

# THE STANDARD BEARER

A Reformed Semi-Monthly Magazine

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## Meditation

### A Heritage In Him

*In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will. That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.*  
Eph. 1:11, 12.

We!

Notice the use of the first person throughout.

Blessed be the God and Father of *our* Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed *us* with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; according as he hath chosen *us* in him before the foundation of the world, that *we* should be holy and without blame before him in love. vss. 3, 4.

Having predestinated *us* unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made *us* accepted in the beloved. In whom *we* have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace, wherein he hath abounded toward *us* in all wisdom and prudence. . . . In whom also *we* have obtained an inheritance, or better, according to the Revised Version and the Dutch translation: In whom also *we* were made a heritage. . . .

*We* and *us* and *our* throughout!

And beware that you do not change these pronouns into *they* and *them* and *their*!

For although by making this alteration you would not essentially change the objective sense of the passage, you would fail to consider the riches of which it is speaking in the right light and from the intended viewpoint. Of the glorious riches of grace in Christ Jesus the apostle is writing here. But he displays and enumerates and evaluates these glorious riches

here, not merely in order that you should admire them as you would a beautiful estate of some millionaire in which you have no part and which you pass by on the road, but that you should rejoice in them as being your own!

It is the language of personal possession, of appropriating faith, which Scripture here places on the lips of the whole church.

Yes, indeed, of *the whole church*!

There are those who would apply the words of our present passage to the Jews only; “ye also” means: the Jewish Christians in distinction from the converts out of the Gentiles.

And it may be granted, especially in the light of the last part of verse twelve, that this distinction is before the mind of the apostle. The words: “we who first trusted in Christ”, or again better in the Revised Version: “we who had before hoped in Christ”, no doubt, refer to the Church of the old dispensation.

But even so the words do not apply to the Jews as such, but to the Old Testament Church, whose old hope was now realized, and that in a far more glorious way than they had ever been able to conceive. For in the old dispensation Israel was *the* Church, the peculiar possession of Jehovah, the only heritage of God and all of it. But now they had become part of a more glorious and far richer whole: “we who first hoped in Christ have now become a part of God’s heritage, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will.” All things He worketh!

And this implies, according to the tenth verse, that He will gather all things again in Christ as their everlasting Head, and thus make unto Himself a glorious heritage.

And in that glorious heritage we also have become a part!

To the praise of His glory!

We also!

Made into a heritage!

Thus, no doubt, the text should be read.

Not, indeed, as if it made any essential difference whether we read: *have obtained an inheritance* or: *have been made a heritage*.

The two do not exclude each other in this case, but are rather supplementary to each other. For the truth is, that when we are made into a heritage of God we also obtain the inheritance. The wonder is that the inheritance we obtain is exactly that we become the heritage of God. The fact is that the only inheritance one can ever obtain is the joy and glory and riches of being an inheritance of the ever blessed God!

Consciously to be God's eternal heritage, His peculiar possession in which He has His delight, upon which He looks with loving favor,—that is the inheritance we obtain!

But the fact is, that in the text the viewpoint is not that of our obtaining an inheritance, but of our being the heritage of God, more specifically: of our being a part in God's peculiar possession, an *erfdeel*, as the Holland translation has it. For not the active form "we have obtained", but the passive "we have been made" a heritage is used in the original.

A figure is used here.

What was done with the land of Canaan, when the children of Israel took possession of it, is the basis of the figure. The word means: "to divide by lot". And the land of Canaan was apportioned by lot to each of the tribes of Israel, outside of the tribes of Reuben, Gad and half Manasseh, so that each tribe obtained its own portion in the land of Canaan. Thus they all obtained their own part of the heritage that was promised them, and that particular part of the land that was assigned to each tribe by lot was its peculiar possession. All of Israel inherited the whole land, and the whole of Israel in the whole land was the peculiar possession, the heritage of Jehovah, but each tribe occupied its own peculiar place in that possession.

Such is the figure that is implied in our passage.

A figure it is, not in the sense in which anything might be selected as an illustration of a subject that is being discussed, but because the figure in this case was designed to be the prototype of the reality that was to come. For Israel in the land of Canaan was, indeed, very really the heritage of God, His peculiar possession, Jehovah's portion, but it was at the same time the shadow of things to come, the picture of a better hope, the type of the ultimate and eternal realization of the "purpose of Him who worketh all things according to the counsel of His own will". For He has purposed in Himself to gather together in one all things in Christ, the things in heaven and the things on earth, and to make the Church in Christ heir of that glorious inheritance. And of this Israel in Canaan is the beginning, but as such also the figure and type.

For, even as Israel in the old dispensation in the

earthly land of Canaan was the peculiar possession of God, so Christ and His glorious and perfected Church in the new heavens and earth is the ultimate realization of Jehovah's heritage.

Beautiful heritage!

Peculiar that heritage will be, no longer in the sense that it will be a small portion of God's handiwork that will be the object of His delight, in distinction from the rest of the world that lieth in darkness and serves dead idols instead of the living God, as was Israel in the midst of the nations round about them; but only in the positive sense that it is the object of God's everlasting love and favor, and that it will be solely to the praise of the glory of His grace in the beloved. For God's peculiar heritage shall then embrace all things in heaven and on earth.

And that heritage shall be one; a glorious, harmonious whole, in which each part shall serve in its own peculiar place and position to enhance the beauty of the whole.

In the whole of "all things" as God's heritage, the Church of Christ shall occupy the chief place.

And that Church again shall not consist of a multitude of individual saints, but a well ordered whole, in which each part, each group, each individual shall occupy the peculiar place assigned to him by the great Builder and artificer.

And for that place each church in every period in time, and each individual believer is foreordained and prepared in time.

And thus it could be said to those whom the apostle had in mind in our passage, and to the church of every age: we also have been made a heritage, an "erfdeel", a peculiar portion in the great heritage of God!

Marvellous work of God!

Blessed heritage!

We also became a portion!

Wonderful wisdom of God, and marvellous providence of Him Who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will!

For the passage here, no doubt, refers to the Church of the old dispensation, which for years constituted the entire heritage of God, but now became a part of the larger and all comprehensive possession of Jehovah. For this is evident from the text itself which qualifies this portion of God's heritage as those "who before hoped in Christ". And this is shown, too, by the words "ye also" of the next verse, referring to the Church gathered out of the Gentiles.

We also. . . . and ye also!

We who before hoped in Christ, and ye who are now sealed, became a portion of the great, harmonious heritage of God!

All became one in Christ, yet each in his own place!

Amazing revelation of God's wisdom! They had

before hoped in Christ. Yes, indeed, they were the people of God, even then. Theirs were the covenants and the promises. And in the land of Canaan they possessed a partial realization of the promise. But in Christ, in the One that was to come, they had their hope. Reality was not yet. They lived under the law. And under the law they could but take hold of shadows. Hence, they looked forward in hope. In the promised Seed they trusted. On Him they fixed their hope. For Him they looked. And when He should come they would become the glorious and everlasting heritage of Jehovah indeed, in eternal reality!

*They first hoped in Christ; no one else!*

They were the heritage of God, not the other nations. And when they looked for the realization of the promise and fixed their longing eyes on the future, they still envisaged that glorious future only as an elevation and perfection and extension of their own national existence. And though their prophets sometimes spoke of larger things, who understood the glorious purpose of God, who of those that before hoped in Christ could possibly apprehend the larger purpose of God's good pleasure?

Yet, now that wider purpose of the God of their salvation had been revealed!

It had been made known, that it was the good pleasure of God's will that in the dispensation of the fulness of time God would gather together in one *all things* in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth, and that they, who had before hoped in Christ as a single and isolated nation, would merge into the larger whole of God's heritage and become a portion of a universal Church and a universal inheritance. The smaller heritage had widened into a universal possession, and what was formerly the whole now had become a part of a far more glorious whole; and in becoming a part had entered into the possession of a more glorious inheritance!

The whole had changed into a portion, and the portion it had become was more glorious than the whole it had once been!

*Marvellous mind of God!*

For only the adorable wisdom and purpose it was that had become manifest in it all!

Had they not been predestined unto this, according to the divine purpose?

But how else could this marvellous history be explained? No blind fate could possibly work out such a glorious purpose. There is manifest wisdom in it all. And this wisdom has its source in "the counsel of His own will". God's counsel, the counsel of His will, is motivated by infinite intelligence and perfect, though incomprehensible wisdom. It has a purpose, an ultimate aim, an "omega" that is to be attained, with a view to which all designs in that same counsel serve but as means to an end. And that purpose is that

in the highest possible way we and all things should be to the praise of His glory. And this highest possible revelation of His glory and praise is to be attained by gathering together in one all things in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth!

Such is the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will!

And according to that purpose, in harmony with it, they too, who had before hoped in Christ, were predestinated. Hence, they could not possibly remain the whole of God's heritage!

Because of that divine predestination according to that purpose, they could not remain isolated, they must merge into the greater and more glorious whole!

*A portion they became.*

And richer than the former whole is now the portion!

*Amazing purpose of God!*

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*Soli Deo gloria!*

Yes, emphatically, and quite exclusively: to God alone the praise!

That we should be to the praise of His glory! We, indeed, who before hoped in Christ and have now become a portion of God's glorious heritage; but we, too, who after we heard the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation, were sealed into that glorious heritage of God by the Holy Spirit of promise!

Let us say without qualification: to God alone be the praise! Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who hath so blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ!

Do not attribute any praise that belongs to Him alone to man!

For He not only purposes all things, but He also works all things after the counsel of His own will! His counsel is not a dead design, the blueprint of an architect to be worked out by others under His direction: it is the living, almighty, eternal decree of the living God. The counsel of God is the counselling God. He alone works out His own counsel. He perfects His own work. He attains His own aim. He realizes His own purpose. For He works all things according to that purpose. All things have their own place in that marvellous counsel of God. All creatures have been predestinated to their own place and to serve their own purpose in His eternal good pleasure. Rational and irrational creatures, men and angels, good and evil, things in heaven and things in earth and things under the earth,—all things literally are comprehended in that living counsel of the Most High!

And according to that purpose He Himself works all things! Therefore, they cannot fail!

And because of this, too, the praise will forever be His alone!

*The praise of His glory!*

H. H.

## Editorials

### A Decided Change

At the time when our synod was held and when, therefore, as many of the editors of the Standard Bearer were in Grand Rapids as could ever be expected, the president of the staff, the Rev. G. M. Ophoff, called a meeting of the editorial staff for the purpose of discussing the desirability of changing the setup of our paper and introducing possible improvements.

The meeting was held on May 26, in the consistory room of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids.

Present were the editors, the Revs. G. M. Ophoff, G. Vos and the undersigned; the associate editors the Revs. P. De Boer, G. Lubbers, B. Kok, C. Hanko, A. Petter, J. Vanden Breggen, R. Veldman; and also the brethren Revs. J. De Jong and M. Schipper, who had been invited to attend the meeting.

Several of the editors were absent, of course. Nor had they been notified of the meeting. In so far the meeting was rather irregular, although this was entirely due to circumstances. Because of the distances that separate us, it is quite impossible ever to convoke a full meeting. The time of Synod was considered the best opportunity to get together as many as possible. And the meeting was called at a short notice. Besides, some of the absent brethren had already voiced their opinion as to desirable changes in the organization of the Standard Bearer. However, if some of the brethren that could not be present at the meeting of May 26, should have very serious objections to the decisions taken, they should still reveal them, in order that they may be discussed at our next meeting.

The decisions that were taken are rather radical. But they were taken unanimously.

The proposal was made by the Rev. C. Hanko to change the editorial staff in such a way, that there be henceforth only one editor, who is to be held responsible for the entire contents of our paper. This editor, therefore, is to have dictatorial powers, for you cannot have all the responsibility unless you have all the power. He is to outline the entire contents of each issue and assign to each associate his particular task: how much space he has to fill, in what language he must write, the subject he is to discuss, the time his copy must be delivered.

This was a rather radical change and a bold proposal.

One had to get used to the idea, to get over the first shock.

Especially the undersigned, who had reason to fear

that he would be vested with these dictatorial powers, could see several objections to such a plan. For, when responsibility and powers are increased, the burden of work becomes heavier accordingly.

However, the proposal was offered in the form of a motion and it was supported. In the course of a long discussion the idea appeared to receive more and more support and to grow in favor with the brethren present.

The undersigned finally suggested an amendment to the effect that an annual meeting of the staff should be held, and that at this annual meeting the editor should come with a definite proposal outlining the entire contents of the Standard Bearer for the ensuing year, so that at that meeting the definite task for that year might be assigned to all the co-workers.

The result was that the following resolution was adopted: "It is decided to give the paper in the hand of one editor, and to appoint assistant editors for a specified time. The editor is to have control over the entire contents of the paper, provided that at each annual meeting he come with a definite proposal outlining the contents of the paper for one year".

Further it was decided so to change the language of our paper, that henceforth, i.e. until further changes are made, two thirds of the space shall be given to material in the English language, one third to the Holland.

And undersigned was appointed editor.

H. H.

### Our Lecture Tour

Before I continue my narrative, I want to tell you something.

On the eve of my departure from Manhattan, after my last lecture, a group of young folks, with smiling faces, and bubbling over with young life, took me to task for what I had written last year in our paper about the weather in Manhattan and the Montana climate, and they dared me to write anything derogatory on that delicate subject this time. It is my experience that in many States people talk about their weather and climate as if they made it themselves. Well, the above mentioned young folks threatened that they would watch the *Standard Bearer* very closely on this point, and they left the impression on me that their wrath would surely find me out, if I did not write favorably this time about the weather in their State. And I very dutifully and humbly pledged myself to champion their cause.

Hence, before I should forget, I hereby solemnly testify of my own free will and choice, that during my

five-day sojourn in Montana we enjoyed some very beautiful weather and, though I cannot with a good conscience assert that the "sky was not cloudy all day", we saw a good deal of the clear and bright Montana sunshine.

However, even more than the sunshine in nature we enjoyed the warm and pleasant sunshine that radiated from our Manhattan people, and the way they made us feel at home among them.

This last statement, I feel sure, will be strongly and heartily supported by my son, whose presence the above mentioned young folks made the occasion to arrange for two parties, one of which was a welcome, the other a farewell party; and this plus the fact that in Manhattan he could roam through the country on a saddlehorse and that they provided many other ways and means of enjoyment for him, so turned the young man's head that for many days after we had left he could think and talk of nothing but Montana.

Well, how's that?

I surely may expect now that I will receive several indulgences in the form of letters from my young Montana friends, in which it is plainly stated that I am fully and completely forgiven for my former offense, and that I am wholly restored in their favor.

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But let me now pick up the thread of my story where I dropped it last time.

We departed from Sioux Center on the morning of Thursday, April 17. The usual way would have taken us over Sioux Falls through all of South Dakota to the Black Hills and thence through the State of Wyoming into Montana, and it did too,—ultimately, not right away. For we decided to take another road, which would take us far into the north on route seventy five and then west on route ten into Manhattan. This road was marked as a good paved road on our road-map, and good it would have been had it not been that the road to the north was broken up by many frost-boils, which became so bad about fifty miles north of Firestone, Minn. that the road became almost impassable. We then turned around and took the orthodox way after all, but in the meantime most of the forenoon had been lost, and it was not until noon that we arrived in Sioux Falls, where we stopped to eat lunch. This meant that we were still about four hundred miles from Rapid City at the foot of the Black Hills, while the change to mountain time that afternoon caused us to gain an hour also. We reached Rapid City, however, at about eight thirty that evening, and there we stayed for the night.

It had turned cold, there was snow in the Black Hills; it felt as if there might be snow in the air. . . .

Our host in the cabin-camp predicted that we might see snow in Montana. And snow we did see the next

day, plenty of it! We took our way through the beautiful Black Hills and thence through bleak and wild Wyoming. When we stopped for gasoline we heard people talk of snow ahead, the morning train had been an hour late through that region. In Sheridan we stopped for lunch. A strong, chilling wind blew from the north. We were told that heavy snow had fallen, between two and three feet between Sheridan and Billings and westward all the way to Livingston. And presently we ran into it. Still it was snowing in the mountains, and occasionally we passed through a blizzard. However, the snowplow had been through ahead of us and the roads were open, so that we had no trouble in driving. That night we put up for the night in Livingston just on the east side of what is known as "Bozeman-Hill".

The next morning, Saturday, we crossed this "hill" into Bozeman, where we took our breakfast. There, at about nine o'clock in the morning, we saw hanging in the blazing sun a large thermometer registering nineteen above zero. And when we arrived in Manhattan or Church Hill a little later we discovered that the temperature had gone down to zero that morning! However, it was a beautifully bright morning, the sun was sparkling on the pure white snow on the fields and on the distant mountains many miles away, though they appeared so near that they seemed to invite one to take a leisurely stroll and to pay them a visit. And during the day the temperature rose considerably so that one could comfortably walk around in his shirtsleeves.

In Manhattan we made our home, as last year, with Mrs. J. R. Kim. This lady, who is already advanced in years but still young in nature, has the knack of making you feel that the pleasure of staying at her home, while it is yours, of course, is all hers. And that is what I would call real hospitality. There are also people, though happily we did not meet them on our trip, who open their homes to you and provide every possible comfort for you, but make you realize how much they put themselves out for you and how thankful you ought to be. Not so Mrs. Kim. It is she who enjoys your stay, and the pleasure is all hers, to the very last. And many a pleasant evening we had, when after lectures, she would invite as many as would come of the congregation for a social chat.

Let me say here, that it was not because Manhattan had no minister, or because the minister did not have a decent parsonage to receive us, that we stayed at the home of Mrs. Kim. Nor was it because we would not have been welcome at the home of Rev. De Wolf. On the contrary, he would have been glad to entertain us for a few days, and so would his wife. But just a day or two before we came, someone else had arrived at the home of the dominie of Manhattan, someone that insisted that he had come to stay, and whose arrival,

moreover, had been the cause that the juffrouw had to stay in bed for a few days.

The Reverend appeared to be thoroughly domesticated in Manhattan. He and his family enjoyed it there and showed no signs of homesickness for the east whatever. Then, too, the brother enjoys his work. There is something exhilarating and refreshing in the lively interest in our truth as evinced by a newly organized congregation, which is not always so evident in an older congregation. The congregation is glad to have Rev. De Wolf in Manhattan, and they appreciate his work very much. And a nice home they built for him.

We spoke five times in all in our church there before good audiences. About one of these speeches I will have something to say in a later connection.

Yes, Montana has its beauty and grandeur. This one realizes when he takes a trip to Yellowstone Park, as we did one day with a group of picnickers from the congregation. Never, I believe, would I grow weary of gazing at the majestic beauty of Galatin Canyon, through which one passes as he takes his way from Manhattan to the Park. The road follows a mountain stream, the Galatin River, and, alongside of it, all the while meanders through high and rocky mountains, steeply rising on both sides, partly covered with mountain forests, and instilling in one a feeling of awe. Always the scene changes as one takes his way up the stream, and never can one surmise what new surprises of beauty await him at the next curve in the road. And the play of the sunlight upon the richly colored rock, pink and red and yellow and light green, creates an ever varying combination of shades and hues that is delightful to the eye.

Of course, in "Karst's Place" we stopped for coffee.

The Park itself was still largely closed because it was too early in the season. However, we received a taste of its beauty and wonder, as we went into it as far as Old Faithful.

Old Faithful is the famous geyser from which every hour a tremendous waterspout issues forth, a hundred feet straight into the air, accompanied by clouds of steam. It is caused by surface water trickling and flowing into a basin deep under the surface of the earth and with a hot lava bottom. From this basin a shaft leads to the surface, and as the water in the basin is heated the pressure increases, until the geyser "goes off" with a roar. As we arrived this had just occurred, so that we had to wait an hour for the next spout.

And the time of waiting we utilized by eating our picnic lunch.

And it was worth while waiting for.

All the time, even between eruptions, steam issues from the geyser's mouth. As the time approaches for

its eruption, its activity increases. It begins to sigh and rumble like a steam engine that is about to start; it lets out a few "woofs"; it begins to labor under the tremendous pressure from within; water is thrown up from its mouth; it toils and sighs and groans and roars, angrily trying to shake its fetters; higher and higher the steaming hot water is thrown up into the air, five, ten, twenty feet; until finally with a roar of victory the main spout leaps high into the air, sustains itself there for a few minutes to be sure that all the world is witness of its victorious power; then gradually subsides, receding back into its crater, to prepare for a new attack an hour later.

Yes, a wonderful work of God is Old Faithful.

And all around are other wonders, smaller geysers laboring and steaming, pools, some quiet and placid, others busily boiling, beautifully colored: emerald, pink, red, deep blue; all clear as crystal, so that you can gaze far into the mysterious depths of these apparently bottomless craters.

On the way and in the park we saw deer and moose, grazing on the hillsides or coming to the river to drink. Bears we did not see. They had not yet aroused themselves from their long winter-slumber.

Yes, we thoroughly enjoyed our visit in Montana from every aspect.

But the time came for us to leave. And on the morning of April 24 we began our trip to sunny California.

H. H.

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## As To Books

*Philosophy, Education, and Certainty.*  
by Robert L. Cooke, Ed. D.  
Zondervan Publishing House,  
Grand Rapids, Michigan.

This book has already been much discussed also in Reformed circles, and has met with unstinted praise and recommendation. The reason for this is to be found in the subject, the aim the author kept before his mind in treating the subject, and the way he treats it. The author proposes to expose the failure of philosophy to supply us with a firm basis for the education of our children and youth, and defends the proposition that only the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ can give us the certainty philosophy has utterly failed to establish.

In a "Preface" the author writes: "This book is intended to serve a double purpose: first as a college text in the philosophy of education and for courses in



the history of education, the seventeen chapters of approximately equal length lending themselves well to a semester course in either field; second, for informing the youthful reader, whether or not he is actively engaged in the practice of education, as to the significance of some present-day developments in the educational field. It should be of special value in liberal arts colleges and in other schools where a survey of the subject that is not committed solely to the glorification of human achievement is appreciated".

The bulk of the book is devoted to "a comprehensive and sympathetic survey of the whole field of educational philosophy", from the time of the Greek philosophers before Christ, through the early church-fathers, Augustine, the Schoolmen, the Renaissance, the Reformation, the philosophers of the "Enlightenment", down to present-day currents in educational philosophy. It covers, therefore, a wide field and is very comprehensive.

He shows that philosophy's quest for certainty has failed.

In a final chapter he offers the conclusion that the only way out for education is the application of the principles of Christianity to educational philosophy. I quote:

"Twice in the recounted history of educational philosophy, it will be remembered that something appeared that made a bold and arresting contrast to the tentative proposals and confusing doctrines of humanly conceived programs. That something was Christianity, with all that it promised both for education and for philosophy. Here we meet with 'thus saith the Creator', not 'thus reasons the creature'; we are hearing now, not the man-made dogmas of an ecclesiastical body nor of the tenuous etherialism of an equally man-made religious idealism—not of the pious but utterly futile faith in the spread of good-will among men—but of that true and living philosophy offering assurance here and security hereafter, which is nowhere to be found but in the inspired pages of the Old and New Testament Scriptures. Here, in spite of man's long neglect and wilful scorning, are the perfect answers given by Supreme Intelligence. Here we are pointed to the One who alone is 'the Way, the Truth, and the Life!' p. 372.

What, according to the author's conception, is that Christianity whose principles should be applied to educational problems? I quote:

"Let us see, then, what this Christianity may be that we would consider for the clarification of educational confusion. If it be not the Christianity of Scolasticism, or the Christian humanism of the somewhat later years; if it be not the modern version of that Christian humanism which present-day religious idealism seeks to promote, the school has the right, if only

because of its past disappointments and long misguidance, urgently to demand a clear statement of what this Christian philosophy of education may be, this which claims to be the answer to all the world's eager seeking. Let us, then, in the words of no ecclesiastical creed or dogma, but in the light of nothing other than the unequivocal statements of the infallible Scriptures themselves, seek to examine it.

"The facts stand out clearly: True Christianity when it was given to the world came not as a program of ethics or a system of worldly institutions, not as a religion of rigid rules or of mere definitions, certainly not as a collection of 'cunningly devised fables', and not even simply as a 'way of life' for us to live; but it came as a *life* and that the supremely unique life of the everlasting Son of God. This Good News, this Gospel, was not another worldly philosophy nor another gospel by man—for man has no gospel; it was the gospel of God Himself. Here, now, is not man feeling after God, but God stooping down to man. Here is not man seeking to make a better man but an offer to him of a divine indument of power, without which he is helpless; most certainly here is not a man undertaking to make for himself a god of his own fashioning, for not such is the God of the Bible. Here is not even the cooperation of God with man or of man with God, to the uplifting of an individual or race—the creature must be nothing; God must be all. The gospel, then, is solely and uniquely 'the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth' and only by sincere repentance and humble acceptance of the finished work of Christ, each individual for himself, is the miracle of the new life wrought in the experience of anyone on earth". pp. 372, 373.

We are, of course, very much in agreement with the positive stand the author takes in favor of Christian education. Because of this positive Christian standpoint and because of the author's uncompromising exposure of the vanity of philosophy and its failure to establish a basis of certainty, we recommend the book to those of our readers that are interested in the subject of education, and are able to read a book of this kind. It is hardly a book for the general reading public, of course.

It is refreshing to read a book of this calibre by and American author.

However, this does not imply that we agree with everything the author offers. On the contrary, we have a few points of rather serious criticism. First of all, we must differ with the author with respect to his evaluation of the historical development of dogma. In his historical survey he does not only treat the various philosophies that have been offered as a solution of the most fundamental problems, but also offers a partial history of dogma, an evaluation of the doc-

trines of faith which in the course of time the Church established on the basis of Holy Writ. The two, the survey of educational philosophy and of doctrinal development are intertwined. The Greek philosophers are placed on a par with the early church-fathers; the Reformation and the Renaissance are treated in one breath; Luther and Calvin are discussed in one line with the philosophers of the "Aufklärung". This I consider a serious weakness in the work of Dr. Cooke. He forgets that, even though there may have been and admittedly was with the early church-fathers, Augustine, the Schoolmen and the Reformers a tendency to syncretism, the fact remains that there is a positive line of dogmatic development, that should be and easily can be distinguished from the false philosophy of the human mind. I do not know in how far Dr. Cooke is competent to pass a well-founded judgment on the dogmatic development of the past, but certain it is, that he should have considered this part of his survey not as a philosopher but as a theologian.

In the second place, and in close connection with the preceding, I must differ emphatically with Dr. Cooke in many instances of sweeping condemnation of the dogmatic results of the labor of the Church in the past. I will quote some passages that may illustrate the instances I have in mind.

In connection with some of the early church-fathers and their work (the Apologists) Dr. Cooke passes the following unconditional verdict of condemnation: "And so in the process of refuting Gnosticism and other doctrines antagonistic to Christianity, there was gradually formulated a body of dogmas that has itself been called a betrayal of Christianity but which the early church accepted as the authoritative guidance for faith and practice". p. 81.

On p. 83 we find the following statement: "Indeed, we may safely characterize the attitude of all these early church fathers, in spite of their enthusiasm for the Scriptures, as strongly rationalistic. For 'their great Platonic maxim that nothing is to be believed which is unworthy of God, makes reason the judge of revelation'."

Mostly quoting from secondary sources the author gives us the following picture of Augustine: " 'In philosophy he had the merit of being the first to synthesize the best elements of pagan inquiries into a coherent system of Christian thought'. He was called 'greater than Origin, in whom again the Christian and the ancient world meet in new and richer combination'. The *Catholic Encyclopedia* says that as a student before his conversion to Christianity 'neo-Platonic philosophy inspired him with genuine enthusiasm', and that after that event in 386 he was ready 'to devote himself to the pursuit of true philosophy which, for him, was now inseparable from Christianity'. From then on

Augustine gradually became acquainted with Christian doctrine, and in his mind the fusion of Platonic philosophy with revealed dogmas was taking place,' so that 'the threads of Christian and neo-Platonic thought, the ideas of Origin and Plotinus, unite in his philosophy'.

"As to the importance to the world of Augustinianism, the evidence is overwhelming. 'The whole life of the medieval Church was framed on lines which he has suggested. . . . it was in its various parts a carrying out of ideas which he cherished and diffused. Nor does his influence end with the decline of medievalism; we shall see presently how closely his language was akin to that of Descartes, who gave the first impulse to and defined the special character of modern philosophy'. 'He so moulded the Latin world that it is really he that has shaped the education of modern minds'. Quoting Harnack, 'Even today we live by Augustine, by his thought and spirit; it is said that we are sons of the Renaissance and the Reformation, but both one and the other depend upon him'".

The author reaches the following, rather amazing conclusion with respect to Augustine's philosophy: "Therefore, 'the great inheritance which Augustine left the world was along the philosophical line of *intellego ut credam*' (of knowledge as the basis of faith instead of faith as the basis of knowledge). This dictum had an overwhelming influence on Scholasticism, as will be seen". pp. 85-87.

The Reformers are pictured as "humanists", and although "in theological matters the syncretizing tendencies of the Protestant leadership was rendered largely innocuous, it was sadly not so in matters other than religious". p. 110. And, according to the author, there can be no doubt "that official Protestantism from its inception completely failed, in spite of the spiritual heights achieved, to do for the world of mind what it did for the world of spirit. Thus by that failure was (should be: *were*, H.H.) there poured into the headwaters of the stream of modern educational thought, the worldly intellectual poisons of paganism". p. 114.

Summarizing the results of his survey in a later chapter, Dr. Cooke characterizes the attitude of the "ecclesiastical man" to the Gospel in the following words: "Then almost immediately mankind was offered a second and supremely perfect alternative in the light that shone from a lone Cross on a lonely hill. It has been recorded how ecclesiastical man in general responded to that opportunity, neither by open refusal nor yet by free acceptance, but in a subtler way that had vastly more potentialities for future confusion than even a complete turning away would bring. In effect he said, 'I will gladly receive all that is acceptable to my intellect; that which does not satisfy, need not be rejected, but rather let it be modified to meet the criteria of my reason!'" p. 351.



And in the same summary the Reformation is evaluated as follows: "In the midst of the glittering intellectual tinsel bordered by dark shadows of social wrong and philosophic blindness came the protestant Reformation. And we have seen how this latter movement, which once more, as at the start of Christendom, gave promise of putting before the minds of men the truth as revealed from a higher Source than this world, had its opportunity destroyed just as effectively as had been true of the early Catholics and for the same reason. For here again, though in the schools alone this time, was man's wisdom allowed to vitiate the Higher, by means of that humanism which had been the chief characteristic of the Renaissance and which was ultimately to prove just as disappointing in this new syncretism as it had previously been ineffectual when guided by intellect alone".

In his Preface the author informs us that the use of secondary sources instead of the works themselves of the men discussed is done "in pursuance of a well-considered purpose". Nevertheless, I believe that if the author had made a careful study of the early fathers, Augustine, and the Reformers, he would have been spared the error of the one-sided verdict he expresses upon them now. Besides, in my opinion, the secondary sources he employed are hardly reliable to serve as a sole basis for a historical survey.

Finally, and again in close connection with the preceding, the conclusion to which the author finally arrives can hardly be sufficient to serve as a new basis for educational philosophy. If I understand the author correctly, he wants to get away from ecclesiastical doctrine, and simply return to the pure gospel as revealed in the Scriptures. But, in the first place, it is quite impossible for anyone, and also wrong, to ignore the positive guidance of the Holy Spirit in the past. And even in application to educational philosophy the principles of the truth as found in the Word of God will have to be definitely stated. And, secondly, the attempt to ignore the doctrine of the Church in the past will ultimately mean only that the author will apply his own view of the Gospel to education. And just how this is to be done the author fails to point out. It seems to me that the historical and negative part of the book is rather in disproportion to the positive and constructive part.

Then, too, I believe that the attempt to Christianize public instruction is hopeless.

After all, the only proper solution is the free Christian School.

Nevertheless, the book is valuable, refreshing because of its Christian standpoint, worthy to be studied by all that are interested in Christian education.

H. H.

## Voor Alle Menschen

De vraag rest ons nog te beantwoorden of Ds. Zwier's beschouwing van het bidden voor de overheid metterdaad berust op eene zuivere verklaring van den tekst, waarop hij zich beroept. I Tim. 2:1, 2.

We lezen daar de bekende woorden: "Ik vermaan dan voor alle dingen, dat gedaan worden smeekingen, gebeden, voorbiddingen, dankzeggingen, voor alle menschen. Voor koningen en allen, die in hoogheid zijn; opdat wij een gerust en stil leven leiden mogen in alle godzaligheid en eerbaarheid".

We weten, hoe Ds. Zwier op grond van deze woorden zijne lezers en hoorders onderwijst te bidden. Hij wil, dat ze ongeveer als volgt zullen bidden: "Geef aan de overheid eene ruime mate van uwe algemeene genade, opdat de macht van het militarisme verbroken worde, de oorlog mag worden voorkomen, en er vrede en burgerlijke gerechtigheid in ons land en onder de natiën der wereld wonen moge".

Letten we nu allereerst op de woorden van den tekst.

En dan trekt het onze aandacht aanstonds, dat de apostel Timotheus en de gemeente vermaant om gebeden en dankzeggingen op te zenden tot den troon der genade voor *alle menschen*.

Dit is zeer breed.

We hebben hier dus geen vermaning om bepaald te bidden voor de overheid als zoodanig, in de capaciteit van overheid. Wel worden koningen en allen, die in hoogheid in het tweede vers nog uitdrukkelijk genoemd, doch het is duidelijk, dat dit alleen geschiedt uit het oogpunt van het feit, dat ook zij tot *alle menschen* behooren, voor wie de apostel wil, dat gebeden zal worden door de gemeente. Aan een bijzonder gebed voor de overheid als zoodanig wordt hier niet gedacht. Ge kunt op grond van dezen tekst niet bidden: geef onzen president en zijnen ministeren, en onzen gouverneur en onzen burgermeester, en allen, die over ons regeeren, algemeene genade om burgerlijke gerechtigheid te handhaven en oorlog te voorkomen. Gebeden voor *alle menschen* moeten worden opgezonden.

Als hier dan ook in vs. 2 aan toegevoegd wordt: "voor koningen en allen, die in hoogheid zijn", dan beteekent dit niet, dat deze de eenigsten zijn, die de apostel op het oog heeft. Ge kunt niet lezen: Ik vermaan, dat gedaan worden gebeden voor alle menschen, *dat is* voor koningen en allen, die in hoogheid zijn. Dit zou natuurlijk geen zin hebben. Doch de bedoeling is: voor *alle menschen*, koningen en allen, die in hoogheid zijn *niet uitgezonderd*. Het gebed, dat voor alle menschen door de gemeente moet worden opgezonden, geldt dus ook koningen en allen, die in hoogheid zijn.

En let ook hier weer op het breede van dit gebed.

Alle nationale grenzen worden hier eenvoudig overschreden. Dit is geen vermaning om voor *eigen* koning of voor *eigen* keizer of dictator of president te bidden, maar voor koningen (in het meervoud) en voor *allen*, die in hoogheid zijn. Als ge dus aan personen wilt denken, dan moet ge u niet bepalen tot den president van onze Vereenigde Staten, maar ook insluiten den dictator van Duitschland, de premier van Italië en den sultan van Turkije.

Alleen maar zal het wel duidelijk zijn, dat de apostel niet de personen, maar het geheel van een groep op het oog heeft. Evenals hij door *alle menschen* niet aanduidt ieder individu van ons menschelijk geslacht, maar het oog heeft op menschen van allerlei rang en stand, zoo noemt hij hier met name de klasse van hen, die in hooge plaatsen zijn, overheidspersonen, "koningen en allen, die in hoogheid zijn".

Als dus Zwier wil bidden voor algemeene genade voor *onzen* president, dan doet hij dit niet op grond van I Tim. 2:1, 2, want deze tekst is niet nationaal begrens, doch zeer breed van begrip. En wil hij dit toch bidden met beroep op dezen tekst, dan moet hij ook hetzelfde bidden voor Hitler en Mussolini. Daar kan hij nooit voor weg. Nu zal hij waarschijnlijk willen bidden: "Zegen onzen president en zijne ministeren en vernietig de macht van Hitler". Maar dan zal hij voor dit gebed toch een anderen tekst moeten zoeken. Er staat hier nu eenmaal: alle menschen, koningen en allen, die in hoogheid zijn.

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Maar wat zullen we dan voor alle menschen, dat is, voor menschen van allerlei rang en stand, rijk en arm, hoog en laag staande menschen, koningen en overheidspersonen niet uitgezonderd, moeten bidden?

Volges Ds. Zwier leert ons deze tekst, dat we moeten bidden voor algemeene genade voor deze menschen, bepaaldelijk dan voor koningen en allen, die in hoogheid zijn; voor burgerlijke gerechtigheid en vrede in den lande.

Nu is dit, afgedacht nog van de vraag, of Ds. Zwier dit wel uit den tekst vermag te halen, maar een arm gebed. We hebben er in ons vorig artikel reeds op gewezen, dat er van de vrucht van dit gebed niets gezien wordt in de wereld. Het tegendeel is waar. Het wordt al slechter. Maar ook al zou Ds. Zwier grond hebben om te gelooven, dat dit zijn gebed verhoord zou worden, zoodat hij reden had om *amen* op zijn gebed te zeggen (des neen!), dan blijft het toch nog een armzalig gebedje.

Waarom bidt Zwier niet om zaligmakende genade voor "alle menschen", voor "koningen en allen, die in hoogheid zijn"? Dat zou zijn gebed immers oneindig veel rijker maken? Hij zou daarin immers ook veel meer waarachtige menschenmin openbaren dan in een

gebed om wat "algemeene genade", waarmee immers die menschen, die niets anders ontvangen, naar de hel gaan? En voor zulk een gebed zou hij immers ook grond hebben, want "God wil, dat alle menschen, ook koningen en die in hoogheid zijn, zalig worden en tot kennis der waarheid komen".

En, als dat gebed eens verhoord werd, dan hadden diezelfde menschen immers aan algemeene genade geen behoefte meer. Alles komt dan vanzelf terecht.

Doch hierover zoo meteen meer.

Ds. Zwier tracht zijn voorstelling van de beteekenis van dit Schriftwoord te baseeren op het laatste gedeelte van vers 2: "opdat wij een stil en gerust leven leiden mogen, in alle godzaligheid en eerbaarheid".

Zie, zoo redeneert hij, dit zegt ons wel zeer duidelijk, wat we moeten bidden. Dit laatste ziet op vrede in het land. De apostel wil dus, dat we zullen bidden voor de stuiting van de booze macht van het militarisme, voor voorkoming van den vreeselijken oorlog, voor burgerlijke gerechtigheid. Want immers alleen als zulk een gebed verhoord wordt, leidt een volk een stil en gerust leven.

"Stil en gerust" beteekent hier dus, volgens Ds. Zwier: zonder oorlog; een leven van nationalen vrede.

Dit gaat echter niet op.

Ds. Zwier wordt veel te veel beheerscht door zijn theorie van algemeene genade in zijn verklaring van dezen tekst.

Als "stil en gerust" ziet op nationalen vrede, dan zal het voornaamwoord "wij" zeker ook moeten slaan op de natie, niet op de Kerk. Als er geen oorlog in het land is, dan leven wij als natie een stil en gerust leven van algemeene genade.

Maar die verklaring gaat niet op, want er volgt op dit "stil en gerust leven" immers "in alle godzaligheid en eerbaarheid". Nu kan dit laatste zeker niet worden toegepast, zelfs niet door de algemeene genade mannen, op een volk als zoodanig. Stond er nu nog alleen "eerbaarheid", dan zou het wel kunnen klaar gespeeld. Eerbaarheid kan immers wel een vrucht zijn algemeene genade. Maar "godzaligheid", neen, dat is toch wat anders. Dat dit ook een vrucht zou kunnen zijn van een gebedje om algemeene genade, dat zal ook Ds. Zwier niet aandurven. "Wij" zal dus wel op de Kerk moeten slaan. En de uitdrukking beteekent dan: "opdat de Kerk een stil en gerust leven leiden moge in alle godzaligheid en eerbaarheid".

Jawel, zal Ds. Zwier zeggen, maar zoo bedoel ik het ook niet. Ik stem u gaarne toe, dat het wordeke "wij" slaat op de Kerk. Maar, ziet, de zaak zit zoo: wij moeten bidden om voorkomen van den oorlog; als we dat doen, dan komt er vrede in het land, waarin wij wonen; en dan leven wij, de geloovigen, ook een stil en gerust leven in dat land, waar de oorlog niet woest.

Maar dan merk ik op: 1. Dat in dat geval de woor-

den “stil en gerust” toch niet met noodwendigheid behoeven verklaard te worden als doelende op een nationalen vrede. De kerk kan wel een stil en gerust leven in tijden van oorlog. Het zal er maar op aankomen, wat die woorden “stil en gerust” eigenlijk beteekenen. 2. Dat nationale vrede in geen geval iets te maken heeft met “godzaligheid en eerbaarheid”. Toch staan de woorden “stil en gerust” op het allernauwst in verband met “godzaligheid en eerbaarheid”. Het eene staat of valt, blijkens de duidelijke bedoeling van den apostel, met het andere. Als ge geen stil en gerust leven leidt, dan kunt ge ook niet in alle godzaligheid en eerbaarheid leven.

Hoe ge dus de zaak ook wendt of keert, het lijkt er niet veel op, dat de apostel hier denkt aan politieken wereldvrede, of aan vrede onder een volk.

Het woordje “stil” beteekent eigenlijk “zonder opspraak te verwekken”. De Kerk moet zoo leven, dat ze geen oorzaak wordt van berucht te zijn in de wereld. En het woord, dat vertaald werd door “gerust”, en dat misschien juister kan worden weergegeven door “rustig”, beteekent “zich niet met eens anders doen bemoeien”. Godzaligheid is de vreeze des Heeren, zooals ze zich openbaart in een vromen wandel. En “eerbaarheid” is die deugd, waardoor we ons het respect van anderen waardig maken.

De Kerk moet dus zoo wandelen in het midden der wereld, dat ze geen opspraak verwekt, zich niet mengt in hetgeen haar niet aangaat, ze moet zich niet berucht maken, maar zoo wandelen, dat ze zich het respect van anderen waardig maakt.

Nu kan ze zich nooit meer in opspraak brengen dan wanneer ze een verkeerde en hatelijke houding aanneemt tegenover “koningen en allen, die in hoogheid zijn”.

En in de dagen, waarin de apostel leefde, bestond hiervoor wel gevaar. Koningen en keizers en allen, die in hoogheid zijn, stonden bekend als vijanden van Christus en Zijne gemeente, die de gemeente Gods vervolgden. Hoe gemakkelijk was het dan, om tegenover hen een houding aan te nemen van verachting en tegenstand. Koningen en menschen in hoogheid behoorden nu eenmaal tot de goddeloozen en verworpenen. Er was voor hen geen hoop. De zaligheid had God voor hen niet bestemd. Men sloot hen systematisch buiten het gebed der gemeente. En die houding kwam ook wel tot openbaring in het leven der geloovigen naar buiten, in woord en daad.

Welnu, zoo werd de gemeente zelf oorzaak, dat ze geen “stil en gerust” leven kon leiden, “in alle godzaligheid en eerbaarheid”.

En daarom vermaant de apostel “voor alle dingen”, dat de gemeente voor “alle menschen” zal bidden, en koningen en allen, die in hoogheid zijn, niet buiten haar gebed zal sluiten.

En wat moet zij dan bidden?

Het antwoord vindt ge in de verzen 3 en 4 van dit zelfde hoofdstuk: “Want dat is goed en aangenaam voor God, onzen Zaligmaker; welke wil, dat alle menschen zalig worden, en tot kennis der waarheid komen”.

Dat “alle menschen” hier, evenmin als in vs. 1, niet kan beteekenen: ieder mensch, behoeft thans niet te worden aangetoond. Hierover loopt thans niet het geschil.

Maar wel willen we er op wijzen, dat er in deze woorden een aanduiding ligt van hetgeen de apostel wil, dat we zullen bidden voor “alle menschen”, ook voor “koningen en allen, die in hoogheid zijn”. Immers ligt er in deze laatste woorden een grond voor de vermaning, dat we voor “alle menschen” zullen bidden. God wil, dat alle menschen zalig worden; daarom is het Hem goed en aangenaam, dat we voor “alle menschen” bidden; maar hierdoor is het dan ook volkomen duidelijk, dat het de bedoeling is, dat we voor hen zullen bidden naar den wil Gods, i.e., dat ze zalig worden.

God wil Zijne gemeente vergaderen uit allerlei soort en klassen van menschen, ook uit koningen en die in hoogheid zijn.

Daarom is het Hem aangenaam, niet dat Zijne gemeente systematisch degenen, die in hoogheid zijn, buiten haar gebed sluit.

Ze moet voor alle menschen bidden, niet om een beetje algemeene genade, maar om de zaligheid der verkorenen uit alle natien, rangen, standen en klassen van menschen.

In de houding van dat gebed zal de gemeente een stil en gerust leiden, in alle godzaligheid en eerbaarheid.

Zoo versta ik dezen tekst.

En ik geloof, dat Ds. Zwier wel inzien zal, dat zijne verklaring niet deugt.

Hij liet de algemeene genade dogmatiek over de exegete heerschen.

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Mag ik er ten slotte nog op wijzen, dat ook Dr. A. Kuyper Sr., jaren vóór hij zijn “De Gemeene Gratie” schreef, dezelfde tekst in beginsel ook verklaarde, zooals wij het boven deden?

Hij schrijft:

“Er staat namelijk: ‘Voor *alle* dingen (wat ook hier weer niet beteekent voor alle mogelijke dingen, maar voor alle andere dingen die ik u in dezen brief zeggen ga) voor alle dingen dan, vermaan ik u, dat er smeeingen en voorbiddingen en dankzeggingen geschieden *voor alle menschen*, voor koningen en allen, die in hoogheid gesteld zijn; want dat is goed en welbehagelijk voor onzen God en Zaligmaker, welke wil

dat *alle menschen* zalig worden en tot de kennis der zaligheid zullen komen'.

Zeer duidelijk slaat dat *alle menschen* uit het slot dus op dat eerste 'alle menschen' terug. Er moest voor 'alle menschen gebeden' en dat kan en mag en moet, omdat het gebed op de belofte moet steunen, en de belofte vast ligt in het besluit, en ook dat besluit *alle menschen* omvat.

"Dit is duidelijk niet waar?

"Ons *bidden* doet het niet, maar wel het bidden op grond van de *belofte*, en die beloften zweven weer niet in de lucht, maar komen uit Gods *raadsbesluit* en zijn er de openbaring, de bekendmaking, de mededeeling van.

"Voor "alle menschen" kunnen we dus dan eerst bidden, met hope op verhooring, indien we weten dat er een belofte voor "alle menschen" ligt en indien die belofte weer rust op een raadsbesluit, dat "alle menschen" omvat.

"Wil men nu weten wat dat "alle menschen" in de voorbidding beteekent, dan geeft vers 2 een duidelijk uitsluitsel. Daar toch is sprake niet van den *souverein van één enkel volk*, maar van alle volkshoofden, souvereinen of opperheeren, onverschillig of ze den titel van koning voeren, of shah of mogul heeten. Er wordt dus geprotesteerd tegen het enghartige nationale; tegen het bidden alleen maar voor eigen volk, voor den koning van zijn eigen land, voor zijn eigen opperhoofd; alsof men niet tot de menschheid behoorde, en geen banden aan heel het geslacht had.

"Neen, verre vandaar, zegt Paulus: 'gebeden en gedankt moet er worden volstrekt niet alleen voor u en in uw eigen kleinen levenskring, maar voor alle volk onder de menschen en met name voor de hoofden dier volken, laat ze dan koningen of archonten heeten; want zoo wil de Heere God het, die wil dat niet een enkele natie, maar alle volk onder menschen zalig zal worden. Want alle natiën hebben maar éénzelfden God, en tusschen dien God en alle volk onder menschen is er maar één Middelaar, de mensch Christus Jezus, die zichzelf voor alle natiën heeft overgegeven, waartoe ik een prediker en apostel gesteld ben, o let er op, want ik spreek de waarheid in Christus, ik lieg niet: *een leeraar onder de heidenen.*" Uit Het Woord, IV, pp. 29, 30.

Het punt, waarop ik vooral de aandacht wil vestigen, zal voor ieder uit bovenstaande aanha'ling duidelijk zijn: ook Dr. Kuyper verstond het gebed, waartoe de gemeente hier wordt vermaand, als doelende, niet op wat algemeene genade maar op de zaligheid van "alle menschen", dat is, van menschen uit alle natiën, rangen en standen.

Laat Ds. Zwier toch eerst zijn algemeene genade bril afzetten, eer hij tracht de Schrift te verklaren!

H. H.

## Hinkende Tusschen Twee Gedachten

I Kon. 18:21.

Het sprak niet wel voor Israel, dat Elia zoo plotseling met de vraag op hem afkwam, wie dan toch eigenlijk God is. Het hoorde wat naif. Hij wist toch wel, dat hier niet meer gekozen kon worden, De keuze was alreeds geschied, nog aleer tot kiezen, Israel in staat was. Zoo zouden wij in onze onnoozelheid spreken.

In den eigenlijken zin des woords doet een ieder, wat betreft zijn hart, altijd een keuze. Voor of tegen God kiest men altijd. Er is immers in geheel de wereld nooit sprake van neutraliteit? Zeker, men kan dat wel zeggen, maar mogelijk is het niet, dat men een houding kan aannemen alsof zoude men noch tot de eene, noch tot de andere partij behooren. Zelfs rondom ons laat geen enkel heerscher het toe, dat men tegenover zijn zaak neutraal zou staan. Wie neutraal is, wordt of ingepalmd, of men laat den veroveraar stilletjes zijn gang aan. Men is het met hem eens. God de Heere laat dit ook nooit toe, dat men in Zijn Kerk zou kunnen spreken van neutraal tegenover Hem te staan. Hij schiep Zijn schepsel naar Zijn Beeld en daarom één van beiden, óf de mensch beantwoordt aan zijn schepping, óf hij keert den Schepper den rug toe.

Hij kiest voor den Schepper of voor het schepsel. En in zijn hulpeloosheid en afhankelijkheid weet hij maar al te goed, dat er van een zichzelf handhaven, het op eigen beenen staan, geen sprake is. Ook al mede, doordat Gods eisch onvoorwaardelijk gehandhaafd blijft, wordt de mensch tot kiezen gedrongen en gedwongen. Zijn kiezen als redelijk zedelijk schepsel is dan ook voor hem vrije wilsdaad, waarop hij zich met trots beroept. Hij ontkent echter Gods recht, houdt daarom ook met God geen rekening en treedt op als iemand, die meent God te zijn in het diepst van zijn gedachten, naar het levensbeginsel van Kloos. En heel opmerkelijk kiest dien zich vrijwaanenden mensch altijd tegen God, tegen Zijn Woord en tegen Zijn Christus. Doch kiezen doet hij.

Zóó is het in met de wereld gesteld.

Zóó is het ook in de Kerk.

En daarmee komt men dan in botsing met het groote gebod des Heeren, dat men geen andere goden nevens Hem dient, of in gehoorzaamheid dient men Hem met de verwerping van alle anderen.

Die eisch, door Jehova gesteld, moet ook Israel gehoorzamen.

Het is één van de karaktertrekken van Elias' arbeid, dat hij daarmee tot Israel gezonden werd. Geheel den arbeid van dezen Godsman werd gekenmerkt door de prediking, dat er geen tweeslachtigheid mag toe-

gelaten in de Kerk, dat de wereld in de Kerk geen plaats mag worden ingeruimd. Het is altijd weer die oude strijd tegen de wereld in de Kerk waarmede de Profeten Gods te kampen hadden. Israel moet alleen willen wonen, geen goden nevens den God des Verbonds dulden, zal het veilig wonen. En meestal vonden de Profeten geen bijval bij de overgrootste menigte, die dat juist niet wilden. Niet wilde kiezen, noch voor de wereld, noch voor Jehova.

De Kerk wilde er dikwijls net zoo wat tusschen door zeilen. Jehova geheel en al den dienst op zeggen, o, neen, dat nu juist niet, Hem alleen dienen, och, dat kon men ook wel wat al te kras doortrekken. Men moest tenslotte toch ook weer niet in uiterste vervallen en vooral niet eenzijdig zijn, nietwaar? De lijn zoo heel strak trekken, was het maar niet beter om een beetje te geven en te nemen? Godsdienstig, alleszins menschen. Zelfs een ferme preek die 'raak' was kon er nog wel op door, maar nu niet in alles doortrekken. Blijf toch wat in het relatieve hangen, alles is tenslotte betrekkelijk, voor wie nuchter nadenkt. Daarmede werden dan ook de godsdienstplichten (naar den vorm) niet terzijde gezet, er werd aan plicht en vorm heel veel aandacht gewijd—iets dat juist in dagen van geestelijk verval in het oog springt. Wat aan wezen wordt gemist, wordt door menige vorm gedekt.

Een volk hinkende op (tusschen) twee gedachten, is het Israel van de dagen waarin Elia optrad. De welbekende en welberuchte Achab stond aan het hoofd van Israel, terzijde gestaan van de heidensche Izebel, die haar man in goddeloosheid wel een lesje kon leeren.

Hinkende tusschen twee gedachten.

Let er op, er staat niet, op die beiden gelijktijdig, doch op geen der beiden, maar er net tusschen in. Men was niet 'al te vroom' en ook niet 'al te goddeloos'.

Daar behoeven we ons eigenlijk, waar we de geschiedenis kennen, niet over te verwonderen. En toch eigenlijk ook weer wel. Immers, de dienst des Heeren was en moest zijn, de eenige dienst. Alleen Israel was het geoorloofd dien dienst te onderhouden. Israel was daartoe, in onderscheiding van al de andere volkeren, verkoren. In geheel de wereld was dit voorrecht geen ander volk gegund. Het eigenaardige en tegelijkertijd goddelooze verschijnsel wordt gezien, dat die dienst van Jehova in de dagen van Elia, schier niet meer te vinden was in Israel. De dienst van Baal was in dien tijd tot staatsgodsdienstig verheven. Aan dien dienst namen Achab en Izebel deel en werd door die beiden onderhouden. De priesters van dien afgod werden goed verzorgd en zelfs was een tempel door den Koning gebouwd en een altaar voor hem opgericht, daarbenevens was nog een bosch terzijde gesteld voor den zedeloos dienst van Astarte. En ongeveer een duizend profeten waren aan dien dienst gewijd (450 die aten

van den tafel van Izebel, terwijl er in het bovengenoemde bosch zich een 400 bevonden).

De naam Baal beteekent Heere en Bezitter (soortgelijke beteekenis had den naam van den afgod Melech, god der Moabieten. Zijn naam was koning). Van dezen dienst lezen we alreeds ten tijde der Richteren, doch onder de regeering van Achab, mede onder de inspiratie van Izebel, bereikt deze dienst hoogtepunt en was in eere en aanzien, daar hof en volk er zich aan bezondigden.

Deze toestand moet des te meer schrikkelijk zijn, daar Israel het Bondsvolk genoemd werd van Jehova en hier op een soort middenweg zich bevindt, waarvan de Heere en Zijn knecht gruwen. Zoo althans dient de vraag verstaan te worden, die door Elia aan Israel wordt voorgelegd. Het is hier geen pleiten om toch wat anders en beter zich te gedragen, maar om er onomwonden voor uit te komen, wien men nu eigenlijk dient of dienen wil. Elia heeft in de ziel des volks gekeken en richt daarom de scherpe pijl op hun hart, opdat het nu eindelijk en tenlaatste eens duidelijk zij, wat men wil en aan wien men zich verknocht weet.

Naar de grondgedachte bedoelt de vraag aldus gelezen te worden 'hoe lang zal dat ellendig heen en weer zwaaien, als van een kreuple, nog duren? O, Elia verstond het wel, hoe gaarne men vriendjes wilde zijn van den afgod, doch openlijk Jehova niet durfde af danken. En dat dubbelhartige kwam in de levensopenbaring van het volk zeer sterk uit. Zelfs van die God vreesden en den dienst in de toekomst zouden waarnemen, was geen spoor te ontdekken. En aldus was er in het leven van Israel dan ook niets gestadigs. Het zwalkte van links naar rechts en men was ongestadig in al zijn wegen. Iemand die zich aldus openbaart, tracht aan de beide zijde van de 'fence' tegelijkertijd zich als een vriend voor te doen. Aldus dient hij zich aan en meent alle moeite te kunnen ontloopen, en aldus blijft hij dan ook precies in het midden. Spreekt ge met hem over de Waarheid of over de zaak Gods, over actie ten opzichte van de opvoeding der kinderen naar den eisch des Verbonds, hij ziet u met een gezicht aan waarop noch het vóór noch het tegen te lezen staat. Een direct antwoord krijgt ge dan ook nooit, ook dan niet al zoudt ge uit uw vel springen.

Zóó vindt ge het echter nooit in de wereld. Daar toch is het terrein der duisternis en de kinderen der duisternis trachten niet zich als kinderen des lichts voor te doen. De mensch van nature komt te voorschijn zooals hij is en veracht de idee, dat men hem een Christen zou noemen.

Neen, zulke middelmenchen, die hinken, dat is, die er zoo tusschen door trachten te zeilen, bevinden zich niet in het midden der wereld, maar juist daar vindt men hen, waar het Woord Gods gepredikt wordt. Waar men door den Woord Gods wordt vermaand en

onderwezen, om toch niët de goden der wereld te dienen, doch te luisteren naar den eisch des Verbonds. Het is juist in den kring des Verbonds, waar dus den eisch des Verbonds gepredikt wordt, waar men zich kan schuldig maken aan het hinken tusschen twee gedachten.

Dat dit kan vindt zijn oorzaak heel eenvoudig in het feit, dat niet alles Israël is, wat in Israël geboren wordt. In de zichtbare openbaring van het lichaam van Christus is de sfeer waar beiden gevonden worden, licht en duisternis, de kinderen des vleesches en die uit den Geest geboren zijn. Men kan in die sfeer, gelijk het dan ook altijd geschied, tweeërlei tot openbaring brengen, daar wordt gesproken over de dingen des hemels en die van Gods eeuwig Koninkrijk, of, men spreekt daar over de dingen der aarde, de vergankelijke dingen, de genietingen der wereld. Daar geschied oogenschijnlijk, want wezenlijk is dit niet mogelijk, dat men uit twee beginselen leeft, er althans twee beginselen op nahoudt: Gerechtigheid en zonde.

Nu is het opmerkelijk, dat de tekst niet spreekt over het hinken tusschen twee beginselen, maar het hinken tusschen twee gedachten, twee opinies, of twee overleggingen. Hoe dat kan? Wel heel eenvoudig, omdat men door de prediking des Woords wordt geplaast voor den eisch, om de wereld te verzaken, zijn oude natuur te dooden en tegen de zonde te strijden en vervolgens, dat men in een nieuw en godzalig leven zal wandelen. Zóó is en zóó moet het zijn, zegt iedere Schriftuurlijke prediking, die tot de gemeente komt. Kwam men daar nu maar met kracht tegen op en verwierp dat zonder doekjes er om te winden, dan was er geen sprake van, dat dit niet spoedig ten einde zou worden gebracht. De tucht des Woords wordt dan gevo'gd door de Kerkelijke discipline en niet wat zondaar is, gelijk sommigen meenen, maar wat zich als *onboetvaardig* zondaar openbaarde, werd dan in den Naam des Heeren en naar Zijn bevel buiten gezet, nadat ten uiterste toe gearbeid was aan genoemde personen. Ondertusschen, openlijk komt men niet tegen die prediking op, maar gaat heel gewoon zijn eigen weg. Men volgt de weg van het vleesch, de begeerten en de lust der oogen en verliest zich in de vermaken der wereld. En deze dingen zijn natuurlijk niet moeilijk te volgen. Het gaat als vanzelf, omdat het hart zich niet vindt in den dienst des Heeren, doch in dien der zonde. Het is dus ook niet zoo onschuldig, gelijk men het wel wil voorstellen in sommige kringen. We hooren het weleens, dat wie zoo te werk gaat de menschen buiten de Kerk jaagt en wat dan? Dan zijn we hen voor goed kwijt en komt er heelemaal niets van terecht. Aldus vergeet men, dat de gemeente er aan gewaagd wordt en het doode hout de overhand krijsende, den toon tenslotte gaat aangeven. Neen, maar geheel die toestand is niet zoo onschuldig voor te stellen. Men zondigt tegen beter weten in, handelende en

wandelende naar de dwaasheid van het zondige hart, begeeren en denken.

Zeker, men blijft wel bij de Kerk, vooral dan, als het lidmaatschap strookt met het fatsoenlijkeheidsbegrip van den mensch. En daar mag niet bij vergeten worden, dat een mensch bij zijn dood dan toch ook nog een nette begrafenis begeert, waar een leeraar die in het leven van den doode den geestelijken moed niet had het 'schaap' te vermanen, heel zoetsappig een 'roerend' gedeelte der Schrift leest en in een zalvende en tot tranen toe bewegende toespraak den doode prijst en den hemel 'inpreekt', het Woord Gods ondertusschen niet laten spreken of uit elkaar scheurt, mede tot het sussen van het eigen geweten.

Had men met den leeraar er nu eerlijkheidshalve maar uit gestapt, dan had er niets vreemds geschied, want men behoorde er immers niet bij, noch gevoelde men er zich thuis?

Dan had men ook niet onstichtelijk behoeven te gevoelen als het Woord werd verkondigd. Want dat gaat er altijd mee gepaard, dat de critiek op de zuivere prediking niet uit kan blijven. Het kan wel met wat minder toe. Nog eens weer, deze dingen geschieden op het terrein der Kerk. Daar worden die dingen openbaar en wordt een ieder openbaar. Hetzij het hem nut doet of geheel geen voordeel brengt. En de kerk, die op den gulden midden weg, zoo tusschen Waarheid en Leugen in weet te schipperen, die kan nog wel allen tevreden stellen, behalve dan Gods volk.

Aan deze dwaasheid had Israël met zijn koning zich schuldig gemaakt. De zondaar is altijd een dwaas, maar vooral als die zondaar dan ook nog tot de Kerk behoort. Dwaasheid, want men kan wel trachten anderen en zichzelf te bedriegen, maar gelukken kan dit eigenlijk niet. Wat geeft het tenslotte wanneer men zich laat noemen naar den God des Verbonds en het leven daartegen vloekt? De Baaldienst in Israël bracht met zich het heilig misnoegen des Heeren, dat zoo kennelijk over Israël geopenbaard was. En wie onder het licht des Woords zich bevindt, zal toch niet zichzelf wijs kunnen maken, dat God het niet zien en zoeken zal? God kan men niets wijs maken en Hij bezoekt altijd de zonden, vooral van Zijn Israël.

Wezenlijk is men nooit in staat om tusschen twee gedachten te hinken. Ook geldt het hier, dat men den eenen heer zal lief hebben en lief heeft en den anderen haat.

Trouwens, als Elia het volk oproept om getuigen te zijn van het wonderwerk Gods en hen voor den strengen eisch stelt om uit te spreken, wie God is, ja, dan komt er door den geweldige kracht des Heeren, geopenbaard door het zenden van vuur op Elias offerande een heel geroep van "De Heere is God, de Heere is God", maar deze momenteele opwelling niet opgevolgd door een zich bekeeren in stof en asch en een ootmoedig belijden van zonde en ongerechtigheid, die



tegenover Jehova bedreven waren, doch een voortgaan op het pad der ongerechtigheid.

Het stellen van den eisch droeg in zich het oordeel over Israel. Het is toch niet noodig, dat in de Kerk de vraag nog beantwoord zal moeten worden, wie is God? God is Jehova en niemand meer.

En nog al leer het wonder plaats grijpt durft nog wil men die belijdenis uitspreken. Het ontzettende in den tekst is dit, als Elia den eisch stelt van kiezen en niet langer tusschen twee gedachten te hinken, dan staat er "maar het volk antwoorde hem niet met één woord". Dat kon niet anders, het is waar. Maar het kon enkel en alleen niet, omdat een antwoord, wat het ook geweest ware, een oordeel was geweest voor Israel. Men kon niet antwoorden, want in den tijd van drie en een half jaar, toen de Heere luide had gesproken van Zij heilig misnoegen, was men toch doorgegaan met den dienst van Baal en het verachten van Jehova.

En in het stellen van dien eisch aan het volk ligt dan ook niet allermeeft, gelijk sommigen het voorstellen, een oproep tot bekeering, doch een oproep, om zich in zijn ware verhouding tegenover God den Heere zich te openbaren, hetzij dan in vijandschap of in een betrekking van liefde tegenover Hem.

Zoo is het altijd.

Voor of tegen.

Belijdt ge Zijn Naam, dien Hem dan.

Erken Hem in al uwe wegen.

Tegen, ga dan uit het midden van Israel weg en loop uwen afgod na, maar weet dan, dat de weg waarop ge u bevindt, die des verderfs is en uitloopt op het eeuwig verderf.

Zoo staat het met de Kerk ook nu. Wie den Heiland belijdt zal Hem dienen en de zonde haten, de wereld verlaten en op het pad van Gods geboden wandelen.

W. V.

### ATTENTION

We hope to see ALL of our people, who possibly can come, at our Field-Day at Gun Lake, which is 25 miles south of Grand Rapids: take Division Road, then turn east at Bradley, following arrows to Gun Lake. Come early because the program starts at 10:00, and we would like to have the games in the forenoon. In the afternoon we have community-singing and two good speakers. Ball games and swimming for the young people,

The Field-Day Committee.

## Contrasting Strains

(Psalm 36)

There is a vivid contrast in this psalm.

On the one hand, we read a description of the wicked in their wanton wickedness; and, on the other hand, a description of God's wonders, both in the works of nature and of grace.

The first verse has given rise to many different explanations and even translations. One, the able linguist, Delitzsch, translates the first verse as follows: "An oracle of transgression hath the ungodly within his heart: There is no fear of God before his eyes." But the fact remains that in the original Hebrew the expression is: *my heart* and not *his heart*.

The difficulty for Delitzsch seems to have been: How can the wickedness of the wicked speak in the heart of David?

The various translations of our Bible substantially agree. They all translate: The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, etc. I find such agreement in the Holland "Staten-vertaling", the St. James' version, Calvin's French translation and Luther's German. It is also substantially found in the Latin translation of 1624.

Delitzsch' translation does not agree with the second clause of the verse. According to him we must look for this speech of transgression in the following verse, while the second clause of verse 1 is the judgment of the inspired poet.

I am convinced that we must explain this first speech as follows: first of all, the wickedness of the wicked has a speech; it speaks even loudly. Second, this speech of wickedness which comes to David in the various forms of behaviour, in speech and acts, in walk and deportment, is brought before the bar of judgment residing in David's regenerated heart. In that heart resides the wisdom of God, the gift from heaven whereby we know how speech, acts and behaviour ought to be to the praises of God. Third, when this wicked behaviour is evaluated, appraised, tasted by the enlightened heart of David, he utters such appraisal in the second clause of the verse. David comes to the conclusion: There is no fear of God before the eyes of all those that walk in such wickedness.

The next 6 verses of the psalm give us the explanation of David's judgment of this wicked speech. In the verses 2-4 he gives us this explanation by a description of their life. And in the verses 5-7a he deepens this explanation by a description of the overwhelming revelation of God's great goodness in the midst of which all this wickedness is perpetrated.

The description of the wicked is striking and horrible.

Imagine: The wicked brings himself before the bar of his own judgment: he comes before his own eyes; he sees himself. Standing there in all his wickedness he begins to flatter himself. He explains all his acts to have been goodness; he judges sweetly of all his dirt and filth. When the form of his life as he lives it disappears from view he leaves himself with this appraisal: Thou art pure, without transgression!

I would ask here: Did you ever try to pin down an unrighteous man to his unrighteous deeds? He will always excuse himself; he will defend his very wickedness and call it sweet, pure, very goodness.

Moreover, he has a purpose in mind. And here I would take the literal translation as my basis of interpreting. His purpose in self-flattery is: that he may continue his unrighteousness, namely, that he may continue to hate God and man. He purposes to find his iniquitous life, namely, to hate. This last sentence is as close to a literal translation as we can approach without obscuring the sense.

Furthermore, his mouth brings forth iniquity and deceit. Elsewhere in Scripture the mouth of the wicked is likened unto a sepulchre, an open grave, full of abomination and filth. The wickedness of his words are such that he never lets you glimpse the real underlying motive of his speaking. You can never trust him. There is no goodness or wisdom in his words. That is, he has not your welfare or well-being at heart. To the contrary, his words are in the service of his determinate counsel and purpose: he wants to hate you, to destroy you. In this he is an apt pupil of the devil, for he is a murderer of man from the beginning.

Here I would ask a question again: Do you find any common grace in this description of the objects of study of the Kalamazoo Synod? They watched the wicked also; they listened to his words and they scrutinized his life. And here is the result: they found that his words were goodness and wisdom. So sweet were the words of the wicked that they want the church to believe that even God approves of them.

But it is an evil dream. The Holy Ghost tasted of the words of the wicked and the text says of them: they are iniquity and deceit!

Whom will you follow? The Synod of Kalamazoo or the living God?

But still worse is to follow: The wicked grew tired, even as you and I. They went to bed. But instead of meditating upon God and all His wonderful works, they fell to planning and plotting for the morrow to come. Now, let me see: tomorrow I must close that deal; I must invest that money; I must needs meet so and so; I am called in conference on this or that matter; I have work to do for him or her; the business of the morrow passes the review. And the text says

that they devise mischief upon their bed. And this mischief is described in two ways: they set themselves upon a way that is not good; and they do not abhor evil. No, but their way is evil from the heart out and they cling to evil, they love it and seek it. Presently they have decided how to act, what course to pursue for the following morning; and smiling in prospect, they sleep and slumber. Woe unto the victim or victims! Mischief is set afoot.

Now all this plowing of the wicked is done in the midst of the revelation of God's wonders. They judge evilly of themselves, they flatter their corrupt selves, their mouths vomit iniquity and deceit, they set their lives on such a wise that they may hate God and men, devising ways and means even when the night calls for sleep and slumber, they do all this while God speaks from the heavens and the clouds, the great deep of the oceans and the heights of the mountain tops. There is a speech of power and wisdom, of loving-kindness and mercy—but they are seemingly deaf to all this beauty and excellence.

David will tell us of all this preciousness.

The heavens and the clouds tell of God's mercy and faithfulness.

Yes, the clouds draw our wandering eyes upward and for thousands of years the Lord has spoken of His great Covenant faithfulness. You read of this faithfulness and mercy in a twofold way. First, there is the blue firmament. And this ocean of immeasurable blue tells us that God will never forget you. The blue firmament whispers of remembrance, remembrance of the objects of His love forever. He cannot forget you for you are His own. From all eternity He has seen you in the palms of His hands. Second, there is the rainbow in the clouds. On the background of the clouds there is a many-colored speech of grace and kindness, of mercy and pity toward His suffering Zion. It is the breaking of the beautiful light of His countenance. They are the hues of love in His dear Son. The rainbow is the Covenant of God interpreted through the agony of Golgotha. The cross is the prism, the light is God's love, the many-colored beauties are the many and varied graces in the Lord Jesus Christ, the everlasting arms to draw you onward and upward to the glorified heavens and earth.

But the wicked pursue the unrighteous Mammon; they think much more of a dollar than Divine pity; they will work wickedness in the midst of a revelation of God's love in Christ.

Cast your eyes on the mountain tops and you will see the righteousness of God. That righteousness can never be moved, is stable and unmoveable. The mountains tell us that there is a will to goodness in God which cannot be abridged. God will never know of the compromise, the slippery by-pass or crooked ravine. It towers like the mountain, this righteousness, so that

all may see. God wills goodness forever even though it may burn His dear Son in utmost agony of hellish torment. Even then, with His eyes on the mountains He will say with trembling lips: It behooves us to fulfill all righteousness! When you think of God's righteousness, look to the mountains: from them cometh your help. They, these mountains, will tell you that God has redeemed Zion with righteousness: He clothed the meek!

But the wicked will, in the very shadow of these mountains, perform their crooked deeds. Their ways are the tortuous ways of death.

Go with me to the oceans; look well to this great abyss of waters. They will tell you of the great depth of His judgments. They are a great deep. No man can fathom: but you may well wonder and marvel and adore. No, you cannot see the bottom: His judgments are unsearchable and His ways past finding out; but you may worship! His judgments are His outgoing justice and equity, they are His innate, inherent uprightness and honesty in dealing with men, devils, angels.

Yes, look well to the great abyss! It is beauty and loveliness; it is altogether comely. Would you hear its general theme? He preserveth man and beast. He preserveth them for His own peculiar treasure; He has envisioned their eternal perfection: they all shall be to the praises of His wonderful virtues.

An abyss, for the way is strange. It is a way of the sigh and the groaning and the bitter tear. I hear of all His billows and all His waves. But when all the weary night is past we will see that His preservation was also exaltation. Yes, He preserveth man and beast so that they shall glitter as the costly and precious diadem in a land that is fairer than day!

And the wicked? They have seen the great depths of the ocean, but their dealings, the outgoings of their sense of justice is to tear them apart, to destroy, to kill, to murder. Their judgments are the muddy waters of Isaiah; they cast up filth and mire.

David will combine the wonderful speech of the revelation of God. He does so in the next verse: How precious (literal translation) is Thy lovingkindness! O God! Oh, that is the life that counts! Why then would you say, O Jacob, and why would you speak, O Israel; My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God? Nay, turn you to the clouds and the firmament, the great mountains and the depths of the ocean: they will tell thee of love and mercy, of justice and righteousness, of judgment and kindness. Turn you to the cross of Golgotha and you will begin to sing, warble, shout. For great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee.

Yes, when the Christians see all this they will make merry before His face until the storms are passed over. Through Divine Wisdom they will approach and en-

compass His alters; they will repose their trust under the shadow of His wings.

There rest me the fatness of God's house and the rivers of His pleasures. God has a House and He has pleasures in that house. They are the contents of His Covenant life of love and friendship. God is blessed forevermore. And of His own blessedness He would give you and me. You shall eat, you do eat even now and you experience the satisfaction of such repast which makes the angels sing.

Would you hear of the source? With God is the fountain, with Him is the light. This fountain gushes forth the waters of life; this light is lifted up.

Drink then, ye righteous, drink of the rivers of God. Stand in that light, ye blessed ones, and you will marvel at the revelation of what that light brings you.

I could say it all in a few words: You will see God!

Could you imagine a blessedness greater than this?

You will see God, when the night is over past and the storm is stilled. A little while and I saw the wicked no more; and their place could not be found. But we see Jesus, crowned with glory and honor.

Then, then I shall be satisfied. . . .

G. V.

## Wacht Op Den Heere

(Psalm 37, eerste deel)

Deze psalm is een wijze raad van den Heere voor Zijn volk, dat te midden van de goddeloozen wandelt, door hen vertrappt wordt en veel moet lijden. De Heere raadt hen aan, om zich niet te wreken, doch het alles aan den Heere over te geven, die hun twistzaak zekerlijk zal twisten en hun gerechtigheid en recht te voorschijn zal doen treden gelijk het licht op den middag.

Het is goed, dat die raad ons geschonken wordt.

Goed, want steeds komt de neiging boven bij Gods volk om alvast maar oordeelsdag te houden. We kunnen het best verstaan, dat Jezus discipelen vuur van den hemel willen roepen. Het valt niet mee om te wachten op God.

En toch is het goed om te wachten tot God Zijn oordeelsdag inluiden zal. Dat is goed voor Uzelf en ook goed voor Gods zaak. Bovendien is het ons nu zeker niet toevertrouwd. Het valt ook niet mee om een rechtvaardig oordeel te vellen. Dat is een Goddelijk werk.

Doch het is ook goed voor U om te wachten.

Het is goed voor U om vertrappt te worden zonder oorzaak, om te lijden als een rechtvaardige. Het is

gelijk aan de zonneshijn en de regen die het groene kruid doen groeien en bloeien en straks vrucht doen dragen. Ik begrijp het zelf niet al te goed, doch de Bijbel leert ons, dat het goed is om verdrukt te zijn geweest. Jezus spreekt ons zelfs zalig als we vervolgd worden en veel moeten lijden om Zijnentwil. Later vertelt ons een Zijner leerlingen hetzelfde. In eenige woorden geeft hij ons denzelfden raad als dien we hier lezen in Psalm 37. Hij zeide: Wreekt uzelfen niet, beminden, doch geeft den toorn plaats. Ook hebben we het van Jakobus gehoord: Zie, de Rechter staat voor de deur! Paulus zegt, dat de verdrukking van dezen tegenwoordigen tijd ons een gansch zeer uitnemend eeuwig gewicht der heerlijkheid werkt. En van uit de oudheid der tijden is er een stem die ons toeroept: Mij komt de wrake toe; Ik zal het vergelden, spreekt de Heere der heirscharen!

Dat is het thema van dezen psalm.

Ge zult het mij toestemmen, dat het hier gaat over een goeden raad Gods voor Zijn *volk*. Het is goed, dat we daar eerst even op letten. Want er zijn van alle eeuwen goddeloozen geweest die ook veel geleden hebben van onderdrukkers. Job spreekt daarvan, of, liever Elihu, in het boek van Job, hoofdstuk 35:9, waar staat: "Vanwege hunne grootheid doen zij de onderdrukten roepen, zij schreeuwen vanwege den arm der grooten."

Laat het toch duidelijk verstaan worden, dat alle smart van onderdrukking geen heerlijkheid werkt. Er zijn er geweest die veel leden, doch nooit zeiden: "Waar is God, mijn Maker, die psalmen geeft in den nacht?"

Neen, het gaat hier over een bijzonder, particulier volk: de rechtvaardigen. Dat volk wordt ten voeten uit geteekend. Laat ons hun beeld zien.

Eerst staat er, dat zij zachtmoedig zijn, vs. 11.

Nu is de zachtmoedigheid die deugd, waardoor men veel kan lijden om Gods wil. Zachtmoedigheid is die kracht waardoor men een schop kan verdragen. Doch dan een schop die U toegekend wordt om Gods wil. Ge gevoelt het, dat die kracht, die deugd van zachtmoedigheid een heel bijzonderen wortel heeft. Ze stoelt op de liefde Gods. En nu is het wel vreemd, doch het is ook de liefde Gods die de vertrapping van Gods volk veroorzaakt. De goddeloozen zien de openbaring van die liefde in het leven van Gods volk. Nu hebben ze zulk een hekel aan God, dat ze Zijn volk ook niet kunnen uitstaan. Daarom die vertrapping. En wat het volk aangaat in dit verband: "Als zij om die liefde gesmaad en verdrukt worden, oefenen zij zichzelf in zachtmoedigheid, omdat zij God liefhebben. Ze gaan zich zekerlijk niet wreken. Want ze willen Gods zaak niet verknoeien.

De tweede kenschetsing van de rechtvaardigen vindt ge in het 14de vers. Daar worden ze geschetst

als ellendigen en noodduftigen. Ook is hun naam daar: de oprechten van weg.

Ellendig beteekent volgens het origineele Hebreuwsch: bewerkt worden. In het Engelsch is er een werkwoord, dat de gedachte letterlijk weergeeft. Dat werkwoord is: to belabor someone, f.i., with a stick. In 't Hollandsch hebben we zulk een werkwoord niet. Letterlijk vertaald zou het woord luiden: een bewerkte. De gedachte zal nu wel duidelijk zijn. De rechtvaardige is iemand die bewerkt wordt door den goddelooze. En de gevolgen blijven dan ook niet uit. Hij is ook noodduftig. Door de gedurige vertrapping, bewerking, van den goddelooze wordt de rechtvaardige noodduftig. Dat woord beteekent in het originele: ademhalen, in den zin van verlangend, hunkerend zuchten naar iets. En de gedachte is duidelijk. Als men verstoken is van hetgene men behoeft als schepsel, als men vervolgd en vertrappt wordt, zoodat men gespeend wordt aan alle of gedeeltelijke rust en vrede, dan gaat zoo iemand verlangen, hunkeren, uitzien naar de dingen die hij krachtens zijn schepping behoeft. Hij wordt noodduftig.

Doch niettegenstaande al dat lijden en al dat gebrek, blijft hij volharden in één ding: zijn wandel, zijn weg blijft den weg des oprechten. Dat wil zeggen, dat hij vanuit het hart, in gedachten, woorden en werken, het goede nastreeft. Het wil niet zeggen, dat hij zonder zonde leeft, want dat kan niemand. Maar het wil zeggen, dat hij alle kwaadheid haat en alle goedheid mint. Let wel, dat doet hij altijd. Het willen is altijd bij hem. En dat is oprechtheid.

Voorts in vers 21 staat van den rechtvaardige dat hij zich ontfermt en geeft. In vers. 26, dat hij zich ontfermt en leent.

Dat is goddelijk schoon.

O, er zijn duizenden die geven. Doch dat kan men wel doen met een vloek in 't hart. Er worden miljoenen van dollars jaarlijks gegeven. Doch al zulk geven is vervloekt. Het zal den goddelooze nog vervolgen in de hel. Men zal in de hel zelfs lijden omdat men goddelooselijk gegeven heeft.

Doch deze man geeft en leent, omdat hij zich ontfermt.

Zich ontfermen is het naleven van Gods eigen leven. God ontfermt Zich ook. En zegt nu niet, dat de goddeloozen zich ook ontfermen over den ellendige. Want de Heilige Schrift heeft Uw antwoord van voorlang geboekstaafd. Er staat geschreven: De barmhartigheden der goddeloozen zijn wreed. Zal ik ze schetsen? Zeker, men zal U in een hospitaal brengen. Zachtzinnige, lieflijke gestalten glijden langs Uw bedstede. Men maakt U klaar voor de operatie-tafel. Ook bekommert men er zich niet om, dat ge niets hebt om te betalen. Ge krijgt alles voor niets. Men is *barmhartig*. Straks wordt ge uit het hospitaal ontslagen als genezen. Het staat in de boeken opgeteekend: ge

waart object van de barmhartigheid. Het kwaad dat in Uw lichaam zat is er netjes uitgesneden; men waschte de wond en men verbond U voorzichtiglijk. Het waren mannen van de kunst die U verzorgden.

Wel, hoor ik U vragen: Is dat niet barmhartig? Misschien vraagt iemand: Waarom noemt de Bijbel toch al die barmhartigheid wreed?

Laat mij U een vraag doen.

Zeg eens, dat U geheele been, van de heup tot Uw voetzool verbrijzeld werd door een ongeluk en dat ge U baadt in Uw bloed, dat uit de bloedvaten stroomt. En ge hebt ook een klein wondje aan Uw vinger. Als men U nu vriendelijk zou toeknikken, Uw vinger in een mooi verbandje zetten, en verder zich niet zou inlaten met dat verbrijzelde been en die stroomen bloeds, zeg mij, wat zoudt ge zeggen van zulk doen?

Want zoo staat de zaak. Zeker, men bekommert zich over Uw lichaam, doch men laat Uw ziel verdorren, sterven, verwoest worden.

Hoe geheel anders is het ontfermen van den rechtvaardige.

Hij verbindt alles aan God.

Hebt ge er wel eens op gelet, dat men in het Cutler-ville Psychopathische Hospitaal ook een kerkje bouwde? Zeker, men verzorgt Uw lichaam daar. Doch men verwaarloost Uw ziel niet. En die ziel, ja, die ziel is het belangrijkste van Uw bestaan.

De rechtvaardige ziet den geheelen mensch in elende. En hij geeft, en hij leent. En hij doet zulks met het oog op God. Hij doet het, omdat hij bewogen is met het schepsel naar Gods beeld geschapen. En hij doet het als de ellendige een kind Gods is, omdat hij naar het beeld van den Christus getransformeerd is.

Vers 30 zegt ons, dat de rechtvaardige een mond heeft die wijsheid en recht spreekt.

Die woorden zeggen ons, dat de rechtvaardige het alles wil aansturen op de verheerlijking van Gods Naam. Want dat is het pogen en streven van ware wijsheid. Wijsheid is die deugd des Christens, waardoor hij altijd de beste wegen en middelen gebruikt tot bereiking van het hoogste en edelste doel, namelijk, de prijs des Heeren.

Hij spreekt van het goede en dat is recht. Recht, oprechtheid, gerechtigheid zijn alle vormen van een en dezelfde zaak: het goede te willen en te lieven. Wanneer ge zoo Uw mond gebruikt, zijt ge een rechtvaardige.

Eindelijk, in vers 31 lezen we de oorzaak van al zijn gerechtigheid. De Wet des Heeren is in zijn hart.

Daar zit alles aan vast. Daar komt alles uit voort. Dat is de oorzaak van al zijn gezegend leven.

De Wet des Heeren: gezegende grootheid.

Als ik datzelfde eventjes in Nieuw-Testamentische taal mag zeggen, dan zou het luiden: Jezus woont in zijn hart.

Immers, Jezus Christus heeft de Wet des Heeren vervuld.

Vervuld, want Hij heeft geleden voor alle zonden die Gods volk tegen die wet gezondigd hebben.

Vervuld, want Hij heeft die wet voor allen volbracht.

Voorts woont die "de Wet vervullende en volbren- gende Jezus" in het hart van Gods volk door Geest en Woord.

Gij zoudt dat ook zóó mogen zeggen: de liefde Gods woont in hun hart, want de Wet Gods is hierin vervuld, dat ge, namelijk, God en den naaste mint.

Dat kenmerkt alle rechtvaardigen.

En nu is het wel schokkend, doch het is ook de oorzaak, dat men vertrappt wordt door de goddeloozen. De rechtvaardige bekommert zich om God en het waarachtige heil zijns naasten.

Ik hoorde het eens eigenaardig zeggen door iemand: Men heeft o zoo veel medelijden met den mensch; doch wie heeft ooit medelijden met God?

Wel, de rechtvaardige bekommert zich om God.

Was het niet Calvijn wiens levensspreuk was: Hoe komt God tot Zijn eer?

Dat is rechtvaardig.

G. V.

#### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On June 14, our dear parents,

WILLIAM KOSTER

and

MINA KOSTER—Van der Meer

commemorated their 35th Wedding Anniversary.

We, their grateful children, extend our hearty congratulations to them, and thank our Heavenly Father for His grace and loving kindness in sparing them for each other and us these many years. We pray that He will grant them many more years together, surrounded with His blessings.

Their grateful children:

Mr. and Mrs. Henry Koster

Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Schut

Mr. and Mrs. William Quinlan

Mr. and Mrs. John Koster

William Jr.

Dick

608 Vries Street S. W.,  
Grand Rapids, Michigan.

## The Apostates Doomed

As was said, It was a hard speech that the people uttered against the Lord, at their hearing of the report of the spies. They wanted to know why He had brought them to the border of Canaan that they, their wives and their children, should be a prey. The people were committing a great sin. In the Lord's own words, they were despising and rejecting Him in His faithfulness and veracity, His longsuffering and mercy, holiness and righteousness. They did so, not in their ignorance but deliberately, knowingly. For these virtues of God were manifest in them and were clearly seen by them, being understood by the Lord's signs, by the wonders He had wrought in their sight. "How long," asked the Lord, will they despise me? How long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs that I have shewed among them?" As was pointed out, the Lord answered His own questions when He said, "I will smite them with pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they." The implication of this utterance is that they will not cease despising and disbelieving Him. And, as was said, there was indeed every indication that the vast majority of them were persons reprobated, thus thoroughly profligate. What the Lord said to Moses cannot be taken as expressive of His intention; for He had said that He would destroy not the nation in so far as it was reprobated but the entire people with the exception of one man—the man Moses—that thus He would make a sudden end of reprobate and elect alike. So it is plain that the Lord had spoken as He did with a view to arousing Moses to pray for the nation, to beseech the Lord to pardon its iniquity. And the Lord replies, "I have pardoned according to thy word." It was a *word* that we have come upon before. It was spoken originally by the Lord Himself in response to Moses' request, directed to the Lord, "Shew me thy glory," and in connection with the great sin of the people—a sin that had consisted in their serving the golden calf at Horeb. Then, too, the Lord had said, "Now, therefore, let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation." Then, too, Moses besought the Lord in behalf of the nation. And the Lord repented of the evil which He thought to do unto His people. Then Moses turned and went down from the Mount, breaking the tables in his descent. After the idolaters were slain Moses returned unto the Lord and again prayed for the people, even going so far as to petition the Lord to blot him out of His book, if He would not forgive their sin. But the Lord replied that whosoever hath sinned against Him, that one He would blot out of His book. It was at this time that Moses voiced the prayer that the

Lord show him His glory. The Lord answered that He would do so, that He would proclaim the name of the Lord before him. On the following day the Lord descended in the cloud and stood with Moses there in the mountain and proclaimed the name of the Lord, saying, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and fourth generation."

This proclamation has already been explained in former articles. But whereas it again forms the ground upon which Moses bases his plea for the life of the nation, let us observe the following.

The Lord forgives iniquity but He will assuredly not clear. This statement must be made to apply to His chosen people. These He forgives, yet without clearing, that is, pronouncing them innocent with their moral debt unpaid. Being the righteous One, His forgiveness is justification; it is an act that consists in His clothing His people with the satisfaction and righteousness of Christ.

The second section of the proclamation turns solely upon the reprobated Israel. As the Lord forgives His chosen ones their iniquity (though he does not clear) and keeps mercy with them in their generations to the end of time and forever, so will He visit the sins of those that hate Him (the reprobated) upon them in their generations to destroy them.

This, then, is the word that Moses again took hold of. And it was according to this word that the Lord pardoned the iniquity of the nation. But though the Lord pardoned, He by the mouth of Moses made to the nation the following doleful announcement. As truly as He lives, all the earth shall be filled with His glory, that is, He will exhibit His virtues, in particular, His righteousness, holiness and justice, through an act of His to consist in His punishing the rebels, those men who have seen His glory—His mercy, grace and compassion, His goodness and truth—by the miracles which He did in Egypt and in the wilderness, but who, instead of hearkening to His voice, have tempted Him these ten times. Those men, He will punish. They shall not see the land which He swore to their fathers, neither shall any of them that despised Him see it. The two exceptions are Caleb and Joshua. As to Caleb, he had another spirit with him. He followed the Lord fully. Him therefore will the Lord bring into the promised land. And his seed shall possess it. As to all the others, they are ordered to turn them and to get them "into the wilderness by the way of the Red Sea".

There now follows an intensification of the judgment, occasioned in all likelihood by the prolonged murmurings of the apostates. So the Lord once more



spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, "How long shall I bear with this evil congregation, which murmur against me? I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel, which they murmur against me". The Lord continues in the following vein. "As the Lord liveth, as they have spoken in His ears, so will he truly do to them. Their carcasses shall fall in the wilderness,—the carcasses of all that were numbered of them, from twenty years old and upward. But their little ones which they said would be a prey, shall know the land which they despised. But as for them, their carcasses shall fall in the wilderness. And their children shall wander in the wilderness forty years and bear their whoredoms, after the number of days in which the land was searched, namely forty, each day for a year shall their children bear their iniquities. The Lord has said it, and will surely do it. And the spies, who returned and made all the congregation to murmur by their evil report, died by the plague before the Lord. But Joshua and Caleb lived. So spake the Lord. Moses told these sayings to the people. At the hearing of them, they mourned greatly.

There is ground in the narrative for the view that the vast majority of this crowd of murmurers were persons reprobated and thus not forgiven. There is first of all to be considered the notice that they now have tempted the Lord ten times. The number ten signifies completion, so that the statement is to be received as conveying the thought that these murmurers had now filled their measure of iniquity and were thus ripe for destruction. Secondly, they mourned greatly, when Moses told them the Lord's sayings. But they wept not because of their sins but on account of their now finding themselves under the necessity of living out their lives in the wilderness. They do say, "We have sinned". But instead of humbling themselves under God's hand by their getting themselves into the wilderness in obedience to His command, they get themselves up into the mountain, saying, Lo, here we be. We will go up into the place which the Lord has promised." Moses warns them that the Lord would not be with them and that consequently they would be smitten before their enemy. But regardless of this warning, they went up. If the Lord refused to go with them, they would go alone. And so they did. For the ark of the covenant of the Lord departed not out of the camp. But this did not deter them. The venture would succeed without the Lord. So did they in their unholy chagrin endeavor to render the saying of God to the effect that the carcasses of all of them should fall in the desert impossible of fulfillment. Here again they brought themselves to the fore as persons of a reprobated mind. Thirdly, there is the statement, occurring in the narrative, "And ye shall know my *hostility*" (erroneously translated, "And ye shall know my breach of promise"). Chapt. 14:34c.

This notice must be taken to mean that during the forty years the Lord would continuously be against them, would pursue them by His curse until the carcasses of them all be wasted in the wilderness. It is not unlikely that during this period the cloud departed from the tabernacle in token of their being abandoned by the Lord and that the services ceased, so that the wilderness became to this doomed generation the nearest approach to the place of outer darkness.

The apostates that fall in the desert formed a seed of evil-doers that perpetuates itself. And through the centuries of the nations existence this seed will continue to fill its measure of iniquity through its spiritual whoredoms. The Lord will continue to send to them prophets. These they will kill and crucify and persecute from city to city that upon them may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth and that finally their house may be left unto them desolate. It was in this seed that the saying of the Lord through the ages was and is being fulfilled—the saying, "visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me".

In the crowd of murmurers must also have been found persons who, despite the fact that they truly loved God, had to a greater or smaller degree involved themselves in the sin of those apostates. That they did so, will not surprise us if it be considered that in God's people, that is, in their flesh, dwelleth no good thing, so that, when they stand not in their faith, sin in them, taking occasion by trying situations or by the command of God, works in them also murmurings and rebellions. These murmuring believers, who formed the true Israel, the Lord forgave, according to His proclamation. "The Lord, the Lord God merciful and gracious, forgiving iniquity. . . and that by no means will clear." The proof that there was found among the apostates such murmuring believers is this very proclamation. Why should the Lord have inspired Moses to beseech Him to forgive transgression *in His people*, to be sure (not in the reprobated), if also they, the majority of them, had in that crisis not also transgressed? The Lord forgave them. Yet they, too, had to live out their lives in the wilderness and thus bear their iniquity in that it is the way of God to chastise those whom He loves.

There were some—their number must have been exceedingly small—who had not rebelled. The representatives of this group were Caleb, Joshua, Moses, and Aaron. As to Caleb, it was to his special credit, that he had reported with such favor concerning the most terrible portion of the land, the region of Anek and Hebron. It was this very region therefore that became his inheritance. The fulfillment of the promise to him is recorded in Joshua 14. In this chapter he

appears as addressing Joshua in the following vein. Forty years old was he when Moses sent him to spy out the land. And he brought him word again as it was in his heart. But his brethren that went with him made the heart of the people melt; but he wholly followed the Lord his God. So on that day Moses sware to him that the land whereon his feet had trodden should be his inheritance and his children's forever. And now the Lord had kept him alive as He had said for these forty and five years. And lo he was that day fourscore and five years old; and yet he was as strong as the day that Moses sent him. As his strength was then, even so was it now, for war, both to go out and to come in. Let Joshua therefore give him the mountain, whereof the Lord spake in that day. The Anakims, Joshua knew, were there and the cities were great and fenced; but if the Lord would be with him, and of this he had no doubt, he would be able to drive them out. So Joshua blessed him and gave him and his posterity Hebron for a permanent inheritance. So did Hebron, through its permanent association with the name of Calib, become to the Israelitish nation a memorial of his obedience and by contrast of the disobedience and apostacy of the seed of evildoers and of the doom by which this seed was overtaken. How the memory of this doom was perpetuated through the centuries of the nation's existence is evident from the reference to it in the epistle to the Hebrews, "But with whom was he grieved forty years? Was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? And to whom sware he that they should not enter his rest, but to them that believed not?" "Let us labor, therefore," so the writer admonishes, "to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after that same example of unbelief."

There are five chapters in the book of Numbers—the chapters 15 to 19 inclusive—that refer to this interval of forty years, but in what part of this period the events recorded in these chapters took place we cannot say. Besides sundry religious laws, these chapters record the following events: The death by stoning of a man who was found gathering sticks on the Sabbath day. His sin was the doing of servile work in deliberate defiance of the command of God. The rebellion of Korah, Dathan and Abiram was an attempt to bring the priesthood down to the level of the common Israelites, by a perversion of the truth that all the people were "an holy nation and a royal priesthood."

G. M. O.

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We can have no power from Christ unless we live in a persuasion that we have none of our own.—John Owen.

## Why Not Tithe?

In my last article under the above caption I showed that, in the language of Rev. Steigenga, "for many the tithe is an easy, cheap and arbitrary way of serving God with their abundance, and for many others it is it is unfair and difficult in the extreme." It is very difficult, I wrote, for the father of a large family, with an income much too small, to give the tenths. Such a man should not tithe, as through his doing so he would be taking the bread out of his children's mouths. For this man to tithe would be wrong. It is likewise wrong for the rich man to tithe, so I wrote, unless he supplants his tithing by the free-will offering. Doing so, he is not actually tithing but giving as he prospered.

Now if tithing is a wrong way of serving God with our material substance, the 6th and final argument of Rev. H. J. Kuiper in favor of tithing also falls. The argument reads:

Tithing stands the test of Christian experience since it gives great satisfaction to those who practice it. Hosts of believers have testified to the rich blessings which it has brought them. Tithing does not only lead invariably to an increase of contributions to the kingdom but it also enables one to give cheerfully. Here is a double privilege: first to give more than we formerly gave—which means that our usefulness in the kingdom has increased—; second, to give with far more joy and readiness. Contributors who tithe have no intention of using for themselves the money that is set aside, from the moment it is earned, for the Lord's work. This promotes joy and happiness in giving.

"It has often been said that if all Christians would tithe, much more money would be available for the Lord's work than is being contributed now. We do not doubt this. We are sure especially of this, that much more would be given by those who have the best incomes. But even if the church and its various institutions would not receive one more dollar than at present if all the members began to tithe, there would still be a rich blessing in the general introduction of the custom, since it would be a source of spiritual growth and joy."

This last line "it (tithing) would be a source of spiritual growth and joy" is expressive of the thrust of the above excerpt. With this thrust I do not agree. It isn't true. What would be a source of spiritual growth and joy is "giving as the Lord has blessed, prospered" providing such giving be an act of true faith." Giving as the Lord has blessed them, those members of which the reverend makes mention—the members "who have the best incomes"—would be giving what they *should* give, which they do not if they

give merely the tenth of their "best incomes". I repeat what I wrote in my previous article on this subject, "The error of Rev. Kuiper is that he places in the room of the free-will offering, inculcated on the New Testament Church by Christ through the apostle Paul, the giving of the tenths." What he strives to do is to lead God's believing people back to the "beggarly elements" of the ceremonial law.

My previous article I ended with this question: "If it can be wrong for New Testament believers to tithe, how can it be explained that the Lord by Moses placed the Old Testament Church under the necessity of tithing?"

My reply. First, from the fact that the Lord commanded Old Testament believers to tithe, it does not follow that it cannot be wrong for New Testament believers to tithe. To illustrate: the Lord commanded Old Testament believers to bring the sacrifice by blood. It would certainly be wrong for New Testament believers to bring this sacrifice. Second, as was said, the tenths were supplimented by the free-will offering. The reverend places tithing in the room of this offering. Third, the Lord commanded the Old Testament Church to tithe; and in addition, He also promised the Israelitish people—the Old Testament Church—that, if they would walk in the way of His covenant, He would make it possible, easy for them to tithe through His supplying them with material abundance. Said He to His people of old, "Honor Jehovah with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thy increase. So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy vats shall overflow with new wine." And again (Malachi 3:10): "Bring the whole tithes into the storehouse, that their may be food in my house, and prove me now herewith, saith Jehovah of hosts, If I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it."

The question is, does this promise still hold? Is the Lord still saying to His people, "Tithe and I will pour you out a blessing (material blessing), that there shall not be room enough to receive it." Our answer must be a negative one. The promise no longer holds. It is a promise that, together with the symbolical-typical things of the Old Dispensation, waxed old and vanished away. Yet the reverend maintains that the promise does still hold. His fifth argument reads, "Scripture contains special and sweeping promises to those who give the Lord the first-fruits of their income. We read in Proverbs, "Honor Jehovah with thy substance, and with the firstfruits. . . . so shall thy barns be filled with plenty. . . ." The same promise is found in Malachi 3:10. Quoting this passage the reverend continued, "We can scarcely imagine any Christian taking the position that what is taught here is no longer true. The fact is that Jesus corroborates the principle which these words embody—for example,

in the words from the Sermon on the Mount: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these other things shall be added unto you." So far the reverend.

Can it be that what Christ here tells His disciples is that if they will seek first the kingdom of heaven, God will heap upon them *material abundance*, will pour them out a material blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it? If so, we have to do here with a promise that was and is not being fulfilled. The twelve apostles certainly first sought the kingdom of heaven. Paul did and so did the others. Did the Lord shower upon them material goods? Did Paul grow rich in the material sense in the service of God? Are God's people on a whole rich? Is it true that the material substance of a believer increases in proportion as he is spiritual? Of course not. On a whole, God's people are poor. So they appear in Scripture (I now speak of New Testament believers). Wrote the apostle, "For ye see your calling brethren, how that not many wise after the flesh, not many mighty, not many nobles are called. . . ." The apostles did not grow rich in the service of God. But they did have their daily bread. The Lord did continue to provide in their necessities as long as He had use for them on this earth; and this according to the saying of Christ, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God. . . . and all these things shall be added unto you." What Christ assures the seekers of His kingdom is that they shall have in this life not material abundance but their daily bread, the portion needful for them. And for this portion he also taught them to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread." The fact is that the more intensely God's believing people seek God's kingdom, the poorer they become. And the reason is that they seek not the things on this earth but the kingdom of God and its righteousness. According to the reasoning of the reverend, a believer, who is poor in material goods, must ascribe his poverty to his failure to tithe, thus to his unwillingness to seek God's kingdom as he should.

What the Lord *now* promises His believing people, who keep His covenant, is not long life in some earthy land and a large material substance in that land; what He promises them now is the new earth and a *heavenly, spiritual* abundance on that earth. But in this life they have many tribulations. For they are of the party of God and war His warfare. Therefore the world knows them not. And the man whom the world does not know, cannot amass riches. Nor should he want to. It is the things above, that heavenly country, the spiritual riches, on which he should have his affections set. Such is Christ's will. And of this spiritual abundance and of this heavenly country, that material abundance that God gave to His people of old when *as a nation* they walked in the way of His precepts, and that earthy Canaan, was the shadow. But these

shadows are no more. Hence it is thoroughly vain to tell God's believing people that He will load them down with material riches, if they tithe.

The reverend may say, "True it is that the apostle Paul did not grow rich in the service of the Lord. But the apostle was no farmer, but a minister of the gospel. Hence, the promise, "Honor Jehovah with thy substance. . . . so shall thy barns be filled with plenty," could apply to Paul only in an indirect way." Let us reply to this. In our modern set-up of life, there are thousands upon thousands of believers who are not farmers either, but ministers of the gospel and tradesmen and craftsmen and common laborers. We live today in a highly industrialized world. Is it now so that God's people may feel assured that even in times of economic depression, when wages are small and when work is scarce and when consequently there are millions of men out of work, they, the believers, *who tithe*, will nevertheless have fine jobs paying high wages? Or let us suppose that all the believers were farmers. Would it then be so that, even in times of drought, the Lord would single out His people and give them fine crops, if only they would tithe? Such was not even the Lord's doing in the Old Testament Dispensation! Not when a few Israelites here and there tithed or, speaking in general terms, kept God's covenant, but only when the nation as a whole feared the Lord, did the Lord send *national* prosperity. The prosperity was always and only national, not individual. That is to say, in times of *national* apostacy, the Lord did not continue to enrich the few Israelites, who remained faithful to Him, and impoverish all the others. Fact is, that the *nation* was impoverished, when it departed from the Lord and then the faithful, too, would have to suffer.

The reverend may say, "Just so, and for this reason we have our 'Back-to-God-hour' on the radio—an hour in which we seek our nation, our American nation, admonishing it to repent of its sins and to return to God, in order that material prosperity may be its portion."

The proper reply to this reasoning is that the Israelitish people of old formed a typical theocracy, and that the entity corresponding to it is not this or that earthly state, commonwealth, or nation, but the church of the living God, Christ's heavenly kingdom, and further that to the *church* only does the promise, *as spiritualized* now pertain, namely, the promise, "Honor Jehovah with thy substance. . . . so shall thy barns be filled with plenty." It means, as has already been explained, that the true church, God's believing people, walking as they do in the way of God's covenant receive as their reward that heavenly-spiritual abundance that Christ merited for it.

The brethren err in three respects: First, they seek not the church, the elect, the people of God in

their preaching, but nations, earthy commonwealths; second, they present the promises as belonging not to God's people but to the nation, the earthy commonwealth; third, they maintain that what belongs to the nation is these promises even in their typical dress. This accounts for their saying in their broadcasts and in their writings that God will send the *nation* material prosperity, if it only repents. But, some one may say, wouldn't the nation prosper materially also, if it forsook sin and turned to God? It has no sense even to ask this question. For fact is that the nation *as nation* is not going to repent. For we know from Scripture that the abiding resolve of God is to seek not nations but His elect in the nations.

As to that article of the Rev. H. J. Kuiper—the article bearing the title "Why Not Tithe"—it literally teems with misconceptions. Before he again writes on the subject of tithes, it would be well for him to do just a little thinking. We saw that the Lord by Moses *commanded* His people—the people of Israel—to tithe. The Rev. insists that tithing was not repealed and at the same time he tells his readers that the New Testament believers do not find themselves *under the necessity* of tithing. But how can this be, if the law of tithing was not repealed? G. M. O.

#### IN MEMORIAM

On May 3, 1941, following an illness of six months, it pleased our Heavenly Father to take unto Himself our dear father and grandfather,

Mr. SIDNEY VISSER, Sr.

at the age of 68 years.

Our comfort is that he now rejoices above with his Lord and Saviour whom he served and in whose way he walked with delight.

Mr. and Mrs. C. S. Visser  
Mr. and Mrs. Ryn Visser  
Rev. and Mrs. A. Cammenga  
Mr. and Mrs. J. E. Visser  
Mr. and Mrs. Ray Visser  
Mr. and Mrs. M. Beurkens  
Sidney  
Richard  
Nine grandchildren.

Grand Rapids, Michigan.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

As it is beyond us to express to every one personally our gratitude for the many congratulations wherewith our friends overwhelmed us, we take these means to thank them for their kind sentiment expressed at our GOLDEN WEDDING ANNIVERSARY.

Mr. and Mrs. Jacob H. Hoekstra,  
South Holland, Illinois, Box 252.