. We may agree if he means merely that the unbeliever can follow the technical processes of intellectual procedure as well or often better than the believer. But when he says or assumes that God's revelation in Scripture may be expected to reveal nothing which will be apparently self-contradictory we demur. He attempts to harmonize the revealed and secret will of God, prayer and the counsel of God, etc. His efforts on this score would not be accepted by unbelievers. He cannot solve the full bucket difficulty, a difficulty which, they think, lies at the heart of the Christian religion. To them the whole idea of a God who is self-sufficient and all glorious precludes the idea of anything taking place in history that should glorify Him. To say that no one resist the will of God, not even the murderer is for them, to say that we simply believe in fatalism. Have we then the right and courage to say that Christianity does not contradict the laws of logic? We do by pointing out that it is God, the self-sufficient God, in Whom is no darkness at all, Who made us His creatures. Then it appears natural that there should be

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in all that pertains to our relation to God (and what does not?) an element of mystery. As finite creatures we deal in all our contacts with an infinite and inexhaustible God On the other hand, the Christian doctrine of God is the presupposition of the possibility of true logical procedure. The rules of formal logic must be followed in all our attempts at systematic exposition of God's revelation, whether general or special. But the syllogistic process must be followed in frank subordination to the notion of a self-sufficient God. We must here truly face the Absolute. We must think His thoughts after Him. We must think analogically rather than univocally. To reason as though we can remove all the "logical difficulties" which will naturally appear to be contained in Christian system of truth is to say, in effect, that on the question of logic the believer and the non-believer occupy neutral territory and to assign to the unbeliever a competence he does not in reality possess." pp. 59, 60.

It is evident that in application to the first point of 1924 this means that, when Scripture teaches that God hates the reprobate, both as reprobate and as historically existing wicked, this does not preclude the possibility that the same Scripture also teaches that He loves them, both as reprobate and as wicked, and is gracious to them. The first point is defended by an appeal to the Paradox. The same application is made, of course, with regard to the second and third Points of 1924. The fact that the Bible teaches that the wicked is wholly corrupt, not only in his nature, but also in his ways, does not preclude the doctrine that he also does good in this world. It is admitted that these things are *apparently* contradictory. It is denied, however, that they are *really* contradictory. The apparently contradictory is a *mystery*. And all this is maintained by an appeal to the self-sufficiency and absoluteness of God.

Now, on this entire philosophy of the "paradox" I wish to make the following remarks:

1. That it is still not quite clear to me what the author means by his distinction between Christian and non-Christian logic. He appears to admit that the formal rules of logic are the same for the believer and the unbeliever. But if this is fully admitted, it seems to me that it is admitted also that there is no difference between the *logic* of the believer and the *logic* of the unbeliever, anymore than there can be any difference between the formal rules of *arithmetic* for the Christian and the non-Christian. For what is logic otherwise than a system of formal rules of reasoning? There may be difference in fundamental premises from which the Christian and the non-Christian start their reasoning process; and there is, of course. The former starts from revelation, the latter refuses to take his starting point in the Word of God. But this does not effect their formal logic. There may be

a difference in the application and appraisal of the value and power of logic. The Christian admits, of course, that with his finite mind he can neither reach out for, nor deny the Infinite; the rationalistic unbeliever refuses to admit this. But even so, the formal processes of logic remain the same for both. Also in this respect they have what Van Til calls "the metaphysical situation" in common. The distinction made by Van Til between Christian and non-Christian *logic* to me appears erroneous.

2. To formal logic certainly belongs the law of contradictions, and I maintain that this law holds for the Christian as well as the non-Christian, and, what is more, that even Van Til can never escape its binding force. It is my conviction that for anyone to state that he believes both sides of a contradiction, apparently or real, is itself a contradiction. He that makes the statement simply contradicts himself. What is a contradiction? It is a statement that is the direct opposite of another statement, so directly the opposite that it denies the truth of the latter statement. And what is the formal rule of logic that applies here? This, that a thing cannot *be* and *not be* at the same time, or a thing must either *be* or *not be*; and that the same attribute cannot be denied and affirmed of the same subject at the same time. Now it ought to be as plain as the sun in the heavens that no one can possibly escape the stringent necessity of this formal law of logic. If I maintain the truth of one of two contradictory statements, *I thereby have already stated that I have denied the truth of the other statement*. A thing may have two quite different attributes, of course. The statement: *this paper is white*, does not contradict the statement *this paper is black*, for the simple reason that it may be white on one side, black on the other. But after I have stated: *This paper is white*, I cannot say and believe the statement: *this paper is not white*, for the simple reason that in my first statement I did already state: this paper is *not* not-white. Now, Van Til admits this. He emphasizes that he does not believe in the *really* contradictory. But he claims that he can maintain the *apparently* contradictory. Let us see whether this be true, i.e. whether any normal mind, Christian or non-Christian, can really accept the *apparently* contradictory. What is meant by the *apparently* contradictory? This, that two propositions *appear* contradictory to me, although I know that they are not. As far as I can see, they are absolutely contradictory, so that the one precludes the truth of the other, and the other precludes the truth of the one. I know that this paper is not: *white and not-white*. Yet, so it appears to me. What, then, is my only conclusion? The contradiction? Do I, in that case, say categorically: this paper is both white and not white? Not at all! I know that this statement cannot be truly made. I am convinced, that whatever may be the truth about the color of that

paper, the statement that it is both white and not-white is *certainly not true!* What then is the result? That I can say absolutely nothing about the color of that paper! And so it is evident, that no normal mind can possibly entertain two contradictory propositions.

3. This does not at all deny the *mystery*. I can very well believe the mystery on the basis of revelation. I know that the Infinite is forever beyond the reach of the finite, and that if we are to *know* the Infinite, it can only be by revelation, and, moreover, that this revelation of the Infinite must necessarily involve mysteries for my finite mind. The Scriptural notion of mystery is that of something which cannot be known by man at all, except by revelation. And even though it is known by faith, it may be too high, too deep for me to comprehend and fathom. But a mystery is no contradiction, nor an apparent contradiction. The doctrine of the holy trinity is a mystery, but it is no doctrine that involves logical contradictions. If it did, we could not have a doctrine of the trinity at all. That God is the absolutely self-sufficient Being, and that He, nevertheless, purposes to be glorified by the creature, may involve matters too high for us, but it implies no logical contradiction. But that God wills to damn and save the same man, is to say: God wills to *damn* him, and God wills *not to damn* him. And that is a contradiction.

4. But Van Til claims that there are apparent contradictions in the Bible, and that in such cases we simply accept both sides of the contradiction. I deny this. For: 1. The Bible is the revelation of God to us, adapted to our understanding. God, Who created our logical mind, also adapted His own revelation to that mind. Hence, there surely cannot be contradictions in the Word of God. There are no contradictions in God. How could there be contradictions in His revelation to us? 2. It is true, that there may be, there are, in Scripture statements that at first blush appear to contradict each other. But it has always been sound Reformed method of exegesis to make a serious attempt to solve the difficulties by explaining those passages that appear to contradict the current teaching of the Bible, the *analogia Scripturae*, in the light of the latter. Van Til emphasizes that this method must be applied in such cases. Only, for some reason, he quite arbitrarily wants to stop at a certain point. And his objection to my method can only be that I insist that this method must be applied throughout, to the very end. And when I apply this thoroughly Reformed method to the interpretation of Holy Writ, I come to the conclusion that the theory of common grace is a myth, an invention of man's mind, not a truth of revelation. 3. But suppose now that after all our efforts there should still be apparent contradictions in the Bible. What then? Must we then not accept both sides of the contradiction? I have already shown that this is impossible. No, but in that case:

a. We adhere to the current teaching of Scripture, and b. We humbly confess that as yet we have not sufficient light to solve all the difficulties, and continue our search. I sincerely believe that I have always followed this method, and that Van Til does me an injustice when he accuses me of abstract reasoning or rationalism. H. H.

The Sign Of The Virgin Mother

The fulness of time, the time when "God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law," is noted for its many visions and revelations. Shortly before the birth of the Saviour, the angel Gabriel was the bearer of amazing and glad tidings. He had been sent to the aged Zacharias as the latter was ministering in the temple, to announce to him that his wife Elizabeth should bear him a son, at whose birth many would rejoice, and who would be great in the sight of the Lord. Six months later the same Gabriel, "that stands in the presence of God," was sent to the humble and despised village of Nazareth, out of which no good thing was ever expected, to bring Mary the most amazing message that was ever brought to human being, that she, a virgin, should conceive, and bear a son, and should call His name Jesus. "He shall be great," thus the angel had spoken, "and shall be called the Son of the highest; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David; and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end." And when Mary, perplexed, had inquired: "How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?" the heavenly messenger had explained: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." And other revelations had followed. When Mary, at the suggestion of Gabriel, had visited her cousin Elizabeth, the latter had called her the mother of her Lord, the blessed among women; and Mary's soul had magnified the Lord, and her spirit had rejoiced in God her Saviour, as she envisioned through the Spirit of prophecy the salvation of God, and the realization of His promise to Abraham. So too, the birth of John the Baptist, Zacharias' tongue had been loosed, and being filled with the Holy Ghost, he had prophesied of salvation through the "dayspring from on high." And soon, when the Christ-child is born, the heavens rend, and angels bring the message of the gospel in speech and song, shepherds spread abroad what they had seen and heard, Simeon speaks of the child as a sign that shall be contradicted, and Anna tells the glad story to all that looked for redemp-

tion in Jerusalem. Revelations, through visions of angels as well as through prophetic inspiration, abound in the fulness of time. The incarnation of the Word is richly accompanied by the spoken Word of God!

And how could it be different? Was not the birth of Jesus, the incarnation of the Son of God, the highest revelation of the Invisible; but was it not, at the same time, shrouded in the most impenetrable veil: the likeness of sinful flesh? Who, then, is ever able to understand the deep ways of God Who hideth Himself; and Who, of finite human beings, would have been able to trace the steps of the Infinite as He came in the Person of His only begotten Son to dwell with us for ever, unless He Himself had announced His coming, and explained His inscrutable ways? Who would have recognized Him in that babe in the manger, wrapped in swaddlingclothes, had He not sent His angel to the shepherds in the fields of Ephratah, to explain the Word that had come to pass? Was not the Christchild in Bethlehem like every other babe to all appearances, except that he was poorer than the poorest on the earth? Or how could Mary have understood, or even endured, the awful experience of her virgin pregnancy, had not God Himself explained the cause to her before it came to pass? Or who would have believed the sign of the virgin mother, so capable of quite a different interpretation, if the spoken Word of God had not accompanied the Word becoming flesh?

Joseph, to whom Mary was espoused, certainly did not correctly read and interpret the sign of the virgin with child. And who can lay it to his charge, or hold it against him? But the sign was divinely explained to him, and he believed the Word of God. The narrative of this revelation, as beautiful as it is simple, you may find in Matthew 1:18-21: "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph, her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: and knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name Jesus."

Everything in this narrative revolves, as you notice, around the sign of the virgin mother. For the text declares that all this was done that the sign of the virgin mother might be fulfilled. Unto this end, Mary was espoused, yet not married, to Joseph, who was, like Mary, of the house of David. This although giving her the legal status of a wife, left her a virgin still; and so the sign could be realized, and at the same time hidden from profane eyes, and, perhaps, from wicked hands, and presently, Jesus could be legally registered as the son of David. But, evidently, and quite naturally, Mary had not informed her espoused husband of the message she had received from Gabriel. She kept all these things pondering them in her heart. The subject was too delicate for discussion with Joseph. And, besides, how could he possibly believe her word? It was a matter that could only be accepted on the Word of God Himself. And so she trusted that the same God Who had revealed the Wonder of the Sign to her, would in due time interpret it to Joseph. And so all these things: the wrong interpretation by Joseph of Mary's pregnancy, his determination to put her away privily, without going through the process of a public trial, the vision of the angel, and the following up of the word of the angel by Joseph,—all these things took place that the sign of the virgin mother might be realized, believed and understood by believers, and protected against the assaults of wicked men!

Long ago the sign of the virgin mother had been promised. Even then, almost eight hundred years before its final realization, it had been given as a sign that Jerusalem should surely be saved. The wicked Ahaz was then king of Judah. And the existence of God's people was then threatened by Rezin, king of Syria and Pekah, king of Israel, who made war against Jerusalem and Judah. The prophet Isaiah is sent to the wicked king, as he is examining his fortifications, with the promise that Jerusalem shall be saved, and that her enemies shall not prevail against her; and with the exhortation to put his confidence in Jehovah. But this the wicked king dare not do. How can the wicked trust in the Lord? Ahaz would rather rely on his strongholds, and on his alliance with the king of Assyria. The prophet suggests that the king ask a sign that the Lord will surely save Jerusalem. He may ask for a sign, either from heaven above, or in the depth beneath. But the king refuses. Piously he offers the excuse that he will not tempt the Lord, but in his heart he is afraid that the sign, when it is given, will only aggravate his guilt, seeing that in his heart he is determined not to put his trust in the Lord. However, the sign will surely be given, for the prophet declares: "Therefore the Lord Himself shall give you a sign; Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." The sign of the virgin mother, therefore, is God's own

sign that Jerusalem, that His people shall surely be saved. And that sign is fulfilled, when Mary is with child, and when the angel interprets her condition as being due to a divine conception.

A sign in Scripture is always some perceptible token of representation in the world of our experience of the invisible wonder of salvation. Salvation is a wonder. It is that work of God whereby He lifts us and all creation from the depth of sin and death and the curse, into the eternal glory of His heavenly tabernacle and everlasting kingdom of righteousness and peace in Christ Jesus our Lord. The power whereby this wonder is accomplished is His grace. Now, a sign is a perceptible token of this invisible wonderwork of grace in our sin cursed world. Sometimes something becomes a sign merely by God's appointment. Thus the rainbow is set in the clouds to serve as a sign of God's everlasting and all-embracing covenant; the sand that is by the seashore is a sign of the multitudinous seed of Abraham; the bread and wine in our Lord's Supper are appointed to be signs of the broken body and shed blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. But sometimes, very often, signs are directly connected with the operation of God's handiwork in our world, and are caused by it. Thus the wonders of our Lord, performed during His earthly sojourn: the healing of the sick, the opening of the eyes of the blind, the cleansing of the lepers, the raising of the dead,—all these are signs of the immediate presence and operation of the wonderwork of God's power of salvation. When the wonder of God's grace breaks through our sin-cursed world, the blind see, the deaf hear, the lame walk, the dumb speak, the lepers are cleansed, and the dead are raised. And all these wonders are signs of that power, that will ultimately completely triumph over all the power of sin and death and the curse, in the new creation, in which the tabernacle of God shall be with men, and righteousness shall dwell forever.

To this latter category belongs the sign of the virgin mother. And it is both unique and fitting. Unique it is, first of all, because it does, and must needs stand alone. It is never, nor could it ever, be repeated. In all the history of the world there appears only one sign of a virgin that conceived and bore a son. Other signs there are many, this sign stands alone. Just as there may be a multitude of radiuses in a circle, but there is only one center, so there are a multitude of wonders, but there is only one sign of the virgin mother. For it is the sign of signs, without which there could be no other signs, because it is the sign of the incarnation, the coming into the flesh of the Son of God, which cannot be repeated, and which is the heart and source of all the wonders of salvation. It signifies, as the angel of the Lord explained to Joseph in a dream, that that which was conceived in Mary was of the Holy Ghost. It means that the human nature of Jesus was, indeed, human, but that

it was nevertheless, conceived and born without the will of man. The sign of the virgin mother represents the inscrutable mystery that the Son of God, the second Person of the Holy Trinity, prepared for Himself a human nature from the flesh and blood of the virgin Mary to unite Himself with us for ever. The sign, therefore, must needs be unique. But unique the sign is, too, in its lowliness. It is lowlier still than the Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in the manger. It cannot be seen except by faith, and in the light of the Word of God. In fact, to the natural eye the sign speaks only of sin, the sin of adultery, so that, as it were, the sign is completely hid by its very form. Thus Joseph at first interpreted the sign. And being a just man, he purposed to let Mary go, and to break the bond that existed between them; while, loving her, he meant to put her away privily, that he might not expose her shame. But surely, the sign speaks only of shame, until the Word of God interprets it to him, and he believes and obeys. This, too, must needs be so. For it is a sign of the Son of God come in the flesh, in fact, in the likeness of sinful flesh. In the manger of Bethlehem lies the most astounding Wonder of God, yet it is completely hid! So is the sign of the virgin that conceived and bare a son the most amazing sign, yet it does not even speak of the Wonder which it represents, in fact, it suggests nothing but sin and shame, except to him that believes! How unique and how fitting is the sign of the virgin mother!

Shall we attempt to explain this marvellous sign? Shall we try to demonstrate the possibility of it? That would mean to destroy it. Shall we make plain its necessity? This has been attempted, but in last analysis even this must fail. We believe that Christ was born of a virgin without the will of man, because this is the indubitable testimony of Holy Writ. Even this has been denied. It is argued that the word translated "virgin" in Isa. 7:14 may just as well denote a young married woman; it is observed that Christ was of the house of David, while the genealogies we have in the Bible of Jesus are not of Mary but of Joseph; it is suggested that it was not at all necessary for the incarnation of the Son of God, that He should be born of a virgin: He could have united Himself equally well with a normally conceived and born human nature. However, there can be no doubt about the Scriptural teaching on this point. When the angel announces to Mary the birth of her great Son, Mary asks the question of astonishment: "How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?" And the angel explains: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee." All this can only mean that Mary was a virgin, and that the conception of the human nature of Jesus was of the Holy Ghost. And the same is true of the narrative in Matthew. The attitude of Joseph toward his espoused wife, and his intention to leave her, have meaning only on the

supposition that Mary was still a virgin: they were betrothed, but not yet married. And, besides, the angel assures Joseph in a dream that "that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost." Surely, the Word of God teaches that Jesus the Christ was born of a virgin, without the will of man! The sign of the virgin mother is very real!

To them that believe this sign represents the greatest of all wonders, and proclaims the very heart of the gospel concerning our salvation. For it signifies that the Son of God, the second Person of the Holy Trinity, who is and remains very God, co-eternal with the Father and the Holy Ghost, became very man, assumed the flesh and blood of the children, that He might save them from their sins, and lift them up into the highest glory and blessedness of God's heavenly fellowship. Great, indeed, is the mystery of godliness! God also became man: He did not cease to be God, but He took upon Himself the human nature! The Creator also became creature: He did not abdicate as Creator, but He assumed the creaturely nature and form. The Infinite came to dwell within the limits of the finite; the Eternal came into time; the Almighty became a weak man; the Lord of all became servant! God came to dwell, to tabernacle with us: He lived our human life, in our human soul and human body; He thought human thoughts, He experienced human emotions, He saw through human eyes, and heard with human ears, and spoke through human mouth. Who can explain this mystery of godliness? To be sure, in the light of Scripture, we can and must say a little about it, to safeguard it against the attack of profane men. And from very early times the Church so interpreted the sign of the virgin mother, that it signified that the Person of the Son of God took upon himself the real human nature from the flesh and blood of the virgin Mary, so that Jesus the Christ is one Person, the divine, but in two natures: the divine and the human. He is very God and very man, in unity of the divine Person of the Son. Let us, however, consider the sign of the virgin mother as proclaiming to us the heart of the gospel: God has united Himself with us in most intimate fellowship! The Incarnation is the beginning and the heart of that wonderwork of salvation that will culminate in the perfected tabernacle of God with us, where we shall know Him as He is, and see Him face to face! And that is why they shall forever call His name Immanuel, God with us!

But as Immanuel He is also Jesus, Jehovah-Salvation! For He came to save His people from their sins! But in order to accomplish this salvation He must be Immanuel, God and man in unity of the divine Person of the Son! He must be very man, for man had sinned, and man must speak the final *Yes* that will negate for ever the *No* he once uttered in paradise. He must die, and die willingly, thus bringing the perfect sacrifice for sin. He must, therefore,

be very man, but also perfectly righteous, that he may bring the perfect sacrifice. But He must be more than man: He must be very God, for how could mere man ever live through the fire of God's wrath, and how could the obedient death of one ever be sufficient to justify millions that had sinned? And, besides, how could mere man deliver us from the dominion of death, and make us partakers of the eternal life of God? He must be very God and very man! Immanuel-Jesus: He is the Saviour indeed! The sign of the virgin mother proclaims that He Who died on the accursed tree is the Son of God, so that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them! We are justified! Immanuel is the God of our salvation! God with us is God for us! And if God be for us, who can be against us?

And so the angel does not contradict the word of prophecy, which had predicted that they should call His name Immanuel, when he enjoins Joseph to call His name Jesus, but rather interprets it and completes it. For, as the angel himself explains to Joseph: "He shall save His people from their sins." To appreciate the significance of this brief gospel message, we should, in turn, emphasize every single part of it. He shall save His people *from their sins*. Sin is our misery; from sin, from guilt and pollution we must be saved, and we must be clothed with everlasting righteousness and holiness and truth in order to be saved at all. He shall *save* them from their sins: He shall lift them out of the depth of their misery, in order to raise them into the highest possible state of blessedness in heavenly glory. He *shall* save His people from their sins. Salvation is not an opportunity, a chance, a possibility, the realization of which is contingent upon the will of man. He is not merely willing to save, but powerless if you refuse to let Him save you. Salvation is an absolute certainty: He *shall* save! He shall surely accomplish all the work necessary to change His people from miserable sinners, hating and cursing God into beloved and loving children of God, dwelling forever in His house! But if the absolute certainty of this salvation is to be maintained, you must not fail to shift the emphasis once more, and read the words of the angel thus: He shall save *His* people from their sins! Salvation is not universal, but particular, both in actual fact and in the eternal purpose of God. For His people are those, whom the Father hath given to this Jesus from before the foundation of the world. And them He shall surely save. And when you and I believe on His name, it is only because the eternal elective purpose of God reached down to us and ingrafted us into Jesus by a living faith. And, finally, let us emphasize one other part of this brief gospel, the most important of all: *He* shall save His people from their sins. There is the guarantee of it all. For He is Jesus-Immanuel, Immanuel-Jesus, the God of our salvation with us and

for us! The sign of the virgin mother proclaims that Jerusalem shall certainly be saved!

H. H.

The Biblical Idea Of Mystery

Generally speaking we may say that there are especially two wrong conceptions of the Biblical idea of Mystery which are very prevalent in the Church today. The first is, that the scriptural idea of mystery is something which is hidden, something which is concealed from us. It is especially those who are addicted to this view, who are always ready to admonish those, who would seek to penetrate into the mysteries of God, and of His Word, with the words of Moses as recorded in Deuteronomy 29:29: "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law." The second wrong conception is, that the Scriptural idea of mystery refers to that which is contrary to human reason and logic, and emphasizes that childlike faith in Scripture demands that we accept propositions that are directly contradictory to each other, and in conflict with our logical mind. Not to do this, is to deny the Biblical idea of mystery. They accuse those, who seek to harmonize the *seeming* contradictions of Scripture, of being rationalists, who refuse to bow before the mysteries of the Word of God. Over against them we maintain that the scriptural idea of mystery always far transcends the limits of the finite mind and our boldest comprehension, but firmly deny that it is ever in conflict with the logic of the human mind. I believe that it was Dr. K. Schilder who once stated that "God's denkvetten maken nooit 's menschen denkvetten teniet." Faith in Scripture never demands that yea is also nay, that black is also white, that in respect to the same object and the same thing God wills, and He wills not.

The first wrong conception of the scriptural idea of mystery, that it is something hidden or concealed, is perhaps due to the fact that this is the usual modern meaning of the term. Webster defines the term mystery as "a rite to which only privileged worshippers were admitted, and that, after preparatory ceremonies and under obligation of secrecy; A profound secret; something wholly unknown, or something kept cautiously concealed, and therefore exciting curiosity or wonder; an enigma; something that has not been, or cannot be explained, as a religious truth or fact, that is beyond human 'comprehension'; a sacred and at the same time mysterious thing." This is not at all the scriptural idea of the term mystery. Such indeed are

the 'mysteries' of paganism which are based upon superstition and false supernaturalism, and degenerated into all kinds of secret heathen cults and pagan rituals. Such is also the 'mystery' of the Roman Catholic doctrine of the Eucharist, also based upon a false antithesis of the natural and supernatural, but these have nothing in common with the Biblical idea of *mystery*.

Christianity has no secret doctrines which must be kept cautiously concealed, as some seem to think of the doctrine of predestination, or religious truths which have not been, or cannot be explained. Just the opposite is true, for the Scriptural idea of *mystery* is always, without exception, identified with *revelation*. The mysteries of Christianity are its revealed doctrines. They refer not to the hidden, but to the revealed things of God. Indeed they were hidden in the eternal decrees of God, but now they are revealed. Thayer in his Greek lexicon defines the New Testament term 'musterion' as "God's plan of providing salvation for men through Christ, which was once hidden but now is revealed."

A study of the various passages of Scripture in which the term *mystery* occurs, strikingly reveals that the scriptural idea of *mystery* is very closely related to such terms as *revelation*, *to make known*, *to know*, *to manifest*, *to proclaim*, *to declare*, *to understand*. In Scripture the term *mystery* is almost synonymous with the terms *revelation*, *knowledge*, and *understanding*. Note the following passages: Romans 16:25, 26, "Now to Him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the *revelation of the mystery* which was kept secret since the world began, but now is *made manifest*, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, *made known* to all nations for the obedience of faith." Notice especially the words I have underscored. Thus also Colossians 1:26, 27: "Even the *mystery* which hath been hid from ages and generations, but now is *made manifest* to his saints: To whom God would *make known* what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." Here the apostle emphasizes that God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery, which had been hid from ages and generations, namely Christ in you, the hope of glory. In Ephesians 6:19 the apostle requests the prayers of the Ephesian believers, "that I may open my mouth boldly, *to make known* the mystery of the gospel." Again in Ephesians 1:9 "*Having made known* unto us the mystery of His will." See also Ephesians 3:3, 4, 8; Colossians 4:3, 4; Revelations 10:7; I Cor. 2:2. In all these passages *mystery* is closely associated with '*revelation*' as well as with word of similar import "*to make known*", "*to manifest*", and "*hath declared*", clearly revealing unto us that the scriptural idea of mystery

is just the opposite from *hidden*, or *that which is concealed*. This is also the idea expressed in the only passage in which the term "*mystery*" is attributed unto our Lord; "And he said unto them, unto you it is given *to know the mystery* of the kingdom of God." Mark 4:11. See also Matthew 13:11 and Luke 8:10. In these passages the Lord emphasizes that it has been given unto us *to know*, i.e. to understand the mysteries of the kingdom of God. Never may we present it as though the scriptural idea of *mystery* is something which is hidden, unknown, or something which must be kept cautiously concealed. Neither may it be presented as though these mysteries of God should not be the object of our earnest, and prayerful study, so that we may come to an ever fuller understanding of them, or that they should not be proclaimed unto the church. It were far better that the prayer of the apostle were also our prayer, "And for me that I may open my mouth boldly, *to make known* the mystery of the gospel."

But why then does Scripture speak of that which is revealed, made known, manifested, as a *mystery*? The answer is self evident, namely *just because* that which is revealed, made known, manifested, is not the product of intellectual research, or human reasoning, but of *Divine revelation*; Not from below, but from above. This is especially the reasoning of the Apostle Paul in I Corinthians 2:1-16. In this passage he speaks of the mystery of God, in contrast to the philosophy and wisdom of this world. God's plan of providing salvation for men through the cross of Christ Jesus, which once was hidden, but now revealed, is the *mystery* of which he speaks in verses 1, 2 which none of the rulers of this world knew, for had they known it, says the apostle, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory. Vss. 7, 8. In verse 9 he emphasizes that this *mystery*, which God ordained before the world unto our glory, was not the product of the human intellect, or worldly wisdom, for "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." That which God prepared for them that love Him, namely, salvation through the cross, is the mystery which we could never understand through human wisdom, but can come to us only by *Divine revelation*. Vs. 10, "But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit." Hence in the scriptural sense all *mystery* is revelation, and all *revelation* is mystery, because that which is revealed, namely salvation through the cross of Christ, is not the product of human wisdom, but of Divine wisdom, and comes to us only by Divine revelation. (See also Dr. Schilder, *Wat is de Hemel*. p. 253). The content of this mystery, which was hid, but is now revealed, is briefly explained by the Apostle Paul in I Tim. 3:16, "And without controversy great is the *mystery* of godliness. God was *manifest* in the flesh, justified in

the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory."

And the reason that this divine *mystery* is hid from the wise and prudent, (Matthew 11:25) and from the princes of this world, (I Corinthians 2:6) and also that it is not given unto them to understand the mysteries of the kingdom of God, (Mark 4:11) is not due to the fact that his revelation of the mystery is veiled in such enigmatical and esoteric language that they cannot understand it. On the contrary the language of scripture is unmistakeably clear, so that they are without excuse. It was just for the purpose, that they might clearly and unmistakably see and hear this revelation, that the Lord spake unto them in parables. "That seeing they may see, and perceive not, and hearing they might hear, and understand not." (Mark 4:12). That they nevertheless do not perceive and do not understand these mysteries of the kingdom of God, which came to pass before their very eyes and ears in parables, and are clearly revealed in the Word of God, (Isaiah 6:9) is not due to any secrecy or indistinctness in the medium of revelation, but is due to the fact that their carnal minds are blinded. This the apostle Paul emphasizes in 2 Corinthians 4:3, 4. "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." (See also I Corinthians 2:14). On the other hand, the ability to perceive and understand the mysteries of God, is a gift of grace. "Unto you it is *given* to know the mystery of the kingdom of God". (Mark 4:11).

Lack of space forbids us at this time to discuss the second wrong conception of the scriptural idea of mystery, namely that it is something which is contrary to human reason and understanding. Perhaps, with the consent of the Editor, I will do this at some later date.

B. K.

Christian Isolationism

It was New Year's Eve. Two young men of the same neighbourhood were proceeding down the street together. As they came abreast a large building where an all-night dancing party was in progress, one of them turned in, the other proceeded down the street until he came to the church which he regularly attended and where divine services were being held that evening. The one chose the pleasures of sin, the other passed it by for the service of his God.

That's Christian isolationism.

The dictionary defines the verb "to isolate" as meaning, "to set apart". The word "Christian" in our caption describes the kind of isolation we have in mind. Christian isolation refers to the state and condition of an individual as the result of having been set apart in the Christian sense of the word. Or, it may also refer to that activity of the individual whereby he sets himself apart, in the Christian sense, from others. The first views that isolation from the passive point of view, the latter from the active point of view. The former refers to the work of God whereby He has set the Christian apart, as Christian, from others who are not Christian; the latter refers to the activity of the individual whereby he sees himself apart from others, not as individual but as Christian. As far as the relation is concerned, we may say that the latter is the result of the former. God has isolated the Christian and therefore the Christian has the calling to isolate himself in the midst of this world of sin and darkness.

And Christian isolationism is the doctrine that concerns itself with the above described reality.

Like almost all Christian doctrines, so also this doctrine of Christian isolationism has been misinterpreted and corrupted in its practical application. There have been—and I suppose there still are—extremists who have placed all the emphasis upon the "isolation" to such an extent that the Christian character of it was almost forgotten. They made of it an isolation of Christians and that is entirely different from Christian isolation. As most of us know, the Anabaptist is known for this radical view.

Now the first thing which we shall have to determine in our discussion is whether or not Scripture in any sense teaches a Christian isolation. We are of the opinion that it does.

We may notice, in the first place, that Scripture, both in the Old and New Testaments, declares it to be a fact that God has set His people apart as His peculiar possession. We find that the history of Israel, the chosen race of the old dispensation, begins with the isolation of Abraham from the land of his nativity, Ur of the Chaldees, Gen. 12:1, 2. Moreover the whole history of Israel is one that is characterized throughout by constant isolation. Jacob and his family are given the land of Goshen to dwell in when they come to Egypt, Gen. 47:11; Israel is cut off from Egypt by the Red Sea and is miraculously preserved in the wilderness and passing through the Jordan it enters the promised land of Canaan. That Israel is a peculiar people, in distinction of all other peoples, God Himself declares in Isa. 43:21, "This people have I formed for myself; they shall show forth my praises." And this, we all understand, has bearing also on the church of the new dispensation. This same fact re-occurs in the beautiful prayer of Solomon at the dedication of

the temple, I Kings 8:53, when he declares that God separated Israel from among all the people of the earth, to be His inheritance, as He Himself spake by the hand of Moses when He brought them out of Egypt. Moses, speaking with the Lord at Sinai, Exodus 33:16, says, ". . . so shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth". Turning to the New Testament, we find that it teaches this same truth with a view to the people of God. The Lord Himself declares in John 15:19, "If ye were of the world, the world love his own; but because ye are not of the world but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." In John 17:14 the Lord repeats this truth. The apostle Peter declares in I Peter 2:9, that we are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people and therefore are pilgrims and strangers in the world, vs. 11. Also John supports this truth of isolation, from a negative point of view in I John 2:19, when he says, "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us", while in I John 5:19, he speaks as follows, "And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness". The apostle Paul likewise teaches this truth by implication in Rom. 11, by the example of the ingrafting of the olive branch.

In the second place, we find that Scripture teaches this same truth by means of various admonitions which come to the child of God. Israel is, for example, constantly admonished against amalgamating with the heathen round about them. Scripture very clearly demands isolation on the part of the child of God in II Cor. 6:14-17, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? . . . And what concord hath Christ with Belial? . . . And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; . . . Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing: and I will receive you." Notice also if you will the warning in I John 2:15, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world". Moreover, every exhortation to holiness implies the necessity of Christian isolation; the basic meaning of holiness is separation. We could, therefore, multiply the Scriptural quotations which plainly prove this fact if the above mentioned were not sufficient.

Finally, Scripture gives us many personal examples of Christian isolation. Moses refuses to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter and chooses to suffer affliction with the people of God; Ruth forsakes her fatherland, Moab, and desires to be reckoned among the children of God; Rahab is delivered from the destruc-

tion of Jericho and is numbered with Israel. In the New Testament all the apostles may be quoted as examples; the author to the Hebrews mentions, in chapter 11, that there were many who were cast out "of whom the world was not worthy", while Christ Himself speaks of the necessity of forsaking father and mother for His sake.

It must be evident to everyone that many more Scriptural examples could be quoted, however, the above mentioned are sufficient for us to draw our conclusions in respect to the teaching of Scripture on this point. Notice that Scripture teaches:

1. That God's people are throughout all ages a peculiar people which He has separated (isolated) unto Himself as His inheritance. They are, therefore, from a spiritual point of view, a different people. They are in the world but not of the world, chosen out of the world, holy, called out of darkness into light, translated into the Kingdom of His dear Son, etc. etc.

2. That this difference, this isolation, finds its deepest cause and basis in God's election. God has formed them for His praise, He has chosen them in Christ before the foundation of the world, has predestinated them unto the adoption of children by Christ Jesus to Himself, has foreknown them and has predestinated them to be conformed to the image of His Son, etc. etc.

3. That God realizes this isolation through the way of regeneration calling and faith. They are not by nature children of God. By nature they are, like all others, born dead in trespasses, without God in the world, children of wrath, darkness, servants of sin and the devil, fulfilling the lusts of the flesh. By nature, therefore, they cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven, cannot see it. But God causes them to be born again, He makes them alive, He begets them through the word of truth, (conversion). Moreover, He calls them unto Himself out of darkness into His marvelous light, for whom He did predestinate, them He also called. He grants them lively faith through the knowledge of Him, ingrafts them into Christ and grants them all things that pertain to life and godliness, and so causes them to walk as children of light, in newness of life, in the midst of this world of darkness and sin.

4. That, finally, this isolation is of a spiritual nature. It is neither natural, earthly nor local. It does not consist, as the Anabaptist contends, in a local separation, in the earthly sense of the word, from the world and the children of darkness. It does not demand an isolated christian community. That was the case with a view to Israel in the old dispensation cannot, need not be denied. But we must remember that Israel was a type and its history was typical. Its local isolation was demanded by God as means for the bringing forth of the Christ. However, since all types and shadows have been fulfilled through the

coming of Christ, and the Kingdom of God has spread itself over all peoples, such a local isolation as well as the necessity of it does not exist. Moreover, we must not forget, that even in the local sense of the word, Israel, in fact, Scripture leaves the impression that this was true of the majority. Scripture affords no basis whatever for the Anabaptistic conception of christian isolation; to the contrary, it plainly teaches that a local separation is not possible. The Lord says, in John 17:15, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil." The apostle Paul says in I Cor. 5:9, 10, "I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolators; for then must ye needs go out of the world." From the above mentioned passages, as well as many others, it appears that the Scriptural conception of christian isolation is a thoroughly spiritual one. It consists in a separation from sin; both from the principle of sin, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin;" I John 3:9, as well as from the pollution of sin. It consists in the second place, in an isolation from wicked men, not in the earthly, local sense of the word because that is impossible, but in the spiritual sense of the word—as having fellowship with them.

Christian isolationism teaches us, therefore, that because God has made us His peculiar possession, has formed us for Himself, has called us into His fellowship through Jesus Christ our Lord, we must therefore also be to His praise and glory in the midst of this world of sin and darkness; that therefore we must be holy in all our walk, which means, negatively, that we keep ourselves unspotted from the world and positively, that in distinction of all those who deny and dishonor Him, we shall glorify Him in all our life.

H. D. W.

Prayer For Peace

One of the most beautiful gifts in Christ Jesus is prayer; there is no gift greater, none more sacred, more intimate and holy. Upon the divine injunction: "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be known unto God", the Christian in prayer withdraws himself from the world about him and stands face to face with God to Whom he pours out the thoughts of his heart, and in it finds the fullest expression for his soul both in sorrow and in joy.

In discussing the subject "Prayer for peace" we

are, therefore, dealing with a very sacred matter. When answering the much asked question, "Should we pray for peace?", I feel that we are standing on holy ground where it behooves man to take the shoes off his feet and tread carefully lest this can be answered with a simple "yes" or "no" gives evidence that he has never considered the sacredness of prayer, the highest and most holy of all Christian duties. Neither has such a person ever stopped to consider the seriousness of the times in which we live.

In discussing the subject of prayer for peace one naturally finds extremists. One might find some who want to be super-ultra-Reformed who would not think of mentioning peace in their prayers because: "God builds His Kingdom by means of war and this thought should suffice and bring us peace." Naturally such people forget that God also builds His Kingdom by peace and secondly, they forget that true submission to God and His will is not as simple as all this since we are but men and the holiest has but a small beginning of this obedience. But there is the other party, which is extremely great in numbers, which desires to be both super-patriotic and pious and storms the throne of grace for peace at any cost. They pollute prayer as to its sacredness, purpose, character and content and are ignorant of the sovereignty of God Who rules in war and peace and have never stopped to consider that, therefore, war and peace are both serious matters.

The last mentioned party proceeds from the idea that prayer is a communication system with heaven whereby sinful men are able to obtain their heart's desire. Their motto is: "Prayer changes things," for it is considered as a spiritual lever whereby men can move God and heaven and earth for the purpose of obtaining what they want.

The Scriptural idea of prayer is not to change "things." Prayer does not center about things, but around God and His Kingdom. This is evident from "The Lord's Prayer," it is centered entirely around God, therein we are taught to pray for His Name, His Kingdom, His will; even then when we pray for our own personal needs such as bread and forgiveness of sins and not being led into temptation since we conclude that prayer by saying: "For Thine is the Kingdom and the power and the glory."

How could it be different since not man but the Holy Spirit is the Author of all true prayer. Could the Spirit be conceived of praying for the material things of man entirely disconnected from God and His Kingdom? On the other hand can man, regenerated by this Holy Spirit, pray God that man's will may be done, his desires realized? Of course not, for a sincere Christian knows only too well that by nature he always desires and wills that which is sin, and even after receiving grace he knows that he often chooses that which is foolish. The true Christian does not

desire things, but he desires God and His Kingdom. And when we thus pray prayer does not "change things" but it changes *us*, that is, in prayer we seek and learn to will God's will only; we seek to learn and trust that He rules in all things and worketh all things unto our eternal welfare that thus we may have peace, the peace of him "whose mind is stayed on God."

If, therefore, the christian's heart is troubled in these trying days of war he brings his troubles to God in prayer. He pours out his soul to Him. He tells God of his fears and woe, about that son gone far from home who lives in the midst of sin, temptation and death. He tells God all, the thoughts of his heart, the desires of his soul, nothing is withholden. And this the Christian *may* not only do, he *must* do it, God wants it so, for Scripture says: "Casting all your cares upon Him" and "let your requests be known unto God." Did not Christ do the same in Gethsemane? And did He teach His disciples to pray for such a simple matter as that their flight should not be in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day? Should we then not pray in these days when our hearts are burdened, when fear and dread is on every hand? We certainly should.

However, when thus praying in faith we are not telling God what He should do. In the unburdening of our heart we may never once tell God that He ought to do as we think should be done. But we unburden our heart with but one purpose: that God may teach us that His way and will is always best. Therefore, we pray that we may renounce our own will and desire God's will and way alone and have peace therein knowing that He worketh all things to our salvation. Hence, we conclude our prayer after pouring out our troubled heart, and say: "Lord, not my will but Thine be done". This means, that if this war has troubled you and you have told God all about those troubles, even telling Him that your flesh desires the war to cease and you then conclude: "Not my will but thine be done", you have said this: "Lord, though I dread this war and long for it to cease, but Thou dost deem that it must continue, then Lord, I pray, continue this war until Thy will is done and in that way give me the peace of heart and thankful submission to Thee knowing that Thou dost all things well". Then and then only can we have peace with God and with all things that He sends us for we know that His will is only and always best, while we are oft' times foolish and blind.

From this it may be concluded that the common prayer for peace by which men generally storm the throne of grace in their personal prayers as well as those offered in the congregation and in the "Prayer for Peace Mass Meetings" are to be condemned. In hearing these prayers the words of Christ always recur to me: "The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light". Why? Because the world refuses to have peace except the

cause for which they fight has been won. In this cause, which they *think* is a good one, they give their all and desire no peace until it is reached; we, on the other hand, *know* that God has a good purpose with this war but Christianity will sacrifice nothing but sue for peace at any price.

To all those, therefore, who for patriotic reasons or because of piety implore God that peace may come now and emphasize that it can never come too soon, the warning ought to be sounded that they ought to consider first of all for what *kind* of peace they are praying. Anyone praying simply for peace is playing with fire and may be praying for that which will result in something far worse than the present conflict.

It is but too often forgotten that peace is a matter of equally as serious a nature as war. We know only too well that the present conflict of nations is nothing but the outgrowth of the Peace of Versailles. The men in whose hands rests the government of the nations fully realize that the future of their peoples depends solely on the character of the peace that will follow this war. This is very evident from the famed "Atlantic Charter" drawn up by our President and Winston Churchill; and it becomes still more evident in Russia's past hesitancy in agreeing to the same. The recent decision at Casablanca that the Axis must surrender unconditionally is still another proof that the coming peace involves as much as the war itself. To the Christian this reasoning should not be strange at all since he knows that all the misery of all men lies in nothing else than the "peace" which man made with Satan in Paradise.

On the other hand it may be worth while to consider that the same Bible which teaches that all our misery finds its source in the "peace" which we made with Satan; also teaches that our *redemption* lies in *conflict* or *war* which God brought about by putting enmity between the seed of the woman and that of the serpent; and there is no conflict in which more blood has flowed and will flow than in this one of Gen. 3:15, a battle in which sinful man will reach the zenith of his cruelty. But bloody and cruel though this battle may be it is no curse but redemption and blessings innumerable for all those who are of the seed of the woman, namely, the children of God.

Now what may be said of the conflict of Gen. 3:15, may also be said of all wars, namely, that they are all by divine appointment and intended for the eternal peace of all God's people. Who would dare contend that the present war is not divinely ordained? Emphatically Scripture teaches that God makes both war and peace: "Shall there be evil in a city and the Lord hath not done it?" (Amos 3:6). "I form light and create darkness, I make peace and create evil". (Isa. 45:7). And pointing to a war-like character such as Cyrus, God says: "Whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him. . . ." (Isa. 45:1ff).

For further proof one need but point to the many citations of like nature in the book of Revelations all proving that both war and peace are of God, who has but one purpose in all these things, namely, the honor and glory of His own name and the salvation of His chosen saints.

Naturally, it must be granted that no man can understand and fathom the marvellous works of Jehovah. Never will we be able to comprehend the depth of God's wisdom, love and mercy in all His doings and especially not in such terrible things as in sin, death and war. But how can it be different? Can the creature ever understand the Creator? Shall we who by nature are unmerciful and haters-of-one-another be able to understand Him who is love and the God of mercy? Of course not! But does our incomprehensibility alter the truth of God that in war and peace, in prosperity and adversity, in life and in death He glorifies Himself and saves His people? Certainly not, for He is God and God alone, high above all creatures, worthy of all praise and adoration forever.

To find peace, therefore, we must learn to do His will and submit ourselves to Him in all our ways knowing that He doeth all things well. To the man, woman or child who by grace has learned to say: "Lord, not my will but Thine be done", there shall be peace and joy in all circumstances of life for he is at peace with the God of peace in Christ Jesus who worketh all things according to His own good pleasure and to the glory of His saints. Hence, the true prayer for true peace is: "Lord, teach me Thy will".

A. C.

ANNIVERSARY

On February 24, 1943, our dear parents,

MR. CORNELIUS N. KUNZ

and

MRS. C. N. KUNZ nee Magdalena Vander Lugt

hope to commemorate their 35th Wedding Anniversary.

We thank our God for the great blessings which He has given us in them and pray that He may continue to bless them and spare them for each other and for us for many years to come.

Their Grateful Children,

Mr. and Mrs. Nicholas Kunz
Gertrude

Alyda

Mr. and Mrs. Hubert Kunz

George

Cornelius

Leonard

and 3 grandchildren.

Grand Rapids, Michigan.

News From Our Churches

Well friends, here I am again with a bit of news for our Standard Bearer. All too soon the year of 1942 has slipped away; and in the year gone by there was much sorrow and grief, but also pleasure and joy.

In the world at large there are signs of much confusion, disharmony; war and destruction; but not a turning unto the God of the nations. And the Church in the midst of the world is inclined to lament: who shall show us any good? To be sure a sinful lamentation.

It is well that the world asks this question, for she has no solution for her problems, and sees no way out of her difficulties. She is always boasting, but also in that she trembles.

Frequently you read in the daily papers: The Allies are on the way to victory; but you also hear, don't be too enthusiastic for it may last for years. However, the world forgets and loses sight of the fact that Christ is King and that He has the victory; and through all these incidents He judges the world and establishes His kingdom, which is an everlasting kingdom. And the truth in the matter is this: that the Church in this chaos has nothing to fear, for in the future she shall rule with her King over the work of His hands. This is also a comfort for the individual believer, hence he must fight the good fight, although he must never forget or close his eyes for the reality, that as God comes with His judgments, then His children are also the recipients.

There were no unusual happenings in our ranks in the year gone by. The Word was preached amongst us, and it was divided aright. Our Churches from East and West came together in Classis and Synod, and their labors were not in vain, but blessed by God from Whom all blessings flow. There was harmony and mutual understanding.

The need of a missionary was again realized to preach and teach our Protestant Reformed truth unto those who should worship with us; and the Rev. G. Lubbers was called, but he could not see his way clear to accept the call extended unto him.

Well friends, news of our individual Churches I can not write, because I haven't received any. A little bit of news of the First Church may interest you. Our congregation has 527 families and 122 individuals, and it has a Sunday School enrollment of 400. There were 93 of our boys called by the Government to serve the Country. You see, friends, we also feel the horror of the war in our own midst. It is not so easy for parents to see their boys go away to the soldier camps, and to the battle fields, in which environment, to say the least, it is not pleasant. And let us not think light of the fact that perhaps some of our boys will stay on the battle field and never return. "That is war!"

It is also noticeable in our Societies that the boys leave us; especially in our Young Men's Society. Let us all try our best to keep things going, for it is very essential to be instructed in our Protestant Reformed truth.

Our consistory began a good work to bid the boys farewell in the evening service. What is more fitting than that? The minister speaks a few words of comfort and consolation, and admonishes the boys not to forget the instruction they received at home and in the church. They must never compromise but walk worthy, also in the army of our Country, unto the honor and glory of God. In closing, the congregation sings a number of the Psalter fitting for the occasion. Words as these: "Help me thy will to do, Thy truth I will pursue, Teach me to fear". . . . and, "To the hills I lift my eyes, Whence shall help for me arise? From the Lord shall come my aid, who the heavens and earth has made". . . .

They also receive a nice Zipper Bible. The Gideons must learn from us, not to give only the New Testament to the soldier boys, but the whole Bible. Nevertheless they do a good work, and the Fuller Ave. Church did collect for this worthy cause on Christmas day.

There are many labors to be performed in a church of our size by the consistory such as: family visiting, the calls to be made on the sick and shut-ins, the various Catechism classes and societies, and also the instruction of our students in our school.

If I have been rightly informed, then the publishing of the book of the Heidelberg Catechism as taught by the Rev. H. Hoeksema is on the way. Some of these articles have been in the Standard Bearer. This paper has been a blessing to many in the past. In it our Protestant Reformed truth is brought to the fore at all times, and we don't have to be afraid that we read such things as I have read in the missionary Monthly of November, 1942. It is a poem and reads as follows: "Jesus and I—I can not do it alone, The waves run fast and high, And the fog close chill around, And the light goes out in the sky, Today so eager and bright, Tomorrow too weak to try: But He never gives in, so we two shall win—Jesus and I."

I suppose this is meant to be a gospel truth for the heathen. It sounds so common, so humble and pious.

There is a pilgrim sojourning through the midst of a sinful world. It is dark and chilly round about him: and it is true that by nature we are cowards, and often grope in the dark and utter the words: hath God forgotten to be gracious? But this pilgrim has a friend, although it is not the Jesus of the Scripture, but only his next door neighbor and now together they try to win, for this Jesus never gives in.

Ah friends, Jesus, the Son of God, the Everlasting Jehovah, Himself in the likeness of man without sin, He who has paid the ransom for those who were given

Him by the Father, He tries with man to win the battle.

The Almighty, Sovereign, Omnipotent, Everlasting God is put on a par in this poem with sinful man. He tries with man to overcome sin, the devil and his angels, and because He is the strongest, they together are victorious. But the Jesus who saves to the full is gone, and the pilgrim is still in the dark.

You may call it a nice poem, but I call it blasphemy.

Shall we listen once to another pilgrim sojourner? Hear him pray in confidence: "O Lord to thee I cry, Thou art my rock and trust, O be not silent, lest I die and slumber in the dust. O let me have no part with those that hate the right; For as their works, so their reward. Jehovah will requite. O hear me when in prayer. Thy favor I entreat, Hear while I lift imploring hands, Before Thy mercy seat." Psalm 28: 1,2,3.

In a prayer like this there is hope and rest for the weary sojourner. In it is balm for the afflicted soul; salvation to the full. In this prayer man is nothing and God is all and in all; blessed be His Name for ever! And all that is not in harmony with this prayer, with it the Lord is displeased.

I know, that you agree with me, that in all our activities we must walk and act as a people saved and redeemed. The world must see in us that we are a peculiar people, and that we aim at different things than they.

As individuals we must love each other, and act accordingly. We must also respect the brother in his convictions, and never with a few chosen words out of our own brain, brush away the opinions of others, and make black the brother upon the streets of Ashkelon, for that is not in harmony with God's holy law and precepts, and a dishonor to the Church.

As Christians we may not raise altars of pleasure, wealth and fame. In our money, pleasure-mad world of today we must break down these altars; for we must have connections with heaven, otherwise life is not worth living. It is good to spend our money freely but not for our own pleasure; and the more we earn the greater the responsibility.

We would be grieved in our soul, would we not, if our churches should become places where altars are raised for every conceivable God. Let us then also be careful not to do it in our own lives as individuals, or families; for then we do the same thing as others who live day by day in such an atmosphere.

We leave all things in the hand of Him who assures us in His Word, that if we seek first the kingdom of God, all other things will be added unto us. And let no one make you believe that that is fatalism; for that is faith.

Things in many churches of today are not the way they should be. There is a wandering away from the principles of Holy Writ, and a seeking of the things which have no value: and also our Protestant Re-

formed youth must again remember that there is no pleasure in the things of this pleasure-seeking world. There is real abiding happiness in things as these: Searching the Scriptures, feasting and banqueting together in the fear of God; have your societies, make use of the means of grace as much as possible. Yes, have your fun, but remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth.

God forbid that it should ever be said of our covenant youth, they have knowledge of many things, but not of sin, and the fear of God is not in them, for then we are lost, and our Protestant Reformed distinctiveness is gone. In it lies our strength. That is our shibboleth, and it should not become a sibboleth.

Don't you think, friends, that it is farsightedness of our Young Men's Society that our radio system is extended, and that people in Traverse City, Muskegon and Battle Creek may also listen to the speaker, Rev. H. Hoeksema, who comes with the undiluted Word of God in his radio speeches, which are beneficial for all those who love the Reformed truth? Let us encourage the young men and pray the God of the harvest that He also may bless these efforts put forth. I know it, it is not direct mission work for that must be ruled by the churches, but indirectly it is, for all those who tune in get acquainted with our Protestant Reformed truth, which is the purest truth in accordance with Scripture; and in that way we may speak of Mission work.

Praise God: that as churches we may stand upon the truth of God's Sovereign grace. It is not mixed with the false philosophy of this world without foundation. To be sure there is sin and corruption in the world at large, but also in nations small and great. And their slogan is: no God and no King, although they have a God of their own imagination.

It may seem that we are in the grip of circumstances, however, God Almighty rules as the Sovereign, and that also holds for the true Church in the world to the which we belong as Prot. Ref. Churches. The false Church is a compromising Church. In it you find no hope; no joy; and no rest for the weary soul; and the question echoes and re-echoes down the centuries, out of the troubled soul of the Christian: if the foundations be destroyed what shall the righteous do? And the reassuring answer comes: My grace is sufficient for thee.

Well friends: this is my last article for the Standard Bearer in the English, as I have not received any cooperation of any of our Churches. Two more articles in the Holland language will follow in the future D.V.

I assure you that I have done my best, although I have only one talent and, besides an inferiority complex.

S.D.V.

An "Extremist" Replies

Esteemed Editor:

The undersigned was interested to note that in your Jan. 1 issue of The Standard Bearer he has received his classification card from Mr. Veldkamp. He is classed as an extremist which is extremely interesting.

It appears from B.V.'s article that there are three classes or schools of thought in regard to labor organizations. There are, on the one hand, the radical materially-minded C.I.O.'s and the A.F.L.'s; on the other hand the extremists such as Rev. Hanko, Mr. Ten Elshof and others and between the two we find B.V. and his social justice plans which he expects to attain through the C.L.A.

However, let me state at the outset that I am always a bit suspicious when someone states that this or that is what he believes to be more Biblical and neglects to quote a single text to substantiate his point. Perhaps it was merely an oversight. And I wonder too how we can use the comparative degree in this connection. Can one thing or one expression be "more Biblical" than another? Could we on this basis then say that the Arminian doctrine is Biblical but the Reformed position is "more Biblical." I'm sure I don't understand. And I am still waiting for someone to refute or disclaim the words of Jas. 5:6-8. Surely you do not with Luther call this a "straw book." It is indeed news to me that the Christian fights against sin and injustice by means other than through the power of the Spirit. I was under the impression that our weapons of warfare were specified in Eph. 6:11-18. And since when have we taken the position that we are going to band together, outside of the band which there is in Christ, and with this band which is a conglomeration of all beliefs, no beliefs, all creeds and no creeds and therewith make our influence felt. I truly know that that is not an exaggerated or "extreme" description of the C.L.A. I know both by personal experience and contact with officers of this "Christian" organization and the direct testimony of others it isn't even required you be a Christian, even in the external sense of the word, in order to belong to this "Christian" association! At least such has not been my experience. I do not say this simply to slander or to heap infamy upon those with whom I do not agree but my point is this: If you are going to testify against sin and injustice shouldn't you first see to it that the organization which you represent at least bears a semblance to the name by which it is called?

In regard to the strike clause, B. V. would seek to allay our fear somewhat. "You see," he says in substance, "that's in there all right but we've never used

it and don't expect to, so rest in peace." But nevertheless the potentiality remains does it not? If a man were to hold a loaded gun to my head, had the hammer pulled back, and finger on the trigger, he could easily still my anxiety by informing me that he had never shot a man in his life! Cub bears may be harmless and make interesting playfellows—until they are full-grown and have attained enough strength to crush a man in this embrace. Even the law recognizes potentialities. How often haven't you read of the apprehension of an armed man who had *intent* to do bodily harm?

It also appears that it is rather easy for B. V. to question what is the will of God. I am very glad that Moses did not question, to the extent of disobedience, and that he did not say that it could not be the will of God that Israel leave Egypt. Indeed it was slavery but they might all starve in the wilderness too! Perhaps Lot should have questioned the will of God in respect to leaving Sodom. No doubt he had a good living there. Perhaps he had an abundance. Remember Lot's wife! Was not she questioning the will of God? But why draw more references? Their number in the Scriptures is legion.

Bluntly B. V. tells us that it is God's will that His people shall have a sufficient amount of it. (i.e. daily bread) Then there is never a case of a Christian who had died of starvation? Then, to cite one example, there is not a starving Greek Christian in all of Europe?

However, B. V., my gyroscope is working and I'm not so unbalanced that I would refuse to employ God-given talents and energies to advance or promote myself. That is not only our right but also our duty. We certainly may and must use and not abuse the things of this world so that as Eph. 4:28 put it, "we may have to give to him that needeth."

But, you will object, regardless of how true your statements are they are merely negative and filled with destructive criticism. Have you nothing positive to offer? Anyone can knock but it takes a carpenter-knock and at the same time build a house.

May I then humbly suggest that if you will bear in mind these points (and perhaps others have more and better to offer) we can come to some understanding:

1. We understand that the duty of the punishment of the evildoer rests with the government and not some organization outside of it. I would consider an unjust robbing employer an evildoer.

2. Have an organization if you will in order to protest and petition our government that they function as they should in respect to evildoers.

3. If that organization is to be called Christian (not necessarily denominational) make provision and enforce it that only those who confess the name of Christ be admitted as members.

4. If after you have used legitimate and Christian means to attain your end you fail—let it rest with the Lord and know for a surety that their day is coming. Remember, they have their reward.

However, I full well realize that such a proposition would not be popular. They would not “get things done”. But I do believe that it is a Christian method and one which without faith we could not subscribe to. Whether or not B. V., you and your followers agree is not all-important. I am ready to say with the well-known Dr. Machen: “God and I are a majority”.

G. T. E.

The Gainsayers

(The Literary Contest of Christianity in the First Three Centuries)

The Christians in the Graeco-Roman world were a people who, by the mercy of God, had identified themselves with the truth in Christ Jesus. For the truth they witnessed. Christ's name they confessed before men. And the result was, as we have seen, that the nameless pollutions of Rome were roused to a frenzy of rage. For Rome's works were evil and the religion of Christ, the truth, was pure. So an attempt was made by the wicked, unbelieving Jews and Gentiles, to silence the Christians. One of the weapons used was persecution. All the violence perpetrated against God's people formed a means resorted to in the vain effort to induce them to relax their hold on the truth, renounce their Saviour, and refrain from teaching in His name. To achieve this purpose still other means were employed. The adversary also spake evil of the truth, heaped maledictions upon the gospel, in the hope that all men and the Christians in particular, perceiving that the gospel was a thing utterly disgraceful and ridiculous, would be shamed into keeping silence about it. The truth had to be crushed—crushed to earth so that it never again would rise. Such was the determination of the wicked opposition. So, under the impulse of the inspiration of the powers of darkness, it even fabricated false gospels of its own for men to believe in, that the sect of the Christians might diminish and completely disappear and that their hated doctrines might disappear with them. Also this rioting of unbelief, the attempt to destroy the religion of Christ with these weapons, was foretold. At II Pet. 2:1, 2 we read, “But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom

the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.”

In this essay regard is had to these false teachers, to their slander and heresies by means of which they strove to destroy the faith of God's people and so to silence the truth. Secondly, account is taken of the reactions of God's people to this wicked striving. Finally, attention is directed to the significance of this vile doing for the church and the truth.

The adversaries of the Christian religion with which we now have to do were men of letters. Their weapon was not the sword but the pen. Hence, under the caption of this writing (the Gainsayers) appears, in parenthesis, the title “The Literary Contest of Christianity in the First Three Centuries”.

The opponents were not of one kind. They divided into two main classes: non-Christian and Christian. The former, the non-Christian, included the Judaists among the Jews and the pagan wisemen—the philosophers, scientists and patrons of art—in the Graeco-Roman world, mostly neo-platonists. They were not of the church and opposed and derided all that was called Christ. But this much can be said in their favor that they were not wolves in sheep's clothing. They were enemies of the gospel and wanted to be known as such.

However, already in the time of the apostles many Jews and pagans became Christians but in name only and smuggled their false religious notions and practices into the church, where they matured and eventually became known as Ebionism and Gnosticism. Ebionitism is Judaizing Christianity; Gnosticism is a paganizing Christianity. The Ebionites were thus the successors of the Judaists; the Gnostics were the successors of the pagan Neo-Platonists. The Ebionists and the Gnostics were the *heretics in the church*. They formed the *Christian class* of opponents of the religion of Christ, and their thought-structures were the *heresies* of the first three centuries.

These Ebion and Gnostic teachers spake of themselves as converts to the gospel of Christ. And their followers, of whom there were many, believed them to be such. Actually they were thieves and robbers, that entered not by the door into the sheepfold but climber up some other way. St. John 10:12. They were the wolves in sheep's clothing within the walls of Zion. Their presence in the church bespeaks the attempt of Satan to Judanize and paganize the church by sowing his lies as concealed in the garb of truth. And Satan's tares grew wellnigh as rapidly as did the wheat sown by Christ through His servants. As the Christians were multiplied and began to be numbered by thousands, so the heretical bodies numbered also their thousands. There were in all nineteen such bodies, gnostic schools of thought, and the heretics were named after the leaders of the special schools to which they belonged.

The first opposition encountered by the Gospel

came from the sects of the Judaists in Palestine, the leaders of which were the Jewish Scribes and Pharisees. Judaism is known from the New Testament Scriptures as a school of thought that denied the Messiahship of Christ and makes salvation dependent on the observance of the law. It inveighed against Christianity for the following reasons: The illegitimate birth of Christ its founder; His fraternizing with sinners and apostate publicans; His surrounding Himself with illiterate fishermen; His being without stature; His having hailed from a region in Palestine that had never yet produced a teacher of any account; His immoderate use of food and wine; His profanity: He desecrated the Sabbath; His being demon-possessed; His ignominious death. We get some idea of how the later Jews attacked Christ from the Dialogue of Justin Martyr (a Christian teacher in the church) with Thypho the Jew. In this writing we come upon the following rebuke of this Jew's unbelief and profanity: "(Yet) you not only have not repented, after you learned that he rose from the dead, but, as I said, you have sent chosen and ordained men through all the world to proclaim that a godless and lawless heresy had sprung from one Jesus, a Galilean deceiver, whom we (the Jews) crucified, but his disciples stole him by night from the tomb, where He was laid when unfastened from the cross, and now deceives men by asserting that he had risen from the dead and ascended to heaven. Moreover you accuse him of having taught those godless, unholy and lawless doctrines which you mention to the condemnation of those who confess him to be the Christ, and a teacher from the Son of God. Besides this, even when your city is captured, and your land ravaged, you do not repent, but dare to utter imprecations on Him and all who believe in Him." Then follows this significant statement: "Yet we do not hate you or those who, by your means, have conceived such prejudices against us; but we pray that even now all of you may repent and obtain mercy from God, the compassionate and long-suffering Father of all."

Let it be said in this connection that all our knowledge of what these adversaries taught and of how they slandered is derived from writings in which their opponents—the Christian teachers in the church—withstood them. The enemies of the truth produced a prodigious literature it seems; but all their original works have disappeared, except the portions quoted by their opponents, the church fathers.

The literary attacks upon Christianity by the heathen did not begin until about the middle of the second century *circa* A.D. 150. The first work devoted to this purpose bears the title "The True Discourse" (it is anything but true) and was put out by a Grecian philosopher, Celsus. In this discourse, of which the church father Origin has preserved considerable remnants in his Refutation, Celsus, in imitation of a tea-

cher training a pupil, introduces a Jew, whom he represents as entering into a personal discussion with Jesus during which he disputes with Him and confutes Him on many points. He accuses Christ of having "invented His own birth from a virgin," and approaches Him with being "born in a certain Jewish village, of a poor woman of the country, who gained her sustenance by spinning, and who was turned out of doors by her husband, a carpenter by trade, because she was convicted of adultery; that after being driven away by her husband, and wandering about for a time, she disgracefully gave birth to Jesus, an illegitimate child, who, having hired Himself out as a servant in Egypt on account of His poverty, and having there acquired some miraculous powers, returned to His own country, highly elated on account of them, and by means of these proclaimed Himself God". Then He "gathered around Him ten or twelve persons of notorious character, the very wickedest of tax-gatherers and sailors, fled in company with them from place to place, and obtained His living in a shameful and importunate manner." Further on Celsus has his informant ask: "How should we deem him to be God. . . who also, after we had convicted Him and condemned Him as deserving of punishment, was found attempting to conceal Himself, and endeavoring to escape in a most disgraceful manner, and who was betrayed by those whom He called His disciples?" According to his informant, the divinity of Christ is contradicted also by his evident lack of foreknowledge and by his leading his own disciples and prophets to such a degree of wickedness, that they became impious and unholy men. Breaking away from his informant, Celsus voices his own hateful opinions. He derides the Gospel narrative of Christ's resurrection. If Jesus desired to show that His power was divine, He ought to have appeared to His enemies. He gives it as his opinion that, whereas both Christians and Jews believe that it was predicted that one was to come as a Saviour to the human race, the discussions which they have with each other regarding Christ differ in no respect "from what is called in the proverb, 'a fight about the shadow of an ass'; and thinks that there is nothing of importance in the investigations of the Jews and the Christians". Moreover, God does not come down or send another down; for then He must needs undergo a change "from good to evil, from virtue to vice, from happiness to misery, and from best to worst." That He should take up His abode among His people alone is for Celsus a thought too ridiculous to contemplate. He compares Jews and Christians alike to "a flight of bats or to a swarm of ants issuing out of their nest, or to frogs holding council in a marsh, or to worms crawling together in the corner of a dunghill, and quarrelling with one another as to which of them were the greater sinners." He upbraids the teachers of the divine Word with wishing to make converts only among "fool-

ish and low individuals, and persons devoid of perception, and slaves, and women and children." He demands to know why it "is an evil to have been educated and to have both the reality and the appearance of wisdom? What hindrance does this offer to the knowledge of God? Why should it not rather be an assistance, and a means by which one might be better able to arrive at the truth." Especially obnoxious to him is the teaching "that it was to sinners that God has been sent." He charges the Christians with acting "insolently towards God; in order to lead on wicked men by empty hopes, and to persuade them to despise better things." He denies the resurrection of the dead on the ground that there is no case on record of any one who was really dead rising again with a veritable body.

The opinions which we encounter in these fragments bespeak grossest ignorance but ignorance rising from bitter hatred and contempt of the truth—a hatred that was roused to a frenzy of rage on account of the absence on the part of this mocker of the will to forsake his abominations and return to Christ's God and be saved. This the truth demanded of him. The reproaches of Celsus render invaluable service in this respect. They emphatically affirm that, if a man will see the kingdom of heaven, discern the things which are of the Spirit of God, he must be born again. Then, too, Celsus spake not for himself alone but for the world of pagan men and women of his day. For to that world he belonged. Hence, the language of these fragments mirrors the soul of that world, its wickedness, its pride and arrogance, its contempt of God's gospel and of the followers of Christ.

As an enemy of the truth, Celsus was not the dangerous type. Opposition of the kind that he offered springs from ignorance too glaring, too shocking and openly spiteful. It could impress and mislead such only who were as ignorant and hostile as Celsus. This type of slander had weight only with Celsus and his kind. It could have no effect on God's believing people except to strengthen them in the conviction that the man devoid of saving grace is a profound fool. The devil is *real* dangerous when, turning theologian, he conceals his ugliness in the mantle of light and glibly, correctly quotes Scripture in defense of his lies. Celsus did anything but quote Scripture correctly. His perversion and abuse of the facts to which he alludes is amazing. Yet all that he tells us, even though expressed in language of abhorrence, bears witness to the reality of the historical facts the Gospel record.

Another enemy of God's people of the type of Celsus was Lucian, who was born in Syria and who died in Greece before 200. He uses the same weapons—those of wit and scorn—and urges substantially the same objections. The Christian hope of an eternal life and resurrection, its opposition to the depraved way of life of the pagan world, the brotherly love which bound Christians to one another, he throws into

the same class with the various kinds of pagan fanaticism. "They still worship", says he of the Christians," that great man who was crucified in Palestine, because it was he by whom the initiation into these mysteries was introduced into human life. These poor creatures have persuaded themselves that they are all immortal, and shall live forever. For this reason they despise death itself, and many even court it. But again, their first lawgiver has persuaded them to believe that, as soon as they have broken loose from the prevailing customs and denied the gods of Greece, reverencing instead of these their crucified teacher, living after his laws, they stand to each other in the relation of brethren. Thus they are led to despise everything alike, to consider everything else as profane, adopting those notions without any sufficient grounds for evidence."

Then there was the more earnest and dignified, but for this very reason more lasting and dangerous, opposition which proceeded from Neo-Platonism i.e., from the modified and greatly amplified teachings of Plato, the Grecian philosopher.

The founder of Neo-Platonism was Ammonius Saccas of Alexandria, who was born of Christian parents but who apostatized and died in the year 243. The one to develop the Neo-Platonic ideas into a system was Plotinus, his pupil. In forming his doctrine, he selected what seemed best from all the various existing religious and philosophic systems; but his pervading interest was the religious. He dealt with God and His relation to the world, the nature of sin, or evil, and the way of salvation. From the religious and moral point of view, Neo-Platonism was the consummation of all the worldly wisdom of the ancient world.

In this system God becomes the unknowable one, not in the sense that, dwelling, as He does, in an inaccessible light, He, as such, lies beyond the boundaries represented by our thought-processes; but in the sense that even in and for Himself He is wholly unintelligible, super-rational, and infinite blank, before whom all thought is powerless, thus a primeval being, an infinite background, without attributes of any kind, "without magnitude, without life, without thought, above existence, above goodness, yet an active force, perpetually producing something else, without motion or diminution of self."

It is plain that to so reason about God is equivalent to saying that there is no God; and that thus man can sin with impunity. If God by Himself is super-rational, His revelation of self to man is an unintelligible blank like Himself; and His background is marked by utter absence of relations with respect to self and to man.

Consequently, in the system of Plotinus, God is known only by blind feeling; and the goal is a pantheistic absorption into the being of God. Here matter as such is evil and evil riots independent of God's will; and salvation, which comes by man's own effort, con-

sists in exterminating the life of the senses, leaving it behind, and in returning to the original perfection from which man has fallen and for which all men long. "The true goal is reached when the soul loses all thought, desire, and activity, all individual life, in an ecstasy of immediate union with God." Such is the primary principle of Plotinus' religious philosophy. Neo-Platonism was an attempt to Christianize paganism and to found a universal religion that could serve as the counterpart to the religion of Christ. It therefore sought for support in all the popular religions of that day, to all of which it gave a meaning. It shunned a rigid monotheism.

Among the leading Neo-Platonists, Porphyry was the most notorious on account of his direct attacks upon Christianity. His work *against the Christians* was directed against the books of the Bible, which, according to this pagan, were the works of deceivers and ignorant people. In his criticism of the origin of Christianity, he spoke bitter and severe words. He endeavored to set the Old Testament against the New by pointing out what he took to be contradictions between them. He seized upon the contention between Paul and Peter at Antioch (Gal. 2:11) to prove that the doctrines of such apostles must needs be lies and fraud. He did not spare even Jesus Himself, whom he accused of deceptive conduct at John 7:8, 14. He was a violent enemy of the Christians. What especially vexed his soul was their unmoveableness in their rejection of and opposition to the pagan gods in his system and their worshipping Christ as God. Thus in another work he has the pagan god Apollo advise a crestfallen husband, whose wife had embraced Christianity, to forsake her to lament *her deceased God*. The husband might sooner "write on the flowing stream, or fly on the empty air, than endeavor to change the mind of his wife after she had become godless"—godless from the point of view of Apollo.

Yet, apparently, like so many rationalists of more recent times, Porphyry was not wholly adverse to Christ. He deems Him a pious soul, who, by a "certain fatality had become an occasion of error to those souls (meaning the Christians) which were destined to have no share in the gifts of the gods and in the knowledge of the eternal Zeus". The error of these souls was that they worshipped Christ as God. On this account they should be pitied. Like these rationalists, he evidently distinguished between the pure doctrine of Christ and what he took to be the derived and perverted doctrine of the apostles. Yet he seems to have been strangely effected even by some of the teachings of the latter, for instance by St. Paul's characterization of faith, hope, and love. He described this triad as the foundation of piety. He was, further, a zealous advocate of image worship; yet he wrote to his wife "that a man is not so much of an Atheist who neglects to worship the images of the gods, as he who transfers

to God the opinions of the multitude." Sentiments such as these, coming, as they did, from a bitter foe of the truth, shows the power exerted by Christianity even over the minds of those who opposed it.

G. M. O.

The Avenging March Against The Midianites

This is the aftermath to the judicial punishment to which the Israelites were doomed on account of their whoredoms and idolatry with Moab and Midian. It will be recalled that Midian and Moab had acted upon the advice of Balaam to call the children of Israel to the sacrifice of their gods in the consideration that, if the call were heeded, Jehovah in His anger would destroy Israel. The call was heeded, and we know with what results. The camp was ravaged by a terrible plague in which 24,000 died.

If the tempted Israelites deserved to be punished, much more the people who were the tempters. Accordingly, Moses was now commanded to undertake an avenging march against the Midianites. The history of this war is soon told. Each tribe had to contribute a thousand, which formed an army of 12,000 men. Because the war was a holy war, Phinehas was sent along with the sacred trumpets to blow in his hand—sent along not as commander but as priest. He was doubtless chosen because he had manifested such unusual zeal. Zimri, a prince of the tribe of Simeon, had led his illicit lover, a Midianitish woman, with shameless impudence into his tent, in the presence of Moses and of all the weeping Israelites. It was Phinehas who had pursued the man into his tent, and had thrust both of them thru. He would now be the fittest person to inspire the army with sacred zeal in the mission.

In the ensuing combat, all the males of the adversary were slain. In addition to those who perished in battle, the five kings of the people were slain, probably after they had been taken captive. They are recorded by name: Balaam, too, the fomentor of the mischief, meets his doom. The cities and the castles of the enemy were destroyed by fire; their wives and children carried captive, and all their cattle, flocks and goods taken as booty. But the Midianites, as a people, were not utterly blotted out of existence. The destruction concerned only those tribes of the Midianites who dwelt on the highlands of Moab. The main stock of the tribe shared neither in the sin nor in the judgment. For later in history they appear as a mighty and hostile power against Israel (Judges 6:8).

When the victorious army returned, Moses, Eleazar the highpriest, and the victorious army was re-

ceived at the front of the camp by Moses, Eleazar the highpriest and the elders. But Moses rebuked the leaders of the host, because they had spared the women alive. He insisted that they all be slain, together with every male among the children and every female, except those whose virginity could be established. The reason that he gives is worthy of careful consideration. It is a justification of Midian's doom; and it answers the question why of the two Moab and Midian, the latter only was vexed.

Said Moses to the leaders: "Behold, these (women) caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor. . . ." This brings out just what the kings of the Midianites had wanted to accomplish through these women. The invitation to idolatrous worship was not simply a friendly gesture calculated to win the good will of a potential foe in order that it might cease to be a menace; but the deliberate purpose was to beguile the people of Israel into trespassing against their God in order that His anger flame against them and they be destroyed. This time the aim was to *compel* the Lord. The hand of Baalam was evident in it all. Whereas his attempts to induce God through enchantments had failed, he now hatched out a scheme that, if successful, would *necessitate* God to curse Israel. He would force God against His will, if this were possible. And the Midianitish chiefs had proven very willing to collaborate with him.

As to these women, they had been the immediate cause of the sin and mischief into which Israel had fallen. They were doubly deserving of death. Besides as associated with the Israelitish families, they would become destructive of the people. Persons so desperately wicked, as were these women, could not be incorporated in Israel's commonwealth. And the boys, too, would have corrupted the Israelitish women. The virgins only might safely become fused into the life of Israel.

But was Moab not just as guilty as Midian? It was Moab who had hired Balaam to curse Israel; Numbers 22:1-3. Also Moab's daughters had taken a hand in seducing the people of Israel. "And the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab. And they—these daughters—called the people unto the sacrifice of their gods" (Num. 25:1-2). Yet the avenging march was against Midian alone. According to one explanation there comes into view again with respect to the Moabites the blood-relationship which was ever an object of pious regard to the Israelites. The Moabites, as the descendents of Lot, were near kinsmen of the people of Israel. But this is true also of the Midianites. Midian, the father of this people, was the son of Abraham by his concubine Keturah, Gen. 25:2-4.

The right explanation is that the Midianites, who were then encamped upon the plains of Moab, were the

prime movers in the temptation and fall of Israel. And they in distinction from the Moabites continued to practice their wives after the plague was stayed, as is plain from chap. 22:18: "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Vex the Midianites, and smite them: for they vex you with their wives, wherewith they have beguiled you in the matter of Peor, and in the matter of Cosbi, the daughter of the prince of Midian, the sister of which was slain in the day of the plague for Peor's sake." As urged on by Balam, who had continued in their midst, instead of returning to his place, they persisted in the attempt to seduce God's people. Their defiance of Jehovah was amazing, as is also evident from the doing of Cozbi. Finally, Moab had sought the material victory over Israel, its subjugation as a political power. The Midianites sought to demoralize Israel. It was not victory that they wanted, but Israel's destruction. And they were not moved by fear as was Moab—by fear that they were about to be supplanted by the people of Israel in their land. They had no fixed place of abode. They were nomads of the desert. What moved them to work Israel's ruin was sheer malice. The branch of the Midianitish family, with whom we here have to do, was an utterly depraved, nomadic horde, a people matured in sin, and thus ripe for judgment. It was therefore necessary that they be destroyed, necessary for God's honor and necessary for Israel's own safety. In their persistent attempt to seduce God's people, they were deliberately and consciously striking at God. Hence, in communicating the will of God to the people, Moses said: "Arm some of yourselves. . . and avenge the Lord of Midian" (31:2). The war of vengeance, here undertaken, was the precursor of the exterminating judgment which was soon to overtake the Canaanites.

Now the Lord could have extirpated the Midianites by Himself; but He chose to do it through the agency of His people. And with reason. Israel *must* fight—fight the good fight of faith. And this consisted not merely in serving God and in confessing His name positively, but it had to consist also in the people of Israel participating in Jehovah's warfare against His enemies. The foe must not only be shunned and avoided but attacked. The lie must be assailed. The world together with the invisible powers of darkness must be overcome and destroyed. Only when God's people are ready for this, can it be said of them that they have actually broken with the lie, are wholeheartedly opposed to the devil and all his works, are of a mind to be actually done with sin and are wholly and consciously consecrated to God with their entire being. For this very purpose God had placed Midian on Israel's path. The Midianites suffering their just deserts at the hands of the people of Israel, is only an instance of a general principle operative through the ages in the sphere of God's covenant. Christian pol-

emics is willed by God. To live the antithesis is very actually to bear down on the lie. The man who can be satisfied simply with the setting forth of the truth, is a half hearted soldier of Christ, if a soldier at all. However godly his form may be, he is in all likelihood a double-hearted man, who receives nothing from the Lord. James 1:7, 8. What would have been done to the Israelite, who stubbornly refused to participate in Jehovah's warfare with Midian and with the Canaanites?

It was doubtless due to a natural feeling of sympathy that the leaders had spared the women and the children. It was hard, very hard to slay these defenceless ones especially the children. But the justice of God called for the extirpation of the whole seed of evil-doers; and the voice of the humanity of the mere natural feeling had to be silenced. Well might the prophet of old exclaim: "O, God, how terrible art thou in all thy works!"

Moses, the highpriest, and the heads of the fathers' houses took charge of the whole sum of the prey. Then it was divided into two equal parts, one of which was given to the army and the other to the congregation. This too, shows that the purpose of the numbering was not to ascertain the number of the males in Israel physically qualified for combat service because ed. The warriors, however were to yield one soul of it was only among such that the land was to be divided five hundred, both of the persons and of the cattle, to the high priest for Jehovah, while the congregation had to give one of fifty for the Levites. The division of the prey into two equal parts was just. For it was not by their own choice that others went not to war. Hence they were fairly entitled to a share of the spoil which their representatives had taken. In the case we now consider, the warriors were allowed to retain a much larger share of their half than the others. This, too, was fair as the former had all the peril.

The warriors had taken an enormous booty: 675,000 sheep; 72,000 beeves; 61,000 asses, 32,000 virgins. It shows that the wealth of those nomad tribes was great.

A roll call was taken of the warriors and it appeared that not one had fallen in battle. It shows that the warfare was the execution of a divine sentence. Because they were in a special sense God's instruments, He was their shield in battle. In their gratitude they present a thankoffering consisting of all the golden ornaments, which they had taken. It amounted to the sum of 16,750 shekels and was put into the treasury of the sanctuary.

The officers, in consecrating their gifts, say to Moses: "We have therefore brought an oblation for the Lord . . . to make an atonement for our souls before the Lord." The Hebrew for *atonement* is *covering*. Thus they cover their souls before the Lord with the spoils of war—the golden ornaments. This was not any real atonement for any sin, for such an atone-

ment required a bloody sacrifice. They simply meant to give expression to their feelings of unworthiness of the Lord's mercy through yielding to Him these spoils of war.

G.M.O.

The Numberings

This enumeration does indeed represent an interest in numbers. But it is plain that its purpose was not to learn, through determination of numbers, the numerical strength of the nation as a fighting force. Nor does the command, "Take the sum of all the congregation. . . from twenty years old and upward, all that are able to go to war in Israel," lend support to this view. It can be shown from the context that the meaning of this instruction is: "Enumerate all of twenty years old and above, those in this class disqualified for combat service by sickness and the infirmities of age as well as those physically fit for such service; but exclude from the enumeration all such who have not attained to the age of twenty." The clause, "all that are able to go to war in Israel," was calculated to exclude from the enumeration solely the youth beneath twenty, as these in the eyes of God were still too young to be counted. If the enumeration had included only those of military age who went to war, the land would have gone to the soldiers in Israel and the sick would have been disinherited, as also those families in Israel in which there were no male Israelites. But the evidence that the Lord, in dividing the land among His people, was also mindful of these is the case of the five daughters of Zelophehad, the offspring of Manassah. Zelophehad, the father of these daughters, had died in the wilderness without sons having been born to him to preserve his memory in a corresponding inheritance. The request of these daughters therefore is that, there being no sons, they be given a possession among the brethren of their father that his name might be preserved among his family. They based their demand upon their father's right which he had not forfeited. He was not in the company of Korah but died in his own sin, i.e., he had not, as Korah and his company, hastened his death through a special transgression. Moses brought their cause before the Lord by whom it was maintained in the following emphatic language: "The daughters of Zelophehad speak right: thou shalt surely give them a possession of an inheritance among their father's brethren; and thou shalt cause the inheritance of their father to pass unto them." Thus, whereas he enumeration included even female Israelites, daughters of a deceased sire who had no sons, its purpose could not have been to determine the magnitude of Israel's fighting forces.