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Communications relative to subscription should be addressed to
MR. R. SCHAAFSMA
524 Henry Ave., S. E.
Grand Rapids, Mich.

EDITORIAL STAFF

Editors—Rev. H. Hoeksema, Rev. G. M. Ophoff,
Rev. Wm. Verhil, Rev. G. Vos.

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Rev. A. Petter, Rev. J. Vander Breggen.

Communications relative to contents should be addressed to
REV. H. HOEKSEMA
1139 Franklin St., S. E.
Grand Rapids, Mich.

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MEDITATION

By The Word Of The Risen Lord

Simon Peter saith unto them, I go fishing. They say unto him. We also go with thee and that night they caught nothing Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No. And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes. Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord As soon as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine This is now the third time that Jesus shewed himself to his disciples after that he was risen from the dead.
John 21:3-14.

I go fishing!

A heart full of impatience and weariness tries to unburden itself in this brief announcement.

't Was at the Sea of Galilee.

The familiar surroundings must have recalled to the disciples that were together here many an incident from the ministry of their beloved Lord, who had now died and risen again from the dead!

Here many a miracle had been performed! Many sick had been restored to health; many a leper had been cleansed; many a lame man had been sent forth leaping with joy; many a devil-possession had been set free; to the blind sight, to the deaf hearing was restored; and the gospel of the kingdom of heaven had been preached to the poor! Here multitudes had been fed with a few loaves of bread and fishes; here the

crowds had been roused to enthusiasm and would have crowned Him king; and here they had become offended in Him because He would not give them the bread that perisheth. Here the wind and the storm tossed billows had obeyed the word of the Master's power; here they had seen Him come unto them in the night, walking on turbulent waves! And here they had been called away from their earthly occupation with the somewhat strange assurance that He would make them fishers of men. . . .

I go fishing!

How many strange and marvellous things had taken place since they had followed the Master in His journeying through Galilee, especially during the last few weeks! Many a change had been brought about, not only in their relation to and fellowship with the Lord, but also in their own hearts and experience. Jesus had died! And how terribly He had died! All that He had spoken concerning Himself and His decease at Jerusalem, His being delivered into the power of the chief priests and Pharisees to be crucified, words that had never been understood by them, had now come to pass. Willingly, without the least manifestation of His mighty power, without a word of self-defense, He had died. And, indeed, He had risen! They had seen Him after His resurrection. Yet, things were not the same as before the cross! Jesus seemed remote! The former daily fellowship had never been resumed. And even when He did come to them, He seemed to belong to them no longer!

Hardly ever did they see Him!

Was He, perhaps, still grieved with them, because in the hour of His sorrow they had all been offended in Him?

I go fishing!

The Lord had directed the disciples to go to Galilee, and promised them that there they would see Him. Even before His suffering and death and resurrection, when He spoke to them of all these things, He had enjoined them that they should go to Galilee. But even as they had never understood the gloomy predictions concerning His death and shame, but had con-

tinued their own line of thought and discussed the question who would be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, so in the hour of darkness they had never remembered His word concerning the resurrection, and had forgotten the promise that in Galilee they would see Him. And after the resurrection the command had been repeated. Another week they had waited, hoping that also Thomas might be persuaded to go with them. And now they were at the Sea of Galilee, waiting for the fulfillment of the promise that here they would see the Lord. . . .

I go fishing!

They had now waited for His coming what seemed to them a long time. And they had expected Him in vain. For, notice that the apostle informs us that *this* was the *third* time that Jesus appeared unto His disciples. Twice He had manifested Himself to them in Judea. Hence, this appearance of the Lord at the Sea of Galilee was the *first* since the disciples had gone thither. They had waited for some time. Every day they had looked for the coming of the risen Lord. But hitherto their hopes had ended in bitter disappointment.

They were weary with waiting!

Impatient. . . .

They had forgotten their own slowness to understand all that the Lord had told them, their disobedience and delay in following the Lord as He would go before them to Galilee; and now they felt that they had reason to be impatient. The Lord is slack concerning His promise. So foolish we are!

I go fishing!

Seven they were. Five of them are mentioned by name; two are merely indicated as "other disciples". This most probably indicates that only five of them were of the eleven apostles, while the other two were disciples in a more general sense of the word. And where were the others? Is there not an indication here, in the presence of these five only and the absence of the rest, that the apostolic bond was already beginning to dissolve? Always they had been together during the last three years. But the bond of their fellowship had been their special relation to Jesus, had been Christ Himself. And now He was gone from them! And they already began to scatter! Easily we may conjecture what would have become of these men, had the Lord not returned to them in the Spirit. They would have scattered. They would have returned to their former mode of living. *They* could not have preached the gospel of the risen Lord; *Christ Himself* must do it through them. . . .

Hence: I go fishing!

It is, of course, Peter speaking.

Peter, who had so self-confidently boasted; who had so deeply fallen; who had been so marvellously saved from utter ruin, by the prayer of Jesus and His never to be forgotten look and the sign of the cock's crowing,

all correctly synchronized; whose name had been especially mentioned by the angel at the vacated grave: "tell His disciples. . . and Peter"; who had been especially privileged by a manifestation of Jesus to him alone; and who now, perhaps, felt that he needed still another word from the Master, a word of public restoration,—Peter takes the initiative, and that in his own characteristic way!

I go fishing!

Then, of course, there were the two sons of Zebedee, the Boanerges, whose mother had once conceived for them a place of special honor in the cabinet of the King! Not easily would they separate themselves from the company of the disciples, nor abandon the hope of seeing the risen Lord. Nor would Nathanael, the Israelite in whom there was no guile, and who on a very early occasion had confessed that Jesus is the Son of God!

But Peter leads: I go fishing!

He asks no question. He does not invite the others to go with him. He merely makes an announcement.

You may do as you please, but I go fishing!

I am weary of waiting.

I shall, for once, at least, return to my former occupation!

Yet, the others follow: we also go with thee!

And fishing they went!

And that night they caught nothing!

For, how shall *they* go fishing. Yes, yes, they may labor and toil, cast their net into the dark sea and again draw it out, all the weary night long.

But the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof. In His hand are the deep places of the earth; the sea is His and He made it. And if the fishes are to be caught into the net, it is He, Who calleth them all by name, that must lead them into it. How, then, shall they fish, but by the Word of the Lord?

And they toil, and they wait, and they labor all the night long. . . .

And they grow more weary still!

And more impatient: all things are against them!

And more irritable. . . .

I go fishing! We also go with thee! Yes, yes, but

Apart from Me ye can do nothing!

Whether ye be fishers of fish, or fishers of men!

And that night they caught nothing!

Hark! a voice!

Is it not familiar?

In the pale light of dawn they perceive a man, standing on the shore, waiting, watching them. . . .

Had he been witness of their toil and of their failure?

O, it was the Lord! It was the risen Master, for Whom they had been waiting, at Whose tarrying they

had grown impatient, if not disgusted. But now they see Him not, they fail to recognize Him, they know Him not though they see His form, though they hear His voice! And how could they? Is not, as long as we are on this side of the grave and He on the other, the Word always first? And must we not needs live by faith, before we can ever live by sight? And had they not grown impatient at His Word, unbelieving, so that they could abide no longer?

And now, He stands before them, and they know Him not!

And He speaks, familiarly, intimately, with friendly words: Children, have ye any meat?

And they hear not His voice!

And all their fishermen's disgust they express in the curt:

No!

And again they toil.

And still they catch nothing!

It is the Lord!

This time it is not Peter, but John, the man whose soul is like the placid waters that are deep, the disciple whom Jesus loved, the quiet but profound, the intuitive John, who speaks.

It is the Lord!

Or is it?

They cannot tell and yet they know. They wonder, and yet they are sure. Even presently, when on the shore they are breakfasting with Him, they would like to ask Him: who art thou? And yet, they durst not, for they knew that it was the Lord! O, it was He, yet He was so different! He was the same as they had known Him, yet He was wholly other! It seemed that He was with them, and still He was far from them! For, He had *risen*! And the resurrection was no return, but an advance. He had gone *through* death, through the grave! He had swallowed up death into victory! He was on the other side! No, He was not another, yet He was other! It was the same body, for you could still see the prints of the nails in hands and feet, yet it was completely changed! The weak had become strong, the corruptible had become incorruptible, the mortal had become immortal, the psychical had become spiritual, the image of the earthy had been replaced by the image of the heavenly. . . .

He was familiar, yet strange!

It is the Lord!

O, yes, He had shewed Himself to them, and they had recognized Him then.

He had spoken again, and the Word had been reminiscent of a similar Word they had heard in the past, and that could only be spoken by the Lord: "Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find!" And was there not something familiarly authoritative about that command? Was it not the Word of Him, of Whom the people had borne witness that He spoke

as one having authority and not as the Scribes? Still they do not see Him, but they hear His Word! And they obey in faith. . . .

It is the Lord!

O, John had recognized Him as soon as he heard that command. But he waited, expectantly now, anxiously, with every nerve taut, until they should have obeyed and beheld the effect of His mighty Word. . . .

It is the Lord!

O, yes, indeed, it is the Lord. For the net is now full of fishes, and they were not able to draw it for the multitude of them! And, behold, although the net was so heavy with the catch, yet they drag it to the shore and it does not even break!

Yes, they went fishing!

And fishing they would go again. For, had not the Lord spoken to them on a similar occasion (though at that time the net had rent!), that He would make them fishers of men?

But even so they must abide in Him and believe and obey His Word!

They could not be fishers of men in their own power!

But the risen Lord would ascend to the Father, would be glorified at the right hand of God, would be clothed with all power in heaven and on earth, would receive the Spirit of promise, would pour out that Spirit upon all flesh. . . .

And He Himself would direct their fishing activities from the shore, where they could not even see Him: Cast your net on the right side of the ship!

And they must obey His calling!

And He would by His Spirit direct the fishes into their net!

Thus only could they be fishers of men!

And give Him the glory!

Come, and dine!

O, it is the Lord, indeed!

For, as they reach the shore, they find that He, Who but a moment ago had asked them, whether they had any meat, had breakfast all ready! There was the fire of coals, and fish, and bread. And He gives the invitation: come, and dine!

Yes, to them it meant that it was the Lord! And none of them durst ask Him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord! But it also meant far more! Perhaps, they did not understand at that moment, for they were amazed and perplexed, and they did not understand the resurrection, neither did they expect the ascension. But later they must have understood, that as all the wonders of the Lord so this one was a sign. The Lord meant to speak to them:

Ye shall be fishers of men!

Go fishing for fish no more! And take no thought what ye shall eat! I will provide!

Come, and dine!

H. H.

EDITORIALS

Dr. Schilder Over "Gunstige Gezindhied"

De Nederlandsche bladen komen hier maar een beetje ongeregeld aan, maar tot nu toe ontvangen we ze toch.

Deze week ontving ik b.v. weer drie nummers van *De Reformatie* en een heel pak andere bladen uit Nederland. Waarom de Engelsche "censor" ze maar niet aanstonds doorzendt, is moeilijk te verstaan, want als ze hier aankomen, zijn ze nog altijd netjes gepakt en gevouwen en dragen ze hoegenaamd geen merk van geopend te zijn.

Maar we ontvangen ze toch, als is het een beetje laat.

En als *De Reformatie* komt, snuffelen de meeste van onze mensen en van vele anderen die altijd eerst even door, om te zien, of er ook iets in is over "De scheuring in Amerika".

De laatste nummers hebben hen daarin teleurgesteld. Dr. Schilder is veel buitenhuis en heeft het blijkbaar druk met vele andere dingen. We oefenen dus maar een beetje geduld.

Intusschen kwam er in de bijlage over den Catechismus toch iets voor over de kwestie van Gods gunstige gezindheid, waaruit blijkt, dat professor Schilder door Ds. Zwier niet van gedachten en overtuiging is veranderd, en dat hij ook niet denkt in de naaste toekomst zijn beschouwing te moeten wijzigen op dit punt. Immers wordt de bijlage geschreven met de bedoeling om in boekvorm te worden uitgegeven.

We schrijven het bewuste stuk hier over:

"Hiermee is tevens door ons afgewezen de onderscheiding tusschen een 'vóór-gaanden' en een 'achterna-komenden' wil van God, zooals wij Vorstius en vele andere sociniaansche en remonstrantsche, en nog wel andersoortige theologen ze vaak hooren bepleiten. In God is geen vóór en na; geen verandering; geen bepaald worden door wat in den tijd geschiedt, noch een komen onder invloed van hetgeen Hij in zijn voorkennis ziet gebeuren onder de menschen. Wij stemmen geheel in met de opmerking van Vorstius (zie blz. 90) dat God *zijn creatuur als zoodanig niet kan haten*. Maar dat is heel wat anders dan Gods toorn over konkrete schepselen (gevallen engelen en menschen) te verklaren uit een *na-komenden* wil.

"Immers, nu we hierboven Gods haten van de zonde, en van alle ongerechtigheid hebben gesteld in Gods eeuwige zelfliefde, en ook de schepping van de mogelijkheid van zonde en van verbondsbreuk zagen als 'uitvloeisel' van die eeuwige zelfliefde Gods, nu kunnen, en moeten we om die reden ook geheel en al breken met

alle schematisme, dat van voorafgaanden en volgen-den wil spreken komt. Het was Gods wil, zich te verheerlijken in al zijn creaturen. Maar ook was het van eeuwigheid zijn wil die creaturen aan elkander ongelijk te maken. Sommige ervan heeft Hij tot zich in verbondsrelatie gesteld, andere niet. Sommige heeft Hij alleen maar onder het leedgevolg, andere daarentegen ook onder de schuld en het schuldgevolg der zonde doen komen en tot het deelen in dat schuldgevolg in staat gesteld.

"Als nu God den gevallen mensch of engel aanziet, dan is bij Hem, die nimmer het één van het ander abstraheert, de *konkrete* creatuur, de creatuur dus, gelijk ze 'reilt en zeilt', ook nooit los te denken uit de rechts- en bondsverbanden, die de Here met en vóór die creatuur geschapen, en waarin Hij ze ook geschapen heeft. En daarom is de Heere God als Architect, als Schepper, als Vader van Genesis I, verblijd over de creatuur, waar ze ook is, en in welke verbanden ze ook opgenomen moge zijn, voorzover n.l. die creatuur als creatuur in aanmerking genomen wordt. Hij verblijdt zich over de bloemen, die bloeien, en over de hersenen, die goed functioneeren, overal waar ze het doen, en voorzover ze het doen; het mogen dan de hersenen van den mensch Jezus Christus, of van den Antichrist zijn. Hij verblijdt zich over het logisch verloop in de gedachten van Michaël en Gabriël, en over datzelfde logisch verloop in die van Beëlzebul. Al wat creatuurlijk, natuurlijk is, behaagt Hem als zoodanig; ook de natuurverbanden; ook de verbondenheid der menschen (welke 'verbondenheid' van heusche *gemeenschap* wel te onderscheiden is, en die ook daar aanwezig is, waar vanwege de zonde de ware gemeenschap, de echte 'koinoonia', niet opkomt, wijl de verbondenheid niet practisch wordt erkend in den wiltot-samenbinding). Hij verblijdt zich over het 'natuurlijk licht', dat, naar de Dordtsche Leerregels belijden, den mensch ook na den val gelaten is. Hij verblijdt zich over allen cultuurdrang, dien Hij geschapen heeft, en ons heeft in-geschapen; en over alle werking van dien drang, ook na de zonde; een drang, zonder welken wij als menschen niet kunnen leven in den tijd, omdat hij nu eenmaal, voor wat den mensch betreft, echt natuurlijk is.

"Maar het behagen, dat God heeft in de hersenen van het genie, dat Antichrist zal heeten, is nog geen verblijding over dien Antichrist *zelf*. Want die is geen brok natuur 'en daarmee uit', hij is geen 'bloote' creatuur; is geen creatuur 'in puris naturalibus' of telwel in een (ook bij de Roomschen immers maar *denkbeeldigen*) 'louter-natuur-staat', vgl. I, 224 v; II, 48 v. En de vreugde over de logische gedachten van den Satan is geen schemerige 'roes', waarin God bij dien monstreusen *Vijand* zelf den onwil, en den haat tegen God, van zijn verdere qualiteiten zou 'abstraheeren'. En de lust aan de menschelijke verbondenheid beteekent nog geen gunstige gezindheid jegens

de aan elkaar *verbonden*, als zij straks de verbondenheid, die hun is opgelegd, en die de Heere dan ook 'onderhoudt en regeert', keeren tegen Hem, en tegen de gemeenschap der heiligen; en als zij mitsdien de menschheid willen verhinderen menschheid-Gods opnieuw te worden. Zijn lust aan het maaksel, dat 'natuurlijk licht' heet, doet Hem geen oogenblik voorbijzien, dat de onwedergeboren *drag*ers van dat natuurlijk licht het 'geheel bezoedelen', en 'ten onder houden in ongerechtigheid', en met vijandige intentie misbruiken, om den Schepper zelf daarin te berooven (D. Leerr., vgl. I, 70, pass.). Hij verheugt zich over den cultuurdrang, en over allen cultuurzin; maar dat is wat anders dan dat Hij ook alle *drag*ers van dien drang met welgevallen zou aanschouwen.

"Daar is het *ver vandaan*. Want onze God kan kan noch van dien antichrist; noch van dien Satan; noch van de menschen, die den samenhang des levens wel willen, maar zonder den (uit Gods Geest naar 't Woord gekenden) samengang te zoeken; noch van de geraffineerde dan wel plumpe beduimelaar van het 'natuurlijk licht'; noch van de cultureele autonomen en autarken onder de menschen ooit vergeten, dat Hij ze in een *ambt* gezet heeft, hetwelk ze te allen dage *weigeren* te erkennen; dat Hij ze heeft geobligeerd door 't Woord van zijn verbond, doch dat zij dit met Adam hebben overtreden, en voortgaan te overtreden. Behagen scheppende in zijn *eigen* werk, vertoornt Hij zich schrikkelijk over de veronachtzamers van het hunne; en het ééne (dit Scheppersbehagen) doet het andere (dat rechterlijke, verbondsmatige mishagen) niet te niet. Waarom dan ook die synode in Amerika (Kalamazoo, 1924) welke eens uitsprak, dat er (zóó althans legt men haar uitspraak in eigen kring uit) een gunstige gezindheid Gods jegens alle menschen is, hierin niet juist zag. Er is een behagen Gods in het kreaturelijke, dat metterdaad ook *in* alle menschen is. Maar dat is heel wat anders, dan een goede *gezindheid* jegens alle *menschen*. Elk woord dient hier nauwkeurig overwogen te worden."

Tot zoover Ds. Schilder.

Zij, die Dr. Schilder hier gehoord hebben over de "algemeene genade" zullen moeten toestemmen, dat hij in zijn lezing zakelijk hetzelfde zeide, als hij in bovenstaande paragrafen schrijft.

Ds. Zwier heeft deze lezing gehoord. En hij beeerde het met den spreker in hoofdzaak eens te zijn.

Dr. De Jong heeft dezelfde lezing van Dr. Schilder gehoord als ik, want het was in *mijn* kerk. En weken daarna, op de conferentie in de Pantlind was hij het, die er vooral sterk den nadruk op lei, dat Dr. Schilder eerst in *De Reformatie* mijn referaat zou bespreken, om te zien of de professor nieuw licht zou doen opgaan.

En dan konden we weer confereeren. Ook heeft hij des professors lezing gehoord, evenals ik, over het gemeen mandaat. En ofschoon Dr. De Jong in zijn al te lang sluitingswoord ('t was eigenlijk een speech na een speech, waaraan niemand behoefte had), Dr. Schilder's lezing wel een beetje verdraaide, kan ik mij toch niet voorstellen, dat hij niet begrepen heeft, dat ook in die lezing de professor zakelijk en principieel hetzelfde ontwikkelde, als boven.

Niemand had toen den moed om openlijk te zeggen, dat ze het met Dr. Schilder niet eens waren.

En Ds. Zwier wilde gaarne van Dr. Schilder leeren.

Wat zou het kostelijk zijn, als ze daar nu eens bij bleven, en pogingen in het werk stelden, om Punt I, Kalamazoo 1924, herzien te krijgen!

Of, indien de broeders sedert verleden jaar van gedachten zijn veranderd, en het ook met Dr. Schilder's voorstelling van de zaak niet meer eens kunnen zijn, laat hen het dan eens duidelijk maken, waarom Dr. Schilders betoog niet deugt.

Ds. Zwier *praat* maar al door!

Laat hem nu ook eens iets zeggen!

H. H.

Korte En Lange Exegese

Hierover had de schrijver over "Dogmatische Onderwerpen" het onlangs in "De Wachter".

Die broeder, die nooit de beleefdheid heeft om ons letterlijk aan te halen, als hij over ons schrijft; die nooit den moed heeft onze argumenten voor zijne lezers te leggen; die nog nooit begonnen is, om onze exegese van onderscheidene teksten der Heilige Schrift te weerleggen,—maakt thans zijn lezers wijs, dat lange verklaringen van teksten een bewijs zijn, den indruk maken, dat men zijn eigen voorstellingen in de Schrift wil indragen. Korte verklaringen zijn natuurlijk bewijs van het tegendeel.

Ik haal hem letterlijk aan:

Van welke vóóronderstellingen we uitgaan, als we de Schrift "onderzoekend" naderen, heeft zeer zeker op onze exegese een overwegenden invloed.

Als we tot de Schrift komen met de vooraf vastgestelde logische conclusie, dat het niet waar kan zijn, omdat het logisch onhoudbaar is, dat er *behalve* de gunstige gezindheid Gods betoond alleen aan de uitverkorenen ten eeuwigen leven, *ook* een zekere gunstige gezindheid Gods is, die Hij betoont aan de menschheid in het algemeen, ja, dan spreekt het wel vanzelf, dat we bij onze exegese van Schriftplaatsen, waarin zoo op het eerste gezicht van zulk een "algemeene" of "gemeene"

gunstige gezindheid gesproken wordt, gaan redeneeren en redeneeren en redeneeren, het vijfhonderd uit, om toch maar dat element uit die Schriftplaatsen te verwijderen.

Dat is zoo Ds. Hoeksema's gewoonte.

En dat heet dan exegese. . . .

Maar als we onbevooroordeeld ons oor te luisteren leggen naar wat de Schrift op de betrokken plaatsen werkelijk zegt, zonder ons door onze "logica" te laten voorschrijven, wat logisch waar of niet waar kan zijn, zie, dan hebben we geen ellenlange redeneeringen noodig, het vijfhonderd uit, om met onze Synode van Kalamazoo tot de conclusie te komen, dat er inderdaad in de Schrift niet maar schijnbaar, doch in werkelijkheid van een tweeërlei gunstige gezindheid Gods sprake is.

Daarom zei ik zoo even, dat we na onze wel wat extra lange schermutseling op logisch terrein de behandeling van de in geding zijnde Schriftuurplaatsen met een gerust geweten betrekkelijk zeer kort kunnen afdoen.

Ds. Hoeksema heeft daar meermalen een klein beetje den spot mee gedreven. Ds. Zwier, zoo zegt hij dan, geeft hoegenaamd geen exegese den naam waard, hij maakt er zich met enkele woorden af, maar kijk eens, wat ellenlange stukken ik tot verklaring van deze teksten geschreven heb!

Alsof de veelheid der woorden den doorslag kon geven. . . .

De broeder kan goed praten en schrijven. Zijn "exegese" is gewoonlijk wel vijf of tien malen langer dan de mijne. Op zijn discipelen schijnt dat diepen indruk te maken: Iemand, die zóó kan praten en schrijven, moet wel gelijk hebben!

Maar die lange redeneeringen komen ons al dadelijk een beetje bedenkelijk voor. Ze maken op ons den indruk, dat er geworsteld wordt, om den tekst der Schrift met eigen opvatting in overeenstemming te brengen. En bij nader inzien blijkt het dan ook wel, dat dit werkelijk het geval is. De eenvoudige en natuurlijke zin der Schrift wordt bedolven onder de veelheid der woorden. Eigen logica, waarmee men de Schrift "onderzoekend" nadert, beheerscht de exegese.

Zóó zijn we het van Ds. Hoeksema gewoon.

Dr. Schilder vergeve me mijne vrijmoedigheid, maar een klein weinigje daarvan meen ik ook in zijn bespreking van het bekende achtal Schriftuurplaatsen te bespeuren.

Eerlijk gezegd, met bovenstaande drijf ik werkelijk den spot, en dat niet "een klein beetje".

Het is toch een beetje al te kinderachtig, om op die wijze mijne uitlegging van teksten op zij te zetten, en eigen exegese als de echte en ware aan te prijzen.

Als we maar onbevooroordeeld naar de Schrift luisteren, hebben we aan ellenlange redeneeringen geen behoefte! Hiermede veroordeelt hij alle beste Schriftverklaarders, de vruchten van wier arbeid Ds. Zwier zeker wel in zijn boekenkast heeft. Laat hem het b.v. maar eens op Calvijn toepassen, dat lange redeneeringen over een tekst hem al dadelijk bedenkelijk voorkomen! Maar dat doet de goede broeder natuurlijk niet. Neen, het geldt alleen maar *mijn* lange redeneeringen. De verkeerdheid en onjuistheid daarvan moet nu bewezen worden door de lengte!

Zoo is de broeder weer van de lastige taak verlost, om nu eens voor zijne lezers duidelijk te maken, waarin mijn exegese niet deugt.

Want let er wel op, dat hij met geen enkel woord bewijst hetgeen hij schrijft: "En bij nader inzien blijkt het dan ook wel, dat dit werkelijk het geval is. De eenvoudige en natuurlijke zin der Schrift wordt bedolven onder de veelheid der woorden". Nu kan ik Zwier wel vragen om één enkel bewijs voor deze bewering, maar dat is al even ijdel als wanneer Dr. Schilder om bewijs aanklopt bij "De Heraut".

Ds. Zwier schrijft maar door.

Als hij er op gewezen wordt, dat hij zijn tegenstanders verkeerd voorstelt, is het eenigste antwoord, dat hij het maar door blijft doen.

Als hij met deugdelijke argumenten er op gewezen wordt, dat zijne redeneering niet deugt, is het eenigste teeken van attentie, dat hij geeft, dat hij dezelfde redeneering nog eens overschrijft.

Hij heeft in dit opzicht veel overeenkomst met Dr. Hepp.

Maar om nog even terug te komen op die kwestie van korte of lange exegese.

Ik wil enkele voorbeelden geven van de "korte verklaringen" van Ds. Zwier, in wier korthed dan volgens hem het stempel van echtheid en zuiverheid moet worden gevonden.

Over Ps. 145:9 Schrift deze exegeet: "Verklaring behoeft deze uitspraak eigenlijk niet. Ze is zoo duidelijk, dat een kind met het begripen geen moeite heeft". . . .

Over Hand. 14:16, 17: "Deze uitspraak is zoo duidelijk, dat ze eigenlijk haast geen verdere verklaring van noode heeft". . . .

Over Luk.6:35: "Ook deze Schriftuurplaats is zóó duidelijk, dat we het eigenlijk een beetje jammer vinden, aan de verklaring hiervan tijd en papier en inkt te moeten besteden". . . .

Over Luk. 18:7: "Deze uitspraak behoeft geen verklaring".

Over I Tim. 1:15, 16: "Ook deze uitspraak is zonder verdere verklaring duidelijk genoeg". . . .

Behoeft het nog te verwonderen, dat hij het met een korte verklaring wel af kan?

Alle teksten, die bespreking vragen in verband met zijn onderwerp, zijn zoo eenvoudig en duidelijk, dat een kind ze wel verstaan kan, dat ze geen verklaring behoeven!

Ja, ja, dat is nog eens het echte!

Zoo deed de Synode van 1924 het ook.

Zoo spreken ook alle Arminiaansche ketters over teksten, waarin het woord "alle" of "wereld" of "goddeloozen" voorkomt. En dan mogen ze gaarne zulke teksten adverteeren op aanplakborden langs de wegen. Het zijn allemaal teksten, die ge door een lange rede-neering maar bederft. Een kind kan ze wel verstaan!

De lezer oordele zelf.

H. H.

Foul Arguments Refuted

II.

In our former article we stated that we, during our labors at Manhattan, had continually been harassed by foul and wicked charges against the truth of God's Sovereignty, as it is revealed to us in the Word of God, and maintained by us as Protestant Reformed Churches. In this wicked practice the Rev. A. H. Bratt is ably assisted by a certain Henry Westra, the leader of the young people. The former should be acquainted with Calvin's teachings concerning God's sovereign decree of election and reprobation, and the over-ruling counsel of God's will, but the latter, I believe does it in his ignorance, though also here ignorance is inexcusable. These men claim to be Calvinists, and yet they attack us when we teach the very doctrines which Calvin taught and defended over against his enemies. They, and many others of our day remind us of the words of our Saviour, "Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, and say if we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets." Thus also many scribes and leaders of our day. O, if they had lived in the days of Calvin, they would not be numbered among his enemies, but they would have embraced the doctrines which he so ably defended; and yet we find those same men bringing the same wicked accusations against us, as the enemies of Calvin brought against him. Therefore we will answer them with the very words of Calvin.

Even as the enemies of the truth in Calvin's days, so also these enemies of the truth of God's absolute sovereignty, rebel at the truth of sovereign election and reprobation, and say that we present God as a demon

when on the basis of the Word of God we teach, that God in His sovereign and righteous good pleasure has created the wicked unto destruction. The enemies of Calvin were offended at the same truth, and brought against him the wicked accusation that he taught that "God of His mere pure will created the greatest part of the world to perdition." Though this statement may appear to be the teaching of Calvin, yet Calvin never taught that God of His *pure mere will* created men to destruction, but that He did it according to His righteous judgments. Calvin replies as follows: Calvin's Calvinism, pp. 266 ff.

"That on which you seize as your First Article is, 'that God, by His pure and mere will, created the greatest part of the world to perdition'. Now, all this—"the greatest part of the world unto perdition," and "by His own pure and mere will"—is a perfect fiction, and a production from the workshop of your own brain. For although God did certainly decree from the beginning everything which should befall the race of man, yet such a manner of speech as the saying that the end or object of God's work of creation was destruction or perdition, is nowhere to be found in my writings. Just like an unclean hog, therefore, you root up with your foul snout all doctrine that is of sweet odour, hoping to find in it something filthy and offensive."

"In the next place, although my doctrine is that the will of God is the first and supreme cause of all things, yet I everywhere teach that wheresoever in His counsel and works the cause does not plainly appear, yet that there is a cause which lies hidden in Himself, and that according to it He has decreed nothing but that which is wise and holy and just. Therefore, with reference to the sentiments of the schoolmen concerning the absolute or tyrannical will of God, I not only repudiate, but abhor them all, because they separate the justice of God from His ruling power. Now see, then, thou unclean dog, how much thou hast gained, and how far thou hast advanced thy cause by this thy impudent barking. For myself, while I subject the whole human race to the will of God, I at the same time ever affirm that God never decrees anything but with the most righteous reason, which reason (though it may at the present time be unknown to us) will assuredly be revealed to us at the last day in all its infinite righteousness and Divine perfection."

"You thrust in my face, and impudently upbraid me with, the 'pure and mere will of God', which idea I, in a hundred or more passages of my books, utterly repudiate. Meantime, I freely acknowledge my doctrine to be this: That Adam fell, not only by the *permission* of God, (I underscore, B.K.) but by His very secret counsel and decree; and that Adam drew all his posterity with himself, by his fall, into eternal destruction. Both these positions it seems, give you great offence, as being (according to your account)

"contrary to nature, and to Scripture." You attempt to prove it to be contrary to nature, because every animal naturally loves its own offspring; whence you argue that, therefore, God, who gave such a natural affection to brute beasts, ought not, certainly, less to love all men, seeing that they are His offspring. (This argument is also made by the present day defenders of the theory of Common Grace. B. K.) Your argument and thought are infinitely too coarse and low, and infinitely beneath the mightiness of the matter, when you demand of God, the eternal Author of nature, just what He rightfully demands of the ox and the ass, which He has created. As if God Himself ought to be bound by the same laws as those which He has appointed for the creature which He has made!"

Further on pp. 270-271, Calvin continues: "But you are ready to reply, next, 'that to create is a work of love, not of hatred; and that God therefore created in love, not in hatred.' But you perceive not, that though all men are hateful to God in fallen Adam, yet that in their original creation the love of God shines in all its brightness". . . .

"Meantime, you hesitate not to vomit forth your profane and abhorrent opinion that God is worse than any wolf, who thus wills to create men to misery. Some men, be it remembered, are born blind, some deaf, some dumb, some of monstrous deformity. Now, if we are to go by your opinion as the judge in these sacred and deep matters, God is also cruel, because He afflicts His offspring with such evils as these, and that, too, before they have seen the light of day. But the day, be thou assured, will come when thou wilt heartily wish that thou hadst been blind, rather than thou hadst ever been so wonderfully sharp-sighted in thus penetrating into these secrets of the eternal God!"

"You accuse God of injustice; nay, you declare Him to be nothing above a monster, (do you remember making that very statement, Mr. Westra? B.K.) if He dares to decree anything concerning men otherwise than we ourselves should determine concerning our own children. If so, how shall we account for God's creating some dull of comprehension, others of greater incapacity, others quite idiots? Do you really think that the work of God's creation, with reference to such imperfect mortals, was really according to the fables of some Jews about the Fauns and Satyrs? For they say that God was prevented from completing the form of these latter monsters by the intervention of the Sabbath, and therefore that they fell, half made, from His hands. No! It rather becomes us to receive a deep and humbling lesson from such sad spectacles as these defective human beings, and not to commence a quarrel with the Maker of heaven and earth, from the conceptions of our own brain, concerning His works, or what, in our opinion, they ought to have been. When any idiot happens to meet me, I am admonished

to reflect upon what God might have made me, had He been so pleased! As many dull of comprehension and idiots as there are in the world, so many spectacles does God set before me in which to behold His power; not less a subject of awe than a subject of wonder. But as for you, you brawl against God Himself with all impiety and profanity, as "being less merciful than a wolf," because (according to your opinion) He has so little considered the good and happiness of His offspring!"

Calvin proceeds on pp. 272-273 "With reference to the doctrine of permission, we will speak of that hereafter in its place. But for the present, if you should be disposed to reply that the foreknowledge of God is not the *cause* (I underscore, B.K.) of evils, I would only ask you this one question: If God foresaw the destruction both of man and of the devil before He created them, and did not, at the same time, *decree* their destruction, why did He not apply betimes, an adequate remedy, which should prevent their Fall and their liability thereto? The devil from the very beginning of the world, alienated himself from the hope of salvation. And man, as soon as he was created, destroyed both himself and his posterity with a deadly destruction. If, therefore, the preservation of both was in the hand of God, how was it that (*if He had not decreed their destruction*) He permitted their ruin? Nay, why did He not furnish each with at least some small degree of ability to stand? To what circuitous reasonings soever, therefore, you have recourse I shall be able to hold you fast to this principle, that although man was created weak and liable to fall, yet that this weakness contained in it a great blessing, because man's Fall immediately afterwards taught him that nothing outside of God is either safe, or secure or enduring. Hence, therefore, it is made evident that all which you prate about men having been created unto salvation, is an argument mutilated and halt, and laid down without adequate consideration."

Calvin continues further pp. 275-276, "Here you throw in the common objection 'that God has no pleasure in the death of a sinner,' as declared by the prophet Ezekiel (Ezek. 33:11). (Notice here that the same objection which the Synod of 1924 brought against the truth of God's Sovereign grace, namely that God is merciful to whom He wills and that He hardens whom He wills, was already a *common objection* in the days of Calvin: *ex ungue leonem*, B. K.) Calvin goes on to answer this common objection: "But listen, I pray you, to that which, in the prophet, immediately follows, 'Because God inviteth all men to repentance' (Ezek. 18:30-32). To all such, therefore, as return into the way of life pardon is freely offered. But the next principle thing to be considered herein is, whether or not that conversion or 'returning' which God requires (verse 30) is in the power of man's free-will, or, whether it be a peculiar and sovereign gift

of God! Inasmuch, therefore, as all men are invited and exhorted by God to repentance, the prophet, on that ground, justly declareth that "God hath no pleasure in the death of a sinner." But *why* it is that God doth not turn or convert *all* men to Himself, equally and alike, is a question the reply to which lies hidden in Himself. And as to your usual way of citing that passage of the apostle Paul, "That God would have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (I Tim. 2:4), how vain a prop that is to put under your error to support it, I think I have shown with sufficient plainness already, and that repeatedly."

On pp. 276-277 Calvin continues: "There is, perhaps a stronger colour in some of the words of Peter, which might have better suited your purposes, where he says that God is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). And if there be anything in the first member of the passage that seems difficult of comprehension at first sight, it is made perfectly plain by the explanation which follows. For in as far as God "willeth that all should come to repentance," in so far He willeth that no one should perish; but, in order that they may thus be received of God, they must "come". But the Scripture everywhere affirms, that in order that they may "come", they must be prevented of God; that is, God must first come to them to draw them; for until they are drawn of God, they will remain where they are, given up to the obstinacy of the flesh. Now if there were one single particle of right judgment in you, you would, in a moment, acknowledge that there is a wide and wonderful difference between these two things—that the hearts of men are made of God "fleshly" out of "stony" hearts, and that it is thus that they are made to be displeased and dissatisfied with themselves, and are brought as suppliants, to beg of God mercy and pardon; and that after they are thus changed, they are received into all grace."

"Now God declares that both these things are of His pure goodness and mercy; that He gives us hearts that we may repent, and then pardons us graciously upon our repentance and supplication. For if God were not ready to receive us when we do truly implore His mercy, He would not say, "Turn ye unto Me, and I will turn unto you" (Zech. 1:3). But if repentance were in the power of the free-will of man, Paul would not say, "If peradventure God will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth" (2 Tim. 2:26). Nay if God Himself, who exhorts all me to repentance by His voice—if God Himself, I repeat, who thus exhorts, did not draw His elect by the secret operation of His Spirit, Jeremiah would not thus describe those who do return; "Turn Thou me, and I shall be turned; for Thou art the Lord my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented". (Jer. 31:19). This solution of the matter (I repeat), if there were any shame or

modesty in so impudent a dog as thyself, ought to have been known to thee as existing in my writings in a hundred different places. (This should also have been known to Rev. Bratt and Mr. W., the latter claiming to agree with every word the Reformer has ever written, which of course is folly, B.K.). And although thou mayest take it upon thyself to reject such a solution, it nevertheless stands supported and confirmed both by the apostle Paul and by the prophet Ezekiel."

"But how, and in what sense it is, that God willeth all men to be saved is a matter not here to be inquisitively discussed. One thing is certain, that these two things—salvation and knowledge of the truth—are always *inseparably joined together*. Now, then, answer me, (and I would like to see Zwier, Berkhof, H. J. Kuiper c.s. give an answer to this question of Calvin). If God had willed that His truth should be known unto all men, how is it that, from the first preaching of the gospel until now, so many nations exist unto whom His pure truth has never been sent by Him at all, and unto whom, therefore, it has never come? And, again, if such had been the will of God concerning all men, how is it that He never opened the eyes of all men? For the internal illumination of the Spirit, with which God has condescended to bless so few, is indispensably necessary unto faith. And there is also another knot for thee to untie. Since no one but he who is drawn by the secret influence of the Spirit can approach unto God, how is it that God does not draw all men indiscriminately to Himself, if He really "willeth all men to be saved" (in the common meaning of the expression)?" pp. 277.

Rev. B. Kok.

IN MEMORIAM

Early in the morning of April the 8th, at the age of 79 years, it pleased the Lord to take unto Himself our dearly beloved Mother, Grandmother, Great-grandmother and Sister,

MRS. JOHN JONKER, nee Blom

We thank the Lord for the many years He spared her, and for the blessed hope that was hers, when the Lord took her to her heavenly home, that we may be consoled by the thought, that our loss was Mother's gain.

The Children,

Mr. and Mrs. D. Wierenga
Mrs. John Ploeg
Mr. and Mrs. Peter Jonker
Rev. and Mrs. H. Dekker
Mr. John Tuinhoff
Mr. John Hendrickson
Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Jonker
Miss Tena Jonker
Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Ensing
Mr. Cornelius Jonker
35 Grandchildren

Grand Rapids, Mich. 10 Great-grandchildren

The Anxious Quest Of The Sorrowful

The thirteenth Psalm is, first, the outcry of a heart that is overburdened with grief, chief of which is the feeling of forsakenness; second, the prayer for relief in the face of jeering enemies; and, third, the song of a grateful saint.

In the first part of the Psalm, that speaks of forsakenness, we hear the cry: How long? four times.

The first cry sounds strange. There is a great contradiction in it. Or so it seems. Attend to this: "How long, Jehovah, wilt Thou forget me perpetually? It seems to us that if Jehovah would forget us perpetually, there would be no point in asking how long this perpetual forsakenness would last. In the English translation this difficulty is removed by simply divorcing the last word from the first outcry and making it an outcry in itself. Then the outburst reads: How long wilt Thou forget me, O Lord? Forever? The sense is then: I feel forsaken by Thee, O Lord! How long will this condition last? And the saint answers this inquiry with another question: Forever?

Against this translation is the fact that the word: forever, belongs to the outcry. It is part of the sentence.

The German translation evades the difficulty by translating the word forever, for: entirely; the sense then being: How long, O Lord wilt Thou forget me entirely?

The French translation evades the issue by translating the word, forever, for: without ceasing. Then the sense is: How long, O Lord, wilt Thou forget me, without a glimpse of Thy presence being left me?

I think that Delitzsch properly explains this seeming contradiction by pointing out that the experience of forsakenness partakes of its eternal character. He says: "It is in the nature of the Divine wrath, that the feeling of it is always accompanied by an impression that it will last forever; and consequently it becomes a foretaste of hell itself."

You find another glimpse of it when an inspired poet exclaims: "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me." (116:3).

You see, there is an awful "power in His anger". (Psalm 90:11).

Yes, I think that Delitzsch is right: when God hides His face from us, it seems as though the darkness of an eternal night has settled round about us. Then we feel like the saint who complains: Will God forever spurn? Shall we no more His favor see? Will mercy never return?

That was the experience of David in this Psalm.

It seemed to him as though God had forgotten him with that forgetfulness that lasts forever. It seemed to him as though God did not think about him any more. And the quality of that forgetfulness was

eternity. "Clean gone forever".

We hasten to add, however, that such is impossible. We may experience such in our consciousness, but there is no objective reality that corresponds with this. God never forgets His saints. He cannot forget them. Their names and image are in the very palms of His hands. He always beholds them in Christ Jesus as perfect and holy.

You may ask: how is it then that both David and we and all the children of God experience such feeling of forsakenness at times? And the answer is: such comes over us for several reasons. Sometimes it is because we have sinned against God in a very grievous way. Then God makes us to feel His displeasure against such sins. Sometimes it is because God withdraws His grace from us to teach us our absolute dependency upon Him. Sometimes it is because the Lord wants to try our faith by it. So that we may come out of the crucible, or, rather, that our faith may show through these trials its heavenly and precious character.

At any rate it does not mean that God *really* has forgotten us. It is rather like David says in the second cry: How long wilt Thou hide Thy face from me? Yes, that is the real, objective situation. In heaven such a thing is impossible. In heaven, now and forever, the saints and the angels see His face perpetually. But, ah yes, here on earth we do not see His face at all times. We are still walking in the valley between the mountains and His face is oftentimes hidden from our view. Even at our brightest moments we do not see that Face unobscured. We see in a glass darkly. The Face is in heaven, revealed in Jesus Christ, our Lord. A reflection of that Face we have through the Spirit of Christ in the Bible. Further, when that self-same Spirit of Christ illumines our mind's eye, we see in that glass (the Bible) the beautiful Image of God. And we rejoice, in part.

Now you will understand that many things can come between our view and the Face of God.

The wicked, even though they look into that glass, do not see the Face, because their foolish heart is darkened and because the devil has blinded their eyes. II Cor. 4:4.

And we, although reborn and converted, oftentimes do not look, or when we look, we look awry and with prejudice, or with sin in the mind and the heart, or without the right attitude, that is, hungry and thirsty.

And when we continue like this we become miserable and finally cry: How long wilt Thou hide Thy face from me?

But there is more.

David tells the Lord all his sorrow. At night he would lie awake and cast and recast his sorry plight before his mind's eye, trying to find a way out of his present misery. He would take counsel in his soul. He would make all kinds of plans and schemes which

would haply bring him his erstwhile peace of mind. But it did not help. All through the day, upon awakening from a troubled sleep, he would carry sorrow in his heart.

And that is very miserable. The heart should be filled with gladness. Thus we were created. The heart of man is the life of man at its source. All the thoughts, desires and issues of your life are coloured by your heart. You can readily understand that when the heart is sorrowful, your thoughts, reflections, meditations, outlook on all life is also sorrowful. Nothing looks nice, nothing tastes good, nothing is agreeable to the sorrowful.

Who among us, poor mortals, does not know that state?

There comes one more: How long!

It has to do with the enemy of David. He seems to have had trouble within and without. Yes, very often do we read of the enemies of David. These enemies are very foolish people. David means: Beloved. That is, beloved of God. And I would say that if you want to make enemies the worst way, do not make enemies with God's Beloved. You lose before you start. David brings the enemies to God.

I do not think though that the enemies of David were the cause of his greatest misery in this history. Just because the enemy is over against us is no indication that God has forsaken us. Even in the midst of those that breathe cruelty you may be able to rejoice in the God of your salvation.

But here is the point: they do not improve the misery of your soul and heart. They aggravate our trouble. And since David was pouring out his troubles before the face of God he made a clean breast of it. Therefore we hear from the enemy last of all.

It is with this matter even as with the passion of the Lord Jesus, and, remember that also here in this Psalm is a clear Messianic note, Jesus suffered from two causes: the Lord His God and His enemies. But chief of all His sufferings is the awful, unutterable experience of forsakenness which He suffered. When He hung on the accursed tree in deepest darkness, He suffers most because: My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?

Enemies, yes, but to be apart from God is the very core of eternal death.

Well, David has uttered his despairing cry and it seems as though it has prepared the way for quiet prayer. What now follows is calmer, sweeter, more hopeful. He asks for positive blessing. He asks for light. Now light, life and happiness are closely related. David knows that if only he may see the face of God and receive from that face the beaming light-rays of life and strength: all will be well with him. There is a final remembrance of his woe: O my God, give me this light, because if I must go without it, I will sleep the sleep of death and my enemy will draw

the conclusion that he has prevailed over me. Let Thy light and Thy truth have the victory, O Lord!

Is it not wonderful that in such a short Psalm we see the reward of persistent crying to God? With giant steps David proceeds from utmost misery to heavenly joy and rejoicing. His first cry reminds us of hell and his final chant is the song of the angels. In between are supplication and weeping. By it Jacob prevailed and received the reward of God's communion which he craved. So also David. And so also we, if we walk in the faith of the fathers Jacob and David.

Yes, there is a moment in His wrath but there is an eternity in His mercy. The Bible speaks of the eternal mercies of God. Also of the sure mercies of David.

Mercy is exactly what David needed in this instance. He found sorrow, also hunger and thirst for God's presence, peace, light and life. He wept at night and groaned by day. In a word: he was miserable.

Well, the sure mercies of David, that is, of Jesus, are God's longing to deliver out of all our troubles. That longing is realized in Calvary. Jesus dying for us and raised again is the mercy of God for you, my brother, who art in distress.

Certainly, even while David is writing all his sorrows on paper, writing slowly because that his eyes are continually filling with bitter tears, even while he must pause a bit and sigh some more, even while the four times repeated: how long! ascends to God—our Father hears.

Witness the last verses: David trusts; he rejoices in God's salvation; he sings unto the Lord; he has eyes for the bounties of the Lord.

I think that when David handed the document to Haman or Asaph for temple worship, his tear-stained face was already illumined with the smile of heartfelt happiness.

He saw the mercy of Jehovah. That mercy is salvation. Which is the same thing as though you and I would say with Paul: But we see Jesus. . . .

G. V.

NOTICE

The Consistory of the First Prot. Ref. Church hereby notifies the churches that Synod will meet D. V., in the parlors of the Fuller Ave. Church at Grand Rapids, Michigan on May 22, 1940.

G. Stonehouse, Clerk.

Classis West will meet the 2nd Wednesday in September.
M. Gritters, S. C.

Voor Den Opperzangmeester?

Ondergeteekende leeft in de stille hoop, dat onze drukker niet vergeten zal om het vraagteeken achter den titel van dit stukje te plaatsen. Want ik bedoel daar wat mee

En het is dit: David zou nogal wat moeite hebben om dezen Psalm gezongen te krijgen door het zingende Israel. Ik denk, dat als hij er mee kwam aandragen bij den opperzangmeester, deze hem weer terug zou zenden met de opmerking, dat David zijn tijd niet verstond. (We hebben het over den veertienden Psalm).

Men is bij zekeren opperzangmeester verschenen in den jare 1924 met dit lied, doch ook hij wenschte wat anders. We hebben dan het oog op Ds. I. Van Dellen, den president der Kalamazoosche Synode.

Het einde van de zaak was, dat men wel gezongen heeft onder leiding van dien opperzangmeester, doch het was een merkwaardig mengsel. Daar waren andere dichters ter Synode. Ze maakten ook een lied klaar. Tot aan den jongsten dag toe zullen we moeten raden wie de eigenlijke componist geweest is van het beruchte lied met zijn drie stanza's, maar ik verzeker U, dat het klankgeslacht naar is.

Dr. Clarence Bouma zette het lied in: hij was rapporteur der commissie voor prae-advies. Sommigen zongen direct even brutaal als hij, doch er waren er toch nog te veel die aarzelden. Er waren strophen in dat lied die de zaak toch wat al te rauw aanpakten. Er was één alinea in, die wilde kweelen van een liefde Gods voor allen, *waaronder natuurlijk ook de verworpenen begrepen zijn!* Ziet, dat ging toch wat al te kras voor de middenmoot der Synode.

Toen stond de opperzangmeester op en heeft be-middelend, verzachtend, bematigend en bedarend inge-werkt op de oorspronkelijke compositie van de poëtische trits: Bouma, Berkhof en De Jong. Hij, de opperzangmeester, gaf een substituut voorstel: voorzichtig, zachtkens, misschien wat beverig, begon hij te zingen; en ademloos luisterden de oudsten van Israel toe. (Er waren te voren allerlei proeven van dit oorspronkelijke lied voorgedragen. 't Was een spannend oogenblik).

Nu moet ge wel verstaan, dat het oorspronkelijke lied niet *wezenlijk* veranderd was. O neen. De scherpe punten bleven; maar er waren watjes omgewikkeld.

En waar men op gewacht had gebeurde: er werd een meerderheid gevonden die glimlachend toeluisterden; er kwam een trek van rust op veler aangezichten; sommigen sloegen de maat aan van het stuk met een vinger opgeheven; ja, zoo zal 't gaan: er is een liefde Gods voor de goddeloozen zondaar, dat hij het lieflijke voor God kan doen in 't burgerlijke leven.

En een paar amechtige, door zwaren strijd vermoeide, strijders bleven staan met Psalm 14 in hun handen. Men wilde hun lied niet zingen. Eén sprak

tot hen smalend van vloekpsalmen. Arme man! Die vloekt in die Psalmen is de vreeselijke God!

Neen, als David, anno domini 1924, zich daar ver-toond had met zijn lied van den vertienden Psalm had men hem het achterdeurtje uitgelaten.

Het past niet meer in de monden van Israel's knechten.

Men wil wat anders.

Om het nu scherp te zien zou ik U willen smeeke om het derde punt van dat beruchte zankkoor eens te leggen naast het eerste vers van den berijmden veertienden Psalm:

"Door de werking van Gods beminnenden Geest op het hart van den goddelooze komt er een lieflijk lied uit den natuurlijken mensch, een lied, dat God óók mooi vindt." (Denkt hier aan het minnelied van Hector, door Van Baalen aangedragen ten voorbeeld). Dit is één stanza van het Synodaal gezang.

Aan den anderen kant hooren we het geruisch van Goddelijke klanken:

"De trotsche dwaas zegt in zijn boos gemoed:

'Daar is geen God'. Zij dooven 't licht der rede,

En maken zich, door gruwelijke zeden,

Afschuwelijk; daar is geen mensch, die goed

Op aarde doet."

Wat een vreeselijk verschil.

Zoudt ge denken, lezer, dat David eenige kans heeft om door onze opperzangmeesters gehoord te worden?

Ja, hij wordt nog steeds gehoord en ook nagezon-gen, doch het koor van die zangers kromp in. 't Wordt minder. Ook zal het minder worden. Het neemt veel liefde tot God om zulke Psalmen te zingen uit den treure. Deze laatste gedachte hoorden we nu twintig jaren geleden. 't Bracht me aan 't denken.

Vele jaren geleden heb ik ook een andere stem opge-vangen over de radio: 't was de stem van den toon-zetter der Synodale trits, Dr. Bouma. Hij liet de wereld weten, dat zelfs sommigen der Protestantsche Gereformeerden zat worden van het volgens hem een-toonige zingen en spelen op die ééne snaar van onze harp. De man heeft natuurlijk niet gelogen. Ik wil het best gelooven. 't Is een wonder, dat er nog duizen-den gevonden worden die jaren lang willen hooren van een God die een Eeuwige Gloed is bij de goddeloozen.

Want Psalm 14 is werkelijk vreeselijk.

Daar wordt een beeld opgehangen van alle men-schen, dat ons doet huiveren. Paulus heeft het ge-lezen. Ik hoor hem zeggen: En denkt gij dat wij beter zijn? O neen. Want wij hebben te voren betuigd, dat we allen onder de zonde zijn. En zijn betuiging was een beschuldiging. Rom. 3.

Voorts is Paulus gaan afschrijven uit de Schriften. En ook uit den veertienden Psalm haalde hij bewijs.

Doch Dr. Abram Jr. leest Psalm 14 anders.

Zeker, zegt deze geleerde, de mensch maakt zich door gruwelijke zeden afschuwelijk. . . . d.w.z., zoo zou het er naar toegaan als er geen gemeene gratie was.

Nu is het niet zoo. En dat kan geschreven en gelezen worden zonder ernstig protest.

Wat moet ik dan nu doen met dezen veertienden Psalm? Hij volgt nu in deze serie.

Tracht hem te lezen in de salons der fatsoenlijken, der beschaafden, der lieve menschen; leest hem in de wereld.

En dan zal het U opvallen, dat zij hem niet zullen uitleggen zooals Dr. A. Kuiper Jr. dat doet. Zij zullen direkt vatten, dat God hen beschrijft zooals zij zijn. Zelfs zonder de voorlichting van dien Psalm heeft één hunner een beeld opgehangen van den mensch, dat bijna dienst kon doen als commentaar op dat stuk der Heidelberger, dat onze ellende beschrijft: Schopenhauer!

En terwijl men dan zichzelf herkennen zal in het beeld van den zang Davids, zal met het aanbiddelijk Wezen vloeken vanwege het zwaard Zijns monds.

Ik zeide: tracht hem te lezen in de salon der fatsoenlijken! Maar hoe kan dat? Er staan woorden in die hun fijn gevoel van al wat lieflijk is en welluidt wondt. Er staat maar liefst, dat zij *stinkende* geworden zijn!

In de kerke Christi mag ik hem niet zingen; in de wereld vloekt men bij zijn klanken: en toch moet hij gezongen. Het spijt mij soms, dat de wijs van dien Psalm niet zoo schoon is als die van den twee-en-veertiger. Dien Psalm zingende, en dat gedurig door alle eeuwen heen, had ons misschien weerhouden om zoo mal te krassen in de valsche drie-star der Synode. Als we van kindsbeen aan gehoord en gezongen hadden van den stinkenden mensch der zonde die zich afschuwelijk maakt voor 's Heeren oog, waren we misschien teruggeschrokken voor het beeld van een mensch met het Synodale pakje aan van de Drie Punten, onzaliger gedachtenis!

(Het tweede vers van die oude grootheid zingt van 't speurend Oog!

“De groote God, die 't recht verdedigt, sloeg
Van 's hemels troon Zijn oogen naar beneden
Op Adams kroost, doorzocht hun hart en zeden;
Hij zag, of zich geen mensch verstandig droeg,
En naar Hem vroeg.”

De Synode heeft ook gespeurd.

En toen zij de harten der goddeloozen doorwroetten hebben ze de algemeene werkingen des Heiligen Geestes gevonden, werkingen die door liefde aangespoord (denkt om 't eerste punt!) een oorspronkelijke goedheid in stand hielden en voor algeheele verrotting bewaarden. De Synode speurde en vindt een overblijfsel van het Paradijs-goed; Berkhof zou zeggen: uitwendig goed, uitwendige gerechtigheid.

Doch, hoe vreemd, als God er aan ruikt zegt Hij, dat zij stinkt!

Daar was geen verstand, zegt God.

Doch als men vandaag de heiden ziet buigen voor het stomme beeld dan wijst men triumpeerend naar de

overblijfselen van een zoeken naar God! Het is voor hen wier voorhoofd zich rimpelde van geleerdheid een bewijs, dat er een spranke van oorspronkelijke licht overbleef.

En God bleef zoeken: luistert:

“Hij zocht alom, maar ach! Hij vond er geen;
Want alle vleesch is trouwloos afgeweken;
Het land is vol van stinkende gebreken;
Geen sterveling wil 't pad der deugd betreen;
Ja zelfs niet één.”

En als die klanken doordringen tot op de studeerkamer van Ds. H. J. Kuiper, dan fronsst hij de wenkbrauwen en grijpt naar de pen: hij zal zoo straks een snelschrijft aan den drukker geven. En terwijl de Heere zocht en onze Gereformeerde poëten de Psalmen in rijmtrant ons geven, dan voegen ze er een “ach en wee” toe: “Ach! Hij vond er geen”. Neen, de Heere vond het land *vol* stinkende gebreken. Doch de eerder genoemde leeraar, Ds. Kuiper, schrijft boven zijn snelschrift een titel die mij nu al voor jaren doet beven: “The good that sinners do!” *Mirabile Dictu!*

En als de Heere Zelf een commentaar schrijft over dit vreeselijke onderwerp, door den Heiligen Geest, het brein en de hand van Paulus gebruikende, dan wordt het nog duidelijker. Dan hooren we, dat de goddeloozen “*vervuld* zijnde met alle ongerechtigheid, hoerij, boosheid, gierigheid, kwaadheid; vol van nijdigheid, moord, twist, bedrog, kwaadaardigheid; oorblazers, achterklappers, haters van God, smaders, hoovaardigen, laatdunkenden, vindere van kwade dingen, den ouderen ongehoorzaam; onverstandigen, verbondbrekers, zonder natuurlijke liefde, onverzoenlijken, onbarmhartigen; (Hier even een interlude: sommigen hoor ik zeggen: dat deed *ik* niet! Wel, leest dan verder:) dewelken daar zij het recht Gods weten, namelijk, dat degenen die zulke dingen doen des doods waardig zijn, niet alleen ze doen, *maar ook mede een welgevallen hebben in degenen die zie doen.*” En o, de woorden die we schuin deden drukken beschuldigen zooveel menschen die naar het uitwendig ge'laet wandelen in “de betrachting van uiterlijken tucht”! De woorden Gods zijn vlijmscherp.

Let er op, dat God de mensch van al die gruwelen *vervuld*, *vol* vindt. Vrage: kan er ook nog wat anders bij? Kan er bij de volle vaten van gruwelen nog wat goeds bij?

Nu zegge dr. A. Kuiper Sr. dat het zoo geworden zou zijn zonder de gemeene gratie; nu schrijve Ds. H. J. Kuiper zijn God-tergenden titel: “The Good that Sinners Do!”; en zinge Ds. Van Baalen zijn lied van den heidenschen Hector: doch hun schrift en woord en zang zal vergaan en al die soortgelijke klanken zullen wegsterven; maar 't woord dat eenmaal uit Gods mond vloede blijft tot in alle eeuwigheid.

Anno Domini 1940 schrijven we vandaag: en de Drie Punten staan nog in de notulen der breedste vergadering. Het zij zoo. Maar de veertiende Psalm

staat er als een protest dat geschreven werd door God vooraleer de misdaad begaan werd. Want God woont in de eeuwigheid. Die Psalm vervloekt die Punten.

En 'k zie als in een vergezicht, dat God eenmaal luidkeels zal lachen in 't oor van allen die soortgelijke, malle dingen neerschreven of krasten in muziek die valsch was.

Straks worden de notulen van 1924 nog eens gelezen maar ze zullen tot in der eeuwigheid niet aangenomen worden: de meerderheid van Gods Eene, eenzame, doch ontzagelijke stem is er tegen.

En als die stem gebruld zal hebben, zeggen de vier dieren: Amen!

En hoewel die stemme mijn ziel en hart verbrijzelt, vernedert, in 't stof doet bukken, komt er een aarzelend, bevend halleluja uit.

Zoo zal het er naar toegaan in den oordeelsdag.

Zooeven had ik het over een amechtig tweetal, dat tevergeefs smeekte vlak vóór de Synodale tafel: hun beviel de klank van de poëtische, Synodale trits niet. Ik schilderde hen met den veertiende Psalm in de hand.

Dat tweetal zal gerechtvaardigd worden in dit hun doen.

Waarom?

Het gezang dat zij den vroeden vaderen voorstelden hield en houdt tempo met den hartslag Gods. G. V.

Christus De Crisis Brengende

Johannes 9.

Tot een oordeel ben ik in deze wereld gekomen! Zoo is ongetwijfeld de hoofdgedachte van dit negende hoofdstuk van Johannes Evangelie. En de eigelijke gedachte van dat oordeel wordt zeer volledig beschreven in de woorden van den Godvruchtigen Simeon als hij profeteerde: Zie deze wordt gezet tot een val en tot een opstanding velen in Israel en tot een teeken dat wedersproken zal worden. . . . opdat de gedachten uit vele harten geopenbaard worden.

Ik ben gekomen om een crisis in te stellen, gekomen om uit te drijven naar een keuze, gekomen om aan te dringen op "ja" of "neen", "ja" en "neen". Zeer schoon treedt deze werkelijkheid van den Christus aan het licht in dit hoofdstuk.

De Heiland was wederom in den temple geweest en had daar tegenover de doodelijke vijandschap van de oversten zoo krachtig van zichzelf en den Vader getuigd, dat de Joden steenen grepen om Hem de woorden des lichts op de lippen te doen verstommen in een stortvloed van steenen.

Doch Jezus ontweek hun woede en ging uit den temple.

En voorbijgaande zag Hij een mensch blind van

de geboorte af.

De discipelen aanstonds door leergierigheid of ook door nieuwsgierigheid bewogen vragen naar de oorzaak van deze blindheid, van dit lijden. Doch Jezus doet de vraag met een kort antwoord af, en wijst op het doel en de vrucht, die het goddelijk welbehagen zich voorgesteld heeft.

Deze blinde is op mijn pad gesteld door de alwijze voorzienigheid Gods, en daar Ik hem onder Gods leiding hier aantref moet Ik hier Gods werken openbaren. Een dagtaak is Hij hier weer aangewezen. En niets mag Mij afschrikken, vijandschap, of ongelegenheid, of de schijn van Sabbats-ontwijding—niets van dit alles mag Mij beletten.

Zoolang het dag is moet Ik werken, en wandelende in het licht zal Ik niet struikelen, noch in de lagen der Joden, noch in de strikken van den duivel!

Dra overvalt mij de nacht des doods—dan is mijn dagtaak vervuld.

Doch zoolang Ik in de wereld ben, zoo ben Ik het Licht der wereld.

Dat Licht moet schijnen.

Des Vaders werken moet Ik werken.

Tegenover dat Licht moeten de menschen zich kunnen openbaren! Want tot een crisis ben Ik in de wereld gekomen.

En Hij spoopte op de aarde, en maakte slijk uit dat speeksel, en streek dat slijk op de oogen des blinden, en zeide: ga heenen, wasch in het badwater Siloam.

Over deze handeling van den Heiland zijn vele vragen gerezen, waarop ook vele en velerlei antwoorden gegeven zijn.

Welke genezende kracht lag er in het speeksel? Welke in de klei?

Wil Jezus hier door aanschouwelijk onderwijs het gebruik der middelen aanprijzen?

Waarom beval Hij den mensch verder zelf te handelen? Wil Jezus hem leeren dat God het werk begint maar dat de mensch het moet voltooien?

Wil Hij aanstonds dat nieuw geloof eene oefening afleggen?

Doch hoeveel antwoorden zijn er niet mogelijk op deze vragen? En wie zal over de waarde van die antwoorden beslissen?

Doch ook met alle deze en meer dergelijk vragen missen wij het doel van Jezus teeken.

Want zeg al dat wij deze vragen ernstig opvatten.

Wat vermag een weinig speeksel aan die steekblinde oogen? En waarom kunnen wij dat middel dan niet benutten?

Of ook waarom lokt Jezus bij andere genezingen geen wederwerking uit, en waarom elders geen geloofsoefening uit?

Doch genoeg! De moeilijkheden vermenigvuldigen!

Neen, maar Jezus is tot een oordeel, tot een crisis in de wereld gekomen.

Daartoe is deze blinde bestemd; daartoe is deze

Sabbath bestemd. Daartoe strekt de werkzaamheid van Jezus.

Hoe lichtelijk had Hij niet met een woord van macht die oogen geopend. Hij die de baren met een woord bedwong. Hij die met een woord Lazerus uit den dood riep!

Doch heden is het Sabbat. En ook dien Sabbat is den mensch gegeven opdat hij daarmede zijnen God diene. Want de rechtvaardige is heer ook van den Sabbat.

En God wil barmhartigheid, en geen eigengerechtigte offerande. Ook op den Sabbat.

Om dat te openbaren is heden zijn opdracht.

Daarom werkt Hij Gods werk, opdat de vijanden hunne werken daartegen mogen stellen, opdat zij en hunne hooggeschatte werken de zijnen mogen haten.

Tot eene crisis moet Hij werken in deze wereld.

Daarom gaat Hij aan het werk voor het oog van vriend en vijand—deze Heer van den Sabbat.

Daarom bukt hij in den arbeid,—deze vervuller van den Sabbat.

Daarom bearbeidt Hij de aarde met speeksel—Hij wien niets onrein was.

Daarom zendt Hij hem op reis op den Sabbatsdag, op een reis naar Siloam, Hij die zelf de vervulling was van al het water dat uit Siloam geschept, gegoten of gesprengd werd. Daarom gebiedt Hij om genezing te zoeken in het leven-water dat uit de woning Gods ontsprong.

Maar vijanden kunnen het niet verdragen.

Zij die Moses volkomen ontkrachten, springen nu voor hun verkrachten Moses in de bres.

Zij die den Sabbat gebruikten om de arme te bespieden en den wees en weduwe in den strik te lokken, komen nu op voor hunne verkrachte Sabbat.

En de Heer des Sabbats, die de Sabbat vervulde met barmhartigheid en de liefde Gods, veroordeelen zij nu.

En de crisis wordt geopenbaard.

De zienden worden steeds blinder.

Uit een taai beginsel concludeeren zij dat de Christus Gods een bedrieger en Godslasteraar is.

“Wij—zoo stellen zij eerst vast—wij kennen Moses en beweren zijne Sabbat door stipte ledigheid.”

Deze wijkt af van onze Sabbat-viering—

Dus is deze niet van God—

Daarom kan Hij ook geen wonderen doen.

En zij verwerpen het licht der wereld.

Maar ook komt de blinde in de crisis—en hij wordt uitgedrongen naar het Licht.

Deze Israeliet in wien geen bedrog is, staat tegenover Jezus zonder enig vijandig vooroordeel. Hij staat neutraal voorzover Jezus hem nog onbekend is, doch met het vooroordeel om Hem te schatten in het licht van de openbaring.

En het betoog van den blinde is juist andersom. “Deze mensch heeft mijne oogen geopend”. Dat is hem een onwankelbaar feit.

Iemand die oogen kan openen is zeker geen zondaar—want God bekwaamt geen zondaar om wonderen te doen.

Daarom houdt ik hem voor een profeet.

Een wonderlijk beeld van geestelijke gezeggelijkheid.

Rasch om te hooren is hij; zoekende naar het licht.

Eerst is het: een mensch genaamd Jezus.

Weldra is het: iemand die Gods wil doet.

Later heet het: een profeet.

En eindelijk: wie is de Zone Gods opdat ik hem geloven mag?

De weg naar het licht heeft hij bewandelt.

Door de crisis heen.

Genen werpen de Christus der Schriften uit hunne synagoge.

Deze zegt, Ik geloof Heere! en aanbidt Hem.

En, ja, de taak van dien dag heeft de zoon des menschen volbracht. De werken Gods heeft Hij geopenbaard.

De crisis heeft Hij ingesteld in dat geval.

En toch is dat ook slechts eene kleine proeve.

Want heel spoedig daalt zijn dag, de nacht overvalt Hem en Hij keert weder tot dengene, die Hem gezonden had.

En Hij is wedergekomen in den Geest. Ook zoo, dus blijft Hij de wereld overtuigen, tot een keuze dringen, in de crisis brengen.

U en mij stelt Hij voor de keuze.

Een van beide moeten wij doen met het licht.

Of wij zullen zeggen: Dit woord beantwoord niet aan mijn vooropgestelde idee van een openbaring. Die kerk is niet mijn idee van een waardige gemeenschap. Dat volk is mij verre te zijn een volk Gods. Ik wil met Gods verbond en Zijne Gezalfde geen bemoeienis hebben.

Al ziende worden wij dan verblind.

Of wij zullen zeggen: van de problemen der ingeving en der teboekstelling draag ik weinig kennis, maar dat woord is mij het woord Gods.

Aan die kerk kleeft veel gebrekkigs, maar met die gebrekkige kerk ga ik voortdurend naar het reinigend bloed van haar Verlosser.

En in de gemeenschap van die broeders en zusters met vele gebreken en zonden mag ik in het licht wandelen in een voormake van het licht des hemels.

Want daar alleen zijn de woorden des levens.

Straks zal de crisis wolkomen uitgewerkt zijn.

Ik heb volbracht het werk dat Gij Hij gegeven hebt te doen—zoo sprak hij.

Dan zullen de wijzen en de verstandigen, volkomen verblind, van alle licht verstoken, in de buitenste duisternis zijn.

En de blinden en de onnoozelen zullen zien van aangezicht tot aangezicht in het eeuwig licht.

A. Petter.

Wacht Houden

Altijd maar weer op wacht staan is een moeilijk en vermoeiend werk. Zoo zal het wel zijn voor hen, die in de strijdende landen van Europa, geroepen worden om toe te zien, dat volk en vaderland niet worden overrompeld. En zoo is het bij de landen waar men tracht een strikte neutraliteit te bewaren. Moeilijk en kostbaar. Wapening is noodig voor den strijd en in den strijd mag de ammunitie niet ontbreken.

Is dit alreeds waar in het leven der volkeren, het kan met niets minder toe in het leven der Kerk en in het leven van Gods kind. Het is daarom ook waar voor eigen Kerken en eigen leven. Wie daar niet aan wil verstaat eenvoudig het leven niet, noch de beginselen waaruit hij leven moet. We bedoelen niet, dat iemand niet veel van beginselen af kan weten en daar veel over kan praten. Ik geloof, dat een Protestantsch Gereformeerd mensch juist wel veel weet en ook wel veel praat van beginselen. Daarvoor HEBBEN we niets anders dan lof. Trouwens, het zou niet wel met ons zijn, wanneer we na zooveel onderwijs te hebben genoten niet wisten waarover het ging. En we willen er nog bijvoegen, dat er over gesproken wordt, is nog altijd een gezond teeken. Het leven begint zijn waarde te verliezen, wanneer we de waarheden, die we als Gereformeerden bezitten, niet meer met elkander bespreken.

Echter, het moet verder komen dan een bespreken der beginselen. Het moet hoe langer hoe meer worden een zaak waaruit we ook willen leven. En de allereerste vereischte is dan, dat we onszelf niet wijs maken, dat in dezen alles zoo goed is als het maar verwacht kan worden. Integendeel, er is meer dan één reden, die ons, met het oog op de toekomst, bevreesd maakt, dat we lang niet genoeg rekenen met onze beginselen. Bevreesd, om maar iets te noemen, met het oog op de opvoeding onzer kinderen. Daar is de School waar zij moeten onderwezen worden, naar en op grond van Gods Woord. Stellen we ons voor de vraag of dat alles zoo goed is als het verwacht kan worden, dan is ons antwoord: Verre van dat. We weten wel, dat ons volk daar in zijn geheel niet onverschillig tegenover staat. Doch ofschoon dat waar is, het kan niet ontkend worden, dat er hoe langer hoe meer gevraagd wordt, of het onder de bestaande omstandigheden veel verschil maakt, wanneer de kinderen naar de publieke school worden gezonden. Daar ligt het gevaar, dat we geheel de opvoeding prijs gaan geven en een geslacht gaan opvoeden, dat in de jaren, warin zij onderwezen moeten worden 'in de voorzeide leer', daar niets van zullen ontvangen.

De argumenten, die voor deze handelwijze worden gebruikt zijn u wel bekend.

Allereerst, het argument, dat de bestaande Christelijke Scholen, feitelijk scholen der Christelijke Gerefor-

meerde Kerken zijn. Ten tweede, dat het onderwyzend personeel leden dier Kerk zijn. Zoodat er verwacht kan worden, dat men de kinderen onderwijst in de leer, waarom wij een eigen Kerkengroep zijn. Ten derde, dat men op de publieke School, over het verschil hetwelk er tusschen ons en de Christelijk Gereformeerden bestaat, in het onderwijs niet spreekt. Gaat ge dan op al die argumenten in, dan is meestal het verloop aldus. De bestaande Scholen zijn gevaarlijk voor onze kinderen. Een eigen School op te richten is nu nog niet mogelijk. Met de bekende conclusie: We sturen hen maar naar de publieke School.

Geheel oppervlakkig beschouwd schijnt het werkelijk een heel eenvoudige zaak te zijn en kan men er wel voor weg, om dit doen te rechtvaardigen. We zouden er zelf nog wel enkele bezwaren aan toe kunnen voegen. Om maar iets te noemen. Daar is in de allereerste plaats het feit, dat we als Protestantsche Gereformeerden in de minderheid zijn. Ook in de School. Dat brengt met zich mee, dat we op zijn allerbest of geheel geen, of maar weinig invloed kunnen oefenen in de bestaande scholen. Tenslotte, is het waar, dat de meeste stemmen beslissen en tegen een stemming bestaan nu eenvoudig geen argumenten. Trouwens, heeft men het er op gezet, om aldus de zaak te behartigen, dan moet ge daar benevens ook nog uw ziel in lijdzaamheid bezitten en toezien, dat men langs allerlei wegen, met knoeien, zijn doel tracht te bereiken. De ervaring heeft ons in dezen ook al wat geleerd. En wie werken wil, onder de bestaande omstandigheden voor de zaak van het onderwijs, moet daar wel op rekenen. Dan maakt het in de tweede plaats nog al verschil, wat betreft het beginsel, of de leiding in de school 'kerkelijk' gekleurd is. Ge hebt natuurlijk ook onder de onderwijzers (ressen) nog een voldoende aantal die, wat betreft het kerkelijk verschil, niet genoeg afweet van eigen beginselen, laat dus staan van de zaak van de Drie Punten. En we voegen er aan toe, dat zulke menschen eigenlijk niet thuis behooren in de Christelijke School. We twijfelen er aan of zij in de publieke school thuis behooren. We kunnen dat deel wel buiten bespreking laten, daar ook zij, de meest fundamenteele waarheden, de kinderen niet zullen imprinten.

Als we dan ook schrijven, over het kerkelijk gekleurd zijn, dan bedoelen we er mede, of men tracht werkelijk samen te werken, of ook allereerst 'kerkje' speelt. Dat is dan, wat ons betreft, bijna het einde van samenwerking. Met kerkje spelen in de school bedoelen we dan, dat het er op aangestuurd wordt, om zoo min mogelijk het Gereformeerde gehalte te doen uitkomen in het onderwijs. Men is dan bang voor de menschen van onze kerken. Kleinzielig bang. En we voegen er aan toe, dat deze wijze van samengaan onmogelijk is. (Misschien dat we later nog wel eens in de gelegenheid zullen zijn, om op concrete gevallen te wijzen). En ook het laatste genoemde plaatst ons voor het probleem van de Christelijke of de openbare

school. Zoo schijnt het althans.

Wat op al de bezwaren te antwoorden?

Laat mij maar beginnen met een algemeene opmerking. Die is deze: DAT SAMENWERKING, HOE GERING OOK, ALTIJD EEN COMPROMIS MET ZICH BRENGT. Het doet er niet toe, hoe we de zaak ook wenden of keeren, maar ge moet wat door de vingers zien, als ge saam wilt werken met de broeders van de overzijde. Weliswaar, maken sommige locale omstandigheden hierop een weinig uitzondering, doch die uitzonderingen bevestigen dan ook den regel. Wie meenen zou, dat het verzwijgen van de Drie Punten Gereformeerd onderwijs waarborgt is, onzes inziens, een geweldige optimist. Daarmee staat het gelijk met sommige Chr. Geref. Kerken en predikanten, die ook de Puntjes verzwijgen, of, wat de laatsten betreft, heel onnoozel beweren, dat zij die punten op hun eigen wijze uitleggen. Ik heb trouwens van die eigen 'uitleggen' nog nooit veel gehoord, noch gelezen. En men houde het wel voor de aandacht, dat zulke eigen uitleggingen, met den Textus Receptus 1924 wezenlijk niet verschillen. Het wordt er meestal nog veel minder van wanneer men tracht dit wat op te kalafateren.

Laat ons daarom de zaak maar recht in de oogen zien en onomwonden er elkander op wijzen, hoe ook voor ons de zaken staan en wat wij in dezen te doen hebben.

Allereerst dan, dat de bestaande Christelijke scholen verre te verkiezen zijn boven de openbare inrichtingen van onderwijs. Er valt zelfs geen vergelijking te trekken tusschen die beiden, noch ook kan er tusschen die beiden gekozen worden. Wie zegt, de bestaande Christelijke School voldoet niet aan hetgeen wij eischen op grond van het Gereformeerd beginsel, die is daarmee bezig, om gelijktijdig uit te spreken, dat de Openbare dit nog minder doet. Persoonlijk is het daarom onze overtuiging, dat er in die richting geen probleem overblijft.

Ten tweede, dan blijft er aldus alleen de Christelijke School, beïnvloed door en bijna geheel bestuurd door de locale Christelijke Geref. Kerken over. Aldus was de toestand in 1924 en deze is sindsdien nog toegevoegd. Het moet erkend, dat we in de voorstanders van de Christelijke School de sterkste mannen vinden der Kerk, die ons uitwierp. Zóó sterk soms, dat zij, willens of onwetende, meer gelijken op onze menschen dan wel op hen met wien zij tot dezelfde Kerken behooren. De Punten laten hun koud of, en dat is niet sporadisch, zij plaatsen er een groot vraagteken achter. Of deze mannen een meerderheid vormen is twijfelachtig. Bovendien wanneer men het weet, dat dit het geval is, zijn ook zij van hunne positie niet zeker en worden zooveel mogelijk gehouden aan den leiband der voorgangers. Wat betreft de overigen, daar zal altijd mee gestreden moeten worden en blijft het eisch de wacht te houden, opdat de afloop der wateren niet

te snel zij. Wie mee werkt aan de Christelijke School beweging dient dat voor den aandacht te houden.

In de derde plaats, op zijn best genomen, is en blijft het van weerszijden een toegeven, zij het dan op zoogenaamde ondergeschikte punten. En wanneer daar eenmaal mede begonnen is, daar zal het in de toekomst blijken, dat het onverbidde'lijk moet uitloopen op een prijsgeven van wat voor ons dierbaar is. Dit ter eener zijde. Aan den anderen kant, ook van de zijde der broeders waar men mee samenwerkt is de zaak dan eenvoudig, dat ook zij, alles wat vervat is in de Drie Punten verzwijgen. En ook dat moet uitloopen op een ontkenning. Zelfs dan, wanneer naar hun eigen getuigenis, de kwestie van de Gemeene Gratie feitelijk uit de School gehouden dient te worden, mag er dan gezegd worden, dat de School een Gereformeerde is? We zijn van het tegendeel overtuigd. Naar we gelooven kan noch het ééne, het verzwijgen, noch het voorzichtig wandelen bij het kantje, een school en het onderwijs ten goede komen. Ja blijft ja, gelijk neen altijd neen is. En in dat stadium, uit ons oogpunt bezien, verkeert thans de Christelijke School.

Hierbij komt nog, dat het eerder erger dan beter zal worden. Als de Kerk zich niet bekeert van haar verderfelijke gemeene Gratie theorie dan jaagt zij door de prediking en het dwaas geschrijf over deze 'fundamentele waarheid'(?), haar volk de publieke school in. Hoe ik dat zoo weet? Eenvoudig omdat er op het standpunt der Gemeene Gratie geen rechtsgrond voor de School overblijft. Afgedacht hiervan komt daar nog bij, dat de Kerk in zijn geheel zich veel meer bezig houdt met Chinees en Indiaan, dan met de opvoeding der Verbonds jeugd. Zie maar rondom u heen. Is het niet waar, dat menschen die zoo sterk 'voor' de Zending zijn, zoo bitter weinig gevoelen voor de Christelijke School? (Hoe meer Zendings-ijver, hoe minder men zich bekommert om de School. Dat heeft de geschiedenis bewezen. Dat hebben ook de leeraren bewezen, die daar altijd de mond vol van hadden en in wier gemeenten zoo goed als niets gedaan is voor het Christelijk onderwijs. *En nog eens weer, als dan straks mede in verband met de afwijking in en door de Drie Punten en het aanvaarden van de Gemeene Gratie, de zaak dood zal zijn, dan zal het ook blijken, tenzij wij van koers veranderen, dat al ons samenwerken, mogelijk op den grondslag van allerlei compromi, daarmee de oorzaak van is.*

Dat brengt ons als vanzelf tot de vraag, maar wat dienen we in dezen dan te doen? Voordat we hierop een antwoord geven, moet dit vast staan, dat we de kinderen ons gegeven nooit kunnen sturen naar de publieke school. Wie het werkelijk een zaak van beginsel en dies ernst is, die gaat *die* weg zeer zeker niet op. Daar verder over te spreken is overbodig.

We dienen allereerst, zullen we iets doen, er met elkander over te spreken. Te spreken over den eisch des Verbonds. Gods Woord laten spreken en door

dat Woord ons laten gezeggen. Alleen hij en zij die buigen voor het Woord, zullen in staat zijn te waken en op den rechten weg te wandelen. Daarop zij dan mede de prediking des Woords ingericht. Niet alsof er nu zoo maar op eens speciale preeken moeten gehouden over het Christelijk onderwijs. Iedere predikatie zal tenslotte, zonder dat men er zich speciaal op toelegt, de noodzakelijkheid van een eigen inrichting naar voren schuiven. Het is ons althans niet mogelijk om het steeds voor den aandacht van de gemeente te brengen. Daarbij is een andere gelegenheid het huisbezoek. En ook daar behoeft men niet naar wat we noemen voor een 'opening' te wachten. Die is er altijd en ligt voor de hand. De kwestie is maar of we er gebruik van maken, iets dat we zeker niet doen, wanneer we er systematisch over zwijgen. En niet te vergeten, vooral de jeugdigen dienen er op te worden gewezen. Een voorganger, die het vertrouwen en de liefde van zijn jonge volk bezit, kan schier alles aan hen kwijt. Het is maar een zaak van aan pakken.

En Redlands blijft voor ons allen het schoone voorbeeld in dezen. Als er iets is wat ons jaloersch maakt is het die kleine school in Redlands. En wat daar nu al jaren feit is, zij voor ons de spoorslag de zaak aan te pakken.

Zoo alleen zullen we de wacht houden en een toekomst hebben als Protestantsche Gereformeerde Kerken.
W. V.

Let Thy Light So Shine

The phrase "of the world" denotes the relation which the Church sustains to the world. It signifies that the Church was given to the world as light; that this light must shine, in order that men (the elect) may glorify God.

"A city set upon a hill cannot be hid, neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven." The Church, then, is a city. Scripture frequently calls the Church a city. "There is a river, the streams of which shall make glad the city of God" (Ps. 46:4). Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of His holiness. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King" (Ps. 48:12). Abraham is said to have looked for a city that hath foundation, whose builder and maker is God (Heb. 11:12). But ye are come unto Mount Zion, unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. . . . (Heb.

12:22). And I, John, saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride, adorned for her husband (Rev. 21:2).

The Church a city, the people of God, a distinct commonwealth, a separate society, constituted of such as have been redeemed to God by the blood of the Lamb out of every kindred, tongue, people and nation — a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, whose King supreme is God.

This city cannot be hid, as it sets on a hill. Calvin's commentary on this utterance reads as follows: "This means, that they (the apostles and the pastors) ought to live in such a manner, as if the eyes of all were upon them. And certainly, the more eminent a person is, the more injury he does by bad example, if he acts improperly. Christ, therefore, informs the apostles, that they must be careful to live a devout and holy life, than unknown persons of the common rank, because the eyes of all are directed on them, as to lighted candles; and that they must not be endured, if their devotion and uprightness of conduct, do not correspond to the doctrine of which they are ministers. . . . After having taught the apostles that, in consequence of the rank in which they are placed, both their vices and their virtues are better known for good or bad example, he now enjoins them to so regulate their life, as to excite all to glorify God."

The assertion that all eyes are upon such as do occupy positions of prominence and that the vices and virtues of such persons are better known for good or for bad examples, and that, finally such persons should, for that reason, be careful to live devout lives is all very true in itself. However, such are not the sentiments circulating through Christ's words. Such, very plainly, was not His point of view. The matter upon which He was discoursing was not the conspicuousness of the Church or the individual Christian as such, but the duty of this church to render itself conspicuous by letting its light shine. The Christian, being light, must emit light, may not cover his light by his vices. Doing so, he places himself under a bushel.

By others it is maintained that Christ meant to caution his people against retreating from the affairs of the larger world into the smaller circle of their own. Doing so, they place their light under a bushel, come down from the crest of the hill to the valley below. The believer, Christ is supposed to have meant to say, should cast him in the deep stream, or take his seat in high places, enter, let us say, politics, engage in big business, join the union, in a word, mount himself upon the candlestick. If one of the gifted God's people could persuade his countrymen to elect him president of our own United States of America, the angels in heaven would rejoice, so it is argued. For this particular disciple, having been raised to the aforesaid height, would be shedding his light over the vast

expanse of our land from one of its borders to the other.

It is altogether possible that such a one would be hailed by men as a great light. It is a matter of doubt, however, whether the light radiated would continue to be the light of Christ. The world refuses to come to this light, so that this particular disciple might soon conclude that he had better place his pure light of heaven under a bushel, would he get along. Be this as it may, it must be supposed that Christ was urging His disciples to make themselves conspicuous in the aforesaid sense when He said, "*Let your light shine.*" This, of course, is no plea for the view that the believer may not take a hand in helping to run the affairs of the state, that he may not hold office. The question confronting us in respect to the matter at hand, is whether Christ in this particular discourse or in any other discourses of His, urged His followers to seek places of prominence in this world. Fact is, no such admonition ever passed from His lips nor from the lips of His servants—the apostles. Paul does say: "And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands as we commanded you; that ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of no man" (I Thess. 4:14, 15). And again: "Now we command you brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourself from every brother that walketh disorderly, for yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you; neither did we eat any man's bread for naught; but wrought with labor and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you; Not because we have not power; but to make ourselves an example unto you to follow us. For even when we were not with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. . . ." (II Thess. 3:6-13).

Here the believer is told how he should conduct himself as a member of society. He may not lead a shiftless life, eating the bread of another. But nowhere in Scripture is he told that he should contend with his fellows for a place in the limelight for the reason that the world may know he is on earth. The matter Scripture stresses is godly conduct. To let our conversation be in heaven is the great injunction of the Lord. "If ye be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things of the earth. For ye are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth. . . . But now ye also put off these: anger, malice, wrath, blasphemy, filthy communications out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds. . . .

Put on therefore as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering, forbearing one another and forgiving one another, if any man hath a quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also ye do". (Col. 3).

Once more, a city on a hill cannot be hid. A city will not be passed by unnoticed. Not in Christ's day at least when travel was slow and dangerous and the attending difficulties many. A city spied in the distance was therefore a welcome sight. Behind its walls the weary wayfarer would retreat for the night and be safe against the prowling beast. Add to this because of its position alone, the city set on a hill is most conspicuous so that it cannot in truth be hidden. In the last instance, however, it was God's city of light on earth—the church—that Christ had before His eye, so that the thought circulating through His speech must be, then, that the church, by reason of its emitted light, is as conspicuous as a city set on a hill. The individual Christian is here enjoined to render himself noticeable not by seeking places of prominence in the world, but by radiating the light kindled within his bosom by the Spirit of Christ, in that particular station in life where Providence placed him. It is a mistake, then, to appeal to the aforesaid Scripture in support of the contention that the believer should aspire to a seat in Congress or join himself to a labor union in order to provide himself with an opportunity for letting shine his light.

Christ does not say, it should be noticed, that the burning candle and the city cannot be hidden. Had He said so, He would not have added, "*Let your light so shine.*" The burning candle can be placed under a bushel, and the city might have sprung up in the valley. As the measure in this case would hide the candle, so the hills would hide this city. The believer, too, can hide his light by projecting that part of self which ought to be put off, to wit, the old man of sin. And the church, likewise, ceases to be seen when it loses sight of its calling, and involves itself in the secular affairs of this life. Ascending the hill to its crest, coming from under the bushel to mount the candlestick are processes constituting the other side of the mortification of earthly members. In a word, the church is the city on the hill when it preaches and lives the Word, and the burning candle mounted upon the candlestick is the emblem of the believer whose conversation is in heaven.

The city on the hill cannot be hidden. A church emitting its light will not fail to attract attention to itself. By the world, this city is cursed; the walkingatars of Jehovah despised. The prophets were, Christ was. So too, His followers, especially in the first few centuries of our own age. The eyes of the world were upon the disciples of Christ of that day. For they let shine their light. Were they men of high estate, these

disciples? Not according to the testimony of the apostle which reads: "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the things which are mighty" (I Cor. 1:21, 26). It was these foolish men after the flesh, men devoid of power, ignoble and weak things who in that day attracted to themselves the attention of the world.

History cannot once be appealed to in support of the contention that the candle on the candlestick is the big and useful man to whom the world will lend an ear and for whom it makes room. The joint testimony of history is that the city on the hill is the persecuted church, constituted of such as had trials of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonments. The light of the church shines brightest when its members are men of low estate, occupying humble places. There is a reason then why the Bible turned out to be a written record of God's message to a persecuted church, to a church buffeted by a world incensed by the living testimony of the just.

Let your light shine. A very necessary admonition. For the inhabitants of the city on the hill may be tempted to hide their light under a bushel for more than one reason. As was said, the light emitted incenses the adversaries of the Lord, who, infuriated by the light, lay siege to the city of God. In order to pacify the wolves without, the citizens of the city of God may be tempted to obscure their light. This may not be done. Let your light shine.

There may still be another reason why believers should want to render their light inconspicuous. It may happen that the crave to again sit at the fleshpots of Egypt becomes strong. In the city on the hill are no fleshpots, but the manna from heaven, good for food, and the pure water from the rock. However, when in a carnal mood, the citizens of the celestial city go to weeping and say; "Who shall give us flesh to eat. We remember the flesh which we did eat in Egypt freely, the cucumbers and the melons, and the leeks and the onions and the garlic: but now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, besides this manna before our eyes." However, these fleshpots and cucumbers, and leeks and melons and onions and garlic thrive in Egypt. The Egyptians must be pacified, their favor won, before they can be expected to admit the citizens of the aforesaid city to their fleshpots. This is done. Lights are placed under measures and simultaneously the Egyptians lauded as a people of superior virtue, shaming by the fine moral quality of their deeds many a citizen of the kingdom of heaven. The Egyptians are told, further, that they are the blessed of the Lord. This flattering speech has its desired effect. The wrath of the adversary subsides. The long standing feud comes to an end. Light and darkness lock arms and make for the coveted fleshpots. With the aid of the

good will and support of the Egyptians, the citizens of the city of light prosper, grow fat, and become famous and the world deems them worthy. But let it be born in mind that while the flesh was still between their teeth, ere it was chewed, the wrath of the Lord was kindled against the people, and the Lord smote the people with a great plague. (Num. 11:33).

Cucumbers and melons and leeks and onions and garlic—it is all good food. However, if not a gift of grace, if secured at the expense of a principle, we die while we eat. "And while the flesh was yet between their teeth. . . . the Lord smote the people with a very great plague." If the flesh and the cucumbers and the onions and the garlic are ours because of our having obscured our light, we may feel assured that we shall come to grief.

Seated at the Egyptian fleshpots, the citizens of the city of light feel ill at ease, as is evident from their attempt to compel Scripture to sanction their upward climb. We, so they say, are the light of the world. A city on a hill may not be hid. Nor do men light a candle and put it under a bushel but upon a candlestick. Hence, we have found our place. Forsooth, a nauseating distortion of Christ's words, indicating a shifting of emphasis from heavenly to earthly treasures, and the loss of both the desire and the inclination to serve as heaven's channel for heaven's light. True, it takes courage and means self-denial. For "this is the condemnation that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God" (John 3:19, 20). And the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months (Rev. 11:12). And they went up on the breath of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them (Rev. 21:9).

Let your light shine. Light is life revealed. Let your light shine that men may see your good works. All the organs of self-expression are involved in this command,—the tongue, the hand, the eye, the foot. All must be placed in the service of the new man in order that this man may shine forth. "Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees" (Heb. 12:12). "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing" (Isa. 35:5, 6). "I thought on my ways and turned my feet unto my testimonies" (Ps. 119:59). "I have refrained my feet from evil ways that I might keep thy word" (Ps. 119:21). "So our eyes wait upon the Lord our God until he have mercy upon us" (Ps. 123:2). And my tongue shall

“speak of thy righteousness and of thy praise all the day long” (Ps. 35:28).

“And glorify thy Father in heaven.” The light emitted attracts, then, as well as it repels,—attracts, draws those foreknown before the world’s foundation. By the light of the church Christ draws all men—such He loved unto death—to Himself. These men, and none other, glorify God, so that this Scripture can neither be quoted in support of the view that the reprobate wicked, as a result of having been brought under the influence of *Common Grace*, glorify God when they see the good works of Christ’s followers.

The light shed, finally, is the believer returning to God whose workmanship he is. The good deeds done image the glories of God. He, then, is glorified.

G. M. O.

And He Drove Them All Out Of The Temple

And the Jews’ passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. And found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting: And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep and the oxen; and poured out the changers’ money, and overthrew the tables; and said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father’s house a house of merchandise. And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up. Then answered the Jews and said unto him, What sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things? Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? But he spake of the temple of his body.

John 2:13-21.

The miracle at the marriage feast drew a marked line of distinction between Jesus, the baptist, and the austere Essenes, those eremites who dwelt apart; shut up in a kind of monastic seclusion, and who renounced the use of wine, condemned marriage, and denounced all bodily indulgence as injurious to the purity of the spirit. By acting as He did in Cana, Jesus at the very outset of His career placed Himself in direct opposition to the strictest class of pietists then existing—in direct opposition to the spirit and practice of these in all ages who have sought, by withdrawal from the world and estrangement from all objects of sense, to cultivate communion with the unseen, to rise to a closer inter-

course with and nearer resemblance to the Deity.

One effect of the first display by Jesus of His supernatural power was a strengthening of the faith of the men who had recently attached themselves to Him. “His disciples”, it is said, “believed in Him.” They had believed before, but they believed more firmly now. The ground of their first faith had been the testimony of John the Baptist. Their faith had grown during the few days of private intercourse with Jesus which succeeded, and now, by manifestation of His power and glory, it was still more strengthened. It was still, as later trial too clearly proved, weak and imperfect. But their mind and hearts were in such a condition that they open to the influence of additional light as to their Master’s, additional evidence of His authority and power. But there were other spectators of the miracle upon whom it exerted no such happy influence. After the marriage feast of Cana broke up, “Jesus and His mother and His brethren, and His disciples went down to Capernaum.” This is the first mention of those brethren of Christ who appear more than once in the subsequent history, always associated with Mary, as forming part of her family, carefully distinguished from the apostles and disciples of the Lord. They are represented on one occasion as going after Him, thinking He was beside Himself; and when He was told that Mary and they stood at the outskirts of the crowd desiring to see Him, He exclaimed, “Who is my mother, and who are my brethren? Whosoever shall do the will of my Father who is in heaven, the same is my brother, my sister, and mother.” On another occasion, the Nazatines referred to them when, astonished and offended, they said to one another, “Is not this the carpenter’s son? is not His mother called Mary, and His brethren James, and Joses, and Simon and Judas? And His sisters, are they not all with us?” John tells that at a still later period, in the beginning of the last year of our Lord’s ministry, these relatives taunted Him, saying, “If thou do these things, show thyself to the world; for neither did His brethren believe in Him.” Had we been reading these messages for the first time, we should scarcely have understood them otherwise than as referring to those who were related to Jesus as children of the same mother. This would, of course, imply that Mary had other children than Jesus, an idea to which from the earliest period there seems to have been the strongest repugnance. Resting upon the well known usage which allowed the term brother and sister to be extended to more distant relationships, and upon the acknowledged difficulty which arises in connection with the names of our Lord’s brothers as given by the Evangelists, both the Greek and the Latin Churches though adopting different theories as to the exact nature of the relationship, have indignantly repudiated the idea of Mary’s having any but one child and have regarded those spoken of as His brothers as being either His half-

brothers, sons of Joseph by another marriage, or His cousins, the children of Mary's sister, the wife of Alphaeus or Cleophas. It would be out of place here to enter upon a discussion of the difficult question. Suffice it to say that, after weighing all the objections which have been adduced, there appears to be no sufficient reason for rejecting the first and the most natural reading of the passages referred to, for not believing that they were brothers and sisters of Jesus, who grew up along with Him in the household at Nazareth. Perhaps our readiness to admit this may partly spring from our not sharing the impression that there is anything in such a belief either derogatory to the character of Mary, or to the true dignity of her first-born Son.

Whoever they were, and however related to Him, these brethren of the Lord, his nearest relatives, who had all along been living, if not under the same roof, yet in close and intimate acquaintance with Him, sat beside His disciples at that marriage feast, and saw the wonder that was done, and they did not believe. As months rolled on, they saw and heard of still greater wonders wrought in the presence of multitudes. Residing with Mary at Capernaum, they lived in the very heart of that commotion which the teaching and acts of Jesus excited. Neither did they then believe. Their unbelief may have been in part sustained by Christ's having ceased to make their home His home, and chosen twelve strangers as His close and constant companions and friends. Nor did any of them believe in Jesus all through the three years of His ministry. But it is pleasing to note that, though so long and so stubbornly maintained, their unbelief did at last give way; you see them in the upper room to which the apostles retired after witnessing the ascension. "And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter and James, and John and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Ze'otes, and Judas the brother of James. These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brethren." How many an apt remark on the peculiar barriers which the closer ties of domestic life often oppose to the influence of the one Christian member of a household, and on the peculiar encouragement which such a one had to persevere, might be grounded upon the fact that it was not till after His death that our Lord's own immediate relatives believed in Him.

When the marriage feast at Cana was over, Jesus and His mother, and His brethren, and His disciples went down to Capernaum. One advantage of the short visit that Jesus now paid to it was, that it put Him on the route along which the already gathering bands of visitors from northern Galilee passed southward to the capital. The Passover was at hand, and

Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Hitherto, though some time had passed (two or three months perhaps, but there are no materials for exactly determining) since His baptism, and the public proclamation of His Messiahship, Jesus had taken no public step, none implying any assumption on His part on the office to which He had been designated. Of the few men who attended Him, there was but one whom He had asked to follow Him; nor was it yet understood whether He and the rest were to accompany Him for more than a few days. The miracle at Cana was rather of a private and domestic than of a public character. Nothing that we know of was said or done by Jesus at Capernaum or throughout the short visit of Galilee, to indicate His entrance upon a public career.

But now He is in Jerusalem, in the place where most appropriately the first revelation of Himself in His new character is made. Let us acknowledge that it is not in the form in which we should have expected it; nor in that form in which any Jew of that age would ever have imagined that the Messiah should first show Himself. We may be able, by meditating a little upon it to see more of its suitableness than at first sight appears. But even at first glance how utterly unlike it was to the popular Jewish conception of the advent of the Messiah. One of the first things our Lord does at Jerusalem is to go up to the temple. He passes through one of the gates of its surrounding walls. He enters into the large open area which on all sides encompasses the sacred edifice. What a spectacle meets His eye. There, all around, attached to the walls, are lines of booths or shops in which money changers are plying their usurious trade. The center space is crowded with oxen and with sheep exposed for sale and between the buyers and the sellers all the turbulent traffic of a cattle market is going on. It goes on within the outer enclosure, but close upon the inner buildings of the Holy Place; so close that the loud hum of the outer court of the Gentiles must have been heard to no small disturbance by the priests and worshippers within. How comes all this? The origin of it in one sense is natural enough. At all the great festivals, but especially at the Passover, an almost inconceivable number of animals were offered up in sacrifice. Josephus tells us of more than two hundred thousand victims sacrificed in the course of a single Passover celebration. The greatest portion of these were not brought up from the country by the offerers, but were purchased upon their arrival at Jerusalem. An extensive traffic, yielding no inconsiderable gain to those engaged in it, was thus created. Some open area for conducting it was needed. The heads of the priesthood, to whom the custody of the temple was committed, saw that good rents were got for any suitable market ground which the city would supply. They were tempted to fill their coffers from this source. Jerusalem could furnish no place so suitable for the ex-

posure of the animals as the court of the Gentiles. What more convenient than that the victims should be purchased in the very neighborhood of the place where they were offered up? The greed of gain prevailed over all care for the sanctity of the temple. The Court of the Gentiles was let out to the cattle dealers, and a large amount was thus added to the yearly revenue of the temple. Still another source of gain lay open, and was taken advantage of. Every one who came up to the Passover, and desired to take part in the festival, had to present a half shekel of Jewish money to the priests. This kind of money was not now in general use; it was scarce even in Judea, unknown beyond that land. Nothing, however, but the half shekel of the sanctuary would be taken at the temple. To supply themselves with the needed coin, visitors had to go to the money changers. And where can he find a better place to erect his booth and set out his table than within the very area in which the larger traffic was going on? He offers so much to the priesthood to be permitted to do so; the bribe is taken and the booth and the tables are erected. And so amid a perfect Babel of tongues, and thronging, jostling crowds of men and beasts, the buying and the selling and the money changing are all going on.

Into the heart of the tumultuous throng Jesus enters. Of the many hundreds there, few have ever seen Him before; few know anything about Him, either about His baptism in the Jordan, or His late miracle at Cana. He appears as a stranger, a young man clad in the simple garb of a Galilean peasant, without any badge of authority in His hand. He looks around with an eye of indignant sorrow, pours out the changers' money, overthrows their tables, forming a scourge of small cords, drives the herds of cattle before Him, and mingling consideration with zeal, says to them who sold the doves, "Take these things hence; make not my Father's house a house of merchandise." Why is it that at the touch of His slender scourge, and the bidding of the youthful stranger, buyers and sellers stop their traffic, the money changers suffer their money to be rudely handled, and their tables to be overthrown? The slightest resistance of so many against one would have been sufficient to have arrested the movement. But no such resistance is attempted, no opposition is made, by men not likely by their occupation to be remarkable for mildness of disposition or pliability of character. How are we to explain this? We can understand how, at the last Passover, at the close of His ministry, when Jesus, then so well known, so generally recognized by the people as a prophet, repeated this cleansing of the temple, there should have been a yielding to His authoritative command. But what are we to say of such an occurrence taking place at the very commencement of His ministry, His first public act at Jerusalem? It is a mysterious power which some men, in time of excitement, by look and

word and tone of command, can exercise over their fellow-men. But grant that rare power in the highest degree to Jesus, it will scarcely account for this scene in the court of the Gentiles at Jerusalem. It would seem as if, in eye and voice and action, the divine power and authority that lay in Jesus broke forth into visible manifestation, and laid such a spell upon those rough cattle drivers and those cold calculators of the money tables, that all power of resistance was for the time subdued. It would seem as if it pleased Him to exert here within the temple the same influence that He did afterwards in the Garden, when He stepped forth from the darkness into the full moonlight, and said to the rough band that advanced with their lanterns and swords and staves to take Him, "I that speak unto you am He"; and when at the sight and word they reeled backward and fell to the ground, the effect in both cases was but temporary. High priests and officers were soon upon their feet again; and, wondering at their own weakness in yielding to a power which at the moment they were impotent to resist, proceeded to lay hold upon Jesus, and lead Him away to Caiaphas. So was it also, we believe, in the temple court. A sudden, mysterious, irresistible power is upon that crowd. They yield, they know not why. But by and by the spell would seem to be withdrawn. They soon recover from its effect. Nor is it long till, wondering at their having allowed a single man, and one who had no right whatever, to interfere with arrangements made by the chief authorities, and to lord it over them, they return, resume their occupations, and all goes on as before.

It was no intention or expectation of putting an end in this way to the desecration of the Holy Place that Jesus acted. What, then, was the purpose of His act? It was meant to be a public proclamation of His Sonship to God; an open assertion and exercise of His authority as sustaining this relation; a protest in the Father's name against the conduct of the priesthood in permitting this desecration in the Holy Place. It was far more for the priesthood than for the crowd in the market place that it was meant. They were not ignorant that the chief object of the ministry of the Baptist, with which the whole country was ringing, was to announce the immediate coming of the Messiah. They had not long before sent a deputation to the banks of the Jordan to ask John whether he himself were not the Messiah, whose near advent he was foretelling. The members of that deputation heard of the baptism of Jesus; in all likelihood they had not left the place when Jesus came back from the temptation in the wilderness, and was publicly pointed to by John as the greater than himself who was to come after him, the Lamb of God, the Son of God. From the lips of the men whom they had sent, or from the lips of others, they must have known all about what had happened. And now here among them is this Jesus

of Nazareth; here He is come up to the temple, speaking and acting as if it were His part and office authoritatively to interpose and cleanse the building of all its defilements. What else could the priesthood who had charge of the temple understand than that here was claimed a jurisdiction in regard to it superior to their own? What else could they understand when the words were heard, or were repeated to them, "Make not my Father's house a house of merchandise," than that here was One Who claimed a relationship to God as His Father, and a right over the temple as His Father's house, which none could claim? They go to Him, therefore, or they call Him before them, and entering, you will remark, into no justification of their own deed in hiring out the temple court as they had done,—entering into no argument with Him as to the rightness or wrongness of what He had done, rather admitting that if He were indeed a prophet, as His acts showed that He at least pretended to be, His act was justifiable; they proceed upon the assumption that He was bound to give some proof of His carrying a Divine commission, and they say to Him, "What sign showeth thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things?"

He had shown a good enough sign already, had they read it aright. He was about to show signs numerous and significant enough in the days that immediately succeeded; but to such a haughty challenge as this, coming, as He knew, from men whom no sign would convince of His Messiahship, He had but this reply: "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up again." A truly dark saying; one that, not only they did not and could not at the time understand, but that they were almost certain to misunderstand, and, misunderstanding, to turn against the speaker, as if He meant to claim the possession of a power which He never could be called upon to exercise. Then said the Jews, interpreting, as they could scarcely fail to do, His words as applicable to the material temple: "Forty and six years has this temple been in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days?"

Jesus made no attempt to rectify the error into which his questioners had fallen. He could not well have done so without a premature disclosure of His death and resurrection, a thing that He carefully avoided till the time of their accomplishment drew near. He left this mysterious saying to be interpreted against Himself. It seems to have taken a deep hold, to have been widely circulated, and to have fixed itself very deeply in the memory of the people. Three years afterwards, when they were trying to convict Him of some crime in reference to religion, this first saying of His was brought up against Him, as one uttered blasphemously against the temple, but the two witnesses could not agree about the words. And when the cross was raised, those who passed by railed on Him, saying, "Ah, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself." Whatever differences

there were in the remembrances and reports of the people, in one thing they agreed, in the attributing the destruction of the temple that Jesus had spoken of here, to Himself. But He had not spoken of the destruction as affected by His own hands, but by those of the Jews themselves. And He had not had in His eye the material temple on Mount Moriah, but the temple of His body, which they were to destroy, and which He, three days afterwards, was to raise from the dead. All this became plain afterwards, and went, when His real meaning stood revealed in the event, mightily to confirm the faith of His followers. And in one respect it may still go to confirm ours, for does not that saying of Jesus, uttered so early,—His first word, we may say, to the leaders of the people at Jerusalem,—does it not, along with so many other like evidences, go to prove how clearly the Lord saw the end from the beginning?

The temple of Jerusalem has long been in ruins. In its stead their stands before us the Church of the body of Christ, the society of the faithful. In her corporate capacity, in her corporate acting, has the Church not acted over again what the Jews did with their temple, when she has made merchandise with her offices and her revenues, and sold them to the highest bidder, as you would sell oxen in the market or meat in the shambles? The spirit which prompts such open sacriligious acts, such gross making gain of godliness, is the self-same spirit which the Lord rebuked; and how often does it creep into and take hold and spread like a defiling leprosy over the house of God? It does so in the pulpit, whenever self, in one or other of its insidious forms, frames the speech and animates the utterance; it does so in the pew, when in the hour hallowed to prayer and praise, the chambers of thought and imagery within are crowded with worldly guests. Know ye not, brethren, that ye are the temple of God; and that the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are? Would that have the zeal of the Saviour showed in cleansing the earthly building were but shown by each of us in the purifying and the cleansing of our hearts. Truly, it is no easy task to drive out thence everything that defileth in His sight, to keep out as well as to put out; for, quick as were those buyers and sellers of old in coming back to their places in the temple, and resuming their occupations there, quicker still are those vain and sinful desires, dispositions, imaginations, which in our moments of excited zeal we have expelled from our hearts, in returning to their old and well loved haunts. The Lord of the temple must come Himself to cleanse it; come, not once or twice, as in the case of the temple at Jerusalem; come, not as a transient visitor, but as an abiding guest; not otherwise than by His own indwelling shall those unhallowed inmates be ejected and kept without, and the house made worthy of Him who designs to occupy it.

G. M. O.