

# THE STANDARD *Bearer* A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

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## MEDITATION

### In 'The Light Of His Word

*Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.*

*Psalm 119:105.*

A lamp unto my feet!

And a light upon my path is thy Word!

Such, emphatically, is the meaning of this part of the Word of God in the one hundred and nineteenth psalm.

Not upon the Word as such, which, in fact, is the theme of the entire psalm, but upon its function and blessedness as a guiding light, as a light that shines in the darkness upon my pathway, as I have to travel it through the midst of the world, falls all the emphasis.

That is the theme of this entire section.

The world in the midst of which the psalmist walks is dark. He is very much afflicted, and suffering is his lot. His soul is continually in his hand. The enemies of the cause of the Son of God encompass him, are constantly on the alert to lay snares for him, that they may entrap him, and seduce him from the way of righteousness, or destroy him in the way. But in this darkness, the Word of God is the light that guides him, a lamp unto his feet, a light upon his path. He has sworn to keep it. His desire is to be instructed in its wisdom ever more fully. Whatever may betide, he does not forget it. Though the wicked laid snares for him, he did not err from the path of its directing light. It is his heritage forever, precious to him more than fine gold. And to that Word he has inclined his heart, that he perform the statutes of his God always.

And that is the subject of this particular passage, as the original Hebrew brings out with emphasis.

And let us note, that the preciousness and indispens-

ableness of the Word of God is here expressed as a personal testimony.

It is not a dogmatic statement. It does not declare the objective fact that the Word of God is always a light in darkness.

On the contrary, it is the confession of the poet concerning his own, personal experience.

He knows that Word, and it is precious to him. He walks in its way, and unconditionally he puts his confidence in it. Nor did it ever fail him. Always it proved to him to be a lamp unto his feet, and a light upon his path.

Unto *my* feet, upon *my* path!

Thy Word is a light!

Thy Word!

Always that Word is the Word of God!

Never is it the Word of man, even though it assumes the form of man's word.

Whether it is the Word God eternally speaks in and unto Himself, the Word that is eternally with Him and is God; or whether it is the Word He speaks in time through the works of His hands, so that the heavens declare His glory, and the firmament telleth His handiwork, day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge; or whether it is the Word which from the beginning He spoke to us through the prophets, and which he realized when He spoke through the Son in the fulness of time, exalting Him, through the cross, at His right hand; or whether it is that same Word, but now as it is preserved for us, for His people in the new dispensation, in the Holy Scriptures, —always it is emphatically the Word of God, and in no wise the word of man.

It is the Word of which God is both subject and predicate, the Word which He speaks, and which He speaks concerning Himself.

God's Word is always the revelation of the living God Himself.

And through the Word which He speaks to us, by

which He descends to our own level in order to address us in language we can grasp, He reveals to us Who and What He is, and makes known unto us the mystery of His works, the secret of His counsel, the wonders of His way, the fellowship of His covenant, the glory of His ever blessed name, the knowledge which is eternal life.

Of that Word, which the Most High speaks through Jesus Christ our Lord as the God of our salvation, the poet speaks.

It is His Word to His people, to the heirs of the promise, by which He calls them: "Behold, I your God!"

And that Word is ever the same.

Whether it is spoken through Moses, emphasizing to the people of Israel that the Word is nigh unto them, or through Paul, teaching us that faith cometh by the thing heard, and the thing heard by the Word of God; whether it is the psalmist through whom it is spoken, and who relates of his experience of that Word, tasting it and finding it sweeter than honey and the honeycomb, or Peter, presenting it as the power through which we are regenerated out of uncorruptible seed; whether Isaiah complains that hardly anyone believed his report, or John speaks of the Word that is become flesh and dwelled among us; always that Word is the same. O, to be sure, as the Word is repeatedly spoken in various forms and diverse manners, it gains in fulness, in riches of grace, in brightness of its light, in clarity of revelation. From the time the Protevangel was spoken in the ears of our fallen first parents, to the fulness of time there was, as it were, an ever continuing divine exegesis of that first Word of God in Paradise, through patriarchs and prophets, through shadows and ceremonies, through symbols and types; and when God, in these latter days, spoke to us through His Son the light of the Word broke through in all its glory and splendor of salvation; yet, essentially that Word never changes. It is ever the same

And always it is the gospel!

And the gospel is the promise!

And the promise is Jesus Christ, the Light of the world!

And the heart of that gospel is the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead! And the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the center around which all things revolve, and unto which all things must and do tend! For he is "the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence."

Always the resurrected Lord is the heart of the Word of God!

That is why the preacher of that Word may never hesitate to speak of the risen Lord, whether he ministers unto that Word as he finds it in Genesis or Revelation, in Isaiah or in Paul, in the Psalms or in the gospel according to John.

And always that Word, as Word of God, is "quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

This is the reason why the psalmist, centuries before the dawn of the fulness of time, could simply speak of "thy Word", without fear of being misunderstood.

The Word may express itself in many commandments and statutes, but it still is one and the same Word of God. For God is One, and Christ is One, and the Word of God is one.

It is the resurrection of the crucified Son of God! Jesus Christ, the Lord!

Marvellous Word of God!

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A lamp unto my feet!

And a light upon my path is thy Word!

The two predicates by which the psalmist describes the Word of God in relation to himself, as he walks in the midst of this world, principally mean the same thing, express one idea: the Word is a light that enables him to walk confidently, hopefully, though beyond the lightbeam of that Word all is darkness.

A familiar figure the text contains.

What dweller in the country, when in the inky darkness of a moonless night he would visit a neighbour, does not take with him a lantern or flashlight, that he be able to find his way safely through the darkness? All about him it is dark; but he has a "lamp unto his feet, and a light upon his path." Or, to use a more modern figure, the traveler by auto switches on the headlights of his car when the road grows dim and the darkness of the night descends upon him. Beyond the few hundred feet of light flashed upon the road ahead of him, all is dark; but in that light upon his path he confidently speeds ahead to his destination.

Such is the figure.

And, although but a figure, it expresses a deep spiritual reality.

For the believer, the heir of the promise, is a pilgrim of the night. He travels through the darkness of this world. Night, pitch black night, descended on the world in Paradise the first, and the sun went down when it was still morning. It is the night of sin and death, from the which there is, as far as we are concerned, no way out. There is a debt we can never pay;

the debt of our guilt. There is the power and dominion of corruption, from which we can never deliver ourselves. There is the grim enemy of death, the fear of whom pursues us all our lifetime, and whom we can never escape. There is no way out into the light. Nor can we invent a way. All the wisdom of men, all the philosophy of the world, is vain, and proved itself powerless to show the way out.

And through that darkness travel the heirs of the promise!

For in that world they are born. And under that darkness they are brought into existence. And through that darkness they must needs travel. The guilt of the world is their guilt. Through flesh and blood they, too, are under the curse of death, and pine away under the fierce wrath of God. Children of wrath they are, by nature, as also "the others."

But they have light in the darkness!

Only, this time, it is not a light which they flash upon their way from within: it shines from without. This light is not a lantern which they can light, and which they can carry with them into the night: it flashes on their path from the beyond. It is not the headlight of their traveling vehicle which they have power to switch on: its source rather beckons them from the distance!

It is light upon their pathway from above!

The source of this light is the Word of God, the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead!

For that resurrection of Jesus, our Lord, nay, better still, the risen Lord Himself, is the way out of our darkness into the everlasting light of glory in God's heavenly tabernacle! And the Word of God through that resurrected Lord is the light upon our pathway, the lamp unto our feet!

It reveals the way out of guilt into everlasting righteousness, the forgiveness of sin, the adoption unto children and heirs. That Word of the God of our salvation is the light, in which as they travel by it, the heirs of the promise have the assurance of the way out of the slavery and dominion of sin into the glorious liberty of the children of God. It shines upon the way out of the lie into the truth of the knowledge of God, out of corruption into everlasting holiness, out of the lust of the flesh into the love of God, out of death into life, out of the depth of hell into the glory of God's presence; yea, even out of our present earthly imperfection into that heavenly height of eternal life, the essence of which is the highest possible realization of God's blessed covenant of friendship, so that we shall see Him face to face, and know Him even as we are known!

And all this blessed light streams upon our pathway from the face of the Risen Lord!

He died and rose again!

He, the One that was anointed from before the

foundation of the world to be the firstborn among many brethren, the head of His Church, He went into the depth of our death, and bore all our sins away!

He was made perfect through sufferings!

He went through the darkness of our death in such a way that the way was forever left open for all His brethren to follow Him!

He obtained everlasting righteousness and life for all whom the Father gave Him, the heirs of the promise.

And He beams His own resurrection-light upon their pathway as they walk through the darkness of the present night!

Thy Word!

A lamp unto my feet, a light upon my path!

A sure light, in which I walk confidently, for it is the Word of God that cannot lie!

And a blessed light, that fills me with joy in the midst of sorrow, with peace in the midst of unrest, with righteousness in the midst of sin, with life in the midst of death!

O, glorious light of Thy Word!

God of my salvation!

---

Unto *my* feet!

And upon *my* path!

The confession is strictly personal.

The psalmist does not speak of the light of the Word in a dogmatic way, apart from his own relation to that light: he speaks from actual experience.

He knows and loves that light. He walks in it. He follows its direction. He puts all his trust in it, so that, rejecting all the would-be light of the word of man, he keeps his feet in the light-path of the Word of God only.

And that implies that the light of that Word shone and shines in his heart. O, to be sure, that Word is a light, is the only light that shows the way through and out of the darkness, whether we know and acknowledge it as such or not. But never will we choose the direction of that light by nature. For we are foolish, enemies of God, always choosing the lie rather than the truth, and loving the darkness rather than the light. And, therefore, the light of that Word must shine in our hearts, if ever it is to become a light upon our pathway.

Or, to abandon the figure for a moment, the Word of God, but emphatically as the *Word of God*, the Word which God speaks, quick and powerful, must be spoken to us, to our hearts, before we are translated out of darkness into light!

Thy Word, my light: O, glorious grace!

Blessed be God! The God of my salvation!

Hallelujah!

H. H.

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### CONTENTS

#### MEDITATION —

IN THE LIGHT OF HIS WORD .....493

Rev. H. Hoeksema

#### EDITORIALS —

THE TEXT OF A COMPLAINT .....496

THE LIBERATED CHURCHES IN THE NETHERLANDS.....497

EXPOSITION OF THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM .....499

Rev. H. Hoeksema

THE OLD AND THE NEW COVENANT .....502

MONASTICISM .....504

Rev. G. M. Ophoff

EEN GEBED DAVIDS .....507

Rev. G. Vos

CHRIST FORBIDDING TO SPREAD HIS FAME .....509

Rev. L. Doezeema

TEMPTED, YET WITHOUT SIN .....511

Rev. J. A. HEYS

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## EDITORIALS

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### The Text of a Complaint

With reference to the last point of the "Complaint", I have demonstrated thus far, first of all, that the claim on the part of the complainants to the right of an irrational position must be denied them: their position, that God seeks sincerely the salvation of the reprobate is not irrational, but presupposes an Arminian view of reprobation; and, secondly, that their argument in support of this their contention is very superficial throughout.

The last point I wish to make in this connection is that, in their claim that God seeks the salvation of the reprobate, they directly contradict Holy Writ.

In support of this statement, I might make the general observation, frequently made by Calvin, that it is not God's good pleasure that the gospel be preached to all men, or even to the majority of men. This is simply a fact, but this is also plainly expressed in Scripture, and it is pointed out in our Confessions. A fact it is, for in the old dispensation the gospel was revealed, for many a century, only to one nation; and at the beginning of the new dispensation the preaching of the gospel was entrusted to only a few men, so that it must necessarily require many years before the tidings of salvation could reach every nation. And Israel is more than once reminded of this distinction, as, for instance, in Psalm 147:19, 20: "He sheweth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation: and as for his judgments, they have not known them. Praise ye the Lord." And the Canons of Dordrecht, II, 5, declare that the promise of the gospel "ought to be declared and published to all nations, and to all persons promiscuously and without distinction, *to whom God out of his good pleasure sends the gospel.*" Now, if the preaching of the gospel is strictly under the direction of God's pleasure, and if, according to that good pleasure, the gospel was sent to only a comparatively small number of men, what becomes of this earnest desire on the part of God to save the reprobates?

But I will remark this only in passing. The complainants might object that they do not claim that God sincerely seeks the salvation of all the reprobates, but only of those that hear the gospel. I will, therefore, conclusively prove to them from Scripture that by this claim they contradict, not themselves, for this they admit, but Holy Scripture itself. And I will do so by quoting a few passages from Holy Writ that leave no doubt as to their meaning.

Turn to the sixth chapter from the prophecy of Isaiah. It speaks of Isaiah's calling to preach. And what is his very special commission? You find it in the following words: "Go, and tell this people. Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and convert, and be healed." vss. 9, 10. Let the complainants admit that Isaiah is called to preach the gospel to Israel, and that, through this preaching the remnant according to the election of grace will be saved. And let them also admit that, according to the good pleasure of God, this same preaching must serve to the hardening and damnation of the reprobate. They will have to admit this, for the text allows of no other interpretation. And admitting this, they will have to confess that their claim that God through the preaching of the gospel sincerely seeks the salvation of the reprobates stands in flat contradiction with the Word of God.

If there should be any doubt in their minds as to the meaning of the above passage from Isaiah, let them turn to John 12:37ff. where we read: "But though he had done many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they *could not* believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them." What, in the light of these passages, becomes of the vain theory that God, in the preaching of the gospel, sincerely seeks the salvation of the reprobate, as the complainants claim?

Or again, consider the explanation the Lord Jesus Himself offers to His disciples of the fact that He speaks to the people in parables: "And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables: That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins may be forgiven them." Note here: 1. That under the preaching of the gospel *it is given* to the elect to know the mystery of the kingdom of heaven. 2. That they that are without are the reprobate. 3. That before their eyes the things of the kingdom of God *are done* in parables: every time a sower goes forth to sow, he enacts a thing of the kingdom of God in parable. 4. That the Lord points to these enacted parables by His teaching. 5. That this is done, not to seek the salvation of the reprobates, but

that they may emphatically see and hear (seeing see, and hearing hear) with their natural perception, without spiritually understanding these things. 6. And, finally, that the purpose is expressed in the words: "Lest they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them."

Passages like the above (and we will quote more) plainly teach that it is God's good pleasure, not to save, but to harden the reprobates by the preaching of the gospel.

The complainants contradict Scripture.

H. H.

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## The Liberated Churches In The Netherlands

The following information, which contains a literal copy of a protest or letter sent by the Revs. M. De Goede and C. Veenhof (well-known to former readers of *De Reformatie*), and twenty eight elders to their consistory in Utrecht, and is, therefore, official and reliable, may serve to throw additional light on the cause of the schism in the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands.

By way of introduction my informer writes that the above brethren had sent a protest to their consistory as early as June 1944, in which they had declared that they could not acquiesce in the doctrinal declarations made by the Synod in 1942. The following letter is a further elucidation of that former protest.

We must bear in mind that the protesting brethren have not yet joined the "liberated churches."

The document here follows in the Dutch:

"Wij verklaren bij dezen:

1. Dat wij de uitspraak, dat volgens de Belijdenis der Kerken het zaad des Verbonds krachtens de belofte Gods te houden is voor wedergeboren en in Christus geheiligd, totdat het tegendeel blijkt bij het opwassen uit hun wandel of leer:

kunnen aanvaarden als de practische omschrijving—zooals die van 1905-1942 in de Gereformeerde Kerken gold—van den regel, waarnaar wij met de kinderen des Verbonds, die immers in de gemeente Gods begrepen zijn, in de praktijk van het kerkelijk leven zullen handelen. Het behandelen van de kinderen des Verbonds naar dezen regel sluit niet uit, vraagt ook niet als aanvullin, maar sluit volstrekt in zich den voortdurenden oproep tot geloof en bekeering, de ernstige vermaning om te waken voor afval, en de in iedere werkelijke bediening des Woords met kracht uitgaande

opwekking om zichzelf te beproeven of men in het geloof is.

2. Dat de regel om de kinderen des Verbonds aldus te behandelen, gefundeerd is in het feit, dat hun de belofte des Verbonds toekomt. Deze belofte, die een toezegging is van alle weldaden des Verbonds, dat is dus van Christus en alles wat Hij voor ons verworven heeft en door Zijn Geest in ons toepast, is onlosmakelijk verbonden met den eisch des Verbonds om in de wegen des Heeren te wandelen, de toezegging van den zegen des Verbonds, welken God in den weg der geloofsgheoorzaamheid schenken wil, en de dreiging met den vloek des Verbonds, indien op zoo groote genade geen acht wordt geslagen. Deze eenheid van belofte, eisch en toezegging van zegen en vloek is zoo innig, dat de belofte, indien ze daarvan gescheiden wordt, geheel teniet gaat. In dezen onverbreekbaren samenhang komt de belofte des Verbonds aan alle kinderen der geloovigen toe.

3. Dat de Doop is de verzegeling van deze Verbondsbelofte. In overeenstemming met de uitspraak van de Gereformeerde Synode van 1863 en met Prof. Lindeboom en degenen, wier conscientie in 1905 moest worden gerustgesteld en ook inderdaad gerustgesteld werd, gelooven wij, dat volgens de Belijdenisschriften de Heilige Doop wezenlijk één is met de besnijdenis. Hij beteekent en verzegelt niet wat in den doopeling aanwezig is, of verondersteld wordt aanwezig te zijn, maar de beloften van het genadeverbond, in het Evangelie geopenbaard.

4. Dat de Doop, die in overeenstemming met Gods ordinantiën, dat wil dus zeggen, door van Zijnentwege aangewezen ambtsdragers met de door Hem Zelf vastgestelde Doopsformule, en door Hem Zelf aangewezen personen wordt bediend, steeds is een waarachtige en weldadige Doop.

5. Dat de aanvaarding van den in 1 genoemden regel voor het kerkelijk handelen met de kinderen des Verbonds niet insluit de noodzakelijkheid van het veronderstellen, dies van het aanvaarden met een hypothetisch oordeel, dat de Heilige Geest in het hart van elk kind des Verbonds, op het moment van den Doop, het onvernietigbare werk Zijner wederbarende genade begonnen heeft. Wij kunnen deze veronderstelling niet aanvaarden. Vooreerst niet, omdat ons God volkomen onkundig heeft gehouden omtrent het tijdstip van den aanvang Zijner wederbarende werking in de harten der uitverkoren kinderen, en het ons daarom niet past daaromtrent veronderstellingen te maken. En vervolgens niet, omdat naar het woord van Prof. Bavinck, het Verbond aan de weldaden des Verbonds en dus ook aan de wedergeboorte voorafgaat en het ontvangen van den Doop, die de verzegeling is van het *opnemen* in het Verbond, niet noodzakelijkerwijs insluit het reeds ontvangen hebben van de weldaden, die God in den weg

des Verbonds op Zijn, voor ons verborgen, tijd schenken wil.

6. Dat, t.a.v. de kerkrechtelijke kwestie, wij met de tijdens de Doleantie bewust en metterdaad en rehtens aanvaarde kerkrechtelijke beginselen nog ten volle vasthouden:

dat de macht van den kerkeraad naar haar aard hooger is dan die der meerdere vergaderingen, omdat zij een door Christus Zelf rechtstreeks gegeven en alzoo een oorspronkelijke, volledige, en duurzame macht is, terwijl de macht van de meerdere vergaderingen een door Christus via de kerken verleende en alzoo afgeleide macht is, beperkt en tijdelijk.

dat in de bepalingen van art. 31 D.K.O. welke voorschrijft, dat de besluiten der meerdere vergadering voor vast en bondig gehouden zullen worden, tenzij het bewezen worde te strijden tegen het Woord Gods of tegen de artikelen in deze Generale Synode besloten, etc., met het "bewezen worde" bedoeld wordt een voor-zichzelf bewezen achten, dat Gods Woord de naleving van wat goed gevonden is, verbiedt, waarbij men uiteraard verplicht is althans te pogen dit bewijs voor de betrokken kerkelijke vergadering te leggen, omdat anders, naar het oordeel van Prof. Rutgers, "deze bepaling onzin zou zijn."

en dat het in strijd is met de D.K.O. een ambtsdrager te schorsen met volkomen negeering van de in eerster instantie bij die schorsing betrokken kerkeraad.

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Here follows a brief digest of the above letter in English:

1. The authors can accept the synodical declaration that the children of the covenant must be considered as sanctified in Christ and regenerated, until the contrary appears, as a practical definition of the rule according to which in the life of the church the children of the covenant must be treated.

2. That in the application of this rule, which is based on the fact that the promise is for the children as well as for the adults, it must never be forgotten, that the promise of the covenant is inseparable from the demand to walk in the way of the covenant, from the assurance of the blessing of the covenant to be had in the way of faith and obedience, and from the threat of the curse of the covenant in case of disobedience. Only in this inseparable connection is the promise for the children of the covenant.

3. That baptism seals the promise of the covenant, not a certain present or presupposed grace in the children.

4. That baptism, properly administered, is always true and beneficent.



5. The authors cannot accept the theory of pre-supposed regeneration. The moment when God performs the grace of the rebirth in the elect children of the covenant is hid from us. Besides, they are received in the covenant before the work of grace is begun in them. That they are thus taken up into God's covenant, therefore, does not necessarily imply that they already received the benefits of the covenant.

6. Concerning the church-political question, the authors hold that the power of the consistory is higher than that of the broader gatherings, classis and synod. Art. 31 of the Church Order, in their opinion, means that no one is bound to carry out the decisions of the broader gatherings if for himself he is convinced that they are contrary to the Word of God or the Confessions, provided that he is in duty bound to bring his objections to the ecclesiastical gathering concerned. It is contrary to the Church Order to suspend office-bearers without even considering their consistory.

The consistory of Utrecht deliberated upon the above mentioned document, and reached the following conclusions: 1. That it contains nothing that is in conflict with the Confessions and the Church Order. 2. That it opens the possibility to restore unity, both in the church of Utrecht and in the churches in general. 3. That the Consistory, therefore, will seek contact with the other churches, in order that brethren and sisters who are principally one may remain or again be gathered in the same communion of churches, and at the same communion table.

H. H.

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## The Triple Knowledge

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### An Exposition Of The Heidelberg Catechism

Part Two.

Of Man's Redemption

Lord's Day XVI.

4.

The Descension Into Hell.

The third possible explanation of the article concerning Christ's descension into hell, and the one which, according to Dr. Phillip Schaff (Creeds of Christendom, II, 46), presents the meaning of the early church, is that it refers to "an actual self-manifestation of Christ

after the crucifixion to all the departed spirits." And Dr. Schaff continues: "As such the descent is a part of the universality of the scheme of redemption, and forms the transition from the state of humiliation to the state of exaltation."

Whether or not "this is the historical explanation, according to the belief of the ancient church," as Dr. Schaff thinks, we have no means to verify. However, the explanation is rather vague, and it is rather difficult to see how the "descent into hell" in this sense could be a part of the universality of the scheme of redemption. Besides, it opens a wide field of speculation as to the purpose and effect of this self-manifestation of Christ to all the dead in *hades*. Why should Christ thus manifest Himself to all the dead, and what could such a self-manifestation add to the revelation of Jesus Christ as the Saviour of His people?

We need not seriously consider the view that our Lord, after His crucifixion, descended into the place of desolation in order to suffer the tortures of the damned, neither can this have been the meaning of the early church, if the explanation of Dr. Schaff given above is correct. Whatever the early church may have understood by *hades*, it certainly cannot have been the place of eternal punishment, for it was to *all* the departed spirits that Christ is supposed to have manifested Himself. Besides, the notion that the Saviour suffered the torments of hell after His crucifixion is contrary to the plain teaching of Scripture. Evident it is that the Lord, after He gave up the ghost, cannot have suffered the torments of hell *in body and soul*, for His body rested in the grave of Joseph of Arimathea. Besides, such a view would be in conflict with the word our Lord addressed to the malefactor from the cross: "Today thou shalt be with me in paradise." And had He not announced in His next to the last cross-utterance: "It is finished"? Surely, this triumphant outcry was uttered in the consciousness that the work of redemption, the sacrifice of reconciliation, had been completed and perfected, and that no more suffering remained to be endured.

Nor can this possibly be the meaning of Ps. 16:10, as quoted by the apostle Peter on the day of Pentecost, Acts 2:27: "Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." The reference here is not the place of eternal torture, but to *hades*, the bodiless state of the dead. In that state the Lord's soul was in paradise, and His body lay in the grave. And the meaning of the passage is that God would not leave Christ's soul in that disembodied state, neither would He allow His body to be swallowed up by the corruption of the grave, but He would glorify His Holy One in the resurrection. This is evident from the following: 1. It may not be ignored that in Ps. 16 it is David that is speaking. True, he speaks as a type of Christ, and ultimately his

words are applicable to Christ only. Nevertheless, what is true of the antitype principally, and in the full sense of the word, is certainly predicated of the type in the first instance. The words, therefore, must also be applied to David. The psalmist was confident, and that, too, with his eye on the Holy One that was to come, that God would not leave his soul in hell, but through death would show him the pathway of life. But it follows that David cannot be speaking of the place of eternal damnation, but that he refers to *sjeool*, the state of the dead. 2. On the day of Pentecost, the apostle Peter is not speaking of Christ's deliverance from the place of the damned, but of His deliverance from death, and of His glorious resurrection. This is evident from the twenty fourth verse: "Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it." In proof of this, namely, that it was not possible that Christ should be holden of death, he refers to the passage from the sixteenth psalm. The very purpose for which it is quoted, therefore proves that the apostle Peter was not thinking of a descent of Christ into the place of the damned, but simply of *hades*, the state of the dead, and of Christ's deliverance from it. 3. And this is also the application made of this text from the sixteenth psalm by the apostle, when he says: "Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne: He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither did his flesh see corruption."

In the light of Scripture, therefore, the view that Christ personally descended into the place of the damned there to suffer vicariously the pains of eternal torture, cannot stand.\*

Roman Catholic theologians appeal to I Peter 3:19, 20, to support their view that Christ descended into what they call *Limbo*, a portal of hell, in order to deliver thence the Old Testament saints, to whom heaven was not opened until Christ's own ascent from death into glory. Thus in "Radio Replies," the Rev. Dr. Leslie Rumble gives the following answer to the question why Christ descended into hell: "Christ did not go to hell in the modern and restricted sense of the word. At the time when the Apostles' Creed was composed, the word hell was used to designate any state of existence lower than heaven. After his death, our Lord's soul went, says St. Peter, to preach to those spirits that were in prison. That is, he joined those souls which were detained from the fulness of heaven and who were awaiting the opening of heaven to mankind by Him. This descent of Christ's soul into hell

was obviously not to the hell of the eternally lost, but to what we call the Limbo or detention place of the souls of the just who lived prior to our Lord's coming into this world."

However, this bit of Roman Catholic exegesis cannot stand for a moment, even though there may be room for difference of opinion as to the true meaning of the passage in I Peter 3:19, 20. This well-known passage reads as follows: "By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water." Now let us note: 1. That the apostle is not speaking here at all of a personal descent of Christ into "prison", after His crucifixion and before His resurrection, but of a going to preach to the spirits that were in prison *after His resurrection and through the Spirit*. This is the simple and plain meaning of the words. The introductory words of vs. 19, "by which" refer back to the latter part of the eighteenth verse: "being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit." And then follows: "By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison." The order of the phrases, therefore, demands that we conceive of this mission of Christ to the spirits in prison, as having taken place after His resurrection. Moreover, He went, not in His human nature, or in His disembodied soul, but in the Spirit by Whom also He was quickened from the dead. And through this Spirit He is able to send His Word down unto the spirits in prison without a personal descent. 2. That the apostle by the phrase "spirits in prison," certainly cannot designate the Old Testament saints, unto whom heaven was not supposed to be opened until the coming of Christ. For they are described as those "which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, when the ark was a preparing." Now, this so very clearly refers to the ungodly of Noah's day, when the righteous were persecuted all the day long, and God saved them by the waters of the deluge, that one can only be amazed at the curious bit of exegesis that makes Old Testament saints out of them. 3. That the apostle does not speak with one word, nor even suggest in any way, that these "spirits in prison" were delivered and taken to heaven by Christ. The text simply informs us that He "preached" to them. And the word used here for "preached" does not mean at all that He preached the gospel unto them, but simply that He proclaimed, announced something as a herald. And besides, Scripture knows nothing of a Limbo, in which the Old Testament saints were kept until heaven was opened for them by Christ.

For all these reasons we must reject the Roman Catholic view of the descension of Christ into hell.

Nor does the Lutheran explanation, that, after His



death and before His resurrection, Christ descended into hell to proclaim His victory to the "spirits in prison" find support in the text from Peter 3:19,20. It is, indeed, quite in harmony with that passage to say that Christ announced His victory to those spirits that persecuted His people, and mocked at His cause in the world, but this word of victory was proclaimed by Christ, not between His death and resurrection, nor by a personal descent into hell, but after His resurrection and exaltation, and through the Spirit that is given Him.

We conclude, therefore, that, whatever may have been the significance of the clause concerning the descension of Christ into hell in the mind of the early church, Scripture knows of no such descent into the place of the damned, nor of such a self-manifestation of Christ to all the departed spirits.

And if the article in the Apostles' Creed that speaks of this descent is to be retained, the explanation of it offered by the Heidelberg Catechism must be adopted, in spite of the fact that this is not its historical meaning.

Christ endured 'inexpressible anguish, pains, terrors, and hellish agonies.'

He endured them in all his sufferings, but especially on the cross. And even on the cross there is a gradual increase in his suffering of these hellish agonies. This is evident from all that occurs on and about the cross. During the first half of the six hour period of the crucifixion, the sun still sheds its light upon the awful spectacle on Calvary, the enemies have the audacity to mock and jeer at the crucified One, and the Lord Himself finds it possible to take interest in the things about Him, praying for His enemies, committing His mother to the care of the disciple whom He loved, and assuring the penitent malefactor of final salvation. But during the last three hours, the cross is completely taken out of men's hands. Darkness, that dreadful symbol of God's wrathful presence, descends on the scene; the enemies, amazed at the fearful omen, cease from mockery, and grow silent; and for the space of three hours the crucified One is completely wrapped up in His own suffering: not a word is heard from His lips. Then, almost at the end of these last three hours of His passion, He makes it known that He has been descending into the depths, that He has, indeed, reached the very bottom of hell, in the question of amazement: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

What does it mean?

The answer follows presently: "It is finished!"

The measure of suffering, and of obedience, is filled. All that was to be borne of the wrath of God against the sin of all the elect, had been endured even to the end. Nothing, emphatically nothing, remains to procure for us eternal righteousness and life.

The Son of God had tasted all there is to be tasted

in the agony of death as the expression of God's just wrath.

That is the meaning of the descension into hell.

Hence, the Catechism, contemplating this descent into hell in its relation to and significance for the believer, explains that it assures the latter, even in his greatest temptations, that he is saved, delivered from the wrath of God and the torments of hell.

Many are the temptations. And let us remember that the German word that is translated by "temptations" here is *Anfechtungen*. It has a slightly different connotation from temptations. It denotes that the believer is assailed, from within and from without, to move him from his sure ground of confidence in Christ, of his assurance that his sins are forgiven, and that he has obtained eternal righteousness and life by mere grace. His own conscience accuses him, sin from within would bring him to doubt, the valley of the shadow of death appears to testify that God's wrath is still upon him, the world laughs at his confidence, the devil assails his assurance.

Can, he, then, be saved?

In all these temptations, however, he clings by faith to the death of the Son of God, that finished it all, which was a suffering of hellish agonies in his stead, and in his behalf.

And from the darkness of his present death, and from the depth of his greatest temptations, contemplating that death of the Son of God, that death even unto the bottom of hell, and clinging to that Son of God, Who died and was raised, he knows that nothing remains to be done, and that he is for ever delivered from torments of hell.

The death of the Son of God is the sole ground of his confidence.

Nothing can separate him from His love!

H. H.

\* This is also my reply to the article by J. J. H. in the previous Standard Bearer.

H. H.

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Day of judgment, day of wonders!

Hark! the trumpet's awful sound,

Louder than a thousand thunders,

Shakes the vast creation round!

How the summons

Will the sinner's heart confound!

At His call, the dead awaken,

Rise to life from earth and sea,

All the powers of nature shaken

By His look prepare to flee:

Careless sinner,

What will then become of thee?

## The Old and the New Covenant

(Continuation of an article under the above caption appearing in the previous issue).

That there was actually such a symbolical-typical satisfaction, forgiveness and sanctification, is also proved by the transaction that consisted in Aaron's laying both hands upon the head of the scape-goat and confessing over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel and this goat's bearing upon him all their iniquities. The passage that sets forth the instructions for this ceremony reads as follow, "And Aaron shall lay both hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness; and the goat shall bear upon him all the iniquities into the land not inhabited; . . ." Lev. 16:21, 22. Now it must not be supposed that we have to do here with an empty form, that by the imposition of hands absolutely nothing was laid upon the head of the live goat and that consequently this creature bore upon him absolutely nothing. Were this true, there would be nothing in the entire ceremony to which the term *shadow*, *symbol*, *type*, could be made to apply. Besides, if this scripture definitely affirms that the "live goat shall bear upon him all the iniquities of the people," it will not do for us to say that actually the animal bore upon him nothing at all. What it bore was their iniquities, that is, the *guilt* of their iniquities, the *guilt*, namely, the obligation (and this is guilt) to suffer the penalty of their sins, not the real penalty—the goat was incapable of suffering this—thus, not the real penalty, which is everlasting death, but the symbolical-typical replica of this punishment, namely, physical death, and, being driven into that uninhabited land. Consider that this ceremony involved also a goat that was slain for the sins of the people. Thus, in this old covenant, the animal was appointed by God to stand in the offender's room, to momentarily, for the time being, free him, by dying in his stead, from the penalty of physical death. But even that freeing from this death lacked reality, for the sacrifice had to be repeated every day at the sanctuary. Besides, when the offender's hour of death would strike, these sacrifices could not avail.

But there is still more proof that there was such a thing as a symbolical-typical forgiveness of sin and salvation in the old covenant. Consider this scripture passage. "And the Lord spake unto Moses saying, If a soul sin, and commit a trespass against the Lord. . . he shall bring his trespass offering unto the Lord, a ram without blemish, unto the priest. And the priest

shall make an atonement for him—the original has, and the priest shall make a covering for him with blood before the Lord. The meaning is that the priest shall cover the offender with the shed blood of his animal sacrifice. "And," so we read further, "it shall be forgiven him for anything of all that he hath done in trespassing therein." Lev. 6:1-7. The sin was forgiven him, be he reprobate or elect, penitent or impenitent in his heart, if only he allow himself to be covered by the blood of his typical sacrifice. The law did not require that he be asked if he were truly penitent or that he be told that his sin would remain unremitted, if he repented not. It shows that the sin was not truly forgiven, that the pardon bestowed was only of a symbolical-typical character. And, as long as the pardoned offender refrained from walking in gross sins, which, in the commonwealth of Israel, were capital crimes that called for the extreme penalty of death, he—the pardoned offender,—would continue to share in the typical prosperity of Canaan, be he ever so wicked in his inward parts. But if the pardoned reprobated offender walked in gross sins—if he desecrated the Sabbath, if he committed adultery, if he prostrated himself before the shrine of an idol, if he blasphemed, the law required that he be put to death, be cut off from the land of the living, thus be banished, through death, from the presence of God and his brethren. For such sins, the typical sacrifices did not avail. This banishment of the offender from the sanctuary of God and the land of the living in Canaan was type of the everlasting desolation of the doomed in hell. For Israel's temple was a type of the sanctuary above and Canaan was a type of heaven. Here we have come upon the basic reason of the great fear of physical death even on the part of the true believers in Israel. Through death they were cut off from God's house, the only house of God they knew of, to wit, the sanctuary in the earthy Jerusalem. Through death they were cut off from God's people. Through death they were exiled from the only heaven of which they knew, namely, the earthy Canaan. The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews makes mention of this fear of death on the part of true believers. I quote, "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He—namely, Christ—also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them, who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage," Hebrews 2:14, 15. The reference here is to the saints of the old covenant, and the writer tells us indirectly that they were in fear of death all their lifetime. From this fear they were delivered by the revelation of atonement, resurrection and glorification of Christ; for this revelation directly set before them for the first time the realities of the kingdom of heaven, preindicated by the typical things

of the old covenant. The sole cure for the fear of death is the resurrection of Christ. Here we have also come upon the reason of the disconsolate grief of the exiled believers in Babylon. They had been banished from the only city of God—the earthy Jerusalem—of which they knew. They had been banished from the only house of God—the earthy temple—of which they knew. They had been banished from the only heaven—the earthy Canaan—of which they knew. In the light of these observations such psalms as Ps. 137 take on meaning for us. “By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our hearts upon the willows in the midst thereof. For they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the sons of Zion. How shall we sing the Lord’s song in a strange land? If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let thy right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.” And Psalm 126: “When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing. . . .”

It ought to be plain now that all the things of the old covenant were symbolical and that therefore, as the writer of the Hebrews tells us, this covenant was symbolical-typical, that it was not the true covenant of grace but a shadow thereof.

This old typical covenant, according to the prophet Jeremiah, was established with the people of Israel at Mt. Sinai. The report thereof is contained in the book of Exodus, chapters 19-24 inclusive. The people of Israel were come to Sinai. The Lord communicated unto Moses the ten commandments and a number of precepts which are contained in chapters 21, 22, 23, which in turn were communicated by Moses unto the people, who, when they had heard, replied with one voice, “All the words which the Lord hath said we will do.” Thereupon Moses wrote all the words of the Lord. Rising up early the following morning, he builded an altar under the mount, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel, and young men sent by Moses, offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen unto the Lord. Moses took half of the blood, and put it in basins; and half of the blood he sprinkled upon the altar. Thereupon he took the laws and precepts that he had written—called in the sacred text, “The Book of the Covenant” and again read them in the audience of the people, who again answered, “All that the Lord hath said, we will do.” Thereupon Moses took the blood of the sacrifice and sprinkled it upon the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words.’ So, at this time and at this place did the Lord establish with Israel this old

typical covenant. At this time and at this place this old typical covenant and its law was added, imposed upon the true covenant of grace and its promise—the covenant of grace that the Lord four hundred years previous had established with Abraham. But this typical covenant and its law did not annul the covenant of grace and its promise. Let us quote scripture also here. “Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made”—the promises of the true covenant of grace. “He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one seed, And to thy seed, which is Christ”. This text forms the conclusive proof that the covenant established with Abraham, was, in distinction from the covenant established with Israel at Sinai, a true covenant of grace and that the covenant established with Israel was, in distinction from this true covenant of grace, a typical covenant, a type of the true. For the apostle continues, “And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ—the true covenant of grace—the law—the law of the typical covenant—which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise—and the covenant to which this promise belonged—of none effect,” Gal. 3:16, 17. No indeed, that typical covenant with its law did not disannul the true covenant of grace with its promises. This true covenant with its true promises abided everlastingly. And by these promises the elect in Israel continued to live through the ages of the dispensation of this typical covenant and its law. Why was this typical covenant with its law added to the true covenant of grace with its promises? Paul gives us the answer, “But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith,” Gal. 3:23, 24. Just why and how this should bring the believers unto Christ, is a matter with which we now cannot deal, for the lack of time.

In the light of all that has thus far been presented, it ought not to be difficult to understand and explain all that the Scriptures have to say about this old covenant in comparison with the new.

Of course, this old covenant waxed old and vanished away, when the body, the reality, made its appearance in the fulness of time. This old covenant with its typical ordinances and institutions had to vanish away as it was but a shadow.

Of course, this old covenant was a covenant with members in whose inward parts the Lord wrote not His law by virtue of their being in this covenant. Writing His laws in the inward parts of His elect is a doing of the God and Father of Christ whereby He truly regenerates them, thus, whereby He realizes in them by Christ’s spirit the fruits of the atonement of Christ. How then could He write His laws in the in-

ward parts of His people by reason of their being in this typical covenant, if this covenant was but a shadow, reposing upon a sacrifice—the animal sacrifice by blood—that likewise was but a shadow? And therefore this typical covenant was also broken. God's law was not in the hearts of its members. And so we also understand why this typical covenant was a covenant with inferior, that is, typical promises. That covenant, being typical, could not otherwise but hold forth promises that were typical, namely, such promises as long life in the earthly Canaan and the promise of an earthy prosperity in this earthy Canaan. And so it is also understandable why the members of this typical covenant should continually be saying to one another "Know the Lord," should be continually exhorting one another to serve the Lord. The reason again is that this covenant was but a shadow, that thus its members were not God fearing, had not the law of God in their inward parts by reason of their being in this covenant. Hence, they had to be urged to serve the Lord. They had to be *told* in unbroken continuity. The admonition, the prompting of the law "Serve, know, the Lord", is only for sinners, not for a holy, sinless man, with the law in his inward parts. Says Paul, "Knowing this that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind. . . ." I Tim. 1:9, 10. For such is the law, the admonitions of the law. Hence, in heaven, among the redeemed made perfect, the law is silent. In heaven, on the new earth the people of God will not say to one another, Know the Lord. For there will be no sin there, on the new earth. But there the law will be in the inward parts of men. And the law in the inward parts of a man does not urge the man to know the Lord. It is when the law is external to a man that it comes to him with these promptings not only, but curses him to hell in his sin. Thus, that from which Christ through His atonement delivered His people is not the law, not the law in the inward parts, but the law as external to us. The law in the inward parts is the royal law of liberty of which James speaks when he says, "If ye fulfill the royal law according to the Scriptures, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, Thou doest well."

It is in the light of what has been presented that we can also understand John's preaching of the baptism of repentance unto the remission of sins, his saying to the multitude, O generation of vipers, Bring forth fruits therefore worthy of repentance. . . . and now also the axe is laid under the root of the trees: every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the Fire." As was said, the carnal seed in Israel, though they repented not, were

not disturbed if only they allowed themselves to be covered by the shed blood of the typical sacrifices and walked not in gross sins, thus kept themselves outwardly clean like the Pharisees. But the coming of Christ spelled the vanishing away of that old covenant in which such men were secure. Hence, they must now truly repent in their hearts and bring forth fruits of repentance or be destroyed. Let them take heed, for the axe is under the tree, and every non-fruitbearing tree will be hewn down and burned.

G. M. O.

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## Monasticism

Monasticism is but another term for Asceticism. The ascetic, in course of time, forsook life and retreated into a monastery and therefore the way of life that took on a concrete form in him acquired the name Monasticism. The origin and nature of asceticism has been treated fully and critically in a previous article. Thus in this writing we are occupied with other phases of the subject. First its development.

Monasticism passed through four stages of development. Its roots are traceable as far back as the first century of our Christian era. Already then many Christians had the custom of setting aside certain days for self-examination, devotion, and dedicating 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 persons of material means, they would give a large portion of their earthy possessions to the church treasury or to the poor and thenceforth provide in their necessities by their own industry. They also remained unmarried, lived in seclusion, and spent their leisure in prayer and meditation. This was monasticism in its embryo state. It formed its first stage of development in which the ascetics were unorganized and continued in the church. In the second stage, the ascetics withdrew themselves from the society of men, even from the society of one another, and took up their abode in the wilderness. Here they received visitors but rarely, and only when the occasion was unusual would they appear in the cities. A hair shirt and a wild beast's skin was their clothing; salt and bread their food, and a cave their dwelling. They prayed much in their solitude, afflicted their bodies, and fought with satanic powers. This form of asceticism or monasticism is known as *anchoreticism* from the Greek "anachoreo" to retire (from human society). It was founded by St. Anthony. It flourished in the

East—in Egypt, Palestine and Syria—but was rare in the rougher climates of Europe. In the third stage of development—290-400—the ascetics organized to form congregations of ascetics or monks. This form or type is known as *coenobitism* from the Greek “*koinos bios*” *common life*. It first appeared, as had anchoretism, in Egypt and from there it spread, through Palestine and Syria, to the West. It was this form of asceticism that became known as “monasticism” though this word, from the Greek “*monasterion*” also means *solitary* and this denote one who lives alone. Thus a monastery is a congregation of ascetics or monks (monks, also from the Greek “*monasterion*”). At its head stood a superintendent called “abbot”, or if the congregation was formed of women “abbess. The final and last stage of development was reached when the separate congregation of monks organized to form monastic orders. These were unions of a number of cloisters under one rule or common government.

Of these four types of asceticism, anchoretism was characterized by greatest abnormality. The following examples, taken from a page of “Schaff’s History of the Christian Church” illustrate the fanatical zeal of this type. Paul the simple, prayed daily three hundred times, counting his prayers with pebbles carried in his bosom. Hearing of a virgin who prayed seven hundred times a day, he was troubled in his soul. When at table, the anchorite, Isidore, was moved to tears by the consideration that he, who was destined to eat angels’ food, should have to feed on material stuff like the beasts. Macarius the Great would eat but once a week and slept standing as leaning on a staff. Ptolemy lived three years alone in a waterless wilderness and quenched his thirst with dew which he collected in January and December and preserved in earthen vessels; but he fell at last a victim to madness and debauchery. Worms crawled out of the teeth of one Batheus by reason of his extreme abstinence. Alas passed his eightieth birthday anniversary without once having eaten bread. Symeon lived thirty six years on top of a pillar forty feet high, where he spent his time in praying, preaching and fasting, broken by one meal weekly. St. Anthony never combed and cut his hair or washed his feet and hands, as he deemed ascetic holiness incompatible with cleanliness. Another anchorite went almost naked in the wilderness. The younger Marcarius exposed himself six months to the attacks of gnats of Africa by lying in the swamp of the desert. He was so badly stung that he could be recognized only by his voice. To school himself in patience and meekness, St. Symeon suffered himself to be tormented for a long time by twenty enormous bugs. In Mesopotamia was found a class of monks who lived on grass with the wild beasts of the mountains. Akepsimas, in Cypress, spent sixty years in the same cell without seeing or speaking to anyone. Many of these monks

chose to live with wild beasts rather than with men, and they avoided looking at the face of a woman as though it were the face of a devil. Some buried themselves in pits, leaving only a small hole at the top through which to breathe. Others, regarding the earth too vile to touch, lived in iron cages hung from trees. Some would thrust a hook through their back and suspend themselves for half an hour at a time, feet uttermost, over a fire. Some lay on beds that bristled with iron spikes. At Astracan, one Johi was found in the vestibule of a temple with his body naked and shrivelled up and overgrown with hair like a wild beast and exposed in this position to the severe winters of that climate for twenty years. Another, Tapasonias, had his body imprisoned in an iron cage, with his head and feet outside, so that he could walk but neither sit nor lie down. It is a question, of course, how much credence can be given to these weird tales of self-castigation on the part of these hermits, but that they went to horrifying extremes in their attempted mortification of the corrupt heart, there can be no doubt.

The hermits—and this was their error—limited the flesh to the lower nature of man and imagined that the mortification of the old man of sin consists in repressing and destroying the appetites, desires and impulses of this nature through the affliction of the body. According to Scripture, the body of this death includes certainly the depraved spirit of man and mortifying the flesh is being done when a man ceases from sin and walks, by the mercy of God, in newness of life. The anchorites limited sin especially to the sexual desire and impulse and to bodily hunger and thirst, which they regarded as being by themselves corrupt. But sin is more than an unholy sexual impulse. Sin is also pride, unbelief, deceit, hypocrisy, selfishness, rebellion against God. But the anchorite was proud of his self-denial and he boasted not in Christ’s cross but in the power of his will to endure the pain of his self-castigations. It is a question how much of true religion was present in these works. In many cases nothing certainly.

The founder of anchoretism was St. Anthony. Born in 251, he was the offspring of a christian Coptic family. His propensity for the way of life of the hermit asserted itself already in his boyhood days. Of a quiet and contemplative nature, he shunned the society of his playmates and despised learning. But he was faithful in the attendance of divine worship with his parents and listened to the scripture lessons with marked attention. In his eighteenth year he heard read in the church the scripture, “If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven and come and follow me.” This word, spoken by Christ to the rich, young ruler, was the voice of God to Anthony, and it determined his life. He divided all his real estate,



which consisted of three hundred acres of fertile land, among the villagers. In addition he sold all his personal property for the benefit of the poor and thenceforth dwelt solitary in the neighborhood. Aspiring to a still higher level of holiness, some fifteen years later, he took up his abode in a tomb far from men, and thus became the founder of anchoretism in the strict sense. The next twenty years of his life he spent in the ruins of a castle and finally settled on mount Golzim, seven miles from the Red Sea. Here he prayed without ceasing, battled with the devil, labored at basket making, according to the maxim, "If any will not work, neither shall he eat," lived on bread and salt and dates, drank nothing but water, ate but once a day and was ashamed that he should need earthy nourishment. Only rarely did he leave his solitude. During the persecution under Maximinus he visited the condemned Christians in prisons, encouraged them before the judges, and accompanied them to the scaffold. The heathen feared to lay violent hands on him. In his hundredth year, he visited for the last time Alexandria to witness for the orthodox faith of his friend Athanasius against Arius, for he hated heretics and would have nothing to do with them. Christians and heathen, the sick and the poor, visited him in his solitude for consolation. He exhorted to prayer, labor, care of the poor, and love of God. He possessed a ready wit and sound sense. His mind was keen and his thought original. In the concluding paragraph of his biography of his friend Anthony, Athanasius pays this tribute to his character, "From this short narrative you may judge how great a man Anthony was, who persevered in the ascetic life from youth to the highest age. In his advanced age he never allowed himself better food, nor change of raiment, nor did he even wash his feet, yet he continued healthy in all his parts. His eyesight was clear to the end, and his teeth sound, though by long use wore to mere stumps. He retained also the perfect use of his hands and feet, and was more robust and vigorous than those who are accustomed to change of food and clothing and to washing. His fame spread from his remote dwelling on the lone mountain over the whole Roman Empire. What gave him his reknown was not his learning, for he had none, nor worldly wisdom, nor human art, but alone his piety toward God—and let all the brethren know, that the Lord will not only take holy monks to heaven, but give them celebrity in all the earth, however deep they may bury themselves in the wilderness." Doubtless, Anthony was a man of true goodness in the heart of his disposition. And Athanasius was the greatest of church fathers of his age. That this great and good man could wax so eloquently enthusiastic about the way of life of a monk, reveals the peculiar temper of the christianity of that day and age. It was remarkably sincere and other-worldly, but through

it ran a strain that was pagan. Doubtless, Anthony was a true Christian. And we marvel at his power of self-denial. But the ascetic in him was not of grace. He was a good man despite his asceticism. Many of these anchorites were worthless men, shiftless, lazy, ignorant and illiterate. Anthony represented the better class among them.

This brings us to the question whether anchoretism finds any support in the Scriptures. The advocates of anchoretism claim that it did, and they refer to the examples of Elijah, Elisha and especially John the Baptist. Of the baptist it is reported in the Scriptures that he "grew, waxed strong in the spirit, was in the wilderness until the day of his shewing unto Israel (Luke 1:80); that he drank neither wine nor strong drink (Luke 1:15); that he had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and that his meat was locusts and wild honey (Matt. 3:14). Thus, the baptist was a nazirite. But the question is whether the nazirite institution belonged to the symbolical-typical apparatus of the Old Testament Dispensation and with this apparatus waxed old and vanished away or whether it abided and whether the way of life it inculcated was carried over into the New Testament Dispensation and set before New Testament Christians as an example to be copied. Not certainly the latter but the former. Hence, the life of the apostles was not a hermit life. Peter was married and travelled about with his wife. Paul assumes one marriage for the clergy as the rule. It shows that anchoretism and monasticism in general is a humanly devised service of God and not rarely a sad distortion of the Christianity of the Bible. It was not indicative of spiritual strength but of spiritual weakness. It is not a local but a spiritual separation from the world that the scriptures enjoin. It is not abstinence from food and drink that the Bible demands but the moderate use thereof. And the ideal set before us in Holy Writ is eating and drinking to God's glory.

G. M. O.

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#### CHANGE OF ADDRESS

The address of the undersigned is now:

343 Eastern Ave., S. E.  
Grand Rapids, Michigan.  
Rev. G. M. Ophoff

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#### CLASSIS EAST

will meet in regular session D. V., Wednesday, October 3, at 9:00 A.M. at the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan.

D. JONKER, Stated Clerk.



## Een Gebed Davids

(Psalm 86)

Deze psalm is een mengeling van gebed en prijs, van roepen om hulp en het grootmaken van 's Heeren naam.

Hij is gedicht door David, doch doorleeft door Christus. De Messiaansche klanken zijn helder en klaar.

Het begin is een klagend roepen tot God vanwege ellende en nooddrift. De uitdrukking "want ik ben ellendig en nooddriftig" komt meermalen voor in de psalmen: 40:18; 70:6; en 109:22. Het is een uitdrukking die vaak voorkomt in de beschrijving van onzen nood voor God's aangezicht. Wanneer we nagaan in wat verband dit tweetal woorden voorkomen, bemerken we, dat de dichter den Heere heenwijst naar onze ellendige toestand waarin we verkeerden vanwege de gevolgen der zonde. We zijn ellendig en nooddriftig. Een commentaar op die woorden vinden we vooral in psalm 109, waar dit tweetal woorden ook gebruikt worden. Ellendig en nooddriftig zijn we, als ons hart in het binnenste van ons doorwond is. Dan gaan we heen als een schaduw die zich neigt en worden we omgedreven als een sprinkhaan. Dan struikelen de knieën en wordt het vleesch doormagerd, zoodat er geen vet aan is. Dan zijn we de smaad der goddeloozen en als zij ons dan zien, zoo schudden ze het hoofd.

Wie bemerkt hier niet het beeld van den lijdenden knecht des Heeren?

Als er ooit iemand ellendig en nooddriftig geweest is, dan is het de Christus Gods. Beroofd en berooid, moest hij al struikelende zijn pad vinden onder den last des toorns Gods vanwege onze zonden, totdat er geen pad meer was. Er was zelfs geen stukje aarde om op te staan, geen straal van licht of leven en Zijn ellende en armoede en nooddrift was zoo groot, dat Hij zeide: Gij legt Mij in het stof des doods. Ellendig is ver van huis te zijn en nooddrift is die toestand waarin men missen moet al die dingen en zaken die we noodig hebben voor ons welwezen en onzen welvaart.

Welnu, die toestand van ellende en armoede wordt door David gebruikt om als pleitgrond te dienen ter verhooring. Heere, ik ben ellendig en nooddriftig: neig Uw oor en verhoor mij!

En dat is korrekt.

Bij God is een volheid van zegeningen die juist passen bij onze armoede. En de Heere wil er om gebeden worden.

Dan komt Hij ook en verhoort Zijn volk, dat schreit tot Hem vlucht.

Doch Christus dan?

Die is ook verhoort, doch eerst nadat Hij een eeuwigheid van "ellende en nooddrift" geleden heeft.

Maar Hij is uiteindelijk verhoord, anders ware er geen verlossing en zaliging mogelijk voor U en mij.

"Bewaar mijne ziel, want ik ben Uw gunstgenoot; O God, mijn God! verlos Uwen knecht die op U vertrouwt."

In het eerste vers bouwt de zanger zijn smeeken op zijn armoede, doch hier is zijn pleitgrond zijn rijkdom. Daar zeide hij: Heere, hoor mijn gebed, want ik ben ellendig en nooddriftig; doch hier zegt hij: Heere, hoor mij want ik ben heilig (zoo mag het woord vertaald worden.) Er staat hier in de Hollandsche vertaling: gunstgenoot, doch het woord dat in het oorspronkelijke gebruikt wordt heeft meer dan een beteekenis. Het is een zeer rijk woord. Echter, hebben al die beteekenissen dit gemeen, dat het ziet op het positieve en niet op het negatieve zooals in het eerste vers. David wijst hier op het feit, dat hij den Heere toebehoort en daarom in Zijn gunst mag deelen. Hij wijst den Heere er op, dat hij op Hem vertrouwt.

Die woorden vinden hun volle vervulling in Christus. Zooals niemand anders het doen kan, kon Hij zeggen: Heere, hoor Mij in Mijn klagen, want ik ben heilig! Kom Mij te hulp, want Ik betrouw op U! En de Evangeliën zijn de commentaar. Keer op keer wordt het feit van Jezus' zondeloosheid en heiligheid geaccentueerd. Niemand overtuigde Hem van zonde en Hij was de Geheiligde des Vaders, afgescheiden van de zonde en toegewijd aan den Vader.

Nog een derde pleitgrond volgt er van God gehoord te worden: Wees mij genadig, Heere, want ik roep tot U den ganschen dag!

Wie Uwer die dit leest kan dit vers nabidden? Hoe vaak is het gebeurd, dat gij den ganschen dag gebeden hebt? Ja, ik stem toe, het kan en het is geschied door sommigen onzer, doch we voegen er bij: hoogst zelden. Ook hier merken we het: deze psalm is allereerst, of liever, op zijn diepst de klacht van Messias. Want van Hem mag het, neen, moet het gezegd worden, dat Hij tot God den Heere gesmeekt en gebeden heeft alle de dagen Zijns vleesch op aarde. Van Jezus moogt gij het zeggen, dat Hij immer Gode-bewust was. Hij verbond alles aan God, ten allen tijde. Leest slechts Hebr-5:7. Daar legt de Heilige Geest er nadruk op, dat de Heere Jezus gedurende de dagen Zijns vleesch gebeden en smekingingen opgezonden heeft tot God met sterke roeping en tranen.

Nu dan, Heere, den ganschen dag roep Ik U aan in al Mijn angst en smart. Wees Mij nu genadig!

Waar bidt David eigenlijk om als hij om genade vraagt? Dan vraagt hij om schoon, liefelijk, aanvallig te zijn. En men wordt dat alleen als God ons aanziet in genade. Dan verdwijnen de schaduwen van zwarte leelijkheid en wordt alles lieflijk.

De Heere Jezus heeft gevraagd om de schoonheid en heerlijkheid en groote glorie, waarmede we Hem zien bekleed aan de rechterhand Gods in den troon.

En op grond van het middelswerk van Jezus, mogen wij ook zeggen met David: Heere, wees mij genadig, want ik roep tot U den ganschen dag. En dan vragen wij ook om glorie voor onszelf. En dat mag. De Heere heeft ons ook verteld waarin die glorie bestaat. We zingen er van in psalm 68. Daar zien we den ellendige die eerst nederlag tusschen twee rijen van tichelsteen, als vleugelen eener duive, overdekt met zilver, en welker vederen zijn met uitgegraven geel goud.

En dat alles is ook nog beeldspraak. Maar het betekent toch, dat het kind Gods dat verhoord is, zeer schoon en lieflijk zal zijn in den dag van Christus. Hier op aarde ellendig en nooddruftig, doch in den hemel en nu al in beginsel: lieflijk als "de gordijnen Salomo's".

En al die lieflijkheid der genade is eigenlijk niets anders dan het belonken van Gods oogen die op ons nederziet in genade.

Dezelfde gedachte ligt in het volgende vers, nader uitgewerkt. Eerst een roepen om de genade Gods. En dan een vragen om de verheuging des harten, of der ziel. Het is de ervaring van deze zegen: De Heere ziet op mij en gedenkt aan mij!

Ik zou U willen vragen lezer: als gij weten moogt dat God aan U denkt, als gij weet en ervaart dat Hij U genadig is, springt dan Uw ziel niet op van verheuging? Ik zou willen zeggen, dat al zou de geheele wereld tegen mij zijn en ik weten mag dat God voor mij is, ik zal opspringen van vreugde en verrukking.

Daar vroeg Jezus om. En David. En gij en ik.

En Jezus en David hebben het ontvangen. De Heere heeft verhoord.

En wij allen zien Jezus, met eere en heerlijkheid bekroond.

En in beginsel ervaren wij alreede de genade, de lieflijkheid Gods, de verheuging der ziel, het opspringen van blijdschap in den Heere onzen God.

Voorst beluisteren we den grond van al deze waarheden.

Want Gij, Heere, zijt goed en gaarne vergevend en van groote goedertierenheid allen die U aanroepen.

Daar hebt ge het. David riep den Heere aan en noemde veel redenen op, waarom den Heere hem zou hooren. Doch hier is de grond. De Heere zal mij genadig zijn, want Hij is goed. Daar hebt ge het: het is met slechts één woord gezegd.

Doch dat eene woord vraagt om verklaring. En de Heere geeft het.

De Heere toont Zijn deugd van goedheid hierin, dat Hij gaarne vergeeft. Wat wondere troost voor Gods volk. O, we hebben het gezien en bijgewoond en ervaren, dat wij soms vergeven, omdat we er niet van buiten kunnen: de broeder beleed zijn kwaad. Doch de Heere heeft er schik van om ons te vergeven. Tracht om er in te komen. Wij hebben zwaar gezondigd.

Doch de Heere vergeeft ons onze misdaden en het is weer vlak voor Hem. Hij heeft de zonde zoo ver weggedaan, dat het is alsof zij geworpen zijn in een oceaan van eeuwige vergetelheid.

Hij is goedertieren, ja, groot van goedertierenheid. Ergens staat, dat Zijn goedertierenheid geweldig is over die Hem vreezen.

Goedertierenheid is die deugd onzes Gods, waardoor alles in Hem gedrongen wordt om Zijn volk wel te doen. Het is de zucht, de hartstocht Gods om U te zegenen, mijn broeder!

En zoo is de Heere voor allen die Hem aanroepen.

Ge moogt het zoo zeggen: alleen Gods volk roept Hem aan. Het is het onderscheid tusschen den Christen en den naam-Christen. De eerste roept Hem aan, zoekt Hem, in de gedachten en overleggingen des harten, in den morgenstond en den avondstond, alle de dagen zijn levens.

En hij roept God aan omdat hij dat bemint. Het gebed des godvruchtigen is hem een genot. Hij mag gaarne tot zijn God naderen. Het is hem een levensbehoefte. Het is de thermometer van zijn geestelijk leven.

En Gods volk roept Hem gaarne aan, omdat zij getrokken worden. Want wij weten doorgaans niet wat wij bidden zullen zooals het behoort, doch de Geest Gods smeekt, bidt en loopt God aan als een waterstroom, met zuchtingen die onuitsprekelijk zijn.

En Hij hoort! Mijn God hoort! Hallelujah!

G. V.

#### ANNIVERSARY

On September 7, 1945, our beloved parents,

REV. GERRIT VOS

and

MRS. CHRISTINA VOS—Treur

celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary.

We, their children, extend to them our most sincere and hearty congratulations, and together with them we bless our Covenant God Who has spared them for one another and for us, and it is our sincere prayer that the Lord may continue to bless them in His love and mercy.

Their grateful children:

Mr. and Mrs. John Poelstra & family  
Redlands, Calif.

Peter, C. Mo. M. M.

Marilyn

Edgerton, Minn.

## Christ Forbidding To Spread His Fame

Any and every subject that relates to the Christ is of chief interest to the disciple of Christ. Christ's followers of all ages, those who earnestly seek salvation, carefully observe all that is written concerning the revelation of the Servant of God. And, the above subject has often been the consideration of Christians.

That Christ forbade someone to speak of His work, and to spread His fame abroad is a fact. However, this cannot be His purpose and command in every sense of the word. If we consider that He came to reveal Himself to us and that He did so with a glorious accompaniment of signs and wonders we must come to a qualifying explanation of this subject, Christ forbidding to spread His fame. This requires a study of the passages in which this is expressed and a conclusion upon the basis of a conception of the revelation of Jesus Christ as is given in the Scriptures.

First of all your careful consideration of the data is necessary for an appreciation of the problem and for certainty of arriving at a correct conclusion.

In Matthew 8:4 we read these words of Jesus, "See thou tell no man; but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them." This is His word to the leper whom He healed, by putting forth His hand and touching him. This is also found in Mark 1:43 and in Luke 5:14. However, this is not exactly the same as His other commands to tell no one. Although He tells the leper to speak about it to no one, in this case there is very likely the reason that it was more in harmony with obedience to the law of Moses, that he should first fulfill it before publishing his recovery.

Other passages we wish to call your attention to have more direct significance. In Mark 1:23 we read what Jesus commanded the unclean spirit which had cried out "what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee, who thou art, the Holy One of God." Then we read, "And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him." The word for "hold thy peace" was probably originally as Souter explains of slang usage and is "be quiet!" This shows that there was intense feeling in Jesus' command for silence. This incident reminds of the almost similar occurrence to the apostle Paul in Philippi when an evil spirit gave testimony through a damsel that "these men are servants of the most high God"; about which Paul was greatly troubled and finally commanded the evil spirit to come out of her.

Concerning Christ's command we can conclude that He forbade the evil spirit to spread His fame, but we cannot conclude without any other qualification, that

Jesus forbade one to speak of Himself to anyone. Here we can only limit it to the demons. They alone were forbidden to speak of Him as the Son of God. It was not according to His good pleasure that devils should be His messengers. It was not pleasing to Paul either that known evil spirits should bear testimony to them. Therefore the stern rebuke, "Be quiet!" And, for further consideration turn to Mark 5:19 where Jesus orders the one out of whom he had cast out many devils in the country of the Gadarenes, "Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath compassion on thee." This should cause us to consider that although it was not Christ's desire to have demons publish His works and Name, nevertheless it was His desire upon occasion to have it known what the Lord had accomplished through Him.

In another connection Jesus also gave a command about Himself. We find in Matthew 12:1-9 that Jesus had an argument with the Pharisees about the sabbath. They had reprimanded Him for allowing His disciples to do that which was unlawful. In conclusion the Lord had silenced them with the most significant words, "For the Son of Man is Lord even of the sabbath day." Thereupon He entered one of their synagogues and behold a man with a withered hand was there and they asked Him whether it was lawful to heal on the sabbath days. In verses 11, 12 of chapter 12 you may read His answer. In verses 13 and 14 you read that Jesus performs the miracle and that the Pharisees went out and held a council against Him how they might destroy Him. Jesus withdrew Himself and the multitudes followed Him, and He healed them all. Significantly we read that He also charged them that they should not make Him known, verse 16. This is data for our consideration of the question, how must we understand Jesus forbidding to spread His fame?

This much is clear from this passage and context that Jesus was well known at this time. He was known to the Pharisees. He openly spoke of Himself as the Son of Man. He proved His power and authority before their face. He was also known of the multitudes. They followed Him. From this it is evident that it would be foolishness to understand the words of Jesus in verse 16 to mean that Jesus did not desire anyone to know Him as the Son of God or Son of Man or to think of Him as the Christ. His previous revelation of Himself already contained that definite purpose. He could not mean that anyone who wished to contend that Jesus of Nazareth was a man mighty in word and deed and likely the revelation of God, the Christ, that he should keep silence. At the beginning of His ministry Jesus did not forbid the first disciple to testify that He was the Messiah. We read in John 1:45 that Philip told Nathaneal that. Recall too, that John introduced Him to the people as the Lamb of God.

Concerning this passage in Matthew 12:16 I think we may say that Jesus did not wish the multitudes to publish His whereabouts, because He knew the Pharisees sought to destroy Him. The context brings us to that conclusion. He knew their intention and He also knew it was not yet His hour. Therefore He withdrew and also warned this multitude which seemed to be a believing following against giving His whereabouts away. The expression Jesus uses also indicates this. It is not a command forbidding to speak about Him, but a command not to make Him known, or as the word shows, visible or manifest. Clearly it was His intention to warn the multitude upon whom He performed miracles of the danger He was in.

So far forth we have easily concluded the apparent reason why Jesus gave an instruction concerning Himself. There remain several passages which refer more directly to our subject, in which Jesus seems to be concerned with His fame, which are more difficult.

In Matthew 9:18-27, Mark 5:43, and Luke 8:41-46 we read of the raising of the daughter of Jairus. In Matthew we read that the fame hereof went abroad into all the land. In Mark and Luke we read that Jesus gave those intimate disciples and the parents who witnessed the miracle the charge that no man should know it.

If we compare this miracle with the raising of Lazarus from the dead, which was performed with the deliberate intention that all might know that the Father sent Him, we cannot say that it was Jesus' policy to remain in secret, or to keep His power from being manifest to all. We can only conclude that He had a particular reason to command not to tell any one of His raising the daughter of Jairus. That particular reason is somehow connected with His method of controlling the manifestation of Himself so that it would coincide with His hour and so that it would be above all a perfect manifestation of Himself as the true Christ. Edersheim in connection with another miracle we already mentioned comments about Jesus' attitude in keeping His work secret as follows: "Rather do we once more gather how the God-Man shrank from the fame connected with miracles which as we have seen were rather of inward and outward necessity than of choice in His Mission." Vol. I, p. 496. To do otherwise than He did would have been to make Himself known as the Jews desired Him to be and that would be as a Jewish Messiah and not as the Christ of the Scriptures.

The same explanation can be given of the miracles found in Matthew 9:29-31, Mark 7:36, and Mark 8:26. But in all these the same results took place. Instead of keeping quiet, they proclaimed it so much the more. Although we may say that Jesus knew that this would take place, we cannot judge Him to desire that the opposite of what He commanded take place.

All the above passages relate to Christ forbidding

to spread His fame with definite words to that effect. These are all in connection with His miracles. It is especially at the time of such manifestation of glory that the command is deemed necessary by Christ. We can also consider that some of His actions were a clear indication that He refused to spread His fame. Recall His action after His mighty miracle of the feeding of the five thousand as recorded in John 6. In verse 15 we read, "When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take Him by force, to make Him a king, He departed again into a mountain himself alone."

In conclusion I would like to make the following observation:

1. That at no time was it Christ's purpose to hide His identity, to keep secret that He was the Messiah. At no time did He deny it and whenever confronted with the question He gave sufficient and definite answer. This is contrary to the theory of secret Messiahship as held Wrede, *The Messianic Secret In The Gospels*, and R. H. Lightfoot, *History And Interpretation of the Gospels*, as referred to and criticized in N. B. Stonehouse's book, *The Witness of Matthew and Mark to Christ*.

2. Positively it can be maintained that it was His desire and purpose to reveal Himself as the Christ of God. So the forerunner had to prepare the way for Him; had to introduce Him as the Lamb of God; and so He came to His own. It was His purpose in the parables, to reveal the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. In the miracles it was His purpose to show Himself as the one sent from God.

3. This purpose to reveal Himself required a definite method or mode of revelation because of those to whom He revealed Himself. It had to be a revelation in the flesh. It could not be through angels or otherwise. The mode of revelation had to be according to fallen humanity also. Because of sinful man, care had to be shown by the Christ that He revealed Himself perfectly as the true Christ. No false impressions might be left.

4. This method that Christ chose was perfectly adapted to reach His purpose with respect to belief and unbelief. His parables and miracles for those who believed were means to give them power to receive Him. Even believers, however, had to be led from unbelief to faith. Because of their unbelief some things upon occasions had to be withheld from them. Compare His transfiguration before three disciples with the command to tell no one until after the resurrection. His parables and miracles were at the same time a savor of death unto death, given to give unbelievers the correct conception of the Christ and to guard against them having an excuse, or seeing in Him an object of false hope. Mark 4:11, 12.

L. D.

## Tempted, Yet Without Sin

The subject that was assigned us bore the high sounding title, "The Non Posse Peccare of Christ and His Temptations". Fearing that we might frighten away some of our readers by such a title which they were not able to translate, we have taken the liberty to treat the same material under the title above. Briefly, our essay deals with the impossibility for Christ to sin and His temptations.

That Christ could not sin is taught us in Scripture and follows from the very fact that He is the Son of God. Although Christ assumed our flesh and took upon Himself our human nature, as to His person He is and remains the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. He is God and therefore He cannot sin. John even tells us in I John 3:9, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin: for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." John is here thinking of the life of regeneration which we receive from God and according to which we begin to live as God's obedient children. Much more than must it be maintained that He Who is the Son of God by eternal regeneration of the Father through the Spirit, Whose person is not born or created but is Divine, He cannot sin.

That He was tempted no one can deny. Scripture literally speaks of His temptations, even stating that He was driven of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the Devil. Thus these two facts, that He could not sin, and that He was tempted, are both taught in Scripture. Both are spoken of in one text in Hebrews 4:15 where we read, "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin".

Now it will be sensed by this time that the primary question that will have to be answered in this essay is, How can it possibly be a temptation when it is impossible for Christ to sin? If it is a foregone conclusion that He will not yield, yea that He cannot yield, can it really be considered to be a temptation? If the Devil cannot make Him sin, can the Devil then really tempt Him to sin? It is no temptation for a blind man for you to place a forbidden book before him. He cannot see that the book is there, nor could he read it even if he were told that it is within his grasp. The obscene and corrupt advertisements on the billboards of the theatre will not tempt him to go in and see the show when you lead him past. He cannot be tempted by such things.

Similar reasoning has led some to maintain that Christ really was tempted and that these temptations were very real but that they were such only because Christ could sin. Thus in their minds they maintain

the reality of His temptations, but in so doing they deny His Divinity. Can He sin, then He is no more God. Others fearing to do this find it easier for their consciences to maintain that He could not sin but that the temptations were real only in the sense that if you and I had been there instead of Christ, we would have been sorely tried. To them then His temptations were such only from our viewpoint and from the viewpoint of the devil. This view finds no support in Hebrews 4:15 where Scripture plainly enough states that He was tempted in all points even as we are. Worth noting here is the fact that Christ's temptations are placed on the same level with ours. They were as real as our temptations are.

We must therefore go out from the Scriptural viewpoint of our theme and maintain both the Non Posse Peccare of Christ and the objective reality of His temptations. The question primarily then is, How can a temptation be real to one who cannot succumb to it?

One thing to consider is that Christ's temptations were unique and as to their content quite different from the general run of our temptations. He was tempted with something wherewith He only could be tempted. At the same time we may say that many of the temptations which for us are sore trials would not and could not touch Him at all. He was tempted, but at the same time we maintain that many things for Him would not and could not be temptations. The devil could not tempt Him to commit adultery, to steal, to take the Father's name in vain, to make an image or desecrate the Sabbath or any such sins. Because our nature is corrupt and filled with carnal lusts, we can be tempted into committing every possible kind of sin. His thoughts were pure and His desires were righteous and His human nature did not crave the sinful things that our natures desire not only but after which they also lust.

Christ's temptations it will be noted always centered around His work as our Redeemer, especially as our High Priest Who would bring the supreme sacrifice of His own life to the Father for our sins. He was always tempted by one thing or another, in one way or another to forsake the way of the cross, the way of sufferings and death in order to save His people and enter into His Kingship and Kingdom. He was tempted to escape the agony of hell which His High Priestly office would demand of Him. He was tempted to leave us in our sin and seek for His own flesh-comfort, pleasure and life. He was tempted to forsake the Father's will and to prescribe a will of His own. This unique element in His temptations is to be observed in every one of His temptations that is recorded in Holy Writ.

When He was tempted at the very outset of His ministry in the wilderness, He was suffering already from having fasted for forty days and forty nights.

The agony of this, of course, could in no way compare with the greater suffering He would have to endure to save His people, and so the devil tempts Him to leave this way of suffering before the greater misery cometh whereby He would atone for our sins on the cross. Therefore he came with the suggestion that Christ change the stones into bread. He would have Christ pay attention and be concerned with the needs of His own body rather than the needs of our souls. He would have Him turn from this way of suffering and seek His own good. He would have Him seek the honor and esteem of men, all men and not the elect alone, and he would have Him seek His own glory and not that of the Father. Therefore he comes with the second temptation and urges Him to cast Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple in the eyes of man. In this way again, so the temptation ran, Christ would have a kingdom without the physical and spiritual suffering He would have to endure upon the cross. All men would marvel at His feet and the fact that the angels were subject unto Him so much that they would bear Him up lest He even dash His foot against a stone. In the third temptation this becomes especially plain when the devil suggests that Christ bow down to him and as a reward receive all the kingdoms of the earth. Here again the heart of the temptation is an attempt to turn Christ away from the suffering of the cross and to present a way to glory and honor in the way of disobedience to the Father. He presents the matter to Christ as though there is far more to gain and an easier road to travel than the one upon which He has set out. The way of the cross brings Him one kingdom and is realized only through the most terrible agony of God's wrath. The devil promises all the kingdoms of the earth and does not insist upon a great suffering to attain it, but he promises it only for the simple and painless act of bowing down before him.

Thus it was with all the temptations of Christ. When He has fed the five thousand with bread, they wanted to make Him their king. The devil was in this again seeking to tempt Him away from the way of the cross. Here again was a chance, according to the temptation, for Christ to enter His kingship and kingdom without the suffering and agony of Calvary and Hell. In Gethsemane when He saw more fully what this way held for Him, He was once more tempted by the devil to turn about and not travel that way. Who would have continued down that road for men who were so unconcerned about his agony as these sleeping disciples? Then again on the cross they taunt Him and challenge Him to come down and show them His power. The devil again stirs them up to stop Him if possible from continuing in the way of suffering. They will believe on Him and accept Him as their king if He will only come down. He is tempted to leave us in our sins in order to vindicate His own name and to prove His

teachings. The underlying idea still is that He can have a kingdom without the way of suffering. Of course, this is never true. The nature of all temptations is just exactly that. They always present something which cannot be attained or if attained, something which is not what was expected. The way and the objects the devil presents are always full of deception. He is a liar from the beginning. There was no kingdom for Christ apart from this way of the cross and its suffering. To disobey God may bring a man prosperity and honor for a short time, but it all is consumed in the torment of hell.

It would be a great mistake however to maintain that this escape from suffering and death in itself was not appealing to Christ. Apart entirely from the sin that such an escape would involve, the mere escape from pain and death certainly had its appeal to His human nature. His human nature was exactly as ours, sin excepted. We often forget that His human nature was a *human* nature. His flesh shrank from pain. He felt it as much as we do, and His human nature was not unaffected by its presence. In Gethsemane He cried out that His soul was exceeding sorrowful even unto death. His human nature very definitely was touched here by that which the devil used as a temptation. Because in His human nature He could suffer pain and agony of body and soul and could also enjoy food, drink, rest and health, He was able to observe in these temptations that to do the Father's will meant suffering for Him, that to atone for our sins meant great agony, while to leave this way of the cross would be far more pleasant for the flesh. This made it very really a temptation. As far as the human nature was concerned that which the devil proposed had its appeal. The cry that was rung out of Him in dark Gethsemane when He prayed that if it be possible this cup might pass from Him shows that the temptation was real. It shows that an escape from this awful suffering did very really appeal to His human nature.

However, since the person that dwelt in that human nature was the Son of God, the second person of the Holy Trinity, the will to depart from the Father's way, no matter how appealing the escape from suffering was to the human nature, never appealed to Him at all. That after all determines whether one sins or not. The moment that he begins even to will to go another way than the way of obedience he sins. To be able to see that the way of disobedience brings more bodily comfort rather than God's will that is sin. This was never found in Christ. He could not even for one moment do that, and in His prayer in Gethsemane He adds, "Nevertheless not my will but thy will be done." His will to obey the Father never wavered. To escape suffering appealed to His human nature, but not for one moment did it appeal to Him to escape suffering by walking the way of disobedience.

J. A. H.



## NOTICE TO OUR PATRONS

Beginning with Volume 21, the Board of the R. F. P.A. intends to print a yearly index in the last number of each Volume of our Standard Bearer.

The Board realizes that many of our readers are interested in having their copies of the Standard Bearer bound but realizes too that an index published at the end of ten volumes, as has been the custom in the past, deprives many of our readers of the full benefit of the various subjects treated in this length of time.

The Board, therefore, presents in this Number of our paper, its first yearly index and urges all subscribers to have this 21st volume, from October 1, 1944, to September 15, 1945, bound, in order that they may preserve in convenient form the valuable contents of our paper for future Scripture study and society use.

We also wish to remind you that copies of the Index of our Standard Bearer from Volume 1-10 and from Volume 11-20 are still available. Price: \$1.25 per set. These may be obtained by writing to S. De Vries, 700 Alexander St., S. E., Grand Rapids, Michigan.

## Index for Volume 21

## INDEX TO SCRIPTURE PASSAGES TREATED

TEXTS	Author	Page	No.	Vol.
Gen. 1:1 .....	J.A.H.	394	17	21
Psalms 37:25 .....	H.H.	290	13	21
Psalms 51:15 (Med.) .....	H.H.	97	5	21
Psalms 75:16 (Med.) .....	H.H.	145	7	21
Psalms 119:65, 66 (Med.) .....	H.H.	1	1	21
Psalms 119:74 (Med.) .....	H.H.	49	3	21
Psalms 119:84 (Med.) .....	H.H.	193	9	21
Psalms 119:93 (Med.) .....	H.H.	405	18	21
Psalms 119:101 (Med.) .....	H.H.	449	20	21
Psalms 119:105 (Med.) .....	H.H.	493	22	21
Ecl. 5:2 (Med.) .....	H.H.	309	14	21
Matt. 1:1-3 (Med.) .....	H.H.	121	6	21
Matt. 22:11-14 .....	J.D.	376	16	21
Matt. 22:31, 32 .....	H.V.	396	17	21
Matt. 22:35-40 .....	H.V.	485	21	21
Matt. 24:30 .....	J.B.	487	21	21
Matt. 27:9 .....	H.D.W.	11	1	21
Luke 16:9 .....	G.L.	398	17	21
Luke 23:33, 34 (Med.) .....	H.H.	237	11	21
Luke 23:42 (Med.) .....	H.H.	261	12	21
Romans 6:10 (Med.) .....	H.H.	469	21	21
Romans 8:14 (Med.) .....	H.H.	381	17	21
I Cor. 1:15 .....	H.D.W.	302	13	21
I Cor. 15:20 (Med.) .....	H.H.	285	13	21
II Cor. 12:16b .....	H.H.	290	13	21
Phil. 2:7 .....	J.B.	115	5	21
Hebrews 1:3, 4 (Med.) .....	H.H.	357	16	21
I Peter 2:1, 2 (Med.) .....	H.H.	25	2	21
I Peter 2:4, 5 (Med.) .....	H.H.	73	4	21
I Peter 2:9 (Med.) .....	H.H.	169	8	21
I Peter 2:11, 12 (Med.) .....	H.H.	217	10	21
I Peter 2:21 (Med.) .....	H.H.	334	15	21
I Peter 2:24 (Med.) .....	H.H.	429	19	21
II Peter 2:1 .....	J.D.J.	137	6	21

## INDEX TO ARTICLES TREATED

TITLE	Author	Page	No.	Vol.
A.				
Aangaande Dr. Schilder .....	H.H.	222	10	21
Abimelech's Fall .....	G.M.O.	6	1	21
Abraham's Separation — The Purpose of .....	M.G.	255	11	21

TITLE	Author	Page	No.	Vol.
Als Een Waterstroom .....	G.V.	205	9	21
Ammon's Answer and Jephthah's Reply .....	G.M.O.	82	4	21
Anabaptists — The .....	P.D.B.	282	12	21
Apollinarian Conception of the Natures of Christ — The .....	M.S.	214	9	21
Appelman — Arminianism Gone Wild .....	H.H.	124	6	21
Being Crafty I Caught You with Guile .....	H.H.	124	6	21
Arminianism Gone Wild .....	H.H.	124	6	21
Asceticism — Monasticism .....	G.M.O.	504	22	21
Atone for the Elect .....	H.H.	30	2	21
Continued .....	H.H.	54	3	21
Continued .....	H.H.	49	4	21
Authorship of the Book of Revelation .....	J.A.H.	20	1	21

## B.

Baptism Form and Our Own School—The Basic Problem of the Church's Multi-formity — The .....	R.V.	423	18	21
Being Crafty I Caught You with Guile .....	A.P.	402	17	21
Bereshith — Time and Content of .....	H.H.	290	13	21
Bodily Resurrection — Matt. 22:31, 32 as proof of the .....	J.A.H.	394	17	21
Bread for the Righteous .....	H.V.	396	17	21
Bread for the Righteous .....	H.H.	290	13	21

## C.

Calvinism According to Kuyper's Stone Lectures .....	G.L.	65	3	21
Continued .....	G.L.	112	5	21
Continued .....	G.L.	140	6	21
Calvin and the Offer of Salvation .....	H.H.	472	21	21
Calvin and the Reformation .....	H.V.	210	9	21
Calvin — The Text of a Complaint .....	H.H.	432	19	21
Continued .....	H.H.	452	20	21
Calvinistic Conference — The Need for a .....	L.D.	278	12	21
Catacombs — The .....	G.M.O.	202	9	21
Catechism and Our Own School — The .....	R.V.	423	18	21
Catechism Preaching is Ministry of the Word — Debate — Resolved that .....	R.V.	165	7	21
Continued .....	A.P.	167	7	21
Continued .....	A.P.	184	8	21
Continued .....	R.V.	186	8	21
Charity — The Deaconate and Civil .....	C.H.	374	16	21
Christ Forbidding to Speak His Fame .....	L.D.	509	22	21
Christian Education — We Heartily Agree .....	H.H.	198	9	21
Christian Education in this Century — History of (continued) .....	M.G.	13	1	21
Christian Home — The Radio and the .....	S.T.C.	324	14	21
Christian School Discipline — The Principle of .....	W.H.	208	9	21
Christ Our Intercessor .....	H.H.	80	4	21
Continued .....	H.H.	102	5	21
Christ's Sonship and Ours .....	H.H.	198	9	21
Christ's Temptation .....	J.A.H.	511	22	21
Christus is Opgestaan .....	H.H.	285	13	21
Church Order and Our Own Schools—The .....	R.V.	423	18	21
Church — The Doctrine of the Early .....	G.M.O.	439	19	21
Continued .....	G.M.O.	460	20	21
Continued .....	G.M.O.	481	21	21
Clark — Text of a Complaint Against Dr. .....	H.H.	174	8	21
Continued .....	H.H.	221	10	21
Continued .....	H.H.	240	11	21
Continued .....	H.H.	264	12	21
Continued .....	H.H.	288	13	21
Continued .....	H.H.	312	14	21
Continued .....	H.H.	336	15	21
Continued .....	H.H.	360	16	21
Continued .....	H.H.	384	17	21
Continued .....	H.H.	408	18	21
Continued .....	H.H.	432	19	21
Continued .....	H.H.	452	20	21
Continued .....	H.H.	472	21	21
Continued .....	H.H.	496	22	21
Clark — Treatment of the Case of Dr. ....		352	15	21
Continued .....		362	16	21
CLA — Contribution against .....	Frank Rottier	307	13	21
CLA — Contribution .....	H. A. Van Putten	117	5	21
CLA — Reply to J. Gritter .....	H. A. Van Putten	329	14	21
CLA — Reply to H. A. Van Putten .....	J. Gritter	213	9	21
Common Grace and the Two Tables of the Law .....	H.V.	485	21	21
Common grace in Schilder's Passion Trilogy .....	G.L.	300	13	21

TITLE	Author	Page	No.	Vol.
Communism and the Social Life .....	B.K.	135	6	21
Concept Servant of Jehovah in Isaiah .....	J.A.H.	142	6	21
Condemned Without a Hearing .....	H.H.	4	6	21
Conference — The .....	H.H.	52	3	21
Confident of a Glad Reception .....	H.H.	49	3	21
Contradictions in Scripture .....	H.H.	360	16	21

## CONTRIBUTIONS

Contribution .....	Geo. Ten. Elshof	10	1	21
Contribution .....	J. H. Hoekstra	492	21	21
Contribution (CLA) .....	Frank Rottier	307	13	21
Contribution (CLA) .....	H.A. Van Putten	117	5	21
Contribution (CLA—Reply to J. Gritter) .....				
Contribution (CLA—Reply to J. Gritter) .....	Geo. Ten. Elshof	236	10	21
Contribution (CLA—Reply to J. Gritter) .....	H.A. Van Putten	329	14	21
Contribution (CLA—Reply to Van Putten) .....				
Contribution (Reply to G.T.E.) .....	J. Gritter	213	9	21
Contribution (Reply to J. Gritter) .....	J. Gritter	332	14	21
Contribution (Reply to J. Gritter) .....				
Contribution (Reply to J. Gritter) .....	Geo. Ten. Elshof	380	16	21
If — Peccavi .....	Geo. Ten. Elshof	85	4	21
Ingezonden .....	J. R. VanderWal	491	21	21
Jericho Theology .....	J. H. Hoekstra	257	11	21
Musings on Motives .....	J. H. Hoekstra	72	3	21
News from Oak Lawn .....	John Buiter	331	14	21
Proofs for the Existence of God .....				
Continued .....	D. Vander Wal	22	1	21
Continued .....	D. Vander Wal	42	2	21
Responsibility .....	J. H. Hoekstra	404	17	21

Cooperation as an Element of Divine Providence — The Idea of .....	H.D.W.	159	7	21
Covenant of Sinai — The .....	P.D.B.	489	21	21
Covenant — The Old and the New .....	G.M.O.	477	21	21
Continued .....	G.M.O.	502	22	21

## D.

Deaconate and Civic Charity — The .....	C.H.	374	16	21
Dead to Sin .....	H.H.	437	19	21
Continued .....	H.H.	454	20	21
Death in Its Various Phases .....	W.H.	454	20	21
Death of Believers — The .....	H.H.	413	18	21
Continued .....	H.H.	434	19	21
Death of the Cross — The .....	H.H.	365	16	21
Continued .....	H.H.	386	17	21
Death of the Son of God — The .....	H.H.	389	17	21
Continued .....	H.H.	410	18	21
Debate — Resolved That Heidelberg Catechism Preaching is Ministry of the Word .....	R.V.	165	7	21
Continued .....	A.P.	167	7	21
Continued .....	A.P.	184	8	21
Continued .....	R.V.	186	8	21
Debate — Resolved That the Underground Movement in Occupied Countries is Revolutionary .....	C.H.	252	11	21
Continued .....	H.H.	254	11	21
Continued .....	C.H.	320	14	21
Delilah and Samson .....	G.M.O.	390	17	21
Denying the Lord That Bought them .....	J.D.J.	137	6	21
Descension Into Hell — The .....	H.H.	457	20	21
Continued .....	H.H.	499	22	21
Divine Providence .....	H.D.W.	159	7	21
Divinity of Christ — The Essential .....	G.M.O.	460	20	21
Doctrine of the Early Church — The .....	G.M.O.	439	19	21
Continued .....	G.M.O.	460	20	21
Continued .....	G.M.O.	481	21	21
Door Den Geest Geleid .....	H.H.	381	17	21
Door Genade Vrij .....	H.H.	469	21	21
Door God's Arm Verloft .....	G.V.	15	1	21
Downfall of Heathenism in the Roman Empire — The .....	G.M.O.	157	7	21

## E.

Early Church — Doctrine of the .....	G.M.O.	439	19	21
Continued .....	G.M.O.	460	20	21
Continued .....	G.M.O.	481	21	21

TITLE	Author	Page	No.	Vol.
EDITORIALS				
Aangaande Dr. Schilder .....	H.H.	222	10	21
Arminianism Gone Wild .....	H.H.	124	6	21
Atomic Bomb — The .....	H.H.	474	21	21
Conference — The .....	H.H.	52	3	21
Condemned Without a Hearing .....	H.H.	1	1	21
Eureka Classis Incorporated .....	H.H.	174	8	21
Evangelical and the Reformed Church—Continued .....	H.H.	76	4	21
Continued .....	H.H.	101	5	21
Continued .....	H.H.	125	6	21
Continued .....	H.H.	148	7	21
Continued .....	H.H.	172	8	21
Continued .....	H.H.	196	9	21
Continued .....	H.H.	220	10	21
Continued .....	H.H.	241	11	21
Continued .....	H.H.	266	12	21
Grand Rapids Christian High .....	H.H.	101	5	21
I Told You So .....	H.H.	100	5	21
Liberated Churches in the Netherlands...Continued .....	H.H.	474	21	21
Continued .....	H.H.	497	22	21
Proposal of Local No. 12 — As to the ...	H.H.	28	2	21
Protecting Christian Reformed Church of Kalamazoo — The .....	H.H.	434	19	21
Reformed Church in the United States...Schilder and Others .....	H.H.	53	3	21
Continued .....	H.H.	241	11	21
Separation in the Netherlands — The ...	H.H.	452	20	21
Text of a Complaint — The .....	H.H.	174	8	21
Continued .....	H.H.	221	10	21
Continued .....	H.H.	240	11	21
Continued .....	H.H.	264	12	21
Continued .....	H.H.	288	13	21
Continued .....	H.H.	312	14	21
Continued .....	H.H.	336	15	21
Continued .....	H.H.	360	16	21
Continued .....	H.H.	384	17	21
Continued .....	H.H.	408	18	21
Continued .....	H.H.	432	19	21
Continued .....	H.H.	452	20	21
Continued .....	H.H.	472	21	21
Continued .....	H.H.	496	22	21
We Heartily Agree .....	H.H.	198	9	21
Education — Fairy Tales in Children's Readers .....	M.G.	400	17	21
Education in This Country — History of Christian (continued) .....	M.C.	13	1	21
Election at the Cross .....	H.H.	261	12	21
Element of Divine Providence — The Idea of Cooperation as an .....	H.D.W.	159	7	21
Ephraim — The Pride of .....	G.M.O.	130	6	21
Essential Divinity of Christ — The .....	G.M.O.	460	20	21
Eternal Habitations — Friends of Mammon and .....	G.L.	398	17	21
Eureka Classis Incorporated .....	H.H.	174	8	21
Evangelical and the Reformed Church...Continued .....	H.H.	53	3	21
Continued .....	H.H.	76	4	21
Continued .....	H.H.	101	5	21
Continued .....	H.H.	125	6	21
Continued .....	H.H.	148	7	21
Continued .....	H.H.	172	8	21
Continued .....	H.H.	196	9	21
Continued .....	H.H.	220	10	21
Continued .....	H.H.	241	11	21
Continued .....	H.H.	266	12	21
Existence of God — Proofs for the ...Continued .....	D. Vander Wal	22	1	21
Continued .....	D. Vander Wal	42	2	21
Exposition of the Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Day XII (continued) .....	H.H.	30	2	21
Continued .....	H.H.	54	3	21
Continued .....	H.H.	79	4	21
Continued .....	H.H.	102	5	21
Continued .....	H.H.	126	6	21
Continued .....	H.H.	150	7	21
Continued — Lord's day XIII .....	H.H.	176	8	21
Continued .....	H.H.	198	9	21
Continued .....	H.H.	222	10	21
Continued — Lord's Day XIV .....	H.H.	242	11	21
Continued .....	H.H.	266	12	21

TITLE					Author Page No. Vol.					
Continued		H.H.	291	13	21	TITLE				
Continued — Lord's Day XV		H.H.	315	14	21	Author Page No. Vol.				
Continued		H.H.	338	15	21	Kuyper's Conception of Christ's Human Nature as General	C.H.	464	20	21
Continued		H.H.	363	16	21	Kuyper's Stone Lectures — A Critique	G.L.	65	3	21
Continued — Lord's Day XVI		H.H.	386	17	21	Continued	G.L.	112	5	21
Continued		H.H.	410	18	21	Continued	G.L.	140	6	21
Continued		H.H.	434	19	21	L.				
Continued		H.H.	454	20	21	Law — Common Grace and the Two				
Continued		H.H.	499	22	21	Tables of the	H.V.	485	21	21
F.						Law — Liberty in Relation to	L.D.	161	7	21
Faculties of the Soul	H.H.	312	14	21		Laws of Nature — Miracles and the	S.T.C.	188	8	21
Fairy Tales in Children's Readers	M.G.	400	17	21		Law — The Term in the Epistle to the				
Faith — Relation Between the Four						Galatians	L.D.	63	3	21
Kinds of	H.V.	280	12	21		Led By the Spirit	H.H.	38	17	21
Firstborn of Every Creature	H.D.W.	302	13	21		Les Der Historie — De	G.V.	38	2	21
Flesh and Blood of the Children — The	H.H.	266	12	21		Continued	G.V.	85	4	21
Foreknowledge and Predestination	C.H.	16	1	21		Continued	G.V.	105	5	21
Freedom of Religion	P.V.	94	4	21		Continued	G.V.	135	6	21
Freedom of the Press in Peace and War	C.H.	114	5	21		Letter to Our Servicemen — A	H.H.	150	7	21
Friends of Mammon and Eternal Habitations	G.L.	398	17	21		Liberated Churches in the Netherlands	H.H.	474	21	21
G.						Continued	H.H.	497	22	21
Gebed Davids — Een	G.V.	507	22	21		Liberty in Relation to Law	L.D.	161	7	21
Gebed in Oorlog — Een	G.V.	322	14	21		Light of His Word — In the	H.H.	493	22	21
Gebed Om Genade Voor Genade	G.V.	462	20	21		Lord Departs from Samson — The	G.M.O.	413	18	21
Gebouwd Tot een Geestelijk Huis	H.H.	73	4	21		Lord Does Wondrously — The	G.M.O.	180	8	21
Geestelijke Eetlust	H.H.	25	2	21		Lord — Our	H.H.	223	10	21
General Human Nature — Kuyper's Conception of Christ's	C.H.	464	20	21		Lord's Supper	G.M.O.	249	11	21
General Human Nature of Christ-Refuted	H.H.	266	12	21		Lord's Supper — Presence of Christ in the	L.V.	191	8	21
Gleanings from Twenty Years	W.H.	45	2	21	M.					
Continued	W.H.	69	3	21	Maar Mijn Volk Wou Niet	G.V.	273	12	21	
Continued	W.H.	92	4	21	Mammon and Eternal Habitations —					
God, Die de Dooden Levend Maakt	H.H.	131	6	21	Friends of	G.L.	398	17	21	
God Speaking Through His Son	H.H.	357	16	21	Man's Responsibility and God's Providence	L.D.	419	18	21	
God's Providence and Man's Responsibility	L.D.	419	18	21	Man Without a Wedding Garment — The	J.D.J.	376	16	21	
God's Repentance	S.T.C.	91	4	21	Matt. 22:31, 32, as Proof of the Bodily					
Gog and Magog	P.D.B.	234	10	21	Resurrection	H.V.	396	17	21	
Grand Rapids Christian High School	H.H.	101	5	21	MEDITATIONS					
H.					Christus is Opgestaan (I Cor. 15:20)	H.H.	285	13	21	
Heidelberg Catechism — Exposition of (See—Exposition of the Heidelberg Cat.)					Confident of a Glad Reception (Ps. 119:74)	H.H.	49	3	21	
Hell — Do the Reprobate Sin in	G.M.O.	318	14	21	Door Den Geest Geleid (Rom. 8:14)	H.H.	381	17	21	
History of Christian Education in This Century	M.G.	13	1	21	Door Genade Vrij (Rom. 6:10)	H.H.	469	21	21	
Holy Impatience	H.H.	193	9	21	Election at the Cross (Luke 23:42)	H.H.	261	12	21	
I.					Gebouwd tot een Geestelijk Huis (I Pet. 2:4, 5)	H.H.	73	4	21	
Idea of Cooperation as an Element of Divine Providence	H.D.W.	159	7	21	Geestelijke Eetlust (I Pet. 2:1, 2)	H.H.	25	2	21	
Idol Worship — The Motives of	A.P.	417	18	21	God Die de Dooden Levend Maakt (Matt. 1:1-3)	H.H.	121	6	21	
If — Peccavi	Geo. Ten Elshof	85	4	21	God Speaking Through His Son (Heb. 1:3, 4)	H.H.	357	16	21	
I Have Refrained My Feet	H.H.	449	20	21	Holy Impatience (Ps. 119:84)	H.H.	193	9	21	
Incomprehensibility of God	H.H.	240	11	21	I Have Refrained My Feet (Ps. 119:101)	H.H.	449	20	21	
Continued	H.H.	264	12	21	Interceding On the Cross (Luke 23:33, 34)	H.H.	237	11	21	
Ingezonden	J. R. VanderWal	491	21	21	In the Light of His Word (Ps. 119:105)	H.H.	493	22	21	
Inspiration of Holy Writ — Plenary and Verbal	H.V.	18	1	21	I Will Never Forget (Ps. 119:93)	H.H.	405	18	21	
Interceding on the Cross	H.H.	237	11	21	Onze Zonden Gedragen (I Pet. 2:24)	H.H.	429	19	21	
Interesting Discussion — An	H.H.	352	15	21	Open Thou My Lips (Ps. 51:15)	H.H.	97	5	21	
Continued	H.H.	362	16	21	Reverend Circumspection (Eccl. 5:2)	H.H.	309	14	21	
In the Light of His Word	H.H.	493	22	21	Safe Refuge — A (Ps. 75:1b)	H.H.	145	7	21	
I Told You So	H.H.	100	5	21	Thou Hast Dealt Well (Ps. 119:65, 66)	H.H.	1	1	21	
I will Never Forget	H.H.	405	18	21	Uitnemend Volk — Een (I Pet. 2:9)	H.H.	169	8	21	
J.					Wandelen Als Vreemdelingen (I Pet. 2:11, 12)	H.H.	217	10	21	
John the Baptist — The Significance of	M.G.	467	20	21	Zijne Voetstappen (I Pet. 2:21)	H.H.	333	15	21	
Jephthah	G.M.O.	57	3	21	Micah's Spurious Sanctuary					
Jephthah and Ephraim	G.M.O.	130	6	21	Ministry of the Word — Debate: Resolved that Heidelberg Catechism Preaching is	G.M.O.	458	20	21	
Jephthah — The Days Preceding	G.M.O.	24	2	21		R.V.	165	7	21	
Jephthah's Vow	G.M.O.	108	5	21		A.P.	167	7	21	
Jericho Theology	J. A. Hoekstra	257	11	21	Miracles and the Laws of Nature	S.T.C.	188	8	21	
Jesus is Very God — This	H.H.	176	8	21	Missionary Calling — Our	W.H.	345	15	21	
K.					Continued	W.H.	379	16	21	
Kenosis of Phil. 2:7 — The	J. B.	115	5	21	Monasticism	G.M.O.	504	22	21	
					Montanism	G.M.O.	230	10	21	
					Motives of Idol-Worship — The	A.P.	417	18	21	
					Motives — Musings on	J.A. Hoekstra	72	3	21	
					Multiformity — The Basic Problem of the Church's	A.P.	402	17	21	

TITLE	N.	Author	Page	No.	Vol.	TITLE	Author	Page	No.	Vol.
Naar 't Kerkelijk Niet Naar 't Confes- sioneel Geweten .....		H.H.	315	14	21	Reply to H.A. Van Putten .....	J. Gritter	213	9	21
Natural Theology (Continued) .....		A.P.	61	3	21	Reprobated Sin in Hell — Do the .....	G.M.O.	318	14	21
Natures of Christ — The Apolinarian Conception of the .....		M.S.	214	9	21	Continued .....	G.M.O.	342	15	21
Natures of Christ — The Nestorian Con- ception of the .....		H.V.	118	5	21	Responsibility .....	J.A. Hoekstra	404	17	21
Need for a Calvinistic Conference — The Netherlands — The Liberated Churches in the .....		L.D.	278	12	21	Resurrection — Matt. 22:31, 32, as Proof of the Bodily .....	H.V.	396	17	21
Netherlands — Separation in the .....		H.H.	474	21	21	Revelation — The Authorship of the Book of .....	J.A.H.	20	1	21
News from Manhattan, Montana .....		H.H.	454	20	21	Reverend Circumspection .....	H.H.	309	14	21
News From Oak Lawn, Illinois .....			233	10	21	S.				
Offer of Salvation — The Text of a Com- plaint .....		H.H.	384	17	21	Safe Refuge — A .....	H.H.	145	7	21
Continued .....		H.H.	472	21	21	Samson and Delilah .....	G.M.O.	390	17	21
Offer of the Gospel — Text of a Com- plaint .....		H.H.	408	18	21	Samson and the Philistines .....	G.M.O.	270	12	21
O Herder Israels .....		G. V.	231	10	21	Samson — Birth Announced .....	G.M.O.	180	8	21
Old and the New Covenant — The .....		G.M.O.	477	21	21	Samson — End of .....	G.M.O.	438	19	21
Continued .....		G.M.O.	502	22	21	Samson Finding Occasion .....	G.M.O.	226	10	21
Old Man — The Outward Man and the .....		J.A.H.	276	12	21	Samson Justified in His Seeking Occa- sion .....	G.M.O.	246	11	21
One Sacrifice — The (continued) .....		H.H.	30	2	21	Samson Possesses the Gates of His Enemies .....	G.M.O.	366	16	21
Onze Zonden Gedragen .....		H.H.	430	19	21	Samson — Reactions of Unbelief to .....	G.M.O.	294	13	21
Open Thou My Lips .....		H.H.	97	5	21	Samson's Seeking Occasion .....	G.M.O.	203	9	21
Opent Uwen Mond .....		G.V.	250	11	21	Samson — The Lord Departs From .....	G.M.O.	413	18	21
Ordo Salutis — The Unconscious in the .....		A.P.	328	14	21	Samson, The Nazirite Judge .....	G.M.O.	154	7	21
Origin of the Soul — The .....		L.V.	88	4	21	Schedule for The Standard Bearer .....	H.H.	477	21	21
Orthodox Church in Russia — The .....		B.K.	372	16	21	Schilder — Aangaande Dr. .....	H.H.	222	10	21
Our Eternal King .....		H.H.	103	5	21	Schilder and Others .....	H.H.	241	11	21
Continued .....		H.H.	126	6	21	Schilder — Condemned Without a Hear- ing .....	H.H.	4	1	21
Our Missionary Calling .....		W.H.	345	15	21	Schilder — I Told You So .....	H.H.	100	5	21
Continued .....		W.H.	379	16	21	Schilder's Passion Trilogy — Common Grace in .....	G.L.	300	13	21
Our Own School — An Injunction .....		R. V.	423	18	21	School an Injunction — Our Own .....	R.V.	423	18	21
Our Sixth Synod .....		J.D.J.	443	19	21	Separation in the Netherlands .....	H.H.	454	20	21
P.						Servant of Jehovah — The Concept in Isaiah .....	J.A.H.	142	6	21
Pacifism .....		R.V.	304	13	21	Sign of the Son of Man in the Parousia .....	J.B.	487	21	21
Parousia — The Sign of the Son of Man in the .....		J.B.	487	21	21	Sinai — The Covenant of .....	P.D.B.	489	21	21
Partakers of His Anointing .....		H.H.	150	7	21	Sin in Hell — Do the Reprobated .....	G.M.O.	318	14	21
Pharaoh's Hardening Process .....		J.D.J.	258	11	21	Continued .....	G.M.O.	342	15	21
Philistines Offend Anew .....		G.M.O.	270	12	21	Smeekbede om Godswil .....	G.V.	182	8	21
Possibility of Christ Sinning .....		J.A.H.	511	22	21	Social Life — Communism and the .....	B.K.	135	6	21
Power of Public Opinion .....		J.D.J.	40	2	21	Soul — The Origin of the .....	L.V.	88	4	21
Predestination and Foreknowledge .....		C.H.	16	1	21	Soul — The Term in the New Testament .....	S.T.C.	447	19	21
Plenary and Verbal Inspiration of Holy Writ .....		H.V.	18	1	21	Soul — The Term in the Old Testament .....	H.D.W.	421	18	21
Presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper .....		L.V.	191	8	21	Sphinx (Stalin) of Moscow — The .....	J.B.	347	15	21
Press in Peace and War — Freedom of the .....		C.H.	114	5	21	Spoken by Jeremy the Prophet .....	H.D.W.	11	1	21
Pride of Ephraim — The .....		G.M.O.	130	6	21	Stalin — The Sphinx of Moscow .....	J.B.	347	15	21
Primacy of the Intellect .....		H.H.	288	13	21	Stone Lectures of Dr. Kuyper — A Critique .....	G.L.	65	3	21
Principle of Christian School Discipline .....		W.H.	208	9	21	Continued .....	G.L.	112	5	21
Proof of the Bodily Resurrection — Matt. 22:31, 32, as .....		H.V.	396	17	21	Continued .....	G.L.	140	6	21
Proof for the Existence of God .....						Synod — Our Sixth .....	J.D.J.	443	19	21
D. Vander Wal .....			22	1	21	T.				
Continued .....		D. Vander Wal	42	2	21	Tempted, Yet Without Sin .....	J.A.H.	511	22	21
Proposal of Local No. 12 — as to the .....		H.H.	28	2	21	Term Law in the Epistle to the Galatians .....	L.D.	63	3	21
Protesting First Chr. Reformed Church of Kalamazoo — The .....		H.H.	434	19	21	Term Soul in the New Testament — The .....	S.T.C.	447	19	21
Providence — The Idea of Cooperation as an Element of Divine .....		H.D.W.	159	7	21	Term Soul in the Old Testament — The .....	H.D.W.	421	18	21
Public Opinion — The Power of .....		J.D.J.	40	2	21	Text of a Complaint (see Clark — Text of a Complaint Against Dr.) .....				
Public Worship in the Church .....		G.M.O.	249	11	21	Thou Hast Dealt Well .....	H.H.	1	1	21
Purpose of Abraham's Separation — The .....		M.G.	255	11	21	Time and Content of Bereshith in Gen. 1:1 .....	J.A.H.	394	17	21
R.						U.				
Radio and the Christian Home — The .....		S.T.C.	324	14	21	Unconscious in the Ordo Salutis — The .....	A.P.	328	14	21
Rationalism .....		H.H.	336	15	21	Underground Movement Revolutionary .....	C.H.	326	14	21
Reactions of Unbelief to Samson .....		G.M.O.	294	13	21	Under Pontius Pilate .....	H.H.	340	15	21
Reformation — Calvin and the .....		H.V.	210	9	21	Continued .....	H.H.	363	16	21
Reformed Church in the United States .....		H.H.	53	3	21	V.				
Relation Between the Four Kinds of Faith .....		H.V.	280	12	21	Van De Rechters .....	G.V.	298	13	21
Religion — Freedom of .....		P.V.	94	4	21	Very God and Righteous Man .....	H.H.	291	13	21
Religious Freedom in Russia .....		C.H.	351	15	21	Vow — Jephthah's .....	G.M.O.	108	5	21
Renewed Apostasy and Repentance .....		G.M.O.	34	2	21	W.				
Repentance — God's .....		S.T.C.	91	4	21	Wandelen Als Vreemdelingen .....	H.H.	217	10	21
Reply to G. T. E. .....		J. Gritter	332	14	21	We Heartily Agree .....	H.H.	198	9	21
Reply to J. Gritter .....		Geo. Ten Elshof	236	10	21	Welgelukzalige Woning .....	G.V.	427	18	21
Reply to J. Gritter .....		Geo. Ten Elshof	380	16	21	Continued .....	G.V.	441	19	21
						Without the Will of Man .....	H.H.	242	11	21
						Z.				
						Zijne Voetstappen .....	H.H.	333	15	21