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MEDITATION

The Just For The Unjust

*For Christ also hath once suffered for sins,
the just for the unjust, that he might bring
us to God. . . .*

I Pet. 3:18.

For Christ also hath once suffered for sins!

O, there can be no doubt about it, even though we repeat it with fear and trembling, our Lord is not the only one, though He be the Chief, that suffered for sins. He suffered for sins *also*. . . .

Our Lord may not be, He must not remain the sole sufferer for sins. Or rather: because He suffered for sins once, we, too, dare not hesitate to suffer likewise for sins! *For* He suffered, hence, we must also suffer.

And this is corroborated by the entire context.

We must suffer for sins, yet not as sinners. "Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing," refraining our tongues from evil, and our lips that they speak no guile, eschewing evil, and doing good, seeking peace, and ensuing it; and that, too, as just among the unjust, suffering for righteousness' sake, without being afraid of the terror of the wicked; having a good conscience, that whereas they, the unjust, speak evil of us as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse our good conversation in Christ; for it is better, if the will of God be so, that we suffer for well doing, than for evil doing. Suffer, therefore, we must, not on account of our own evil doing, not for our own sins, but for the sins of others, on account of their hatred of the light, and to condemn and reprove their evil doing. *For Christ also hath once suffered for sins. . . .*

O, but indeed, there is a comparison, amazing though it be, between His suffering and ours!

And we dare not ignore it, lest in our zeal to enshrine the wonder of His passion all by itself, we become disobedient to His good commandment.

We will humbly take cognizance of it by faith, that we, too, may be willing to suffer for well doing.

But having done so, we will, nevertheless, remember at once that in the same sense as He suffered for sins, we can never suffer!

His suffering must needs stand alone.

Amazing in its incomparableness!

Adorable mystery!

Always becoming more profound as one attempts to fathom it; becoming more adorably mysterious, as one gazes into its impenetrable depths!

He suffered for sins!

He, the Christ, the only begotten One, as He came into the world, and as He tabernacled in the midst of sinners, the Just among the unjust, was the object of the hatred of all the children of darkness. It lies quite within the scope of our comprehension that they contradicted Him in all His work and speech, that they numbered Him with the transgressors, and treated Him as the lowest of criminals. But that *God* would make Him sin who knew no sin, we believe, we trust in it, but we will never fathom. And that *He* would suffer for sins, the Just for the unjust, is but the corollary of this same inscrutable, yet adorable mystery.

God made Him, Who knew no sin, sin for us: this is the one side, God's side of this glorious, though incomprehensible truth.

He Himself, the Just, met God in this act whereby He made Him sin, in the most perfect obedience: He suffered for sins! That is the other aspect of this same wonder!

The two dare not be separated.

God made Him sin. . . . He suffered for sins: the latter were impossible without the former; the former would be vain without the latter. Nor dare we repre-

sent these two aspects as the result of co-operation between God and man, or even between God and Christ. For all things are of God, Who hath reconciled us unto Himself through Jesus Christ. *God was in Christ* reconciling the world unto Himself. O, but indeed, it is all of God! The Christ is of God, and His being made sin is of God, and His suffering is of God: the God of our salvation is the Reconciler. . . .

He suffered for sins!

Not mere passivity, but action of the highest kind, clear, perfectly conscious, deliberate, purposeful action is expressed by the words. The apostle does not intend to say merely: He *underwent* something, that He was the pitiable victim of a cruel fate, that He was the bearer of a load of suffering that was imposed upon Him. On the contrary, the meaning is that He deliberately accomplished something, and that something which He *did, accomplished, performed*, is His suffering! That is evident from the context. But it is also implied in the original of the expression *for sins*. And, finally, it follows inevitably from the fact that He was the Just.

He suffered *for* sins!

O, to be sure, this implies that He suffered *on account of* sins, *because of* sins, so that His suffering had its explanation, its reason, its ground in sins. This is always true of all suffering, no matter in what form it may present itself. All pain and agony, all sorrow and grief, all the sufferings of this present time, and all the suffering in hell, of soul and body, have their cause and legal ground in sin. There was no suffering whatsoever in the original state of rectitude in paradise; there will be no death, neither sorrow nor crying, in the perfect state of glory when the tabernacle of God shall be with men. But in our present world suffering is inseparable from existence itself, so that we cannot even conceive of existence without suffering.

For all suffering is essentially death.

And death is the punishment of sin. And the punishment of sin is the expression of the justice of God. And the justice of God is God's maintenance of Himself as the only Good, and the inevitable revelation of His goodness to the sinner that attempts to ignore, to deny, to negate Him! God is good. He is the sole Good. He is the implication of infinite perfection. And He will reveal Himself as the Good. He will have Himself known, experienced, acknowledged by the moral creature as the Good, that He may be glorified in the work of His hands. Hence, He blesses the righteous. He rewards the good with good. And He curses the wicked, He rewards the evil with evil, suffering, wretchedness, death, hell. For the sinner is he, who proudly boasts that it is good to depart from the living God, that apart from Him and in opposition to Him he will seek and find bliss, joy, peace. And God causes that

sinner to know and experience that He alone is good, by making Him unspeakably wretched.

That is God's justice.

And because of this unchangeable justice of God, suffering is inseparable from sin.

Thus Christ suffered.

He suffered on account of sin. Sins were the legal ground of His suffering. The reference in the text is not now to His sufferings as they were inflicted upon Him by the wrath and wicked fury of men. God caused Him to suffer. He poured His wrath upon Him. He caused Him to experience to the full His awful goodness by making Him feel the dreadful wretchedness of the sinner that would negate Him, until He, the Christ, was utterly amazed and forsaken of God, and cried out in the anguish of His soul: "O, My God, why?"

He suffered for sins. .

O, but this does not exhaust the meaning of this mysterious word.

That He suffered because of, on account of sin, is not even emphasized here according to the original. For literally translated, the original reads: He suffered *concerning* sin. On account of sin, yes, for no man can suffer except on account of sin; but also: *concerning* sin! And that plainly expresses that He had an end in view, that He had a purpose in suffering: His suffering was concerned with sin! Or rather: in His suffering He was concerned with sin, so concerned with it, that by His suffering He purposed to remove, to destroy it for ever; so concerned, that with that end in view He battled with sin to the bitter end before the face of God.

And do you not see how this makes of His suffering an act in the supreme sense of the word?

He suffered *deliberately*. He had an end in view that must be attained. But that end could be attained only in the way of suffering. Only through His suffering could sin be destroyed, could eternal righteousness be obtained. The sole way to perfect righteousness lay through the depth of hell. So concerned He was with sin, that He deliberately chose and travelled that dreadful way.

He suffered concerning sin.

He suffered *actively*. Suffering was not imposed on Him. For He was the just. No suffering could be legally required of Him. Willingly, actively, He placed Himself under the load of suffering, lifted it, assumed it, bore it even unto the bitter end.

With all His heart and soul and mind and strength He was actively engaged in suffering!

As the sacrifice of perfect obedience He suffered! *Concerning* sin!

Finally, He suffered.

That is, He suffered in such a way, that the end He had in view was actually attained.

Sin was removed, blotted out, destroyed for ever.

Righteousness, perfect righteousness, eternal righteousness was obtained.

For, He suffered for sin *once*!

And, O, this does not refer merely to the "hour" of His cross, or to the moment of His deepest agony on that cross, or to the fact of His death on Calvary, His giving up the ghost. To be sure, that "hour" was the climax of His suffering concerning sin. There, on Calvary, He drank His bitterest cup. But the fact remains that all His life in the world is covered by this "once" of His suffering. He suffered once, that is, all His life. He was concerned with sin when He came into the world, assuming the form of a servant, the likeness of sinful flesh. He was concerned with sin when He preached and labored, witnessed and performed miracles, and was contradicted by evil men. He was concerned with sin when He endured it all, the shame and reproach that was heaped upon Him, the buffeting and spitting in His face, the scourging and the crown of thorns, the cruel agony of the accursed tree.

But, nevertheless, He suffered only *once*!

That one act of suffering for sins was sufficient, final.

By it all was finished.

He does not have to suffer again. Nor do they, in whose behalf He suffered, with whose sins He was so deeply concerned, ever have to suffer for sins.

Sins, the sins that were upon Him, are blotted out!

Eternal righteousness has been obtained!

His one act of suffering is perfect!

It is finished!

Vicariously He suffered!

For it was not His own sin concerning which He suffered.

Christ hath once suffered concerning sin, *the Just for the unjust*!

They, the unjust, could never have so suffered for sins. O, they could suffer on *account of sins*. And on account of sins they would have had to suffer, temporarily, eternally, in everlasting desolation. But it could only be a suffering in utter passivity, the terrible passivity of eternal death! *Concerning* sin they never suffer. Or, how could they? Were they not the unjust? And what else does this mean than that they were guilty and damnable before God, objects of the wrath of God, worthy of being utterly forsaken of God, delivered unto chains of death? And how could they, whose constant obligation it was to love and to serve the living God, and who, for that very reason, could never work "overtime" with the Most High, pay the

load of debt that oppressed them? And, what is more, does not their being unjust also imply that they are corrupt, dead through trespasses and sins, darkened in their understanding, perverse of will, obdurate in heart, impure in all their desires? How, then, could they possibly suffer *concerning* sin? How could they even be willing to bring to God the perfect sacrifice for their sins?

On account of sin they must, concerning sin they could not suffer!

Hence, their case was hopeless!

But He came, the Just!

And He had neither guilt nor pollution. The Lamb without spot was He. For, though in our flesh, He was the Person of the Son of God: personally free from the sin of our race. And, though He came in the likeness of sinful flesh, yet He did not assume sinful flesh, for by His Spirit He prepared His own nature in the womb and from the flesh and blood of the virgin.

In His deepest suffering He could be concerned with sin!

And He might suffer in behalf of the unjust, and, therefore, in their stead. For He was the Christ, God's Anointed, placed at the head of the unjust, His own unjust, from before the foundation of the world!

In their behalf He suffered concerning their sins!

And, O wonder of mysterious love! He never ceased being concerned with their sin, though in the hour of His greatest suffering they revealed most horribly the corruption of their sinful heart, nailing Him to the accursed tree! While we were yet enemies. . . .

And He prayed for the transgressors!

Father, forgive them!

The Just for the unjust!

It is finished!

The Just has once suffered for the unjust, concerned with their sins, blotting them out for ever, obtaining for them eternal righteousness.

To God He may now bring them!

For, indeed, these unjust may not remain unjust. To God they must be brought. For to be with God is eternal life. . O, the sense is not, that they must be with God in the providential sense. In that sense God is everywhere, and even in hell one cannot hide himself from His presence. But to be with Him in His tabernacle, in His blessed fellowship, to know Him, to taste that He is good in His everlasting favor, to walk with Him and to talk with Him, and to see Him face to face,—that is life eternal!

To God He may now bring them. And He does

By the power of His marvellous grace!

O, blessed Redeemer!

H. H.

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EDITORIALS

Conscience

Personally, I am inclined to take the position that the distinction between "sequent conscience" and "antecedent conscience" is erroneous, that is, I am of the opinion that one cannot properly speak of "antecedent conscience," and that, therefore, conscience is always sequent.

It is true, of course, that man is a rational, moral being, and that he has the power to distinguish between good and evil, so that he can make, and actually does make this distinction whenever he is confronted with alternative courses of action, alternative that is from a moral viewpoint, and that, too, antecedent to the actual choice and performance of the action. This is true, not only of Adam in the state of rectitude before the fall, nor only of the regenerated child of God, but also of man in his fallen state of total depravity. Total depravity does not imply that man has ceased to be a moral being, that can no longer distinguish between right and wrong. The sinner has remnants of natural light, by which he retains some knowledge of God, and of the difference between good and evil. Canons III, IV; 4. Besides, he has a sense of moral obligation, i.e. of his obligation to do that which is good.

But this is not what is usually understood by the word conscience.

The term denotes something more specific.

It denotes moral judgment.

And as such it is always *sequent*, that is, it is a judgment upon actions already performed. This does not necessarily mean, of course, that the actual outward deed must be accomplished before conscience passes its judgment upon it. It may be done only in thought, or in the desires of the heart. But this does not alter the fact that conscience acts only subsequent to the act, and that it is never antecedent.

This moral judgment which is passed by conscience upon the accomplished act is either positive or negative, excusing or accusing, justifying or condemning, approving or reproving. The notion has been expressed sometimes that conscience is only negative, accusing, condemning. But this is an error. Scripture teaches rather plainly that conscience also passes its approving and justifying judgment upon deeds that are good in the sight of God.

Perhaps, this consideration will help Creston's Men's Society to reach a satisfactory conclusion with respect

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to the question whether Adam also had conscience.

Further, it will undoubtedly be helpful to turn to Scripture and investigate briefly what it has to say about conscience.

It is rather striking that the word for conscience does not occur in the Hebrew, and is not found in the Old Testament.

This does not mean that the idea is not found there.

Fact is, that we often find mention of the function of conscience in this part of Scripture. It is presupposed in the name of the tree of whose fruit Adam and Eve were forbidden to eat: the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The function of conscience is plainly manifest in the attitude and all the actions of Adam and Eve immediately after they had eaten of the forbidden fruit: their consciousness of being naked, their preparing for themselves aprons of fig leaves, their hiding themselves amongst the trees of the garden.

The function of conscience is revealed in Jacob's address to Laban, his father in law, Gen. 31:36-42; in the attitude of the sons of Jacob as they deliberate to sell their brother Joseph to the Midianites, Gen. 37:18ff.; in Joseph's answer to the tempting wife of Potiphar, Gen. 39:7-9, etc.

Moreover, several passages of the Old Testament directly speak of this function of conscience, even though the term itself is not used.

Thus we read in Job 27:6: "My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go: my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live." It is evident that in these words the function of what we call conscience is ascribed to the heart, whence are also the issues of life.

In Ps. 32:3-5 we read: When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." Here it is the sanctified conscience of the regenerated child of God that is referred to. But the passage is interesting, because what we call conscience is here evidently described as awareness of the heavy hand of God. Then, too, the poet, upon confession of his sins, becomes aware of the justifying judgment of God overcoming his accusing conscience in the forgiveness of sins.

The same sanctified conscience speaks in Ps. 51:3, 4: "For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest." Consciousness of sin is here presented

as awareness of a judgment of God, which has its purpose and end in the theodicy, the justification of God in the consciousness of the sinner. See also the vivid description in Ps. 38:1-8.

The expression of what might be called a seared conscience may be found in Prov. 30:20: "Such is the way of an adulterous woman; she eateth and wipeth her mouth, and saith, I have done no wickedness." An interesting question in connection with this passage is: has this woman actually gotten rid of her conscience? Is what she says concerning her wicked deed, justifying it, actually the judgment of her conscience? If not, to what extent does she succeed in making herself believe what she declares to be her judgment of her evil act? How does this compare with the declaration of the fool, that there is no God? Is there really an Atheist? And is there really a human being that succeeds in calling evil good? Or is there, underlying this judgment of the adulterous woman still another judgment condemning her wicked life?

Compare in the same connection Prov. 21:2: "Every way of man is right in his own eyes: but the Lord pondereth the hearts." When a man judges his own ways right, does he listen to the voice of his conscience or attempt to overrule and contradict it. And is he, in spite of all his efforts, still deeply aware of the fact that the Lord pondereth his heart? Questions like these the Men's Society of Creston ought to discuss. They are extremely interesting. They are closely connected with this fundamental question: Is conscience as such, apart from the efforts of man to silence or corrupt it, infallible? And what does our Netherland Confession mean, when it declares that the books that are to be opened in the day of judgment are the consciences?

However, as was said, the *word* conscience does not occur in the Old Testament. And although this does not imply that the idea is not found there, the absence of the term does probably teach us something with regard to conscience itself. When the Old Testament ascribes the function of conscience to the mind, or to the heart, we may conclude that conscience must not be regarded as a separate faculty of the soul, next to the faculties of intellect and will. It is a function rather than a faculty. It is that function according to which the rational creature passes moral judgment upon his own actions, either approving or reproving them.

In the New Testament, however, the word occurs thirty times.

The word that is used in the original is significant. It is the word *suneidesis*, which is the same as our word conscience. Conscience comes from the Latin *conscientia*, and is composed of the preposition *con*, and the noun *scientia*. The preposition means *with*, *in conjunction with*, *joint*; and the noun means *knowledge*.

Conscientia, or conscience, therefore, means *joint-knowledge*, knowledge in conjunction with someone or something else. This is precisely also the meaning that is used in the Greek of the New Testament. The word *sun-eidesis* means the same as *con-scientia*. Conscience, therefore, according to the meaning of the word denotes *joint knowledge*. And the question arises: joint-knowledge of what, and in conjunction with what or whom? In general I would answer this question thus: conscience is awareness of a judgment which God passes upon all our works, good or evil, and which He inscribes into the heart and consciousness of every man. It is, therefore, joint knowledge with the Judge of heaven and earth of the ethical value of our works.

The Men's Society of Creston better study this further.

But let us consider some of the passages in the New Testament in which the word conscience occurs.

In John 8:9 we read: "And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last." They were the Jews that brought the woman to Jesus that was taken in adultery, and to whom the Lord replied: "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." By this word suddenly their consciences began to condemn them, and they sneaked away.

In Acts 23:1 we find Paul addressing the Jewish council: "Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day." And in Acts 24:16, addressing the governor, he says: "And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offense toward God and toward men." A "good" conscience is here probably the same as a conscience "void of offense". Paul, therefore, strives so to walk that his conscience does not accuse him of offending God or man.

More important is the passage in Rom. 2:12-16: "For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law; For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things (contained in) of the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another; In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel."

But it is probably better to stop here for the time being, and save a little more detailed examination of this passage for our next number, the Lord willing.

H. H.

The Triple Knowledge

An Exposition Of The Heidelberg Catechism

PART TWO

OF MAN'S REDEMPTION

Lord's Day XII

2.

The Prophetic Office And The Fall.

The central idea of an officebearer is that he is God's friend-servant, authorized to function as God's representative, as His vice-regent, in the visible world.

In this general sense of the word Adam in the state of rectitude was very really an officebearer, for in virtue of the covenant relation in which he was placed by his Creator, he was God's friend-servant. For, as we have seen before, the covenant of God with Adam in Paradise was not a sort of pact or agreement, did not consist in "condition, a promise, and a penalty," but was a living relationship and fellowship between God and him. Adam was the friend of God. And since Adam, even in that relation of friendship with God, remained, nevertheless, a creature, in subjection to his Creator as the Sovereign of heaven and earth, he was also servant of the Lord. Friend-servant he was. He was not a slave in the house of God. Nor was he a wage-earner who served God for the remuneration connected with such service. He was free, and served his God in voluntary friendship. It was his delight to do God's will. And as God's friend-servant he stood at the head of all the earthy creation, authorized and empowered to have dominion over all creatures, and in the midst of them all to represent his God. True, he was not the head and king of the entire creation. He was made a little lower than the angels. But all earthly creatures found their focus, their climax, their head and representative in him, and he was their lord. For he was created after the very image of God, in true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, and in his heart the whole creation was united with the heart of God. Hence, Adam, the friend of God, was servant of the Lord, not only in as far as he himself was concerned, but as the head of the visible world. He was chief steward in the house of God's creation, with the calling to keep and tend to that house before the face of God, cultivate it, and bring the glory of it all in loving service to his Creator.

Such was Adam's office.

And this office, although essentially one, was three-fold, presented three aspects. For man was God's friend-servant with his whole being, with all his heart, and mind, and soul, and strength. He was God's officebearer in his entire life and with relation to the whole creation. He was God's friend-servant with the intellectual side of his nature, to know His God and declare His praises; with the volitional side of his life, to will the will of God and consecrate himself and all things to Him; and with all his power and might over all the earthly creation, to subject himself and all things to the living God and to rule over the visible world in the name of God. His one office of servant of the Lord was differentiated according to these three aspects as the prophetic, the priestly, and the royal office. He was prophet, priest, and king.

In the light of these general observations we must try to understand the significance of the prophetic office. In the popular mind, a prophet is one that is capable of foretelling future events. The idea of predicting the future is regarded as essential to the prophetic office. However, this is hardly correct. It is true that it belongs to the work of a prophet to speak of things to come with relation to the kingdom of God, but this is quite different from saying that foretelling the future is the main and one calling and task of a prophet. In general, a prophet is one that has the knowledge of God, speaks in His name, and thus declares His praises. The Hebrew word for prophet is picturesque, and rich in meaning. It is derived from a word meaning to overflow, to boil over. The idea seems to be that a prophet is one that is so filled with the true knowledge of God that his mouth overflows, that he is impelled to speak of Him, and to show forth His glorious praises. God reveals Himself to him. He puts His mighty Word in the prophet's heart, and this Word of God becomes a fire in his bones, urging him to speak of that God Who revealed Himself to him. Thus the matter is presented repeatedly in the prophetic books of the Old Testament. The Word of God overpowers the prophets. They eat His Word and fill their whole being with it. They are wholly in subjection to that Word, so that they cannot keep silent, but must speak of Him, His covenant, His will, whether the revelation they thus received had reference to the past, the present, or the future. A prophet is one who knows God, and speaks in His name and of Him, as the friend-servant of the Most High.

In this general sense, Adam was prophet of God in the original state of rectitude. He was created after the image of God. This implies that also in his intellectual life he stood entirely in the service of God. He was capable of knowing God with a true knowledge, that is, with the knowledge of love, and thus to enter into His intimate fellowship. And not only was he capable of receiving this true knowledge of God, but from the

very first moment of his existence he was filled with the light of this knowledge. It is true that this knowledge of God in the first man Adam functioned on a lower plane than that which is in Christ Jesus our Lord, and is not to be compared to the glorious knowledge that is the heritage of the elect in the final realization of God's covenant, when His tabernacle shall be with men in heavenly perfection. For Adam was of the earth earthy, and his knowledge of God was the reflection of God's glory in his consciousness through the mirror of the earthly creation. He did not as yet see face to face. But the fact remains that Adam possessed the true knowledge of God as soon as he opened his eyes upon the wonder of God's creation round about him. God revealed Himself to him. And Adam's receptivity was perfect. There was a perfect contact between the Word of God that spoke to him through the things that were made, and his own consciousness. For all things were made through the Word of God, and as such it was God's revelation of Himself. Creation was God's speech concerning Himself. Every creature had its own name. That name was its essence. And that essence of every creature was the Word of God. And all these creatures together spelled the Name, the glorious Name of Him that had called the things that were not as if they were. And in the midst of this speech of God, addressing him on every side, day and night, stood Adam, hearing this Word of God, and receiving it in his pure consciousness, and through his consciousness into his heart filled and moved by the love of God. Besides, God revealed Himself to Adam in the garden, and spoke to him as a friend with his friend. And as Adam was the recipient of this true knowledge of God, hearing and interpreting the speech of God through all creation, he would prostrate himself in the dust before his Creator, and in loving adoration declare His wonderful virtues. Adam was in the true sense God's prophet.

The fall of man caused a radical change. The knowledge of God was completely lost not only, but was subverted into its very opposite: darkness, the love of the lie. Man became by nature the false prophet, a prophet in the service of the devil.

For, on the one hand, we must certainly maintain, that in a certain sense man remained a prophet. His light was not changed into darkness in the sense that he ceased to be an intellectual and volitional, a rational and moral being. Even though also from a natural viewpoint the light of his knowledge does not shine any more in its original brilliancy, he does retain some remnants of natural light, by which he has some knowledge of God and of the difference between good and evil, remnants of light that are sufficient to leave him without excuse. Even though he does no longer clearly discern the Word of God in creation, by the light

of the remnants of his natural knowledge, he knows that God is, and that He must be thanked and glorified, and that man is called to declare the praises of the Most High. For, on the other hand, creation remained a medium of revelation of the glorious power and wisdom of God. The invisible things of God are clearly seen, being understood through the things that are made. The light shines in the darkness, even though the darkness comprehendeth it not. God does not leave Himself without witness, even in the conscience of the natural man. Because of this continued speech of God concerning Himself in the works of His hands, and this work of the law written in man's heart, and the remnants of natural light, man is still a prophet, even though through sin he became a false prophet.

But it may not be forgotten, that with all his natural light fallen man has become a servant of sin. From a spiritual-ethical viewpoint all the light that is in him is very really darkness. He is no longer a prophet of the living God in the true sense of the word. He has forfeited the privilege, he has neither the ability nor the will and desire, he is no longer authorized to appear as the representative of God in the visible world, to know Him and to speak in His name and in His behalf. For he is guilty before God, the object of His wrath and condemnation, an exile from the house and fellowship of God. He is darkened in his understanding, so that he loves the lie, and prefers the word of the devil to the knowledge of God. And he is perverse of will and obdurate in heart, so that he stands in enmity against God, and always holds the truth under in unrighteousness. In as far as he still has knowledge of God through the remnants of natural light, and the speech of God through the things that are made, he does not know God in love, but hate Him, oppose Him, contradict Him, and make gods after his own imagination. For the carnal mind is enmity against God. It is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. Rom. 8:5-7. God is not in all his thoughts, and being foolish in the spiritual-ethical sense of the word, he always says within his heart that there is no God. Although, therefore, he is still a prophet, he is in no sense of the word a prophet of God. Through sin he has become a false prophet, who lies about the living God.

This cannot be too strongly emphasized, lest, as is frequently done in our day, we ascribe the remnants of natural light to the operation of a certain common grace of God, even as did the old Remonstrants. They that thus philosophize about fallen man's natural knowledge enlarge upon these remnants until they are presented as possessing true spiritual ethical value, so that the natural man in virtue of these "sparks" from the hearth of his original righteousness, does actually seek after God. Even the old and well-known heresy of the Arminians that these remnants of natural light

are a kind of seed of religion, which, even though in itself not pure, are capable of leading him on to the true and spiritual knowledge of God if they are only used aright, is being revived by those that are supposed to be Reformed in their thinking and convictions. On this basis one dare no longer evaluate the philosophy of the world for what it truly is: foolishness with God. On the contrary, it is presented as true wisdom, and regarded with profound respect and admiration. And this lack of proper distinction and discernment, this confusion of darkness and light, more and more threatens with destruction the whole system of what is supposedly Christian education, higher and lower. It is this fundamental error, this pernicious fallacy of presenting as true wisdom what is essentially nothing but foolishness, that makes many in our day loudly proclaim and enthusiastically worship as Calvinism what is principally nothing but modernism. That all philosophy is false prophecy is no longer understood. That all the wisdom of the world is foolishness with God is often laughed to scorn, even by those that present themselves as advocates of Christian education. That Christ is the only true prophet, and that all that is not of Him is only darkness, is no longer recognized. And, therefore, the theory that through a certain operation of common grace man's natural light represents a remnant of his original wisdom and knowledge, is not only a theoretical error, but from a practical viewpoint a damnable heresy and pernicious fallacy. Over against this error one cannot stress too strongly that through sin man is become a liar, a false prophet, that holds the truth in unrighteousness. He is not a fool in a natural sense. He has the light of reason. He is often possessed of a keen mind. But in a spiritual ethical sense he is a fool. He is an enemy of God. And he presses the remnants of natural light into the service of sin. Man, having rejected the Word of God, is become a prophet of the devil.

If we bear this in mind, we can also understand that in the world, and throughout history, there is a development of the lie in the direction of, and culminating in the false prophet that is pictured to us in the book of Revelation. For the natural man that stands in enmity against God works out his own philosophy, the wisdom of the world, which, according to James, is from below, is natural, earthly, devilish, and is foolishness with God. This philosophy of the world, although in the wisdom of God it does not know God, and does not want to know Him, develops its own conception of God, of man, of the world and its origin, of religion and ethics, of society and the State; and it is always chiefly characterized by the fact that it rejects and opposes God's revelation. It speaks of itself and closes its ears to the speech of God. The line of this philosophy in the pagan world of the old dispensation

is clearly traced in the first chapter of the epistle to the Romans. For there we are taught that the invisible things of God are, indeed, clearly seen from the beginning of the world, being understood from the things that are made; and that what is known of God is manifest in the natural man. But man deliberately opposes this revelation of God. He holds the truth of God's eternal power and divinity in unrighteousness. Knowing God, he does not want to acknowledge Him as God, neither glorify Him. He revealed that he loved the darkness rather than the light. Rejecting the Word of God, he followed his own philosophy of the Most High, and changed the glory of the incorruptible One into the image of a corruptible creature, and bowed himself before man and beast and creeping things. Thus man's philosophy gave birth, first of all, to the pagan religion and its polytheism. And, secondly, this false philosophy and pagan religion, operating under the wrath of God that was revealed from heaven, proved its destructive character in the demoralization and degradation of all life in the pagan world, its corruption and bestiality. For God gave them up through the lust of their own wicked heart unto uncleanness and vile affections, unto a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient. It is true, of course, that this false prophecy in the pagan world appeared in different forms, according as the nations moved on different levels of culture and civilization. But even in its most polished and cultural form, as in that of Greek philosophy at the time of Plato and Aristotle, it was false prophecy nevertheless, the wisdom of the world that is foolishness with God. There is none that seeketh after God, no not one!

It stands to reason that this spirit of false prophecy reveals itself, not only in the pagan world, but also in the line of the generations of the people of God, with whom God establishes His covenant, and to whom He reveals His counsel of redemption. In fact, within the scope of the historical realization of God's covenant in the world, the false prophet expresses himself much more boldly and directly. For there the Word of God is heard much more distinctly, and, accordingly, is contradicted by the flesh much more sharply and vehemently. There shines, not only the light of revelation as it radiates through the things that are made, but as it shines in the face of Christ Jesus. In the pagan world the light of the *Logos* shines in the darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not; in the sphere of the covenant the judgment applies that He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. It is Israel that gives rise to the false prophets in their worst form, in their most hateful opposition of the truth of God. It is Israel that, accordingly, commits more idolatry than any nation under the sun, that tramples God's covenant under foot, despises His

precepts, kills the prophets and stones them that are sent to them by God. It is Israel that finally develops a false conception of the Messiah that was to come, and that rejects and crucifies the Christ of God. It is among the people in whose true prophets the Spirit of Christ dwells and operates, that the false prophets appear in their most determined and wicked opposition to the Word of God.

Thus it was in the old dispensation.

And in the new dispensation it is no different. Even today there still is the pagan world, whose millions upon millions prefer the darkness of their own philosophy and false prophecy to the light of the gospel, and who fast become prepared to play their own part in the final scene of the drama of God's program for the world's history. But also in the days of the new dispensation it is true that the false prophet must not be sought primarily in the heathen world, but rather within the scope of what is known as Christendom. There he reveals and expresses himself in the more refined forms of culture and civilization, of science and philosophy, of religion and philanthropy; there he appears as an angel of light, as the true Christ Himself; but there he exerts his most profound and pernicious influence. It is within the scope of Christendom that the antichrist is developing, and that the false prophet, the combination and culmination of all false religion and false science and false philosophy must be expected to appear. Let no one be deceived by his marvellous display of intellect and power, nor by his deceitful appearance of religiousness and piety. For he already does great things, and will do greater and mightier works in the future. And, no doubt, he will deceive many. But it should not be difficult to know and distinguish him as the false prophet in spite of his glittering display of culture and power. For he lies about God, and about His Anointed. He opposes the word of the true Prophet of God. He denies that Jesus Christ is come into the flesh. And "hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come into the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come into the flesh is not of God: and his is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now is already in the world." And the spirit of antichrist is the false prophet, that will speak great things and blasphemies, and perform signs and wonders, but whom Christ will cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. Rev. 19:20.

H. H.

Our help is in the glorious Name,
The Name of matchless worth;
Of Him to Whom all power belongs,
The Lord of heaven and earth.

Asceticism In The Early Church

Asceticism is from the Greek *askeoo*, to exercise, to strengthen through exercise. By the heathen the word was used by gymnastic exercises but by the fathers of the early church of moral self-discipline. Yet it would be a serious mistake to define asceticism simply as moral self-discipline. For moral self-discipline—the mortification of members which are upon the earth, the crucifixion of the works of the flesh—is a Christian duty enjoined by the Scriptures. It forms a part of the true conversion of man, the other part of which is the quickening of the new man, the sincere joy of heart in God through Christ, and a living according to the will of God in all good works with love and delight. Every true Christian, certainly, engages in moral self-discipline. He must, for the life in Christ that was implanted in his soul will assert itself. But the normal Christian is not an ascetic.

It would likewise be a mistake to maintain that the ascetic tendency is fully exposed as to its true character by the enumeration of its performances such as renouncing marriage, abstaining from wine and animal food, selling whatsoever is had and giving to the poor. The Nazarite of the Old Dispensation abstained from wine during the performance of his vow. But the Nazarite was not an ascetic. Paul does not forbid marriage, but with a view to the “present distress” (I Cor. 7:26) he does say, “For I would that all men were even as I myself. . . . I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them to abide even as I.” “I would have you without carefulness,” he goes on to say, “He that is unmarried careth for the things that belongeth to the Lord, how he may please the Lord: but he that is married carreth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife.” And finally, “Nevertheless he that standeth stedfast in his heart, having no necessity, but hath power over his own will, and hath so decreed in his heart that he will keep his virgin, doeth well. So then he that giveth (himself) in marriage doeth well; but he that giveth (himself) not in marriage doeth better” (I Cor. 7). Yet, Paul, certainly, despite this teaching from his pen, was not an ascetic. Then there is Christ’s counsel to the rich young ruler “If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have a treasure in heaven: and come and follow me” (Matt. 19:21). Yet Christ was not an ascetic. And the doing of the Christians in Jerusalem—their selling their possessions and goods, and parting them to all men, as every man had need, was not a species of asceticism.

If asceticism is to be known as in its true character, its roots must be laid bare. The roots of asceticism are its motives, purpose, aims, and strivings, its dualism and view of life and the world. These can be

known from an examination of the thoroughly pagan type of asceticism as practiced by the Gnostic and Manichæan sects. The primary principles of thought of these sects has already been set forth in another article. In their system God even in and for Himself is a wholly unintelligible, super-rational entity, an infinite blank, before whom all thought is powerless, a primeval being, an infinite background, without attributes, life and thought, yet an active force producing, through an efflux of His essence, a series of spiritual forces to which are given names: mind, reason, wisdom, power, truth, life: goodness. Through these effluxes God passes into life and is known. In this system also appears the idea of matter as uncreated and thus eternal and as in itself evil and the principle of evil in our world, a kind of second deity in everlasting opposition to the spirit of man and to God and incapable of being overcome by God. This world is therefore the handiwork of a fallen aeon—the demiurge—who wrongly imagines self to be the supreme and only God. His throne is in the heavens of the planets, and he rules over this visible world, the raging kingdom of the devil and resists the purpose of God. Now in man exists spirit, which, according to the conception of the Gnostics, animates from the divine essence, and is thus consubstantial with God. In man exists also the body, with its various desires and passions, which is of the nature of matter and therefore in its self, substantially evil. True life consists in contemplation of God, absorption into his essence. This vision can only be attained positively by the cultivation of the spirit, i.e. of the spiritual life and negatively by the mortification of the body—the evil prison-house of man’s spirit—and by the uprooting of the desires and passions of the body. The means recommended are solitude, poverty, renunciation of marriage or celibacy, fasting and penance. The Manichæan, too, had to refrain from all sensual enjoyment, shutting himself up against it by the three seals. The first forbids all eating of unclean food which included all bodies of animals and wine. The second forbids all content with things generally (world-flight) in so far as they carry in them elements of darkness. By the third seal marriage was forbidden.

Now this is asceticism proper. Asceticism, it is plain, is a pagan invention. It is based on pagan views of God, man and the world. Asceticism, especially this pagan type, is of the evil one. This comes out in its striving which was to attain not a greater measure of holiness but absorption into the divine essence, thus the realization of the lie of Satan, “Thou shalt be as God.” It comes out in the methods employed by many of these ascetics in the attempt to achieve this objective. Bidding defiance to all moral laws, they abandoned themselves to the most shameless licentiousness. Here the principle of action was that

voluptuousness must be conquered by unrestrained indulgence in it. The gnostic ascetic was much concerned about evil as it rioted, so he willed to imagine, solely in his body; but he was little concerned about sin as guilt before God, thus little concerned about the God whose eyes are too pure to behold sin. His conflict was not between sin and grace, to be sure, but between a carnal will striving in a colossal pride to attain divinity and the sensuous desires of the lower nature. Thus at bottom it was a clash of merely carnal interests. Identifying sin with the created body, this ascetic made of sin a created substance. Limiting sin to the sensuous desires of the lower nature, and identifying these desires with the body, and thus refusing to perceive that these desires and the pleasure resulting from their gratification are, in the final instance, not physical but psychical, he taught an inherently sinless soul or spirit. Thus the conflict, as he imagined, was between body and spirit, corrupt material and sinless spiritual substance as a means of self-redemption. This was the thoroughly heretical asceticism in the early church. In process of time it was at least theoretically exterminated.

Yet at first glance it might seem that the dualism of this asceticism meets us in the Scriptures, in particular in those Scriptures that treat of the conflict between the old and the new man or creature. But the flesh, the old man, in the thought-structure of Scripture is not solely the body but substantially the whole man as corrupted in his nature by the principle of sin operative in the essence of his being, of his mind and will and heart. And the new man or creature is not ethically but substantially this same man—I speak now of the believer—as subject to the principle of grace operative in the essence of these very members. Hence the conflict, according to Scripture, is not between a material and a spiritual substance, but between sin and grace as both of these take on flesh and blood, so to speak, in and through the one rational-moral organism, man. And the mortification of the flesh consists not in excessive afflictions of the body but, under the impulse of true love, in properly controlling and sanctifying it and in laying off *all* sin, the sins of the whole man, of the one organism man, constituted, as he is of body and soul. The seat of sin is not the body but the soul; but whereas the soul or spirit cannot function otherwise than through the body the moral corruption that riots in the essence of the soul involves also the body.

It was this gnostic asceticism at which Paul was striking, when he wrote to Timothy, "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with

thanksgiving" (I Tim. 4:1ff.).

Now besides this gnostic asceticism, there was still another kind, which, for the want of a name, we call orthodox, and with which we meet in the religious practices and habits of thought of the Christians, practices and habits set forth and defended in the writings of the church-fathers, who themselves, with few exceptions, were ascetically inclined. The fathers, needless to say, rejected with horror the heretical ideas of the Gnostics and Manichaeans, the idea that all nature is the work of a devil-God and the notion of conflict between matter substantially corrupt and sinless spirit. They condemn those "who abhor things in themselves innocent, as marriage, or flesh, or wine, and blasphemously slander God's works, forgetting that all things are very good, and that God made male and female" (The 51st Apostolic Canon). In the room of the pagan dualism between spirit and matter they placed the ethical conflict between spirit and flesh, held to the divine institution of marriage and vindicated its sanctity against the heretics of their time who, on the ground of their idea of the substantial corruption of matter and thus of the body, condemned conjugal cohabitation as a fellowship of corruption. "For He bestowed His blessing on matrimony also, as on an honorable estate, for the increase of the human race" (Tertullian). "Wherefore, if God still forms man, shall we not be guilty of audacity if we think of the generation of children as something offensive, which the Almighty Himself is not ashamed to make us of in working with His undefiled hands? . . . Would it not, then, be absurd to forbid marriage unions, seeing that we expect after us there will be martyrs, and those who shall oppose the evil one. . . ." (Methodius). Such were the views on marriage current among the majority of fathers and the Christian laity of the early church.

But, though the church fathers declared marriage holy, they declared virginity, the unmarried state, more holy, and so exalted the higher holiness of virginity as to come dangerously close to destroying the thrust and force of their assertions of the holiness of marriage. In the following excerpt the word virgin is used as the signification of both the sexes. "The virgins are a beautiful pattern to believers and to those who shall believe. . . . The womb of a holy virgin carried our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God; and the body which our Lord wore. From this therefore understand the greatness and dignity of virginity. Dost thou wish to be a Christian? Imitate Christ in everything. . . . And those who are virgins rejoice at all times in becoming like God and His Christ, and are imitators of them. For in those that are such, there is not the mind of the flesh. . . . For in 'the man who is of God', with him, I say, there is nothing of the mind of the flesh; and especially in virgins of either sex; but the

fruits of all of them are the fruits of the spirit" (Clement, Epistle concerning Virginity). Tertullian went so far as to say that, "If we look deeply into his meaning and interpret them, second marriage will have to be termed no other than a species of fornication." Patristic expressions occur even such as these: "A woman is an evil." "A rich woman is a double evil." "A beautiful woman is a whited sepulchre." "Better is a man's wickedness than a woman's goodness." Athenagoris wrote in his Apology: "Many may be found among us, of both sexes, who grow old unmarried, full of hope that they are in this way more closely united to God."

These conceptions attached themselves to four passages in Scripture, viz. Matt. 19:12; 22:30; I Cor. 7:7 sqq.; and Rev. 14:4. But as proof-text for the above-cited ideas, they are useless. The implication of Paul's counsel at I Cor. 7:7 sqq. is not that of the two states—the married and the unmarried—the latter is the holier, nor that virginity is the proper and normal condition for either the clergy or the laity. This counsel of the apostle is counsel indeed not a command. And this counsel is to the effect that if a man have the gift of continence—a gift that few men have—It is well that he marry not, as the married, being free from the cares of wedded and family life, are at liberty to devote themselves exclusively to the things of the Lord. This is simply a fact.

The writings of the fathers contain also strong recommendations of voluntary poverty and of contempt of worldly possessions based on the advice of Christ to the young ruler, who claimed to have kept all the commandments from his youth up. "And this is the import of 'Sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and come, follow me'—that is, follow what is said by the Lord . . . Despising, therefore, the possessions which God apportions to thee in thy magnificance, comply with what is spoken by me; haste to the ascent of the Spirit" (Clement of Rome). "A blind love of one's own property has deceived many. . . . And therefore the Lord says, 'If thou wilt be perfect, go sell all that thou hast. . . .' If rich men did this they would not perish by their riches. . . . But how can they follow Christ who are held back by the chains of wealth" (Cyprian). In these excerpts we meet with the view that, if these chains are to be broken, a man must literally dispose of all his property. . . This certainly is not the thrust of Christ's counsel to the young ruler. The aim of this counsel was purely pedagogical. The man made a god of his gold and yet claimed that he kept all the commandments of God. He must be made to perceive that his claim is false in order that he might repent and be saved. Therefore, laying His finger on the chief sin in the man's heart, Christ said to him, "Sell all that thou hast. . . ."

But the writings of the fathers contain also senti-

ments better than those set forth by the excerpts last quoted. "Riches, then, which benefit also our neighbors, are not to be thrown away. For they are possessions, inasmuch as they are possessed, and goods, inasmuch as they are useful and provided by God for the use of men. . . . Are you then able to make right use of it? It is subservient to righteousness. Does one make a wrong use of it? It is, on the other hand, a minister of wrong. That then which of itself has neither good nor evil, being blameless, ought not to be blamed; but that which has the power of using it well or ill, by reason of its possessing voluntary choice" (Clement of Alexandria). The spirit that animates from the following language from this same writer's pen is thoroughly protestant, "The perfect Christian, who has the apostles for his pattern, proves himself truly a man in this, that he chooses not a solitary life, but marries, begets children, cares for the household, yet under all the temptations which his care for his life and children domestics and property, presents, swerves not from his love to God, and as a Christian householder exhibits a miniature of the all-ruling providence."

Enough has been quoted from the writings of the fathers to bring out that the ideas that formed the basis of their asceticism are the following:

1. There is nature, this earthy, man, the earthy appetites and desires of his soul and the life of nature, eating and drinking, marrying and begetting children and attending to the earthy affairs of this earthy.
2. There is the spirit or grace and the life of the spirit, fellowship with God through prayer.
3. Life according to spirit or grace far excels in holiness the life of nature. The former must be cultivated. The latter is flesh and must be crucified. Thus the conflict is between nature and grace and not exclusively between grace and sin.

The similarity between these notions and the ideas upon which the Gnostics based their asceticism is strong. The distinction between nature and grace, higher and lower morality, corresponds to the Gnostic distinction between matter or body and spirit, between the life according to the body or nature and the life above nature and contrary to it. The influence of paganism is plainly discernable.

The fathers, of course, did not give expression to these pagan elements in their reasonings in clearcut language. These elements of thought are implicit in their distinction between higher and lower morality and in their depreciation of marriage and of things earthy in general.

But here, too, as ever, practice preceded theory. Already in the beginning of the second century, many Christians had the custom of setting aside certain days for self-examination and devotion and for dedicat-

ing their lives to God anew. On such days they were also wont to fast and to appropriate the food that was saved by their abstinence to the maintenance of the poor brethren. If they were person or material means, they gave, immediately after being baptized, a large portion of their earthly goods, or all they had, to the church treasury or to the poor, and thereupon would provide in their necessities by the labor of their hands, and all that remained of their earnings, after barely satisfying their most elementary wants of life, they bestowed to feed the poor. They also remained unmarried, lived in seclusion, and spent their leisure in prayer, in the study of God's Word, and in religious contemplation. This is orthodox asceticism in its earliest stages. Is it to be approved or frowned upon? The latter, of course. Asceticism, of whatever brand or type, is always to be denounced. But it would be a cruel mistake, certainly, to maintain that the above-cited habits of these early Christians—their prayers, almsgiving and self-denial—were solely the issues of the flesh and must therefore be relegated to the realm of darkness. Many of these Christians were pillars of strength not because of but in spite of their ascetic tendencies. Their practices are to be frowned upon only in so far as they were ascetic and the expression of ascetic motives and aims. What must be disapproved of in these early Christians is not their good habits but their inclination toward asceticism.

The asceticism of these early Christians was a bad tree, as the fruit that this tree bore, in process of time, plainly indicates. The old Catholic Church, in its ascetic practices went from bad to worse. To the fathers voluntary poverty and celibacy were exceptionally good works. To these others were added in after years, such as all kinds of penances and mortifications of the body, abstinence from wine and animal food. As could be expected, pride also entered in. Those who walked in these aforesaid works claimed to be a spiritual aristocracy above the common Christian people, who contented themselves with an inferior type of virtue, consisting in their living a normal Christian life. Eventually the thought took root in the bosom of the church that this higher morality merited with God; and asceticism became a means of self-redemption, as with the heathen. It also developed itself into anchorism (renunciation of the world to live in seclusion) and monkery and celibacy on the part of the clergy.

A word of criticism. Ascetism, this betaking oneself out of the stream of life, from under the yoke of life's responsibilities to live in monastic seclusion, is not indicative of strength but of weakness. And it is contrary to God's will. "I pray not," said Christ, petitioning His Father, "that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from evil" (St. John 17:15). The ascetic dare not

face the temptations of life. He would secure himself against temptation by separation from the world. He lacks the courage to fight the good fight.

G. M. O.

De Koning Van 't Heelal

(Psalm 72)

Hier hebben we weer een der klassieke psalmen uit den bundel, een psalm die de heerlijkheid van den Messias bezingt.

Hij is: *voor Salomo!*

Klassiek, zeiden we. En dat is duidelijk. Hij behoort bij die reeks van psalmen die men veel zingt, aanhaalt, overdenkt. Van alle tijden en onder alle volkeren waar des Heeren Geest troonde, heeft men er den verheerlijkten Christus in gezien. Zelfs de Joden, voor en na de geboorte van Jezus, hebben er den Messias in gezien.

Voor Salomo.

Van alle eeuwen heeft men gestreden over dezen titel. De meesten, waaronder ook Calvijn, zijn tot de slotsom gekomen, dat we hier een psalm hebben die door Salomo zelf gedicht is. Anderen zeggen, dat de inhoud van David was, doch dat zijn zoon die inhoud gedicht heeft voor den zwakken en stervenden vader.

Het is onze overtuiging, dat we moeten gelooven, dat de psalm van David is; dat hij hem dichtte voor zijn zoon; doch, daar hij een profeet was, heeft hij gedacht aan zijn heerlijken Zoon, Jezus Christus. Volgens het getuigen van Petrus op den Pinksterdag, "wist David dat God hem met eede gezworen had, dat hij uit de vrucht zijner lendenen, zooveel het vleesch aangaat, den Christus verwekken zoude, en Hem op zijn troon zetten." Hand. 2:30.

We hebben dus hier een gedicht van een koning aangaande een Koning. David bezingt den Christus Gods.

O God!

Heerlijk, verheven begin!

Als God ons begin is, dan zal het einde vrede zijn. Het klinkt dan straks zoo rustig als we lezen: "De geboden van David, des zoons van Isai, hebben een einde!" Gelukkig einde.

Een heerlijk begin en een vredig einde. Het einde van dien man zal vrede zijn. De vrede die er is voor het aangezicht Gods; vrede daar, want alle werkelijke nooden zijn vervuld.

O God!

Begint ge alzoo, vanuit de diepte Uws harten, het-

zij in smart of in ongekend geluk, dan moet Uw einde vrede zijn. Ge hebt dan den fontein aller goeden aangeroepen. En die Hem aanroept in waarheid en van harte, wordt nooit ledig weggezonden.

Er is hier geen zweem van smart. Het is alles roem, lof, heerlijkheid en schitterende deugd. Deugd van God die in den Messias blinkt en schittert.

Wat er verder volgt in dit eerste vers is tevens het hoofdthema van den geheelen psalm. "Geef den Koning Uwe rechten, en Uwe gerechtigheid den Zoon des Konings." We moeten hier weer met hoofdletters werken.

Eerst niet.

Want Salomo is een koning en is ook een zoon des konings. En dan blijven de hoofdletters weg.

Doch we zien Jezus hier "met eer en heerlijkheid gekroond." (Heb. 2:9).

En let er op, hoe de Bijbelsche theologie en dogmatiek altijd correct is. Het is één volmaakt geheel. David weet, dat alles wat Messias ooit zal ontvangen, tot in der eeuwen eeuwigheid, Hem alléén toevloeit van God. Er is één God en niemand meer. Zelfs Jezus Christus, de Middelaar, ontvangt alles van Hem en uit Hem als de Fontein aller goeden.

O God! Geef dan aan Jezus Uwe rechten en Uw gerechtigheid!

Dat kan zoo gebeden.

Want die Zoon heeft het verdiend.

David ziet Hem hier als teruggekeerd uit den eeuwigen dood. Let op vers 15. Het staat er: "Hij zal leven!"

Nu kan men alleen leven en in de gunst des Heeren wandelen, als men des Heeren geboden vervult.

Doch deze Koning's Zoon was gaan staan in de plaats der boosdoeners. En toen waren alle baren en alle golven van God's toorn en ongenoegen op Hem afgekomen. Ze gingen over Hem henen. In den eeuwigen dood.

En nu heeft deze Zoon zoo wonderlijk dien dood gestorven, dat Hij een wereld van gerechtigheid verdiend heeft.

Gerechtigheid is de wil tot het goede. Het is het leven, dat vergeleken en aangelegd bij den maatstaf van het hoogste goed, recht op staat. Zulk leven beantwoordt aan den eisch des HEEREN Heeren.

En die gerechtigheid heeft Jezus verdiend voor het volk, de kerk, de uitverkorenen, Zijn broederen.

En daar bidt David om.

Hij wil het zien, dat al dat volk van God bekleed mag worden met gerechtigheid en gerichte. En zullen ze dat ontvangen, dan moet Jezus al die gerechtigheid eerst van God ontvangen. Alles, letterlijk alles, wat wij voor goeds ontvangen, na de wedergeboorte, hier en in de eeuwigheid, is eerst aan Jezus geschonken en dan aan ons. Zóó loopt de lijn. Daarom bidden Uwe

kleine kinderen: Heere, zegen deze spijs en drank, *om Jezus' wil!* Amen.

Wat er nu volgt in den psalm is een beschrijving van Jezus, zooals Hij de gerechtigheid Gods ontvangt en die beoefent, gebruikt, mededeelt; doet strijden en verbrijzelen den goddeloozen, ter eener zijde; en het volk doet juichen, ter anderer zijde.

Eerst staat er dat Hij het volk van God (Uw volk) zal richten met gerechtigheid, en Gods ellendigen met recht.

Dit vers herinnert ons aan onze vreeselijke toestand. Wij worden door Jezus gericht met gerechtigheid. Ziet, dat was eerst niet zoo. Eerst werden we voortgezweept door Satan en door onze booze lusten. Satan van buiten af in ons hart indringende, verblindde ons en maakt ons zeer gewillig hem te volgen op de paden des doods. Dan was daar de lust des vleesches en der begeerlijkheden die ons henen wegvoerden naar de plaats van eeuwig afgrijzen. Onze misdaden voeren ons henen weg als een wind; we vallen af als een blad. Wij zijn kinderen des toorns, gelijk ook de anderen.

Doch daar is des Koning's Zoon! Hij is onze Koning! Hij zal ons richten! En dan zal 't gaan.

Ziet het slechts! Hij grijpt Satan aan en vermorselt zijn kop. Hij grijpt ons aan door Zijn almachtigen Geest en vermurwt ons hart; Hij doodt de zonde in ons in beginsel; Hij stort in ons diepste hart het leven dat Hij verwierf: het leven van den Verbonds-God. Naar de mate van het creatuur.

En Gods ellendigen met recht.

Gods ellendigen! Wat heerlijke beschrijving van het volk des Heeren. Ellende is, dat ge ver van huis zijt, alleen in den nacht en bij onweer, bedreigd van allen kant. Ellende is, dat ge naar Gods beeld geschapen zijt, doch op weg naar de hel. Ellende is, dat ge Uw ziel tracht te voeden met zwijnendraf en dat er sop van gruwelijke dingen in Uwe vaten zijn. Ik ellendig mensch!

Maar we zijn Gods ellendigen! O, dan wordt het anders. Wij zijn Zijn ellendigen van voor de grondlegging der wereld. En daar, voor de grondlegging der wereld, van alle eeuwigheid, heeft hij ons gezien, gewild, gekend, geliefd. Hij zag ons beeld in Zijn Goddelijke handpalmen, onze muren waren steeds vóór Hem! Hij kan ons nooit vergeten. Ook dan niet, wanneer wij in arren moede met gebalde vuist vóór Hem staan en Hem vervloeken. Gods ellendigen! Wij zijn van God. En God is alles wat trouw is en inhoudt. Hij kan Zijn eeuwige liefde nooit verloochenen.

Daarom zegt God tot Jezus, den Christus: Ga hene voor Mijn aangezicht en richt Mijn ellendigen met recht. Dan komt een gansch rechte Geest van God in ons binnenste hart. Dan komen de woorden des rechts vanuit het hart Gods en worden ons ingeprent. En dan? Luistert: een ellendige Gods bidt! "O God,

wees mij, den zondaar, genadig! Toen hoorde God: Hij is mijn liefde waardig! En onze God ontfermt Zich op 't gebed."

Daar komen de bergen en de heuvelen al! Zij komen met een lading van groote zegeningen. Geen wonder, dat de ellendigen zingen: 'k Sla d'oogen naar 't gebergte heen!

De oneindige bergen en de eeuwige heuvelen. Wat zijn ze en wat zeggen ze ons?

Dit: de berg is de verhooging van de aarde die in de diepten weggeslingerd was door een toornend God. De aarde was eerst hooger, toen Adam haar nog opdroeg in den gebede tot God. Toen zong de aarde en de zee met hare golven bruiste tot lof des Heeren.

Doch na de zonde heeft de Heere de aarde gevloekt en zij is weggezonden. De schaduwen des doods strekken zich uit en worden al donkerder, tegen den dag wanneer haar duisternis verdiept zal worden tot in de hel toe.

Doch Gods ellendig volk ontvangt de verhooging der aarde. Toen Jezus uit het graf klom van den eeuwigen dood heeft Hij de aarde meegenomen. Er komt straks een wedergeboorte aller dingen. Dan gaat het hooger, al hooger, tot in den hemel toe. Jezus brengt de aarde niet terug naar haar vroegere stand, doch brengt haar tot op hemelsche hoogte.

Daar is de berg en de heuvel een symbool van.

De bergen zullen den volke vrede dragen en de heuvelen met gerechtigheid. Het is een beschrijving van de verhooging in het Koninkrijk Gods. Vrede en gerechtigheid is Uw deel, geliefden.

Vrede is dat het stil werd in Uw rumoerige, rebel-leerende hart. Eerst werden in Uw hart gehoord de harde woorden die de goddelooze zondaars tegen God gesproken hebben. (Judas 15). Toch toen Jezus in Uw hart begon te richten (vers 1) toen is het anders geworden. Op den duur werd het stil, harmonieus in dat hart. Het sloeg en hield tempo met het eigen hart van God. In de sfeer van liefde Gods, naar Zijn wet, dacht ge en spraakt en handeldet ge: "Wat vree heeft elk die Uwe wet bemint!" Telt de elementen maar in dien eenen regel en ge vindt er Vrede, min, wet! Het klopt.

En de rechtvaardige en gerechtige Zoon des Konings gaat voort. Hij grijpt den verdrukker aan en verbrijzelt hem. Die verdrukker openbaarde zijn goddeloosheid duidelijk: hij had er schik in om nooddruftigen te benauwen! Vreeselijk werk.

Eerst is dat Satan. Dan de goddelooze verworpenen. Ze hebben samen een voorzichtig verdrag gemaakt. Een verbond, uitgedacht, uitgebroed in den walm van sulfur en grillig vuur.

Dat volk, aangevuurd en bestuurd door Satan, werpt zich op Gods volk. En de angstige stem van die schapen weerklinkt.

Doch Jezus verbrijzelt nu, of straks, alle verdruk-

kers en verlost Zijn arme volk. Wacht dan, ja, wacht!

En dan komt er vanuit dat vredige hart der kinderen de vreeze Gods. Want God is het voorwerp van vreeze. Jezus wekt het, doch het gaat henen tot God, dat eeuwig aanbiddelijk Wezen! "Toen werd in mijn ziele die vreeze gewekt!"

Des Heeren vrees is rein. O neen, het is niet de slaafsche vrees, die ons doet ineenkrimpen onder de slagen van de zweep. Die vrees is haat. Des Heeren vrees is de uitwerking van Gods grootheid en heerlijkheid en Goddelijkheid op Zijn kind. Het is de vreeze der liefde Gods. Luistert: de vreeze Gods spreekt in Elihu: "Want bij Hem is een vreeselijke majesteit!"

Die vreeze is er nu. Zij woont in mijn aanbeddend hart. Doch ook in U, godvruchtige lezer! Ook is zij er geweest in 't verleden. Ze is van geslachte tot geslachte. Ook zal zij er altoos zijn. Ze wordt gewerkt door den Christus. Totdat het laatste kind thuis is en er geen tijd meer zijn zal. Dan wordt de zon een haren zak gelijk en de maan wordt veranderd in bloed. Het is niet meer noodig dat zij schijnen.

Dan, als de sterren vallen en de bergen verzet worden en de rotsen sidderen voor den komenden God, dan zullen de grooten der aarde vreezen met een slaafsche vrees. Dan bidden ze tot de rotsen en de bergen: Val op ons en bedekt ons! Wij zijn bang voor dat Oog! Hij zit op Zijn troon. En ook de toorn van het Lam. Want de groote dag Zijns toorns is gekomen en wie kan bestaan?

Doch op U zal de Heere nederdalen. Ge waart dorstig geworden. Doch de Heere komt. En Hij zal zijn als een regen op het late nagras. Ge zult vol zijn van hemelsche, eeuwige, heerlijke, geestelijke zegen.

De Koning van 't heelal heeft de liefde onzer zielen.

G. V.

IN MEMORIAM

Whereas it pleased our Heavenly Father to take out of our midst our Brother and charter Elder,

NICK A. KIMM

the consistory of the Manhattan Protestant Reformed Church hereby expresses its heartfelt sympathy to the bereaved family and commends them to the deep and abiding comfort of our covenant God, Who alone is able to comfort and sustain in this deep sorrow.

May they experience His constant faithfulness and abide in His promise that "all things work together for good to them that love God."

Rev. H. De Wolf, Pres.

H. P. Van Dyken, Sec'y.

The Half-Way Covenant of New England

The "Half-Way Covenant" was an expedient adopted by New England churches in the seventeenth century to allow baptized persons of moral conduct and orthodox belief to have their children baptized but forbidding them the right to partake of the Lord's Supper. It has been the rule to baptize those infants one of whose parents was a church member. When such baptized persons grew up and married but failed to join the Church, the question arose whether their children should be baptized. This question whether such as were church members by birth only were entitled to have their children baptized was a matter of controversy for nearly thirty years. At a synod called by the General Court of Massachusetts in 1662 the controversy came to an end. This synod confirmed the decision of a ministerial body appointed by the same court in 1657, namely, that non-regenerate members, who "owned the covenant", publicly approved the principles of the Gospel, lived upright lives, and promised to promote the welfare of and submit to the discipline of the church, might present their children to baptism, but they themselves might not come to the Lord's table nor take part in ecclesiastical affairs. Notwithstanding much opposition, this became the general practice of the New England churches. Accordingly many persons of "reputable" life, especially in times of religious interest, who could not make a full profession of religion, were admitted to Half-Way Covenant relations in the church and their children were baptized. Solomon Stoddard, pastor at Northampton, Mass., 1669-1729, initiated a further modification which was widely adopted:—the Lord's Supper, in his view a converting ordinance, was to be participated in by "all adult members of the church who were not scandalous." The Half-Way Covenant received its death-blow from Jonathan Edwards, Stoddard's successor, although it survived for many years.

The name of Jonathan Edwards receives prominent mention in connection with the "Half-Way Covenant." Considered by many to be America's greatest theologian, Jonathan Edwards was born at Windsor Farms, Conn., Oct. 5, 1703, and died at Princeton, New Jersey, March 22, 1758. He graduated in 1720 from Yale College, then a school chiefly for the training of ministers, with the highest honors of his class. In 1727, when in his twenty fourth year, he was ordained as colleague with his grandfather, Solomon Stoddard, and pastor of the Congregational Church at Northampton, Mass. In process of time he became convinced that his grandfather was wrong in permitting unconverted persons to partake of the Lord's Supper. A prolonged controversy with the Northampton church followed,

and Edwards was ejected in 1750 from the pastorate which he had adorned for more than twenty three years. In 1751 he was installed pastor of the small Congregational church in Stockbridge, Mass., and missionary of the Housalonic Indians at that place whom he served with fidelity. On Sept. 26, 1757, he was elected president of the college at Princeton, New Jersey, but was not inaugurated until Feb. 16, 1758. One week after his inauguration he was inoculated for the small-pox. A secondary fever intervened, and he died five weeks after his inauguration.

Jonathan Edwards was ejected from his pastorate at Northampton partly because of his opposition to the "Half-Way Covenant" as prevalent in his day. In its beginning this practice gave "non-regenerate" members who owned the covenant the right to present children for baptism, but withheld from them the right to partake of the Lord's Supper. However, Solomon Stoddard initiated a further modification which was widely adopted as early as 1700. Stoddard had been a very practical man. Accordingly, when in 1700 he put his ear to the ground and heard ominous whispers of discontent from the Half-Way members who were shut out from the Lord's table, he recognized that the Half-Way Covenant was in need of modification and improvement. He therefore decided to take his courage in hand, go one step further than the decision of 1662, and throw the doors wide open to Covenant and non-Covenant members alike. He did so in the belief that such a step might turn Half-Way members into better Christians. The Lord's Supper he regarded as a converting ordinance, a means to induce Half-Way members to repent.

Moreover, to understand Jonathan Edwards's ejection from his pastorate because of his opposition to the conception and practice of the Half-Way Covenant, we must bear in mind the historical event, known as "The Great Awakening", which immediately preceded his dismissal. The "Great Awakening" was a tremendous revival particularly throughout New England under the magnetic and dynamic leadership of a certain English preacher, George Whitefield. Whitefield literally turned the spiritual world of his day in the colonies upside down. Whitefield, in contrast with the Calvinistic Jonathan Edwards, was a thorough Arminian. Emphasizing the arminian "whosoever will" doctrine, this young English preacher was strictly a "revivalist." In a week he had changed the whole definition of preaching and pulpit behaviour. Instead of doctrine logically stated, proved, applied, according to a carefully prepared plan of argument, he dramatized both the biblical narrative and the application, spoke entirely without notes, made violent gestures, laughed, sang, shed public tears, and literally took New England by storm. Hitherto preaching had been a solemn exercise; Sermons had been made according

to the pattern. But here was a preacher who substituted human interest stories for sober logic, turned his pulpit into a stage, and gave church-going America its first taste of theatre under the flag of salvation. Conversions became common. The people were literally swept off their feet. Heaven's doors were opened to all and the masses crowded one another to enter.

Consequently, Jonathan Edwards, in his struggle against the Half-Way Covenant and its practices, was engaged in a hopeless struggle already from the very beginning. It was impossible for him to maintain the Scriptural principle of limiting baptism as well as communion to the confessing people of God. It was impossible for him to shut the door of the Kingdom of Heaven to some at a time when the door had been thrown wide open. He was ejected from his pastorate by a vote of more than three hundred to twenty three.

In our appraisal of the Half-Way Covenant, as also including Solomon Stoddard's modification in 1700 to permit non-regenerate members to partake of the Lord's Supper, we need not prove in detail the error of this conception. It is surely Scriptural that, although all the children of confessing believers must be baptized, only believers may and can present their children for baptism. Only they may. We read in Acts 2:38, 39: "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Notice here that Peter exhorts the people to repent and *then* be baptized. Baptism therefore follows upon repentance. Then he proceeds to declare in verse 39 that unto *them* is the promise and unto their children and to all that afar off, *even as many as the Lord their God shall call*. The implication is that God's promises are to these *who repent* and their children, and to those who are afar off with their children, as many as the Lord shall call by His Spirit and Word. And this is taught throughout Scripture. Besides, only these can present their children for baptism. To present one's child for baptism implies that we spiritually and consciously embrace the significance and practical implication of this sacrament, and this is possible only when we ourselves have a spiritual understanding of being baptized and risen with Christ.

Secondly, it is also Scriptural that only confessing believers may and can partake of the Lord's Supper. We need but read our beautiful Communion Form to be convinced of this. The apostle Paul expressly commands "non regenerate members who merely own the covenant" to abstain from the supper of the Lord. We are admonished to "examine ourselves and so partake of the Lord's Supper lest we, eating and drinking unworthily, should eat and drink damnation to ourselves."

And, of course, only believers in Christ Jesus are spiritually able to partake of this sacrament. Only then will the table of the Lord not be abused and profaned.

Although the Half-Way Covenant was a theory and practice in New England more than two hundred and fifty years ago, its error is still prevalent today. In the first place I would call attention to the teachings of the Netherlands Free Reformed, or "Oud-Gereformeerden" of our present day. We grant that they are very strict in their teachings with respect to Holy Communion. In these circles only a few partake of this sacrament. Nevertheless, they adhere to the practices of the Half-Way Covenant as far as the sacrament of Baptism is concerned. Not all who present their children for baptism are permitted to partake of Communion. The fact remains that attendance at Communion is restricted to a very few and that members are discouraged from partaking of this sacrament. Conversely, those who cannot partake of Communion are permitted to present their children for baptism. It is true that only those who make profession of faith are permitted to present their children for baptism. This, however, only implies that "non-regenerated" persons are allowed to make confession of faith, that their confession of faith is nothing else than "owning the covenant", a mere intellectual agreement with the doctrine and principles of the church. This constitutes a clear violation of the principles of the Word of God with respect to the sacrament of Baptism. Also in these circles Baptism is viewed as an expediency measure. The children must be baptized. On the other hand, they fail to see the Scriptural principle that God develops His covenant organically in the line of succeeding generations. Hence, they also have adopted the practice of "owning the covenant" as an expediency measure, in order that their children may be baptized. This we would say on the one hand.

On the other hand, the Half-Way Covenant, with all its implications, particularly in the light of "The Great Awakening" should teach us that we must not be wiser than God. Jonathan Edwards, in his struggle against the errors of his day, was engaged in a hopeless struggle. Solomon Stoddard viewed Communion as a "conversion ordinance." George Whitefield had proceeded one step farther and thrown wide open the doors of the Kingdom of Heaven. The people rejected any teaching or preaching which would shut the doors of the Kingdom. Arminianism today believes in a church with an open door. They have no place in their system of thought for a rigid enforcement of the two holy sacraments. Their conception allows no place for the doors of the Kingdom of God being shut. Stoddard and Whitefield were opening doors, not shutting them; Jonathan Edwards was shutting doors, not opening them. Hence, his cause was doomed to failure.

However, we may not be wiser than God. The Lord has indeed restricted the operations of His grace and Spirit to means. Only, He has restricted His salvation to His own means, which He has sovereignly instituted. But one course is left open to us, and that is that we use and enforce the means which He has given us. Doing this, whatever the outcome may be, we shall experience the blessing of the Lord. Expediency measures must never substitute the Divine means of grace. Let us preach the Word, enforce discipline, preserve the sanctity of the sacraments—the rest we may safely leave to God.

H. V.

The Minister And Himself

Perhaps some of our readers consider this a somewhat peculiar subject. The very title may create some inquisitiveness as to the contents of the article. The Minister and Himself. The reader must, however, not read this subject in the wrong light or from a wrong viewpoint. This article is not a report of the self-examination of a minister, nor a minister's confession of his many weaknesses and sins. Such an article would not only be out of place but would also fail to present the peculiar distinctiveness between a minister and the common christian. From that viewpoint the minister is no different than any christian. We are all aware of the fact that the minister is really no better than another christian and that he too has but a small beginning of new obedience. Who does not know that the minister often is not what he should be, that his eye of faith is often beclouded as well as that of every christian, that he time and again lacks the meekness, humility and patience necessary for his task, and is unwilling to suffer shame and sacrifice for the cause of God? These things we all know only too well. Therefore this article is not a report of house-visitation done at the pastor's home, even though there are always some people who seem to delight in detecting, seeing, and describing the sliver in the minister's eye. Neither is it our intention to write about the requisites of a true minister, that he must be sincere, sure of his calling, walk in the way of sanctification, be a living witness of God's Word and the truth, etc. All these are naturally presupposed in an article of this nature. After all if the minister does not have these he really is not worthy of his name. From the above it therefore has become evident that this article is not about the personal being of a minister but about his work.

About this much can be said. In the first place he is a minister. Now the word "minister" has received

an erroneous connotation in our day. Is he not the "reverend" or "dominee"? He is considered as the head of the congregation, the leader and commander. He is the one who rules, who has power and is considered as a superior. However, the word minister really means the very opposite, namely, to serve. In reality he is one who must administer, be at the service of others and dispense to them. This he must do in respect to the Word and the Sacraments. He is an ambassador to serve the king of the church. Therefore he must speak nothing but the word of the king, must at all times be ready to serve the congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ in obedience to her king, and may nor can do anything else than he is commanded to do. In respect to the Word he may speak nothing but the Word of the king, just like an earthy ambassador must speak and act exactly according to dictates of his superior. In all things the minister is servant of our Lord Jesus Christ. Never may he speak his own word, do what he pleases or command and hold power in his own name. The one who realizes the import of this work immediately realizes that his is the highest calling upon this earth. How blessed to be a servant of the Lord who has redeemed him through His own blood! The very life of the christian is to be in the service of the king, our Lord Jesus Christ, how much more then the work of the minister. Christ's love, devotion, zeal, complete sacrifice and self-surrender out of sovereign grace is the means but also the incentive of our serving Him. Be it therefore on the pulpit or in the study, be it with house-visitation or sick visitation or even with a funeral the minister is a servant of the king of the church. At ALL times in ALL his work he is servant.

However, when we now speak about the minister and himself we must readily admit that this is the one thing he so easily and often forgets. The biggest danger with a minister is that he forgets all about being a minister. This danger exists not because of some peculiar weaknesses of this or that minister but because of the common strife with the old man of sin. Our nature is not to be servant but lord. Man wants to rule, sway his own sceptre and have dominion and power even though his inherent nature according to creation is that of a servant. Consequently there is always the danger of coming with his own word, acting according to the dictates of his own conscience, of uttering things pleasing to the flesh, of not rebuking and reprimanding too sharply for fear of unfavorable reaction from his already small flock and of becoming weak in discipline. Only too often does he on Monday morning line up his work for the coming week and consider it as his particular *job*. His job is to make two sermons, teach several catechism classes, lead a few societies, etc. O yes, he really *should* make a few personal calls too. Such is his occupation. And for

this particular vocation he get so much pay. And when Sunday evening has come he gives a sigh of relief because he has again acquitted himself of his particular job for the past week. Now it is very well possible that the above-mentioned things can be found with a minister who is a true christian, preaches the truth of God's Word, and gives very good satisfaction in the congregation in all his work. But in all this the *minister* forgets that he is a *minister*. He forgets to bear in mind that he at all times is serving the sheep of Christ as a servant of Christ Himself. In all things he must be serving, be it on the pulpit or at the sick-bed of a saint. To really be a minister he must be conscious of this very thing. Neither must he consider his salary as so much pay for his job, but as a means to free him from earthy avocations and cares in respect to the sustenance of himself and his family.

The minister is also apt to forget *himself* in connection with the expounding of God's Word. He is always confronted with problems. How must this Lord's Day be explained and what about this particular text or phrase? Sometimes he exegetes when awaking in the morning or going to sleep at night. Explain it he must, naturally with the guidance of the Holy Spirit through prayer with the light of God's Word. But by next Sunday he must have a solution and be able to present this particular portion of God's Word in a comprehensive way. Hence in all this the personal element is apt to go lost. We don't mean that he must be subjective or practical, as some call it, as well as objective, neither that exegesis itself must be sacrificed for the subjective, but that with all the emphasis on the exegesis and the proper explanation of this particular portion the riches of the Word go lost for the ministers *own soul*. A pure mechanical study of God's Word certainly deprives the student of a spiritual blessing in respect to that particular portion.

Closely related to this is the fact that the minister is inclined to have one member less in his audience than there really is. Again he is so apt to forget himself. He preaches for everybody and tries to break the bread of life for all except himself. To be sure he knows better. But only too often does he consider his preaching like the work of a waiter in a restaurant. He is serving others and bringing them the Word. He is so taken up in the contents of his sermon, the language, delivery, etc., that he forgets all about himself. And his own soul leaves church hungry and empty.

In view of all this we can see the perfection of our Lord Jesus Christ. He was the perfect servant, it always being His meat to do the will of the Father, to be nothing else but servant, and never thought it robbery to be equal with God. He is the king that always serves, He is host and never the guest, He is the servant of all His own. Because of this His attitude and action two things are made possible. In first place He

paid for our sins, washing us in His own innocent blood. He washed the feet of all His own. But secondly through His Spirit and this His humble service we receive the power and the incentive to wash one another's feet. Therefore the way and the truth and the life for the minister as well as every christian is Christ Jesus, God's own Son. But the flesh remains with us in this life, and therefore even the holiest and most conscientious of God's ministers are always and again amazed at God's grace whereby He furthers His cause through human instruments often so fleshly, proud and earthy.

J. B.

The Coming And Influence of Buddhism in Japan

Japan and its horde of eighty million people confined to a space not larger than the state of California, is in no sense of the word a Christian nation. The number of nominal Christians, prior to the present war, was approximately half a million, which is only a fraction of the total population. If it is borne in mind that this small fraction includes Catholics, modernists, etc., it is quite evident that the actual number of true Christians is indeed small in comparison to the millions of people that inhabit the islands of Japan.

Man who was made in the image of God is not, and cannot be without religion. Forsaking God he will hew himself out cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water. Thus Jeremiah testifies in Jer. 2:13 of Israel that turned from God to the idols of the other nations, and it is true of every man that lives on the earth that forsakes God.

As we stated in a previous article on the religious situation in Japan, the native belief of Japan is Shinto. Shinto is simply a collective term to denote the religious concepts and practices native to Japan. It consists in brief of the deification, either with or without personification, of all natural objects, forces and phenomena, animate and inanimate, living or dead. The worship of the sun and of the Emperor are only phases of it.

But Shinto is not the dominating religion of Japan today, nor has it been for many centuries. Buddhism, an imported religion, claims the allegiance of the great masses today and has done so for many years gone by. Japan is a stronghold of Buddhism. This does not mean that Shinto has disappeared. Not at all, Shinto still has its adherents, even among the thousands that profess Buddhism. As a matter of fact Buddhism has accommodated itself so much to Shinto that the Shinto

gods have been turned into Buddhist saints, and Shinto virtues into Buddhist virtues. Being also itself the lie, it naturally could accomodate itself and absorb the lie of Shinto. For the rest it exists peaceably side by side with Shinto.

Shinto is an imported religion. It came to Japan about the fifth century after Christ, that is about the time that Christianity first came to England. It came from the Asiatic mainland through China and Korea. The Emperor for political reasons, it seems, allowed the Chinese and Korean Buddhist monks and priests admission to Japan to propogate the new "faith" ("error" it really was, of course). As a matter of fact the Emperor whom Japan hails as a god even appointed a minister of the new religion, whose duty was to father the new ideas and propogate them. The Emperor undoubtedly sought contact with the mainland in the interest of trade and political influence. However that be, the priests of Buddhism energetically propogated their ideas, accomodated themselves to Shinto, brought a new culture and in the course of a few centuries established elaborate monasteries, temples and built huge Buddhist idols. The monasteries became strongholds for power upon which later Emperors relied for protection. Gradually the millions of Japan became Buddhists rather than Shintoists.

What Is Buddhism?

Just what is Buddhism? Of course, fundamentally it is the lie as much as Shinto is. However, in contrast to Shinto, Buddhism is very definitely a philosophy rather than a religion. It compares in more than one sense with what is known in our nation today as Christian Science, which is neither Christian nor Science. Christian Science teaches the non-reality of evil; if only you can make yourself believe evil does not exist, you have overcome it. Surely, it is true, if you can reason yourself into believing that you have no trouble and pain, you've overcome it. But it is folly nonetheless, for it is deceit pure and simple. Buddhism also, especially in its beginnings, is exactly such a deceit as Christian Science. It is the philosophy of self-annihilation and nihilism, and roots in utter passivity and pessimism.

Buddhism did not originate in Japan, nor even in China. It began in India, where today it has largely been supplanted by still another lie—that of Moham-medanism. About a thousand years before Buddhism came to Japan, in the 6th century B. C. to be exact, there lived an Indian prince, Siddharta by name (also known as Shaka, Gautama, and usually as Buddha). While Isaiah as the prophet of the Lord prophesied of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow after, the darkness of Brahmanism had reached a pitch of ritualism such as the world had never seen. That brought a great reaction. Prince Siddharta re-

volted against this ritualism, and became the founder of Buddhism, which historically is only an off-shoot of Brahmanism. He rejected the writings of Brahmanism and the entire system of caste, and talked of the Great Renunciation. Buddhism centralizes in Renunciation. Buddha himself one night arose from his bed and left his wife and child, renounced his kingdom, rode into the forest to become an ascetic and never returned. This disrespect to the duties and obligations of daily life is characteristic of all Buddhism. In course of time he set forth the doctrine of "the impermanence of all individual existence, the universality of suffering inherent in individuality, the non-reality of the ego-principle".¹ This was gradually expanded into the so-called Four Noble Truths, which are briefly: 1. The truth of suffering—all being is suffering. 2. The truth of the cause of suffering—being is the result of desire, particularly the desire to be, operating through what is called Karma. 3. The truth of the cessation of suffering—suffering ceases when Karma ceases, and Karma ceases when desire ceases, and desire ceases through enlightenment. 4. The truth to the way of the cessation of suffering—enlightenment is attained by the noble eightfold way of correct belief, correct resolve, correct speech, correct behaviour, correct occupation, correct effort, correct contemplation, correct concentration.

"The key-note of Buddhism is the transitoriness and vanity of life, which is conditioned by Karma, the fruit of deeds done in countless previous lives; nor can existence be ended before the expiration of many re-incarnations devoted to works of holiness and spent in unceasing efforts to gain Nirvana. . . . Nirvana seems to imply the annihilation of the soul. . . . It is noteworthy, furthermore, that the word Nirvana etymologically denotes "a blowing out", the extinguishing of the fires of hatred, infatuation, and all passions. Nirvana seems to have been twofold, a secondary condition which may be reached by the righteous in this life, and the blessed state of freedom from rebirth."²

Buddhism That Came To Japan.

But it was not this original Buddhistic philosophy, pure and simple, that came to Japan. In the course of the years Buddhism had been modified, for Buddhism was a thousand years old when it came to Japan. Buddha himself had not believed in gods at all, he had not been interested in after life. In his philosophy there were no gods, no soul, no sacrifice, no prayer, no help—by mediation and concentration man must attain self-annihilation. Through the passing of the centuries this original philosophy was modified. Buddha himself became a god. The Buddhist built large and ornate temples with elaborate ritual, immense idols that sat with folded hands staring into nothingness as symbols of the state of perfect calm that Buddhism

has as its goal. For Buddhism life is sorrow, only sorrow, and man must attain to perfect calm and utter self-resignation.

Buddhism as it exists today, while still true to its original passivity, has many variations. There are hundreds of sects in Japan, existing side by side, be it peaceably. In the main there are two distinct schools of Buddhism. The first is called Hinayana; the second, Mahayana. The former, Hinayana, is the more like original Buddhism. It holds forth as the only way to escape life (which is suffering) by one's own efforts, by progress in the steps that lead to Nirvana. It is called the "self-help" school. There is no room for help from the outside—one's own efforts alone can lead to the goal of perfect calm. The latter, Mahayana, is known as the "other-help" school. This group, which counts by far the larger number of adherents, teaches that there was once a Buddha saint, Amida by name, who attained Nirvana for others. As a result, without any effort, simply by faith in him, the average man may have this Nirvana. This group, strange as it may seem, speaks of a blessed heaven after this life. It has departed far from the original, in every sense atheistic, Buddhism. This Mahayana is an adaptation of original Buddhism to the general average mind, to the desires latent in man, and with its Amida evidently even a wicked attempt to adapt itself to Christianity. However, though as far as its Amida is concerned, similar in a sense to Christianity, in no sense of the word identical as modernists have asserted.

Buddhist's Influence.

The coming of Buddhism to Japan in the 6th century brought a great change to Japan. For, first of all, it meant, through the Buddhist priests, contact with the Asiatic mainland and its civilization. Secondly, it brought learning and "culture" to Japan. The Buddhist priests introduced writing, and Japan has since then always used the Chinese character writing. Also art came to Japan via China and Korea through Buddhism. The Buddhists built large, ornate temples; immense Buddhist idols. Also painting as an art was introduced.

As the coming of Christianity brought with it a tremendous cultural change to the British isles in the West, the coming of Buddhism brought with it a similar change to the Japanese islands in the East.

Two Remarks.

Two remarks are in place in conclusion: 1. The first regards the so-called "cultural question". In recent years the theory of "common-grace" has always urged that Christianity brings with it learning and art as a by-product, and that this is due to common-grace. The situation in Japan to our mind disproves this at once. Buddhism brought a similar cultural change into Japan. Or is this also somehow "common-grace"?

Of course not. Another solution must be sought. Renaissance and reformation in Europe differ in every respect; the former is not a common grace product of the latter.

2. Buddhism with its intellectualism is only another form of the lie. Man that departs from God must repeatedly make himself new idols and fashion them after his image. Buddhism is not as rudimentary as Shinto, but it is fundamentally the lie as much as Shinto. Japan still gropes in the darkness of heathendom. Will the light of the Gospel ever be disseminated there and make an impact upon the Japanese nation as it has done in the European nations? I do not know how to answer this question, but one thing is plain there are yet hordes of men both in Japan and in the other Asiatic nations that have never yet come into contact with the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ the Lord. They are still nations that in every sense grope in darkness. Having forsaken God they wander about in sin, believing the lie.

P. D. B.

1 H. Gowen, *An Outline History of Japan*, p. 79. 2 Schaaf-Herzog, *Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, Vol. II, p. 293.

Excommunication of Baptized Members

That the heading of this article is put in question form means to indicate that as far as our Church Order is concerned there is no answer to this question. If there were an answer in the Church Order we would not at all be so presumptuous as to place the heading in question form.

It is immediately obvious to us that this question pertains to the very important matter of Christian discipline. Such a question naturally is vital to every believer who seeks the welfare of God's kingdom here on earth. Very important ought it to be to us as churches and consistories who are called upon to direct all disciplinary action. The matter of treatment of baptized members comes to us in question form when we find no direction given in the Church Order of Dordrecht. And especially does it leave us with a question when we search in vain for unanimity in actions of the synods of our Reformed Churches.

Because this is the nature of the subject I want to place all the historical data I can before your attention. To submit such historical data I consider of prime importance to the readers and the main objective of my article. If there is space I shall also indicate some of the principles involved and will venture my opinion.

If we turn to the very first Synod of Reformed

Churches, the Synod of Emden, 1571, at which Synod the first rules and regulations of Church Order were laid down, we do not find any distinction made as to disciplinary action with those baptized members who failed to make confession of their faith and who had also become objects of discipline because of their doctrine or walk. It only makes the general proposition that it believes that Church discipline or Christian chastisement (*Christelijke straffe*) ought to be maintained in every congregation. (Article 25) of the "Acta der Emdensche Synode van 1517).

This silence about disciplinary action with those who are only baptized members is kept by the following five Synods even including the famous Synod of Dort, 1618-19, from which we have our official Church Order. You will find the expression of the Synod of Dordrecht about censure and ecclesiastical admonition in articles 71 to 80.

Although there is no official regulation about such disciplinary action, there can be no doubt in the mind of anyone who has faced the matter in consistory meetings, that there is a problem. The problem is not whether discipline should be exercised over against baptized members. Such is plainly the duty of Christians. It is first of all the duty of covenant parents, and, should they become lax, it is the duty of the Church to point this out to the parents and children. The apostle Paul admonishes children to be obedient to parents and also that the fathers should not provoke their children to wrath. (Eph. 6:1, 4). The problem however arises with baptized members who have come to the years of discretion and do not confess their faith, and with those baptized members who walk in gross sins. The problem is how shall these be treated.

And from the questions that have arisen in the history of Reformed Churches about disciplinary action of adult baptized members it is also evident that it was a problem from the beginning of Reformed Churches.

Among the "Particular Questions" that were raised at the National Synod of Dordrecht in 1578, there appears a question about this very matter, (ques. 47). The question translated is, "Whether children in Reformed Churches who have become of age should be subject to Christian chastisement (*straffe*), and who after being admonished remain hardened, whether they should be cut off (*afsnijden zal*) *although* they have not made confession of their faith and approached the table of the Lord?" The answer given reads as follows: "Because baptism is a general testimony of the covenant of God, which belongs to children of believers as long as they do not reject it through manifest apostacy, therefore the revealed and general admonitions which were used by the prophets to Israel shall be sufficient in the public and free gatherings (*openbare en de vrije gemeenten*). However, because confession of faith and partaking of communion is a

special testimony in the Church of God, to which communion those who have sinned against the covenant of God are readmitted upon confession as the apostate Israelites were not re-admitted through another circumcision but through the Passover to the true Church of Israel) so therefore one shall not use excommunication except overagainst the one upon whom the covenant of God has been sealed through the participation in the Lord's Supper."

This question about discipline of adult baptized members received, as is evident from the quotation, the definite answer, "no excommunication". The matter, however, came up again much later. This answer of the Synod of 1578 did not prove satisfactory to all for a question was raised about the same matter in the Netherland Reformed Churches in 1896. To the Synod of Middelburg 1896 the two men, Bavinck and Rutgers, gave the following advice: "It is evident that it is simply impossible, without ignoring the Word of God, to classify such baptized members as members of the church. Because they have not made confession and also have not bound themselves, they stand outside the Church institute, which particularly depends upon confession and subjection; membership for them in that sense cannot be recognized." (For this statement see, *Kerkelijke Handboek*, by I Van Dellen and H. Keegstra p. 85). From this quotation in the above Church Manual it is not very clear as to the stand of Bavinck and Rutgers take about excommunication. The authors, Van Dellen and Keegstra, explain that the stand favors excommunication. This appears to be correct from Bavinck's *Dogmatics* (Vol. IV, p. 502). Bavinck gives the general practice in Reformed Churches as follows: children of believers are baptized as believers, instructed in the truth, with satisfactory examination and public confession are admitted to the Lord's table, or upon unchristian teaching or loose walk after repeated admonition are separated from the Church (*uit de gemeente verwijderd*)."

Although this is the general conception of Reformed Churches since that advice was given, there appeared a difference in practice. One direction followed John Lasco and favored excommunication. Another group followed Voetius and simply considered such objectionable adult baptized members as separated without even a formal announcement. The advice of Bavinck and Rutgers was adopted by the Synod of Gronnigen in 1899.

Considering the difference of opinion, we see how it is surprising that the question came up again in the history of the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands. At the Synod of 1923 of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands it was expressed that there was a need for unity of action and that there was not unity of opinion to establish such unity of action. In 1936 the Synod appointed a committee of three to give advice. And at

the last interrupted Synod of 1939 this committee came with their advice.

Examining the report of the committee of 1939 we find that it differs from a statement of the Synod of 1920. And reading the comments made by different ministers in the year 1939 in Netherlands it is evident that all do not agree with the report of the last committee. For our consideration of the matter it is worth our while to examine the statements of 1920 made by the Synod and the report of the committee of 1939.

Here is my translation of the expression of the Synod of 1920: "Synod expresses itself that excommunication cannot be applied to baptized members, but the consistory can very well explain that with reference to certain baptized members who in confession and walk have revealed themselves as unbelievers and ungodly that they have thereby withdrawn themselves from the Reformed Church."

In the religious press in Netherlands this stand was characterized as no official exclusion from the church of baptized members with the key power which was intrusted to the Church by Christ, but only a proof or announcement (constateeren) that someone had left the church. Overagainst this stand of the Synod of 1920 we have a different idea expressed in the report of the committee of three who drew up a "Concept Announcement. . . (Concept-afkondiging). The following is my translation: "The consistory is compelled by sad necessity to announce that the incomplete member, N.N., has stubbornly denied fellowship with Christ and His church, which was signified and sealed in his holy baptism, notwithstanding many earnest admonitions. Therefore the consistory is compelled, since the public trial period of admonition has been given, at the present time to proceed in the name of the Lord to excommunicate (uit te sluiten) N.N., and to declare that he has no part in the kingdom of Christ, as long as he remains penitent."

This report was approved by some in the Netherlands as is evident from a comment of Ds. Van Strien who wrote in effect, 'Here is not simply announcement (constateeren), but here is moving action, excommunication.'

It is interesting to notice that the same difficulty appeared in our country in the history of the Christian Reformed Church. In their *Church Manual*, Van Dellen and Keegstra write after a brief mention of the difference of opinion in the Netherlands, "Also our Synods have made various expressions with reference to baptized adults. In a certain way we are ahead of the Churches in the Netherlands, (This manual was published in 1915) in this that the so-called "royeeren", erasure of baptized members must be made with consent of Classis and the approval of the congregation. For the rest our decisions do not testify to a clear insight in this matter." (p. 86 Kerkelijke Handboek).

Upon the Synod of 1914 of the Christian Reformed Church it was decided (art. 64, 10) 'to investigate the entire question of baptized members and to have a report upon the following Synod, and to correspond with the Churches in the Netherlands in this matter'."

For the present I have no more space. If the editor desires I am willing to submit more material and suggest action upon the basis of principles. I do not have any material of further decisions of the Christian Reformed Church nor of any conception of our Protestant Reformed Churches. At least this material is interesting and serves to cause us to reflect and at least to direct such disciplinary action more consciously.

L. D.

God's Ways Mysterious With His Church

The Lord moves in mysterious ways, His will and counsel to perform; and separates us from our earthly relationships, as with a silent voice. And in a fleeting moment, the past becomes but history, and all the future plans undone. For the Lord is calling! And His faithful servants respond in the words of childlike Samuel: "Speak Lord, for thy servant heareth"! The work of thy kingdom must carry on. The bonds of faithful labor, in love, communion of saints, and friendships, through tangible relationship, must wait; till realized in its fullest perfection, in that glorious kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; Who is our faithful covenant God.

Thus also the consistory of Holland, was suddenly confronted with the question by their former pastor, Rev. P. De Boer: Will you kindly grant me a six-weeks leave of absence to labor in the Redlands California congregation? That was the beginning of a series of events that brought Rev. De Boer to the Redlands congregation as its pastor, and the former candidate now Rev. W. Hofman to the Holland congregation as pastor.

These events as they are briefly enumerated below took place in rapid succession:

Oct. 14.—The consistory of Holland confirmed its informal action previously taken, to grant the request of Rev. De Boer to labor for six weeks in the Redlands congregation. And to ask Candidate W. Hofman to conduct our services and teach our catechism classes, during Rev. De Boer's absence.

Oct. 26.—Rev. De Boer received the call from the Redlands congregation to become its pastor and shepherd. Nov. 23.—Rev. De Boer previous to this date informed

the Holland congregation that he had accepted the call to Redlands. A special consistory meeting was held on this evening in which the following trio was nominated: Rev. C. Hanko, Candidate W. Hofman, and Rev. G. Lubbers.

Dec. 12.—Rev. P. De Boer delivered his farewell sermons to the Holland congregation. Choosing the following portions of Scripture: Matt. 28:20, "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen." And Philip. 1:27, "Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel."

Dec. 13.—The Holland congregation gave a farewell social to Rev. and Mrs. De Boer and family, and wished them Godspeed and God's blessing.

Dec. 14.—Rev. and Mrs. De Boer and family left Holland, Michigan, and began their trip to Redlands, Calif.

Dec. 15.—A congregational meeting is held at Holland, at which time Candidate W. Hofman is called to become pastor and shepherd of the Holland congregation.

Dec. 31.—During the Old Year's evening service, a letter is read from Candidate Hofman, in which he informs the congregation at Holland that by God's Grace he accepts the call, to come over and help them, and become their pastor and shepherd.

Jan. 1.—During the New Year's morning service, a letter is read from Rev. De Boer, that he and his family had arrived safely in Redlands, Calif.

Jan. 14.—During this week Candidate and Mrs. Hofman moved to Holland, Michigan.

Jan. 20.—Installation services and ordination of pastor elect, Candidate W. Hofman took place, in the following order: Sermon delivered by Rev. B. Kok; Prayer offered by Rev. G. M. Ophoff; Form of Ordination read by Rev. M. Schipper; Ordination ceremony, laying on of hands, by all the ministers present including Rev. A. Petter. Rev. H. Hoeksema charged both Rev. W. Hofman and the congregation, using the following Scripture, Col. 4:17: "And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it." The Rev. A. Petter closed the service with prayer and thanksgiving after which our newly ordained pastor pronounced the benediction.

Jan. 23.—Rev. W. Hofman delivered his inaugural sermons to the Holland congregation, choosing the following portions of Scripture, Titus 2:15: "These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee." Phil. 2:14, 15, 16a: "Do all things without murmurings and disputings: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the Sons of God, with-

out rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; Holding forth the word of life."

Jan. 27.—The Holland congregation gave a reception to Rev. and Mrs. Hofman, and welcomed the Brother and Sister into their midst.

And in as much as it pleased God, to take from us our beloved former Pastor and Brother, Rev. P. De Boer, He again made our hearts glad with rejoicing in giving us another Servant, to go before us, and break the Bread of Life. And it is indeed a blessing that through the mouthpiece of this youthful servant, we may again hear the Word of God proclaimed to us from Sabbath to Sabbath. That Word pure and unadulterated feeding us unto the way of Life. That Word feeding the youth of God's covenant in catechism, and other midweek activities. Our hearts are filled with gratitude and thanksgiving to God, that He again gave us His Servant, our beloved Pastor and Brother, Rev. W. Hofman.

The Consistory
Protestant Reformed Church
Holland, Michigan.

IN MEMORIAM

The Men's Society of the Manhattan Protestant Reformed Church mourns the loss of one of its faithful members,

NICK A. KIMM

The Society extends its heartfelt sympathy to the bereaved family and relatives. May the Lord comfort them in the knowledge that He doeth all things well.

Rev. H. De Wolf, Pres.

H. P. Van Dyken, Sec'y.

In the afternoon of March 24, 1944, the Lord in His infinite wisdom took out of our family circle, our beloved husband, father and grandfather,

JOHN VOSS

at the age of 64 years.

We mourn the loss of a devoted husband and father and his presence will be greatly missed in our family circle. But we mourn not as those who have no hope, but are greatly comforted by the thought that he has gone to be with his Lord Whom he so humbly served, in Father's house with its many mansions.

Mrs. John Voss

P. F. C. John Voss Jr.

Mr. and Mrs. Richard Landstra

Mr. and Mrs. Geo. Holden

Mr. and Mrs. Charles Booth

Chaplain and Mrs. Simon Vroon
and 9 grand-children.