

THE STANDARD

Bearer

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MEDITATION

The Grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ

"And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn." Luke 2:7.

"For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich." II Cor. 8:9.

The Mystery of the Incarnate Word!

That is Christmas, worthy the term.

There was an Old Testament saint who set himself to singing in his old age. Listen to him: "And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us!" Correctly, our English fathers have given that chant of Moses to us in this form: "On us let the grace and beauty of the Lord our God remain!" They knew that grace is beauty, beauty of the Godhead.

Well, that prayer of Moses was answered on that first Christmas morning when Mary gave birth to her firstbegotten, and laid Him in a manger.

Grace is the beauty of the Godhead. It is the beauty of all His virtues, it is the beauty of His majesty and splendour.

The simple shepherds knew it. And so they glorified God.

But it takes spiritual sight to see that beauty. It is no beauty such as the wicked world desires. They are satisfied with tinsel and make believe.

When the natural eye looks on at the wondrous scene at Bethlehem, they see nothing but a foul stable, a sour manger, a little babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, a pondering mother and a silent man, the man Joseph.

That's all.

And enough.

That scene spells everlasting grace and beauty, a beauty such as will make heaven sing for the endless ages of eternity.

The history is sober.

A poor couple of young Jews had travelled the long distance from Nazareth to Bethlehem at the behest of Augustus. The whole earth had to be taxed. And obedient to the command of that mighty potentate they also had set out to the city of their fathers, for they were of the lineage of David.

They had arrived too late to find room for them in the inn. And so they had found shelter in one of those caves at the outskirts of the city where the cattle and sheep were kept.

No, there was no room for them at the inn.

Also that is highly significant. This occurrence casts a shadow before over the life of the little Babe. Henceforth the world will have no room for Him. And finally He will hang between heaven and earth on the accursed tree. Their refusal to give Him place at His birth will find its natural, logical fruit in their absolute rejection of the Christ of God.

At any rate, Joseph and Mary made themselves as comfortable as they could under the circumstances.

But so it was that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered!

Give birth to your firstborn in a stable?

Take care of a little Babe without the necessary tools and conveniences?

No bed, no cradle, no layette, no doctor or midwife in attendance?

I am sure that the number of babes born in like circumstances are few.

Mary gave birth to her firstborn, and, having nothing else, wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in that foul smelling manger.

Do I say too much when I call the whole scene a manifestation of great poverty?

Paul spoke of His poverty. And how He became poor.

And, no doubt, Paul spoke of the same scene which now holds our attention. He saw and described the poverty. For He was rich.

And here I hesitate.

What does it mean that Jesus Christ *was* rich, meaning, of course, that He was rich prior to His entrance into that stable, prior to His birth on earth.

Did Paul have in mind the Godhead of Christ? But then he would not use the past tense of the verb, for at the time Christ lay in the manger His Godhead was still rich, in fact, His Godhead owned the whole Universe.

Did Paul have in mind His human nature? But then how can that be? His human nature was not yet. How could the Christ of God be rich when He did not exist as yet according to His human nature?

Dear reader, I do not profess to know the answer to this dilemma. I will but venture an opinion.

I think that Paul had in mind His riches such as the Christ of God always had in the counsel of God which is living and real before God's face from all eternity. Yes, the Christ was even before he appeared at Bethlehem. Do we not read several times that Christ was among Israel in the desert? And He Himself said at one time to the unbelieving and hostile Jews: Before Abraham was I am.

And Jesus knew that He was glorious from all eternity. And so we hear Him pray to His Father (Which is the Triune God): "And now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine Own Self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was!"

Attend to this: God does not pray to God. And so we hear in this prayer the Son of God in human nature praying to the Triune God and referring to His glory which He had with the Father before the world was.

But that glory was not while He was on earth. O, surely, for a moment that glory would return to Him, as for instance, when He stood and talked with Moses and Elijah on the mount of transfiguration; and perhaps also when He caused those wicked soldiers in the garden to fall backward on the ground.

But usually His glory was not on earth.

He became abjectly poor.

But it was our poverty which He took vicariously on His own poor head.

And that is the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

That is the beauty of the Lord our God.

That He took someone else's misery on Himself.

And what a misery!

Attend to this: our poverty is that we lack all virtue and that we have all wickedness. And that poverty He took over from us out of the motive of purest love. And that is His beauty.

Let us draw up some sort of catalog.

We are sinners, guilty, cursed, dead, and condemned and damned unto everlasting death in hell and the pit that burns with fire and sulphur.

Study that catalog, dear reader. I assure you that it fits you and me,

And it is the beauty of your and my Christ that He took it from you and in its stead He gave you of His own glory

and beauty so that you might be glorious eternally. He beautifies the meek with salvation.

"That ye through His poverty might be rich."

And the stamp of that poverty stayed with Him throughout His whole life on earth.

He complains that the foxes have holes and the birds have nests, but the Son of man has nowhere to lay His head.

He is so poor that His name is The Curse of God.

He is so dreadfully poor that Paul gives Him the strange name of SIN! "He became sin for us!"

He is so poor, and this will show the bottomless depth of His poverty, that He finally cries in hellish darkness: My God, My God why hast Thou forsaken Me?

And remember that all this poverty came upon and with in Him while all the time He was unspotted and clean, beautiful and lovely, good and upright. All He did was carry this burden of everlasting poverty for the elect sons and daughters of God given Him by the Father to redeem out of their poverty into which they had willingly cast themselves.

But He was poor.

And He became poor, motivated by a love that is unspeakable.

And He did it to make us all rich.

What shall I say of that?

The greater part of the riches I have never seen.

Let us see: He took away all our sins and guilt and nailed it on the accursed tree. Imagine: to be without sin! To be brought before the Face of Jehovah and not to fear! to stand within the circle of holy angels and not blush!

He took away all our curse, hell and damnation. When we die we need not go to hell! What glory, and what riches of deliverance!

Oh yes, the Gospel of Christmas tells me that my sins are forgiven, that I am adopted to be a son of God forever, that I have the right to eternal life, and that I have peace with God and the holy angels.

The whole church of Christ is justified. Hallelujah!

And that is not all.

Through the poverty of Jesus I become a temple of the living God; God is going to dwell within me! What unspeakable riches!

What am I saying, my brother? He does already dwell in me in principle. It is through the Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes that God came to dwell within my poor heart in the moment of regeneration. And He came and dwelled there through my conversion. He gave me faith thru that wonder of grace, and I believe, oh yes, I believe, Lord!

And according to the promise of Jesus that God of my salvation abided with me. And so He is my Companion on life's way in sanctification, through which I hate sin and love

goodness, lay off the old man of sin and take on the new man in Christ.

That leaves me basically a happy man.

Through my tears I can smile.

For I see the poverty of Jesus as my own, and I receive the beginning of the beauty and the riches of the Christ of God.

Oh, surely, the scene in Bethlehem's stable is the beauty and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ!

G.V.

Trio

Lynden, Wash., Cand. R. Harbach, Rev. J. Heys, Geo. Lubbers.

May I remind the consistories that all church news is to be sent, not to me, but to Mr. G. Stadt, 754 Prince St., Grand Rapids, Mich.? Also that our churches are interested in knowing what trios and calls the vacant churches make?

H.H.

Announcement

The Officers Conference (Elders and Deacons) will meet on Tuesday Evening, January 4, 1955 at 8 o'clock in the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church. This meeting is for present and past Elders and Deacons. The Rev. G. M. Ophoff will deliver a paper on the Subject: "Excommunication." Let's all be out!

Mr. Joe King, Clerk

IN MEMORIAM

The Lord, in His inscrutable wisdom, and according to His determinate counsel, was pleased to call from this earthly scene

MRS. JACOB VAN KAMPEN

beloved mother and mother-in-law of Mr. and Mrs. Joe Van Kampen. May the bereaved experience the comfort of the Holy Spirit, who comforts the people of God with the word of the Eternal Word who said: "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

John 11:25, 26

The Ladies Aid Society of Holland, Michigan

The Men's Society of Holland, Michigan

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS IN VERSE

Thou shalt have no more gods but Me,
Before no idol bow the knee,
Take not the name of God in vain,
Nor dare the Sabbath-day profane,
Give both thy parents honor due.
Take heed that thou no murder do.
Abstain from words and deeds unclean;
Nor steal, though thou be poor and mean;
Nor make a willful lie, nor love it,
What is thy neighbor's dare not covet.

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EDITORIALS

Independentism

When the complete record of our case in the Superior Court is published, which I sincerely hope will be done in some future time, it will be revealed that our opponents defended a congregationalistic or independentistic form of church government: the consistory alone has power, classis and synod have no power whatsoever.

I think it will even be shown that they testified that the consistory is the highest court, while classis and synod are the lower and lowest courts respectively.

That was their view.

And to defend and maintain this conception of church polity was, of course, their privilege.

But what is far worse is that they tried to leave the impression with the court that their view is the Reformed conception of church polity. In this they did not succeed, because the judge had before him in court a copy of the Church Order.

And what probably was worse still, they attempted to make the impression with the court that their view is the same as that of the Rev. Ophoff and the undersigned. They tried to show, by all kinds of faulty and partial quotations that the brethren Ophoff and the undersigned had always taught the same church political view as they.

The trouble is, of course, that just as those that apostatized from the Protestant Reformed truth (as every fair minded outsider will admit they did) never really understood that truth and certainly never loved it, so they also failed to grasp the principles of Reformed Church Polity as taught in our seminary by Prof. Ophoff and as always maintained by myself.

Although, indistinction from some other Reformed writers and also from the Christian Reformed Church since 1926, we always maintained that no classis or synod could ever depose a consistory under normal circumstances, yet we understood very well and always maintained that, in the church connection and under the Church Order, classis and synod have real power and authority even over the consistory.

If this were not true, how could there ever be a possibility of appeal from the consistory to classis and from classis to synod? Does one ever appeal from a higher to a lower court?

Besides, although the classis or synod certainly cannot depose office-bearers, no consistory can, in the church connection, depose them without the consent of the classis.

In this connection it is interesting to review my testimony in court in 1924. Even then I admitted that, although at that time there was still a controversy in the Christian Reformed Church about the question whether or not a classis

could depose office-bearers, nevertheless, classis has jurisdiction over the consistory.

I quote from the record:

"What classis is it that has charge of your church? That is, in what jurisdiction is the Eastern Ave. Church?

"We are resorting under Classis Grand Rapids East.

"You are within the jurisdiction of Classis Grand Rapids East, are you not?"

"Yes, sir.

"And the classis Grand Rapids East is the next larger body in the Eastern Ave. Church with reference to its governmental affairs, is it not?"

"The Classis is not a body in the Eastern Ave. Church.

"No, but it is the next higher body in the church?"

"Next to the congregation, yes, sir.

"Which has jurisdiction over the church, is it not?"

"There is a controversy in our church about that, Mr. Linsey.

"Yes, in your church there is, now that you have charge of it.

"No, I mean in the Christian Reformed Church.

"Well, in any event there is no dispute about this?"

"There is a quite a little dispute about that, whether the classis has jurisdiction over the consistory, in our doctrine . . .

"It has not been very long, has it?"

"It is quite a while.

"Bultema took that position didn't he?"

"Well, yes, Bultema took that position; I did not take that position.

"Do you take that position?"

"No, I will admit here in court — otherwise I think the court will never understand — that the classis has jurisdiction over the consistory.

"All right, all right, we have got so far then. Now then it was proper for classis for these three men to appeal to classis, was it not?"

"Yes, sir, it was.

"And this matter being before classis, classis could pass upon the question as the whether or not the censure should stand or whether it should be lifted, couldn't they?"

"They could advise the consistory, yes.

"And if they advised the consistory that the censure should be lifted, it then became the duty of the consistory to lift it, did it not?"

"No, sir; no, sir.

"Why not?"

"Because the consistory could appeal to the synod.

"Well, if they did not appeal to synod, it would be their duty at once to lift it, wouldn't it?"

"Yes, I think it would in the church connection.

Thus far the quotation.

Notice, that in court I took the position that the classis has jurisdiction over the consistory, even though I did not agree that this jurisdiction included the authority to depose office-bearers. Notice, too, that I took the position that, in

the church connection the consistory was bound to lift the censure of the three brethren that were censured, unless the consistory appealed to synod. This meant, of course, that, although it could not depose the consistory, it had power to declare us out of the denomination.

The court record will show that, in 1954, the opposition even denied this.

I will continue this in the next issue, D.V.

H.H.

AS TO BOOKS

*De Levensgang van Gerben Gervaa*s, (The Life-Course of Gerben Gervaa)s by Go Verburg. Published by J. H. Kok, N.V., Kampen, The Netherlands. Price f 5.40.

This is a story and an interesting one. What is more, it is a Christian story. I hardly know how to characterize it. It is not a romance, it is hardly a novel. It is a story of a Christian School teacher, a principal of the Christian school in Heijlingen. When he was sixty five years old he had to retire. At that occasion all the parents of the school-children and others arranged a farewell party for Mr. Gervaa)s, who had been and was still highly esteemed by all. At the party, it was suggested that Mr. Gervaa)s write a sort of biography, which it was thought would be very beneficial for both his contemporaries and his posterity, seeing that, according to the opinion of everybody he had led such an exemplary life. Mr. Gervaa)s considered this a good idea. He starts to write and sits lost in thought on the first page of the first chapter; finally, gives it up, and tries to write on a different period of his life; he again fails

But why should I tell you the story. Read it for yourself. It is, I think, very realistic. Most Christians can, most probably, find themselves in it.

H.H.

Daily Manna, a calendar for the year 1955. Edited by Rev. M. Monsma; published by the Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich. Price \$1.85.

This calendar contains three hundred and sixty five meditations, supposed to be read one for every day of the year 1955. Naturally, seeing that these meditations are to be read at the rate of one a day, and that the year has not even begun, it is impossible for me to review their contents here. They are written by different ministers. All I can say, therefore, is that this is often an edifying form of Christian literature, and that what I have read in the past of *Daily Manna*, also under the editorship of the Rev. Monsma, inspires me with a measure of confidence to recommend this calendar to our readers.

H.H.

Het Raadsel van ons Leven (The Riddle of our Life) by Dr. J. H. Bavinck. Published by J. H. Kok, Kampen, The Netherlands. Price f 3.50.

This book, which, by the way, enjoys its third edition and print, I did not enjoy as well as the book I reviewed of

the same author on the principles of missions. In it the author is very apologetic, almost from beginning to end. The author begins with a chapter on „Het grote ontwaken” (The great awakening) by which he means that a child, for the first time, awakens to the reality that he stands in the midst of a world of riddles. Then he faces the question what we know, which is followed by the chapter on faith by which the author does not refer to saving faith in Christ, but simply to the general subjective assurance, inborn in man, without which he cannot know anything, etc. etc.

I was wondering whether, perhaps, in this book we have an illustration of what the author, in his book on missions calls “the approach.” He certainly does not address the Christian that has the faith in Christ in his heart.

This does not mean that the book, though it is philosophical and apologetic, is not worth while reading and interesting. It is written in a style which easily brings it within the reach of the general reader that still can read Dutch.

H.H.

As to Contributions

It is high time that I remind our readers of the rule which, years ago, the staff of the *Standard Bearer* laid down for contributions.

That rule is that contributions must observe the limit of three hundred words.

Perhaps, most of our contributors and readers are not even aware of the fact that such a rule exists.

It is possible, too, that I myself am partly to blame if they have forgotten it. I certainly did not always strictly adhere to and maintain this rule. I was too lenient and very liberal. Frequently I published contributions that far exceeded the space limit. This was, in part, due to circumstances: the *Standard Bearer* did not always have a complete staff of editors.

But now it is different.

We again have regular editors. To each of them a certain space is assigned in our paper.

The result is that I cannot find room for contributions of a thousand to twelve hundred words as, recently, I have been receiving again.

Let contributors, therefore, as much as possible observe the rule.

Personally, I like contributions from as many of our readers as are able to write. And if at all possible I usually place them even if they exceed to a certain extent the space limit.

But if I receive long articles that would occupy two or three pages in our magazine, the reader will understand that it is impossible for me to place them.

Ik kan geen ijzer met handen breken. I cannot break iron with my hands.

H.H.

OUR DOCTRINE

THE TRIPLE KNOWLEDGE

AN EXPOSITION OF THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

PART III — OF THANKFULNESS

LORD'S DAY 43

In II Sam. 19:27 Mephibosheth complains to the king that his servant had slandered him. Of the wicked among the people of Judah Jeremiah complains: "They are all grievous revolters, walking with slanders; they are brass and iron; they are all corrupters." Jer. 6:28. And in chapter 9, vss. 2-5, he complains: "Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging place of wayfaring men: that I might leave my people and go from them! for they be all adulterers and assembly of treacherous men. And they bend their tongues like their bow for lies: but they are not valiant for the truth upon the earth; for they proceed from evil to evil and they know not me, saith the Lord. Take ye heed every one of his neighbour, and trust ye not in any brother: for every brother will utterly supplant, and every neighbour will walk with slanders. And they will deceive every one his neighbour, and will not speak the truth: they have taught their tongue to speak lies, and weary themselves to commit iniquity." Also the term *backbiting* occurs in Scripture. In Psalm 15:3 we read: "He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour." And in Proverbs 25:23: "The north wind driveth away rain: so doth an angry countenance a backbiting tongue." In Romans 1:30 backbiting is listed in the enumeration of the corruptions of those that are of a reprobate mind: "Backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents." And in II Cor. 12:20 we read: "For I fear, lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would and that I shall be found unto you such as ye would not: lest there be debates, envyings, riots, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults." Besides the Word of God employs other terms to denote this same sin, such as *talebearers*, Ps. 10:18; 11:13; 12:17; 14:3; *whisperers*, Romans 1:29; Prov. 18:8; 26:20, 22; Ps. 41:7; and *tattlers*, I Tim. 5:13. No wonder that James in his epistle, 3:6, thinking no doubt especially of this most despicable evil, calls the tongue a fire and a world of iniquity: "And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and is set on fire of hell."

In close connection with backbiting and slandering, we must call attention to what the Heidelberg Catechism calls falsifying a man's words. This too is a very common and very evil business. One can change and falsify a man's words, either spoken in conversation or printed, in a very subtle way.

It seems rather easy to report someone's statement and to distort his words without apparently even becoming guilty of lying. Sometimes one does not even have to change the words. He can quote them literally, but the words are lifted out of their proper connection. They are quoted only in part, while the statement would appear in an entirely different light if the whole were quoted. Sometimes even a man's word is falsified by laying stress and emphasis upon a different part of the statement made, emphasizing something which was not stressed at all by the original speaker. Or, the words are quoted in entirely different circumstances from those in which the original statement was made. And so they receive an entirely different meaning than they originally conveyed. Also in this way a man really becomes guilty of backbiting and slandering. For the purpose is the destruction of the good name of the neighbor or of the brother.

Finally, the Catechism sums up the matter in the statement, "that I avoid all sorts of lies and deceit, as the proper works of the devil." This also includes the sin of lying about one's self. This is true, for instance, of the sin of boasting. It is the sin of exalting one's self above another, or of speaking about one's self with the intention of giving others a high opinion about one's self, about one's deeds or accomplishments, or of the things belonging to one's self. In the world there are even traditional boasters. God forbid that they should also appear in the church. Men and women that always vaunt about themselves, there are. Sometimes they are such traditional braggers that they do not care very much whether you believe them or not. They just like to boast anyway. On the other hand, one can lie about himself when he is accused of a certain sin or misdemeanor and tries to deny it. He is ashamed before the brethren that he has committed this sin, and so he denies it and lies about himself. Also this should not be found in the church, among the children of God: in the first place, because God in Christ Jesus demands that we shall always speak the truth in love, also concerning ourselves; but in the second place, too, because it is only in the way of truth and in the way of confessing the truth concerning ourselves that there is forgiveness of sin and peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. In the way of impenitence there is no mercy. And as the Heidelberg Catechism expresses it, we only bring down upon us the heavy wrath of God. But in the way of confessing our sin before God and before one another, there is grace and peace.

Over against all this lying and slander and falsifying a man's words and boasting of self stands the admonition of the Word of God that we shall always speak the truth in love concerning one another and concerning ourselves, before the God of our salvation. But what does this imply? Does it mean that we shall speak the truth about our neighbor all the time and in all circumstances? Does it mean that always and everywhere I shall say all that I know about him? God forbid. This certainly would not be speaking the truth in love. Does it mean that I am obliged to publish all that I

know about myself? Also this is not true. Of course not. Others certainly do not have to know all that I know about myself. There are many things that God only knows and has to know and that I have to confess before Him alone. It would be quite impossible for the small beginning of the new life in us and the many sins we commit in thought, word, and deed, to live as a church of Jesus Christ if we knew about one another what God knows about us. Life would become impossible and intolerable. Such is not necessary. But to speak the truth in love certainly implies that we shall never bring a false report about our neighbor, yea, that if at all possible, we shall conceal an evil report about the brother, even though the report be true. And it implies that rather than spread the evil report about him, you shall visit him and speak with him face to face, in love, before God in Christ. When we speak the truth in love, it is our purpose to defend the honor and good reputation of the brother and sister, rather than maliciously to besmear one another's name. In this there is a rich blessing for the church of Jesus Christ in the world, just as there is a curse in sinning against the ninth commandment. The curse is that by the lie there is under the wrath of God, created an atmosphere of suspicion and malice and hatred and envy and distrust in which one chokes rather than lives. The liar destroys his neighbor, destroys himself, and destroys, if possible, the church of Christ. But if we speak the truth in love, there is, under the blessing of God, created an atmosphere of confidence, the confidence of love, of seeking one another's well-being, in which it is a joy to live, in which one can breathe freely as a child of God in the Lord Jesus Christ. He that speaks the truth in love saves his neighbor, saves himself, and saves the church of Jesus Christ. For God dwells where the truth dwells. Hence, as children of God we have a double calling, or rather, one calling with two aspects: put off the old man, that moves in the sphere of lying; and put on the new man in Jesus Christ our Lord, that always speaks the truth in love. Then there will be joy and peace and light in the midst of Zion, and God will dwell with us.

LORD'S DAY 44

Q. 113. What doth the tenth commandment require of us?

A. That even the smallest inclination or thought, contrary to any of God's commandments, never rise in our hearts; but that at all times we hate all sin with our whole heart, and delight in all righteousness.

Q. 114. But can those who are converted to God perfectly keep these commandments?

A. No: but even the holiest men, while in this life, have only a small beginning of this obedience; yet so, that with a sincere resolution they begin to live, not only according to some, but all the commandments of God.

Q. 115. Why will God then have the ten commandments so strictly preached, since no man in this life can keep them?

A. First, that all our lifetime we may learn more and more to know our sinful nature, and thus become the more earnest in seeking the remission of sin, and righteousness in Christ; likewise, that we constantly endeavor and pray to God for the grace of the Holy Spirit, that we may become more and more conformable to the image of God, till we arrive at the perfection proposed to us, in a life to come.

Chapter 1

The Perfection of the Law Preached

It is evident at first sight that in Lord's Day 44 we have not only an explanation of the tenth commandment. There is much more. This Lord's Day combines especially three elements. First of all, it speaks of the significance and the sense, the deep inner meaning, of the tenth commandment. In the second place, it raises the question as to the possibility of perfection in this life for the Christian: can the Christian keep this law of God perfectly? And it answers that question with a Yes-No. And thirdly in connection with the negative part of the answer which the instructor of our Heidelberg Catechism gives to that second question, it raises the equally logical and natural question: why, then, should the law be preached so strictly, if no one can keep it anyway?

It is evident at once why the Catechism connects these last two questions with the exposition of the tenth commandment. The reason lies in the very nature of this commandment. This precept differs from the preceding nine in this, that openly and directly it points the finger to our inner life when it forbids us to covet. All the other commandments fail to do this. It is true that they all certainly imply this, and that they all concern our inner life: for the principle of the whole law is the love of God. But they do not directly point the finger at that inner life of the Christian, at his thoughts and desires, at his will, and at his deepest heart. All the other commandments, — Thou shalt not serve idols; Thou shalt not profane the name of God; Thou shalt observe the sabbath; Thou shalt honor father and mother; Thou shalt not kill, commit adultery, steal, or bear false witness, — these all, as to form, lay the hand upon our life in the outward sense of the word. It would seem that the Decalogue, until you come to the tenth commandment, is satisfied with the outward conformation to the precepts of God. To this the apostle Paul refers in Romans 7:7: "What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Howbeit, I had not known sin, except through the law; for I had not known coveting, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet."

The tenth commandment in its very form, in its literal expression, very clearly claims the whole inner life of man. It forbids covetousness. To covet is a question of my inner life, not of my outward act. No one can detect when I covet anything, unless, perhaps, it comes to manifestation in the expression of my eyes or face. It surely is none of another's

business whether or not I covet. My mere act of coveting surely does not injure my neighbor. And therefore, coveting does not appear to be a real sin whatsoever. Nevertheless, the tenth commandment approaches us with the prohibition: "Thou shalt not covet anything that is thy neighbor's."

It is for that reason that the Heidelberg Catechism correctly sees in this tenth commandment the manifestation of the perfection of the law. The spiritual perfection of the whole law becomes revealed in the tenth commandment. And it is because of that character of the tenth commandment that the Catechism with it joins the question: can anyone keep that law perfectly; can the Christian keep that law of God without fail? And of course, for the same reason the next question follows: what, then, is the use to preach the law of God, if no one can keep it perfectly anyway?

That the Catechism does indeed see the perfection of the whole law reflected in the tenth commandment is at once evident from the way in which it explains it in Question and Answer 113. It does not even take pains to enter into a literal interpretation of this commandment whatsoever. The very question is put positively, rather than negatively: what doth the tenth commandment require of us? Besides, let us notice that in the answer to Qu. 113 it passes by the idea of coveting in the narrower sense of the word altogether. It does not even call attention to the literal sense of the tenth commandment. Literally, as we know, the tenth commandment reads: "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house; thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbor's." With the literal language of this commandment the Catechism does not appear to be concerned whatsoever. Instead, it at once strikes at something far deeper. Negatively speaking, this precept of the Decalogue, according to the Heidelberg Catechism, means "that even the smallest inclination or thought, contrary to any of God's commandments, never rise in our hearts." Literally this tenth precept of the Decalogue does not seem to refer to any thought or desire that may rise in our hearts against any of the commandments of God. But it simply speaks of coveting the neighbor's goods. And on the other hand, the Catechism explains the positive requirement of this tenth commandment as follows: "That at all times we hate all sin with our whole heart, and delight in all righteousness." The interpretation of the Heidelberg Catechism, therefore, is all-embracing and very profound. And we understand, of course, that this is not the narrower sense of this commandment; but it is the conclusion which the Catechism draws from it with regard to the entire law of God.

As to the literal and narrowest sense of this commandment, it is very evident that it simply forbids us to covet, that is, to covet sinfully, covet the earthly goods that belong to the neighbor. We understand, of course, that in itself it is not sinful to covet. To covet simply means to desire, to long for with eagerness, to wish for the possession of anything. In itself this cannot be sinful, for the simple

reason that God has created us in such a way that we must desire and long for many things. The very power to covet is a God-given gift. No one can help to covet. And the apostle Paul admonishes the church at Corinth: "But covet earnestly the best gifts." I Cor. 12:31. You can no more help to covet than you can help to see with your eyes and to hear with your ears and to taste with your mouth. God gave us a soul and body that must covet and that covets all the time. This is true simply because we are dependent creatures, dependent ultimately and absolutely upon the God that created us, but at the same time dependent mediately upon many things in the world round about us. If we are hungry, we covet food. If we are thirsty, we covet drink. We covet a home to live in, and we covet clothing to cover and protect our bodies. Moreover, we are originally created in the image of God, in true knowledge, righteousness and holiness, adapted to stand in the covenant of friendship with the Most High. And that means that we were created with the very power and faculty to covet the fellowship of friendship with the living God. Apart from sin, our mind covets to know God, and we hunger and thirst for the love of the Most High. It is this sinless and pure coveting which the psalmist expresses in Ps. 42:1, 2: "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?" And the same sinless coveting is expressed in Ps. 84:2: "My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God." In fact, the Catechism, in its answer to Qu. 113, refers to the same coveting when it explains "that at all times we hate all sin with our whole heart, and delight in all righteousness." Man, therefore, must normally covet. To covet is to desire something. It is to present something before the mind and to desire to possess it and to enjoy it. Man cannot help to covet as long as he is man. But the question is: what is the object of his coveting? On what does he set the desire of his heart? He must covet the right things. As man stood originally in paradise, he certainly was a coveting creature. And as you and I hope to stand before the throne of God in perfection, dwelling in His tabernacle forever, we shall never cease to covet. We shall forevermore covet with all our heart, with all our mind, with all our soul, and with all our strength. But there the central object of our coveting shall be God, and all other things in relation to Him. God in Christ shall forever be the desire of our hearts. He will have the love of our hearts, even as we covet His love to us in Christ Jesus our Lord.

But when the Scriptures refer to the sin of covetousness, they refer to the fact that our hearts, our minds, our will, and all our desires have become fundamentally corrupt. Covetousness, according to the Bible, is one of the sins that make it impossible for us to inherit the kingdom of God.

H.H.

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

The Prophecy of Isaiah

XL 21. Have ye not known? Have ye not heard?

Hath it not been told you from the beginning?

Have ye not understood *from* the foundations of the earth?

It is best to regard these questions as directed to worshippers of idols with whose vile doings the prophet is occupied in the preceding verse, but directed to idol worshippers for the benefit of God's distressed, discouraged but believing and penitent people in the captivity of the exile. This benefit lies in the answer to these questions, particularly in the truth about God that underlies this answer — an answer that the Lord Himself supplies. Of course, this entire discourse of twenty six chapters was communicated to the prophet for the benefit of this people, the remnant according to the election of grace. The purpose was to stimulate and sustain its faith in God, in His ability to provide Him a way whereby to lead His people out of their captivity — deliver them from the clutch of the world-power as represented at the time by the kings of Babylon — and to bring them home. This must constantly be kept in mind. This second half of Isaiah's prophecy is preeminently a book of comfort for the church in Babylon.

The tense of the verbs of the first line of the above-cited verse is imperfect (the verbs of the Hebrew text), so that it is best to translate here, "Will you not know? Will you not hear?" Thus rendered, the two clauses express the indignation of the prophet, of the Lord Himself, at the hardness of heart of idolaters, the heathen, and the impenitent apostate Jews in exile. They refuse to know and to hear, despite the fact that it has been told them from the beginning and that by the light of reason they understood *from* the foundations of the earth.

The preposition *from* is not found in the original, but to my mind it is plain from the immediate context that it is nevertheless there by implication.

Have you not understood? Understood what? The answer is contained in the two verses that follow.

22. He that sitteth upon the circle of the earth,
And the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers;
He that stretched out the heavens as a curtain,
And spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in:

23. He that bringeth the princes to nothing;
The judges of the earth as vanity makes.

The sentence is without a predicate. The context shows that this must be, "Hath made the earth." Who? Not their idols, the work of men's hands, but He that is sitting on the circle of the earth from where its inhabitants seem like grasshoppers, stretches out the heavens as a curtain and as a tent

to dwell in, and reduces the rulers of the earth to nothingness, — He made the earth. And this fact has been transmitted from the foundations of the earth, from Adam on, and preserved in its purest form in the Mosaic account of creation. Besides, the invisible things of God are clearly seen since the creation of the world through the things that are made, even His everlasting power and divinity. And these things are manifest in them, so that they are without excuse for giving glory and thanks to their idols instead of to the true God.

The circle of the earth is here not the globe of the earth but the earth as it presents itself to the eye of its inhabitants, namely as enclosed on every hand by the circle of the horizon. High above the same the Lord is enthroned. From this elevation the people appear as grasshoppers. This is figurative language. Its purpose is to impress with the fact of God's exaltedness and of man's nothingness before Him.

This idea of the absolute sublimity of the Lord is made still more impressive by a description of the ease with which He brings the great ones of the earth to complete and thorough ruin.

24 Yea, they were not planted;

Yea, they were not sown:

Yea, their stock took not root in the earth,

When He also blew upon them and they withered,

And a tempest bore them away as stubble.

The meaning is, that no more are the worldly rulers planted and sown and does their stock take root in the earth, that is, scarcely do they succeed in establishing themselves in the earth, when the Lord with no effort at all, simply by blowing upon them, brings them to nought so completely that they cannot anywhere be found. Who but God alone is capable of such a doing? Not only that but the only and very reason that He can thus dispose of the rulers is that, existing as they do by His power, they are less than nothing before Him. And their idols are the work of men's hands. And so once again,

25 To whom will ye liken me,

Or shall I be equal?

Saith the Holy One.

Verily, to whom in heaven or on earth or in the waters under the earth will ye liken Me? There can be but one right answer. To no one. I God am only. I am God and none else.

This, of course, is the answer of faith, of all such only in whose heart is shed abroad God's love. Fools persist in giving glory to the idols, to the not-gods of their own making. But that they may be fully without excuse, the prophet directs to them a final word.

25 Lift up your eyes and see

Who hath created these, *the stars*,

Who? He that bringeth out by number their host;

All by name He calls by the greatness of His might,

For He is strong in power,

Not one is missing.

The stars are His creation. How otherwise would they come forth as a result of His calling each one of them by name? Truly, to His power there is no limit. He is the incomparable God.

How unspeakably privileged His captive and afflicted people there in Babylon were to possess Him as their God! But they were deriving no comfort from that fact. For in their unbelief they were harboring in their souls wrong thoughts about Him as is clear from their complaint that the prophet voices in order that he may reply to it.

27 Why sayest thou O Jacob, and speakest thou O Israel,

My way is hidden from the Lord.

And my judgment is passed over from my God?

To awaken in them the awareness of how precious they are in God's sight and how secure by reason of His promises to them, he addresses them by the names that were born by their ancestral father. The meaning of the name "Jacob" is heel-lifter. A "Jacob" is one who in the way of the good fight of faith—a faith that identifies him with Christ in whom he has the victory—displaces the reprobate and inherits the earth. The name "Israel" means, one who wrestles with God and prevails. An "Israel" is one that in prayer wrestles with God for the blessing and is made to prevail, that is, He receives of God the blessing. He is thus made to prevail also over men, the adversary. That is what those captives were by God's mercy. They were Jacob-Israel.

But Jacob-Israel, God's people in Babylon, were unbelieving. And in the despondency of their unbelief they went to reasoning about God as though He were a man, ascribing to Him the weaknesses and limitations of a man. As in their minds the Lord was associated with the temple in Jerusalem that was in ruins they allowed themselves to be directed in their contemplations of Him by the feeling that had stolen over their souls that from sheer weariness or lack of interest He was no longer taking any notice of their course of life, of their warfare in Babylon and the sufferings that it entailed, and that He had abandoned them to the enemy. The hope that the Lord would judge between them and their captives and deliver them out of the adversary's hand had faded. Perhaps He was unable or lacked the proper penetration, the necessary knowledge of the required measures. For Babylon was strong. As a world-power it seemed unshakable. If it was to be made to pass away, it would have to be by a miracle. Besides, it was a long way home. And the journey would have to be made by foot. And the way was rough and crooked. It led over hills and through deep valleys. Would they have the strength, courage and endurance, they and their wives and their little ones? There was no end to their doubts and fears and misgivings. Yet in their unbelief their souls mourned after the Lord. And they loved Jerusalem better than life. I speak now of the remnant according to the election of grace and not of the Jews who chose to remain when the leave to return home

was finally granted. To the former the prophet tenders a reply that was calculated to shame their unbelief and revive their faith in God.

28 Hast thou not known? Hast thou not heard?

Eternal God, Jehovah,

Creator of the ends of the earth,

He does not tire, He does not become weary,

There is no searching to His understanding.

29 He giveth to the weary strength,

And to them that have no strength He multiplieth strength.

30 Faint the youths and grow weary,

The choice men utterly fall:

31 But they that wait upon the Lord renew their strength,

They run and do not weary;

They walk and do not faint.

God is eternal, without beginning and end, which must needs imply that He is the everlasting fountain of His own blessed existence and as the infinitely good God the overflowing fountain of all good. God is He, the I am, the creator of the ends of the earth, of the far-off land of their captivity. It is His creature. By His will it exists. Here, too, He reigns supreme. How can *He* be faint and tire? How can there be any diminishing of *His* strength? How can *He* want penetration, necessary knowledge of the measures to be adopted? How can there be any limit to the power of such a God that He should not be able to save? And He gives strength for the journey home to His people who, because they know that they are without strength, seek all their strength with Him. And as they possess in Him an inexhaustible source of strength through Christ in His Spirit, they walk and run without getting tired. Not one of them falls not again to rise. All shall appear in Zion. Not one shall be missing. Now the prophet was not telling them things that they did not know and had not heard. They did know. They had heard. But the prophet will continue preaching to them God as revealed in Christ's face, in order that He may become very real to them.

The conqueror from the east is operative as the Lord's agent, xli. 1-7.

1. Be silent before me, O Islands; and let the Nations renew strength;

Let them draw nigh, yea let them speak.

Let us (I, the Lord, and you nations) come together for judgment.

2. (Tell Me) who raised *him* up from the east,

With righteousness called him to his feet,

Gave before him the nations,

And made him to tread down kings?

His sword made *them* as dust,

And his bow as driven stubble,

3. He pursued them and passed in peace,

By the way he had not gone with his feet.

4 Who hath wrought and done *this*?

He that called the generations from the beginning,

I the Lord, the first,

And with the last; I *am* He.

This is more conclusive evidence that with the Lord there is power to save. The spoiler of nations from the east is the Cyrus of subsequent chapters. By him the Babylonian empire that had been built on the ruins of the kingdom of Assyria was to be brought to nought. In describing his military successes the prophet uses the perfect tense. For though his appearance in history was still a matter of the distant future, his achievements were as good as accomplished, seeing that the mouth of the Lord had spoken it. The great one was to be active as the agent of the Lord. What would prove this to God's believing people in Babylon is that the Lord had foretold his appearance. This would be the uncontrovertible evidence that the Lord raised him up and was performing His work through him. God wanted His people to know this. Not alone that it was their only comfort but they also had to praise Him, which they could only do in the knowledge that it was He who had wrought and done it. He the Lord, the first and the last.

To make the truth about God more impressive, the prophet is made to present the Lord as proposing that He and the nations come together for judgment, that is, controversy. Let them say who raised up him from the East (Cyrus). But there is no reply. For even before the controversy commences the Lord commands that they be silent and be instructed of him, hear His answer, which is, "He hath wrought and done this, He that called the generations from the beginning, I the Lord, . . ."

The marvelous work that the Lord accomplished through Cyrus filled the nations that lay within the scope of his conquests with a great dread.

5. The isles saw it, and feared;

The ends of the earth were afraid.

But what was their reaction? Instead of giving Him the glory, they took refuge to their own gods. To render them favorable they hastened to make new images to their glory.

5c (They) drew near and came.

6 They helped every one his neighbor;

And *every one* said to his brother, Be strong.

7. So the engraver encouraged the founder,

And he that made smooth with the hammer him that smote the anvil.

Saying, it is ready for soldering;

And he fastened it with nails that it should not be moved.

The prophet goes into this detail of idol-manufacture to bring out the absurdity of idol-worship. Here the workmen appear as encouraging each other, the reason being that there was haste.

G.M.O.

Feature Articles

At a recent meeting, the editorial staff of the *Standard Bearer* decided to ask all our ministers, outside of the staff, to write, for the coming year, the Lord willing, each two "feature articles" on a subject assigned to them.

It appointed the Revs. H. C. Hoeksema and H. Veldman as a committee to draw up a schedule for this purpose and to correspond with the ministers involved.

This they did. The ministers all accepted the invitation. And the result of the labors of the committee is the following schedule:

Schedule of Feature Articles for S.B. and Replacements

Date	Feature article and writer	Rubric, author, replaced
Jan. 1 —	"Our Immediate Mission Field" C. Hanko	Voice of our Fathers H. C. Hoeksema
Feb. 1 —	"Common or Individual Cup in Communion," H. H. Kuiper	Decency and Order G. v. d. Berg
Mar. 1 —	"John 21:25, — Hyperbole or Fact?" R. Veldman	Contending for the Faith, H. Veldman
April 1 —	"Consistorial Supervision of League or Federation Activities," G. Lanting	In His Fear J. A. Heys
May 1 —	"Principles of Christian Giving Applied to Offerings in the Churches" J. McCollam	All Around Us M. Schipper
June 1 —	"The Social Principle(s) of the Epistle to Philemon," E. Emmanuel	From Holy Writ G. C. Lubbers
July 1 —	"Participation of Children in the Lord's Supper," C. Hanko	Day of Shadows G. M. Ophoff
Aug. 1 —	"Social Security and the Office of Deacon," H. H. Kuiper	Decency and Order G. v. d. Berg
Sept. 1 —	"Deut. 24:1-4 and the Scriptural Principles of Divorce and Remarriage," R. Veldman	Day of Shadows G. M. Ophoff
Oct. 1 —	"Choosing a Vocation" G. Lanting	In His Fear J. A. Heys
Nov. 1 —	"The 'Much Cattle' of Jonah 4:11" J. McCollam	All Around Us M. Schipper
Dec. 1 —	"The Anti-Christian Implications of Russian Communism" E. Emmanuel	From Holy Writ G. C. Lubbers

This ought to be an improvement for our paper, not because the present co-editors are not ably filling their space (which, to my mind, they do), but because "variety is the spice of life."

H.H.

FROM HOLY WRIT

Justification of Separate Existence?

The Rev. J. Howerzyl is busying himself with the consideration of the question of "Our Right Of Separate Existence." It is time for a little searching of the heart. That Rev. Howerzyl had to come to this as a spokesman for the many brethren and sisters, who took ecclesiastical position with him, I had long ago foreseen to happen. And that the term the "right of separate existence" would become a "certain justification" of their existence I could too have prognosticated. And that he would have to face the "doctrinal" side of the "controversy" is also not strange; for that is exactly the point. It is a "doctrinal matter" and not at all a matter of "personalities" as has so often been falsely alleged.

Now I rejoice in this that Rev. Howerzyl is willing to state (not merely concede!) that we must look for the difference in the doctrinal position and "that a mere church political difference *can never*, in the final instance, justify separate existence." (I italicize) I take it that with "final instance" Rev. Howerzyl has in mind, that God has spoken His verdict about the right of existence, and we have read this verdict accurately and must put our hand upon our mouth, because He has spoken and we have heard it; as Paul says: Let God be true and every man a liar! Howbeit, I rejoice that I can reply to Rev. Howerzyl on a matter that is *doctrinal* and that can and must be judged by objective standards!

Rev. Howerzyl "finds" the right of existence, separate existence in this that certain "decisions taken" have made the warnings, exhortations and admonitions of the gospel" impossible. A serious charge, if true. So serious in my mind that I shall, as long as God gives me breath, say, that those who deny these are, according to III, IV, 17 of the Canons, preachers who tempt God, just as well as those preachers are tempters of God, who lose sight of the difference between admonitions of the Gospel and the command of law, and place the latter on the back of the saints for whom Christ shed His blood! But no Church gathering can make decisions with impunity which deny exhortations, admonitions and warnings of the Gospel! However, I most positively deny that such decisions were ever taken; neither did the Synod of 1951 perpetrate this evil under the sun, nor did Classis East become guilty of this perversion of the preaching of the Gospel.

None need to take my word for it. A mere allegation, with a lot of exclamation marks, is no proof. If such decision have been taken then they should be quoted. The very words employed should be quoted, Rev. Howerzyl! It is below the dignity of the office of a Minister of Jesus Christ

in which I stand to concede to Rev. Howerzyl that it is ethically correct in God's Church to write "and while we appreciate . . . we would point out the hopelessness of his task when the stand taken by those with him, not according to the words perhaps but in their intention and purpose, was exactly to rule out such preaching as he advocates." I say again: none need take my word without proof! But God does not permit anyone to believe so much evil insinuation either of the Rev. Howerzyl. With such reasoning the wicked operate, brother Howerzyl, of whom I sing in Psalm 1! I "warn" you, I "admonish" you, I "exhort" you to walk in the freedom in Christ and not mistake liberty for licence. I fear for you with a great fear! You are not thus beautifully useful to the Lord! If you would indeed fight Jehovah's battles, furnish proof and do not slander ecclesiastical gatherings!

Show the "right" of your existence!

That is quite different than a mere attempt at "justification" of one's separate existence.

If Rev. Howerzyl will, before the Throne of God in the midst of God's church, show that either Synod or Classis is guilty of the making preaching of sound, Reformed exhortations impossible, I will grant him not only that I am "fighting a losing battle," but that it is far worse; than I am *not fighting* the battle, if I do not bring it to the attention of these bodies in the way of overture and protest!

Let Rev. Howerzyl prove the following with literal and complete quotations and proper inferences:

1. Where, in the Declaration of Principles, the Synod of 1951 has curtailed the freedom of preaching "admonitions of the Gospel." In this day of "challenging," which gives the impression of "pistols at dawn" I will simply be content to quietly affirm that *as yet* Rev. Howerzyl has not quoted such a decision. He speaks of "decisions taken." May I point out the following in the Declaration of Principles, which I have not seen quoted yet by anyone who opposed this Declaration. It is the following:

"B. And we maintain:

1. That God surely and infallibly fulfills His promise to the elect.

2. The sure promise of God which he realizes in us as rational moral creatures not only makes it impossible that we should not bring forth fruits of thankfulness but also confronts us with the obligation to love, to walk in a new and holy life, and constantly to watch unto prayer. All those who are not thus disposed, who do not repent but walk in sin, are the objects of His just wrath and excluded from the Kingdom of heaven.

(3) That the preaching comes to all; and that God *seriously commands to faith and repentance, and that to all those who come and believe He promises life and peace.*" Page 23. This is literally II, IV 8 of the Canons. (I italicize).

If the above curtails anyone in preaching exhortations, admonitions, etc., it must be that it does not give free play

to the Pelagian-Arminian in him. Such preachers cannot breathe freely in a Reformed oxygen tent. I will not leave this "oxygen-tent" of Reformed expression for the suffocating "air" of pretended liberty of preaching "exhortations" of the promise to all upon the condition of faith!"

But let Rev. Howerzyl furnish proof to the contrary from Synod's decisions. It seems to me that this part of the Declaration of Principles is the very preaching he applauds in me. If so, I am really in good company. Fact is, that this part of the Declaration of Principles came from the Creston Consistory. Rev. H. Hoeksema moved to adopt it, and Synod adopted it too. That was fighting a winning battle for the truth; it was constructive criticism where it was needed. It was building the walls of Jerusalem. What have you to write on the Arch of Triumph for your battle of words and endless "points of order," which looked more like a "chess game" than a real battlefield, Rev. Howerzyl?

2. Where did Classis East in its decisions in regard to the "Statements" of Rev. De Wolf make it impossible to preach exhortations, warnings and admonitions through which *God confers grace*?

Let Rev. Howerzyl point this out with words in which the intention is *expressed*. Let Him not simply be content with mere allegations. That is not fighting Jehovah's battle but the battle of Satan's attempt at confusion. In the same Article from which Rev. Howerzyl quoted (October 1, 1954 issue) I also wrote the following: "At the same time let not those admonitions be confused with 'prerequisite acts' but rather as enjoining us, requiring of us to work out our salvation with fear and trembling . . . Satan thrives on misunderstandings, and heretics work with them. But teachers in sound doctrine speak the truth in clarity and in all sincerity as before God!" Let the brother show with the actual words where Classis East made this exhortation of the Gospel impossible. I assure him here and now that there is a very strong communis opinio on this score in our ranks concerning the needs of preaching admonitions. I merely wrote that "*some people*" are confused on this point. Why blow this up beyond recognition?

In conclusion I beg Rev. Howerzyl to trace down for me a ten page document I sent to Rev. Hofman which document the latter sent to the "midwest," and that he for the sake of righteousness in God's church publish it. In good part this is also a reply to some earlier untrue allegations on the part of Rev. Howerzyl. It is true they are allegations couched in such language as "as I see it," "it seems" etc. They are untrue allegations nonetheless. Let him print this document lest he stifle the voice of one who would rejoice in "free speech."

G. L.

Post Scriptum:

I feel constrained to add just a few observations to the foregoing; the matter of the invitation, which Rev. Hower-

zyl extends to me calls for a reply from my heart. I must give an answer to all who request an answer of the hope that is in me. Since I serve God in a good conscience I am ready to give this reply.

Writes the Rev. Howerzyl: "We who rejoice in the freedom to preach as he (Lubbers—G.L.) instructs us *call out to him to join us* in that freedom to preach the whole gospel of our God, whereby God reveals that salvation is of Him from beginning to end, but . . ." (I underscore.)

This is my reply: I shall continue to do all I can in the strength of God to help you, but I *cannot* "join" you!

The question is: does *God call me through* Rev. Howerzyl that I cease walking where He does not place His candlestick, and that I come and confess "that I have loved you"? Confer Rev. 3:9. Does the Son of Man, who has the "seven stars in His right hand" say through Rev. Howerzyl to Rev. Lubbers that he be *obedient to Him*, he must "join" Rev. Howerzyl and those with him!

That is the *sole* question! All the rest is small, sinful, disobedient endeavor of mere man whose breath is in his nostrils. Let us put the shoes from off our feet as we stand at the Burning Bush, lest He, who is a Consuming Fire, destroy us even in our *seeming success*! Psalm 50:16-23.

The question of whether God calls me to labor with Rev. Howerzyl is whether in so doing I should be a "co-laborer under God" with him, or whether I should be an accomplice in evil, working Satan's confusion! Let us not pretend that we can play with God's holy fire and not be burned!

Hence, the sole question is: what *saith* the Lord?

If Rev. Howerzyl speaks truthfully, factually, then the Lord speaks through him. Deut. 18:20-22. Can Rev. Howerzyl be judged to belong to the calibre of preachers, who say with Paul, "Therefore seeing we have this ministry, even as we obtained mercy, we faint not: but we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by the manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." II Cor. 3:1, 2.

The facts are against him; the actual decisions which he refers to under "decisions taken" do not corroborate his contention.

Does a prophet in Israel need to fear to speak the *whole* truth? Can those who do not speak the *whole* truth save themselves and those who hear (read) them? I Tim. 4:16. Rev. B. Kok may write, "I can't quote the whole Standard Bearer," but he need not do this to speak the "whole" truth. I would despair of working as a "co-laborer" with such workmen as Rev. Kok! I only ask Rev. Howerzyl to quote the next three sentences of my article and then ask him whether he can still use it as a stone in his building and architecture! He must not do what Rev. Kok contended to be his right once to me in a recess of the Court Trial before Judge Taylor. When I chided him for his partial and slanted

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IN HIS FEAR

The Gate Is Open

Time will reveal whether our title is an understatement of the case or not. An overstatement it surely is not. The gate is open for an influx of all Arminianism!

Nor is it the expression of what we enjoy observing. Contrary to all the evil things that have been written to and said concerning the undersigned, we do not rejoice to see those who left us walking still further in their error. We would rejoice to see them review the whole case *In His Fear*, tightly close the gate, and, after repairing the damage done, keep with us a strong defense against all Arminianism and danger of Arminianism.

But at present the gate is open in that denomination that falsely calls itself Protestant Reformed and at the same time defends those literally heretical statements of Rev. De Wolf.

If they continue in that unyielding defense of these statements, its inevitable fruit will soon appear. In fact, now already, according to their own official stand they no longer have the moral right to deny any one of their constituency the right to use those statements of Rev. De Wolf as freely as he pleases. Officially they have never condemned them any more than he has. They have not officially, or otherwise, banned the use of such expressions.

Nor have they the moral right to deny any of their members the right to substitute the word "offer" for "promise" in that first statement of Rev. De Wolf. Never have they made plain or even attempted to make plain that there is one degree less of Arminianism in saying "God promises every one of you that if you believe you will be saved" than in the statement of 1924 that "God sincerely offers salvation unto all who hear the Gospel on the condition that they believe." According to the official stand of both their Classis and Synod they cannot deny any of their members, ministers or students from believing or stating: "God offers sincerely salvation to all who hear the Gospel if they will believe." Nor may they lodge protests against anyone who preaches that "The preaching of the Gospel is a well meant promise to all who hear that Gospel." For a promise that is not well meant is no promise. And to say that God gives promises that are not well meant is blasphemy. Let it be clearly understood that a conditional promise is always a proposition. God makes no propositions. He would cease to be God the moment He would make a proposition with the creature that depends upon Him.

But those that left us must expect in the future all manner of arminian expressions in their circle. And, assuming for the moment, that they are sincere when they say that they still love the Protestant Reformed truth, if they would then in the future see the evil to which they opened their churches and make efforts to stop the tide of Arminianism,

those who hold on to that Arminianism will find in the writings of the last few years in *Concordia*, *Reformed Guardian* and in the protests against the Declaration of Principles valuable material for arguments to defend the statements that substitute "offer" for "promise."

Try it out once yourself.

Try them all, from the old and worn argument that if you do not offer salvation to all who hear upon the condition that they believe, you will make man careless and profane and deny the responsibility of man, unto the "apology" of Rev. De Wolf that you are sorry that people do not understand that you mean "offer" in a Reformed sense.

By the way, you can do that with any and all heresy, you know. You can simply say: you mean conditions in the Reformed sense! You simply mean offer in the Reformed sense. You mean civic righteousness in the Reformed sense. You deny infant baptism; but you deny it in the Reformed sense. You believe that the bread and wine change into the body of Christ; but you believe that in the Reformed sense. You believe in Purgatory; but you believe that in a Reformed sense.

As long as you do not define that "Reformed sense," give it no content, and evade all questions about what the Confessions called a Reformed condition, that is, indeed, a convenient argument to use. Time will reveal that those who left us will have their own arguments turned upon themselves, if in the future they would still try to close the gate.

And if the schismatic action which was perpetrated to defend those arminian statements of Rev. De Wolf is allowed to run its full course, they will find ultimately that the whole fence is down. And therefore our title is not and cannot be an overstatement of the case.

At the present moment, however, it surely is true that the gate is open. What is more the sad history of the last few years reveals that it was deliberately opened.

We have in mind with our title especially that the gate which makes possible affiliation with the Liberated and opens the doors of their churches to all the arminian conditional promise and the loose, independentistic church polity of the Liberated is wide open.

It is that gate that we have in mind as we write these lines, and all those who have trouble seeing the awfulness of what was perpetrated in 1953 will do well to consider what we begin to write in this and following articles.

We challenge all those who left us to produce one bit of evidence that will prove that this gate is tightly closed and securely padlocked. We challenge all the defenders of Rev. De Wolf's conditional theology to come out in print and even condemn the glaring Arminianism in Prof. Veenhof's Appel. We challenge them to show us and the Liberated that by an unyielding defense of Rev. De Wolf's statements they *can* condemn Prof. Veenhof's view of the promise.

Significant it is that when the Declaration of Principles was being discussed at the Synod of 1951 several of those who now defend Rev. De Wolf's statements stated that al-

though they could not subscribe to the statement in the Declaration that "the promise is unconditional" they did not want the arminian conditional theology of the Liberated. Some stated that literally. Some at that time condemned Rev. De Wolf's statements *before he even made them*.

Thus on page 127 of Vol. 28 of the Standard Bearer you will find a report of what Rev. Gritters said at that Synod about Prof. Veenhof's arminianism. He said that he did not need the Declaration to defend the truth. He said: "And when Prof. Veenhof says that God promises His salvation to all the children that are born in the covenant, head for head, I can find plenty of other ammunition from the Confessions to counteract this." But why, Rev. Gritters could you not two years latter find *any* ammunition to condemn and counteract the arminianism of Rev. De Wolf's statements which goes even beyond the sphere of the children born to covenant parents and says that God promises *everyone*? Look up this report of Synod and you will find more such statements.

Silence has fallen since.

It is an astounding thing, and an evidence of the true situation, that all through the defense of Rev. De Wolf's literally arminian statements, these defenders did not once condemn the conditional theology of the Liberated.

Condemnation by them of the Liberated doctrine has not once appeared in print since we began that sad chapter of trying to rid our own churches of this arminianism as preached from our own pulpits by Rev. De Wolf and his supporters.

And under the multitude of words and pages written since Classis East condemned those statements of Rev. De Wolf, the second ground for demanding an apology of Rev. De Wolf has gone unnoticed. But it speaks volumes.

Classis decided: "We believe that it is necessary for us to state this in the light of our past experiences and history with the Liberated churches *who use these arminian expressions*." The italics are ours. Against that the defenders of Rev. De Wolf voted. Yet they never raised one argument or complaint about this ground. Deny it they could not. And they cannot today.

However, that reason for condemning the statements of Rev. De Wolf must not be overlooked or forgotten. We who preached in Chatham and in Hamilton, we who preached the Protestant Reformed truth there and witnessed faithfully concerning it, we who loved that Protestant Reformed truth and hated all arminianism, we were severely criticized time and again. And time and again we ran into these statements such as Rev. De Wolf refused to condemn as being literally heretical.

And because they refuse to condemn these statements of Liberated, arminian doctrine, the inevitable fruit will soon appear.

The gate is open.

We do not mean that all in their constituency are ready to embrace that doctrine of the Liberated or even to embrace

the arminianism of Rev. De Wolf's statements. Many there are that are more than ready to do that. Many there are who say that we with our doctrine stand "in the way of the free course of the Gospel." They brand our preaching a "passive doctrine." They falsely spread the silly notion that we cannot preach admonitions unless we also become conditional. Ever hear any of those statements made about us, Rev. Blankespoor? It is, indeed, a doctrinal issue.

But, even though all those who have been deceived into following this way of schism and heresy are not ready to subscribe to the arminianism of Rev. De Wolf's statements and of the Liberated conditional doctrine which these statements express, on an official level the gate is open.

Let those that falsely claim to be Protestant Reformed come out publicly in Concordia and the Reformed Guardian with the Protestant Reformed truth, the Scriptural truth that God's purpose in the preaching of the Gospel to the reprobate is never a gracious one but *always* is to harden them. Let them tell us and the whole Liberated world that they still stand there. Let them close the gate to all Arminianism and danger of Arminianism by so doing!

This they cannot do!

They cannot, first of all, because they would have to abandon Rev. De Wolf and demand of him that he apologize for the statement that teaches that the purpose of the preaching to the reprobate is to give him a promise that he can be saved, if he will believe. Try to harmonize those two, if you can! God has the Gospel preached to the reprobate for no gracious purpose at all but to harden them in their sins. And God promises everyone—and that includes the reprobate—that if they believe they will be saved. On their own pulpits they cannot any longer preach that doctrine of reprobation with all its significance without agreeing with us that Rev. De Wolf must retract that first statement. Their power in their own pulpit is gone, and it will soon become evident in their preaching.

We are constantly being assured that they preach election just as strongly as we do. That is not the point. Do they also leave a gate open for the reprobate? Do they preach *this* reprobation which says that God does not promise salvation, even conditionally, to the reprobate? Does anyone of their ministers DARE to stand before his people and say: Congregation, there is no promise for the reprobate, and we must never say or allow it to be said that God promises *everyone* that if they believe they will be saved, for that would be a promise of God to the reprobate; and He sovereignly has the Gospel preached to the reprobate, not in order to offer or promise them anything but for this reason, namely, as was plainly the case with Pharaoh, to harden them in their sins. This is not simply the *result* of that preaching to them. It is God's *purpose*.

And we want to correct a typographical error which unitentionally we allowed to creep into our last article at this point. We want to do Rev. De Wolf justice. On page

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Contending For The Faith

The Church and the Sacraments

VIEWS DURING THE SECOND PERIOD (300-750 A.D.)

THE CHURCH

Constantine's influence upon the Church.

We have already called attention to the fact that Constantine, in his famous Edict of Milan, granted Christianity equal rights with the heathen religions before the law. The age of persecution by the heathen world has become history. The Word of God, as recorded in Rev. 12:12-17, had been fulfilled with respect to the heathen world. Of course, more persecutions would follow for the Church of God in the New Dispensation, even until the end of the world. But this phase of the fury of the devil had been fulfilled. Christianity had been legally established. Its place in the midst of the world was now assured. Constantine surely had taken care of this.

However, the Edict of Milan also proved to have a very great advantage for the Church of God. It was now no longer a shame but an honour to belong to the Church of Christ. The Christian name began to be held in high honour and esteem. This name now secured many and great material advantages. It had become a passport to political, military, and social promotions. The result was that thousands upon thousands of heathens joined the Church. To be counted and regarded as a heathen was now a disgrace. The Church grew by leaps and bounds. Many who joined the Church were Christians in name only. The Edict of Milan of 313 opened the floodgates through which a mighty stream of corruption poured into the Church of God as revealed and constituted in the midst of the world. And the Church became more and more a national institution, a kingdom of this world. This will become more evident later when we trace the power of the popes in the history of the Church and of the world. Whereas the heathens had been in control of the world and had persecuted the Church, this relation was not reversed. The civilized world passed over into the control by the Church. And the power of the Church increased until the kings and princes of this world shook and trembled before the pope at Rome who finally was able to do with the mighty of the earth as he pleased. We will see more of this in subsequent articles.

This development need not surprise us. To view the name of Christian with honour and esteem is indeed also applicable to the church-world of today. The Scripture surely point us in this direction. We are told that, as the end of times approaches, the love of many will wax cold. This surely implies that many will then have the name of Christians who are not Christians. Today, in many churches, it is a disgrace not to be a member in full communion in the Church of God.

Confession is simply the expected and honourable procedure. Moreover, the development of the Church along the line of outward and earthly power was also to be expected. The Word of God also points us in this direction. The thirst for power is always present in the Church of God. And it is surely our task to maintain constant vigilance against this evil.

The Post-Constantine period.

Continuing with the development of the Church in external power and glory in the world during this second period, 300-750 A.D., we believe it to be of interest to call attention to the occurrence of events immediately upon the death of Constantine, the "first Christian emperor." With the death of this tremendous figure his monarchy also came, for the present, to an end. The empire was divided among his three sons: Constantine II, Constance, and Constantius. The days of the monarchy were temporarily ended.

The accession of the three sons of Constantine the Great was not in Christian style, but after the manner of genuine Turkish, oriental despotism; it trode upon the corpses of the numerous kindred of their fathers, excepting two nephews, Gallus and Julian, who were saved only by sickness and youth from the fury of the soldiers. Three years later a war followed of the brothers for the sole supremacy. Constantine II was slain by Constance, who was in turn murdered by a barbarian field officer and rival, Magnentius. After the defeat and the suicide of Magnentius, who had hitherto reigned in the East, Constantius became sole emperor, and he maintained himself through many years until his natural death in 361.

The sons of Constantine the Great did their Christian education little honor and departed from their father's prudent policy of toleration. Constantius, temperate and chaste, but also jealous and vain and weak, entirely under the control of eunuchs, women, and bishops, entered upon a violent suppression of the heathen religion, pillaged and destroyed many temples, gave the booty to the church or to his eunuchs, flatterers, and worthless favorites, and prohibited, under penalty of death, all sacrifices to and worship of images in Rome, Alexandria, and Athens, although the prohibition could not be carried out. Hosts now came over to Christianity, though, of course, for the most part with the lips only, and not with the heart. But this emperor proceeded with the same intolerance against the adherents of the Nicene orthodoxy and punished them with confiscation and banishment. His brothers supported Athanasius, but he himself was a fanatical Arian. In fact, he meddled in all the affairs of the church which was convulsed during his reign with doctrinal controversy. He summoned a multitude of councils, in Gaul and Italy and Illyricum and in Asia, aspired to the renown of a theologian, and was fond of being called bishop of bishops, though, like his father, he postponed baptism until shortly before his death.

There were those, it is true, who justified this violent suppression of idolatry by reference to the extermination of the

Canaanites under Joshua in the Old Dispensation. However, intelligent church leaders, including Athanasius and Hilary, gave their voice for toleration, although even they mean particularly toleration for orthodoxy, for the sake of which they themselves had been deposed and banished by the Arian power. Athanasius, for example, is quoted as follows (the reader will understand that our churches today would hardly endorse this statement): "Satan, because there is no truth in him, breaks in with axe and sword. But the Saviour is gentle, and forces no one, to whom He comes, but knocks and speaks to the soul: Open to Me, My Sister? If we open to Him, He enters; but, if we will not, He departs. For the truth is not preached by sword and dungeon, by the might of an army, but by persuasion and exhortation. How can there be persuasion where fear of the emperor is uppermost? How exhortation, where the contradicter has to expect banishment and death?" With equal force Hilary confronts the emperor with the wrong of his course, in the words: "With the gold of the state thou burdenest the Sanctuary of God and what is torn from the temples, or gained by confiscation or extorted by punishment, thou obtrudest upon God."

Paganism, however, made a final attempt to recover lost ground and regain its ascendancy in the Roman empire during the reign of Julian, the Apostate. Julian, surnamed the Apostate, a nephew of Constantine the Great, was born in the year, 331, and was therefore only six years old when his famous uncle died. The general slaughter of his kindred, not excepting his father, at the change of the throne, could hardly be expected to instill enthusiasm and respect into the young prince for the Christian religion. That Julian was an apostate does not mean, we understand, that he ever entertained any love for Christianity and the Christian religion. He was an apostle because he was educated in the Christian religion, wore its mask for a considerable number of years, and later discarded this mask, declaring himself in favor of heathenism or paganism.

Julian became the sole head of the Roman empire in the year, 361, and openly declared himself a friend of the gods. Of him we are told that he sought to unite the fame of an Alexander, a Marcus Aurelius (one of the emperors), a Plato, and a Diogenes (a Greek philosopher). He practiced the strictest economy in the public affairs and banished all useless luxury from his court, dismissing with one decree whole hosts of barbers, cup-bearers, cooks, masters of ceremonies, and other superfluous officers, with whom the palace swarmed, although he surrounded himself with equally useless pagan mystics, babblers, sophists, soothsayers, etc. In striking contrast with his predecessors he maintained the simplicity of a philosopher and an ascetic in his manner of life, and gratified his pride and vanity with contempt of the pomp and pleasures of the imperial purpose. He lived chiefly on vegetable diets, abstaining now from this food, now from that food, according to the taste of the god or goddess to whom the day was consecrated. He wore common clothing, usually slept on the floor, let his beard and nails grow, and

neglected the laws of decency and cleanliness. In military and executive talent and personal bravery he was not inferior to Constantine; while in mind and literary culture he far excelled him. His reign, however, was a complete failure. The ruling passion of Julian and the soul of his short but most active and remarkable reign was fanatical love of pagan religion and bitter hatred of the Christian religion, and that at a time when the former had already forever given up to the latter the reins of government in the world. He considered it to be the great mission of his life to restore the worship of the gods and to destroy the religion of Jesus in the midst of the world. He would fain believe that the gods had called him to this hopeless and utterly futile task. And unto this end all the means, which talent, zeal, and power could command, were applied; in him paganism makes a final and utterly futile attempt to destroy Christianity. This is Julian's place in history, the place which the Lord had assigned to him. Unto that end the Lord gave him great gifts and talents, equipped him, from a natural point of view, unto his life's calling. And he used those talents to the full, in order that the utter folly of that which opposes the living God and His Christ may be fully revealed. Julian represents the final gasp of heathenism to uproot the Cause of the living God and of His Christ in the midst of the world. How he attempted to destroy the Cause of the Christ we will see in a subsequent article. H. V.

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IN HIS FEAR

120 of the last Standard Bearer the statement should read that Rev. De Wolf said "that he believed that he could say to any man that he *met* that God promises to him that he would be saved, if he believes." The last issue had it thus: "that he said that he believed that he could say to any man that he *meant* that God promises . . ."

In the second place they cannot do this because they have gone on record as rejecting the Declaration of Principles which stands foreshore upon that truth when it says that the "promise is unconditional and for the elect alone." And that statement was one of the most hotly contested of all the statements in the Declaration.

O, the arminianism in Rev. De Wolf's statements!

How dare they defend them and still call themselves Protestant Reformed?

How dare they call themselves Reformed?

An interesting question and an important one which we hope to present more fully next time is this: what moral right have those who left us to refuse the congregations of Hamilton and Chatam to come in through that open gate and belong once again to their denomination?

With what would they close the gate?

How could they do that and still defend the statements of Rev. De Wolf?

What ammunition will you find in the Confessions, Rev. Gritters, that does not also strike a death blow to Rev. De Wolf's conditional theology? J.A.H.

The Voice of Our Fathers

The Canons of Dordrecht

PART TWO

EXPOSITION OF THE CANONS

FIRST HEAD OF DOCTRINE

OF DIVINE PREDESTINATION

Article 14 (concluded)

With the above general observations in mind we may well profit from the stipulations set forth in this article.

In the first place, we are told that the spirit of discretion must characterize our preaching of election. Discretion is prudence, or the practical application of wisdom. It takes into consideration reality. And in this case, discretion takes into consideration the reality of the earthly existence and manifestation of the church for which the truth of election "was peculiarly designed." That church is, of course, essentially the gathering, the assembly, of the elect. And in the positive sense of the word, the doctrine of election was certainly designed for those elect. However, there are all kinds of differences to be found in the membership of that church on earth. And the preaching must surely take these differences into consideration. There are, in the first place, hypocrites. We know this both from Scripture and from experience. And especially in the preaching of election, therefore, one cannot proceed on the false assumption that all the members of the church on earth are elect, have a right to the comfort afforded by this truth, and can actually be comforted by it. The contrary is true. The truth of election, — and this implies the preaching of the truth of reprobation necessarily, — must be so preached that the hypocrite cannot possibly feel at ease in Zion. The keys of the kingdom must be employed to shut as well as to open. Furthermore, there are converted and unconverted elect. And the preaching of election must reckon with this fact. To be sure, this does not mean that for the converted the preaching follows the "track" of sovereign election, while for the unconverted the divergent "track" of human responsibility must be followed. But it certainly implies that election-preaching must take place not in separation from, but in its proper relation to the calling to repent and believe. And thus there are many distinctions in the visible church which must be reckoned with. There are strong believers, who are genuinely and clearly assured of their own personal election; and there are weak believers, who are inclined toward doubt. There are differences of age. There are the young children, lambs, who must according to their capacity be instructed in this truth, but who have not yet even the mental capacity for the deeper

aspects of the truth. But there are also the full-grown sheep, who must no more be fed with a bottle, but must have solid food. There may also be adult believers who never progress any further than a very simple apprehension of this truth; while there are others who love to be led into this truth in all its marvellous ramifications. And therefore, discretion must certainly characterize the preaching of the truth of election, whether in the services for public worship or in the catechism classes.

In the second place, the preaching of the truth of election must be marked by "piety," as the English rendering has it. The original may probably be rendered by "piously and holily." Negatively, this certainly means that the truth of election must be proclaimed not simply in a cold and dead manner, as a mere academic truth, not as a matter of philosophy and debate and mental exercise. Sometimes the expression "cold doctrine" is employed in this connection. Nor is this possibility to be shrugged off. Preaching is more than mere exposition of a certain doctrine, and more than a logical and clear defense of the truth over against the lie. And while the latter are necessary especially in respect to this truth of predestination, the danger of bringing nothing more than these is not exactly imaginary. In this connection it is worthwhile to note that the Scriptures always present the doctrine of election as a living truth and as an integral part, not only of a scheme of doctrine, but of the whole comforting gospel of our salvation in Christ. Think, for example, of the direct connection that is established in Ephesians 1 between our election and our forgiveness and adoption and sanctification. And positively, this piety and holiness implies a large measure of humility before God and the brethren; a deep reverence, because we stand face to face with the thoughts of God's unfathomable and eternal good pleasure; and love toward the flock, which is the object of that good pleasure. In this connection, we may cite not only that wonderful doxology at the close of Romans 11, and the warning of Romans 12:3 that by grace a man should not think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but also the notable example of the apostle Paul himself in his attitude toward his kinsmen according to the flesh, Romans 9:1-5.

In the third place, this article stipulates that the truth of election must still be published in the church "in due time and place." And that "*due time and place*" must be understood, — as a literal translation of the article would bring out, — as "*its own time and place*." This stands in close connection with what we have written previously about an apparent slothfulness in preaching the truth of election. Here again we must remind ourselves that this stipulation is not due to the fact that the fathers actually found that there were some who preached election outside of its own time and place. But there quarrel was with the Arminians. And these Arminians accused the faithful preachers of the Reformed truth that they "were always preaching election," and that "when they preached, they were forevermore in the counsel of God." And against these accusers the fathers

answer, as it were: No, if you mean that we are always preaching the truth of election in the narrower sense of the term, so that all the content of our sermons is election, then you are mistaken. That is not our position at all. We maintain that the truth of election has its own time and place in the whole system of the truth, and that therefore it has its own time and place in the preaching. And with that stipulation, we insist, nevertheless, that it must be preached, — something that you Arminians do not want." As we have already indicated, therefore, this article of the *Canons* certainly condemns those who would maintain a total silence about the truth of election in the proclamation of the gospel. Such are not only non-Reformed; they are anti-Reformed.

However, it may be observed that while the fathers stipulate that this truth must be published "in its own time and place," they do not define that proper time and place. And about this way we may make a few observations. There are those who think they have fulfilled their obligation in this respect if they occasionally, very occasionally, preach about this truth, or even if they occasionally say a few words about it in the course of a sermon, if they "bring it into" the sermon. And incidentally, since this article is not only for the instruction of preachers, but for the whole church, we may also mention the fact that there are those who are satisfied if the preacher "brings it into" his sermon occasionally, or if he occasionally preaches an election sermon. They will assure you that their minister is Reformed. "Why," they say, "he even preaches on election." In the light of all that the *Canons* say about this truth, however, it cannot possibly be maintained that such preachers have actually met the stipulation, "in its own time and place."

Of course, the standard of the truth also in this respect is Holy Scripture. If it is true, therefore, that Holy Scripture is characterized by this, that it does nothing more than occasionally mention election or occasionally "bring it in" or occasionally and in a disjointed fashion teach this truth, then, to be sure, the preaching of the gospel must be characterized by the very same thing. And then we must not seek to answer this question by determining the ration of so-called "election texts" to the total number of Scripture verses, in order then to determine accordingly the "due time and place" of election preaching. For then you would come to the conclusion that if eternal election is taught in only one or two passages of Scripture, it would have to be preached indeed very, very rarely. But the importance of any one truth in relation to the whole system of the truth is not to be measured by the number of words devoted to it in Scripture. It is not to be measured by volume and numbers. Hence, even if eternal election were taught definitely only once in Scripture, — something which is by no means the case, — even then the relative importance of this truth for the whole system of the truth would be unchanged. And then, if the question be asked, "What place does Scripture allot to the truth of election?" the answer is: "First place." The truth of election is of prime importance. It is the *cor ecclesiae*, the heart of the

church. Take it away, and the whole body of the truth dies. For there is not a single element of the entire truth of Holy Writ that can stand ultimately without the truth of sovereign election. And therefore, we may conclude concerning this proper time and place: 1) This does not mean that the preaching always devotes all its attention to this "heart." If a man is sick, it would be a foolish doctor indeed who would limit his examination to the heart. His patient may be seriously ill of a burst appendix, and die even while the doctor devotes all his attention to his patient's heart. So also in the body of the truth: there is much more than the heart. And this must also be preached. 2) It does mean that sound preaching will always take care that the heart is in good condition, and will therefore surely emphasize the truth of election, and strive to have the believers thoroughly founded in this most fundamental of all truths. 3) And in the broad sense of the word, "its own time and place" means that the heart-beat, the pulse, of this heart of the church will beat healthy and strongly in all of the preaching. Even while the church is busy with the task of proclaiming in the narrower sense of the word such truths as vicarious atonement, or regeneration, or conversion, for example, that truth of election will pulsate regularly and strongly through the preaching. If it does not, then the truth of election is being deprived of its proper time and place.

And finally, the fathers make the negative stipulation: "without vainly attempting to investigate the secret ways of the Most High." This is stated, of course, not in the spirit of those who object to the preaching of election by a mistaken citing of the text, "The secret things belong to the Lord our God;" nor with the idea that we may not penetrate as far as possible, in the light of Scripture, into this truth. For then the fathers of Dordrecht were themselves guilty of this very thing. It does mean, however: 1) That in the consideration of this truth you finally come face to face with the mystery, beyond which you cannot penetrate and may not attempt to penetrate. No further answer can be given in our quest for the reason of election than this: "The good pleasure of God is the sole cause of this gracious election." 2) That you may not attempt to investigate this truth along any other course than that of Scripture itself. All rationalism and false mysticism also in respect to the truth of election is ruled out.

Along such lines, therefore, let this glorious truth be proclaimed.

That will be, as the *Canons* have it, first of all, "for the glory of God's most holy name." For it is exactly in this truth that God's name as God, Who is really GOD, is praised and glorified in the highest degree, while the sinner is by this same truth most deeply humbled. And that will be at the same time, as the *Canons* have it, "for the living comfort of His people." Certainly, only His people can ever derive any comfort from this truth. For the reprobate there is never any comfort in the gospel. But then, let it be observed, this

(Continued on page 141)

DECENCY and ORDER

The Ministry Of The Word

(Continued)

As Teacher

To the functions of the minister of the Word belong also the task of instructing the covenant seed catechetically in the Word of God according to the faith (belief) of the church. Although this function is not specifically mentioned in Article 16 of the church order, it is certainly included in "the ministry of the Word." Catechism instruction is that spiritual labor of the church, bestowed upon the children of the covenant, performed through the minister or elders, in which the Word of God is officially ministered unto their needs. Its purpose is to bring the seed of the covenant to the conscious joy and confession of their faith and salvation and to further prepare them to understand the preaching of the Word. Its basis lies in the fact that God Himself establishes His covenant in the line of continued generations. If this were not the case and God did not connect the historical development of His covenant with the organic continuity of generations, and if, therefore, there were no certainty that God would gather His church from the natural generations of believers, there would be no basis for the institution of catechetical instruction and the incentive for the preacher to engage zealously in this labor would be lost. Now, however, it is quite different. God said to Abraham, the father of all believers, "I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee" (Gen. 17:7). And so God also gave to the fathers the command of Deut. 6:7, "And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." To this the believing fathers respond in the baptism of their children when they promise that "they will instruct their children in the aforesaid doctrine or help or cause them to be instructed therein to the utmost of their power." Or, in the words of Psalm 78:4, 6, "We will not hide them from their children, shewing to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done . . . that the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children." In the realization of this calling the catechetical labor of the church has a place of greatest importance.

The minister and the church that understands this will not take this work lightly. It is understandable that in the American church world, where the conception of God's covenant is obsolete, this phase of ministerial labor is lost altogether. Their labor is largely expended upon the adult whom they must win for Christ and bring to conversion. When this

is done an attempt is made to repair the damage done through the neglect of previous instruction by supplying an over-dose of defective Sunday School teaching but this fails to obliterate the great evil. For more than one reason such methodology is ineffective in building the church.

In other circles where remnants of the covenant conception are still found, catechetical labor is still performed although its importance is minimized and it is more and more being supplanted by various organic activities of the church. The trend today is to suppress the institutional work of the church and give prominence to social endeavors. Only where the true concept of the covenant of God running in continued generations is understood and faithfully maintained does catechetical instruction flourish. Parents should realize this and desiring the spiritual welfare of their generations will then give every measure of assistance and cooperation possible to the minister in this important work. And the minister who understand this will relegate this labor to the foremost of his duties.

The minister is a catechete! Catechism instruction is not a side-line activity to keep him busy during the week or a matter he can dispose of in the hour of actual class instruction but it is a work that involves elaborate planning and intensive preparation because it is part of the high calling of God to "feed the lambs of Christ!"

Feed them he must in the green pastures of the Word. His is the task of instructing them in the whole counsel of God as revealed in the Scriptures. Unto that he is called by God and the church. Woe unto him that neglects to bring the gospel unto the little ones and youth. The pastor must unveil the mysteries of the faith and that in such a way that the children of the covenant of different age levels and with different abilities are able to grasp and appropriate the truth. These children must be carefully led from spiritual immaturity into the state of maturity so that they are able to assume their place in the church as living members of the body of Christ. Through this labor they must be outfitted as soldiers in the army of God. To fill such a place in Christ's church is firstly, of course, a matter of grace. The best instruction, without the sanctifying application of the grace of the Holy Spirit, avails nothing. But, secondly, to fill such a place in the church necessitates strong fortification and thorough training because the enemies of the truth of God are many who from within and without inflict suffering upon the faithful. Furthermore, the winds of false doctrine blow from every corner and are even now becoming more violent than ever and to withstand these the seed of the covenant must be instructed thoroughly in the positive knowledge of the Word of God so that they may be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. To thoroughly equip unto every good work in the Lord is the pastor's objective in instructing the seed of the church.

In order to accomplish this labor well, it is important that the preacher is endowed with certain gifts and talents essential to every teacher. Every minister is not an able

catechete. Some lack the essential gifts. Others possess them but fail to develop them and the result is that catechetical instruction becomes a routine matter of one or two hours per week with them. It is no easy matter to be a teacher of children. On the one hand the teacher must remain above those who are instructed. He must win their respect and love. They must be able to look to him with confidence. A certain distance between teacher and pupil should always prevail so that the authority and dignity of the former is felt by the latter at all times and respected. Where this is lacking the Word brought will meet inattentive ears and unresponsive hearts.

On the other hand, if the teacher is to succeed in inculcating knowledge and instruction into the mind of the child, he must be able also to stand on the same level as the child in order that he may enter into the very sphere of its experiences. He must understand their problems, assist them in their difficulties, be patient with them and deal with them as much as possible as though he was one of them. To do this he must love them in the spiritual sense as his own children, take a deep interest in and have a serious concern for their spiritual well-being.

The catechete that so approaches his class will not have difficulty in creating and retaining their interest and attention. When he succeeds in getting their interest in what he has to tell them, there will be no great problem of maintaining order in the class. And, should he have those in his class who apparently reveal indifference to the instruction and become unruly, he will handle these with disciplinary measures in order that he may save them with the rod of correction. It must not be forgotten that he brings to them only the Word of God and all that are born historically in the sphere of the church are not receptive to that Word. Of this, too, the minister is aware. He knows that he must deal with a two-fold seed and although he does not divide his class into elect and reprobate, (which is impossible) he must always be prepared to cope with those that are recalcitrant so that also in the catechism class he may "reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" upon the authority of Christ. (II Tim. 4:2)

This is not the place to treat the subject of catechetics at length but it may be pointed out that through the faithful execution of this phase of the pastor's labor the church of the future is built and made strong. It is true that Christ, not man, builds His church but this fact does not exclude means. And, according to His promise, it is through the faithful labors of the church that Christ continues His church from generation to generation. When these labors are neglected, a generation arises that knows not the Lord with the inevitable result of apostasy and degeneracy. We have only to look about us to see this in effect. It is appalling that so few of the present generation are able to carry on an intelligent conversation in spiritual things. The cause of this may be traced to both a lack of and ineffective instruction in

early years. And what then must one expect of the next generation to be reared by parents that are ignorant and churches that are secularized?

With this in mind the present trend of minimizing the importance of the minister's catechetical labor is understandable but no less deplorable. We do well to take heed. There is room in our midst for a warning. Consistories must see to it that the seed of the covenant receives adequate instruction. Catechism classes are frequently conducted on a six to eight month yearly basis. This is equivalent to about twenty-five hours annually.

Hardly can this be said to be adequate. It is my conviction that catechetical labor should extend no less than the term of the christian day school which is almost ten months of the year. The importance of the work demands this attention. Think of it pastors, elders, and parents with a view to the profit of the church and the spiritual advantage of the children. Let us lay up a good foundation for the time to come!

G.v.d.B.

THE VOICE OF OUR FATHERS

(Continued from page 139)

truth furnishes the ultimate in comfort. Such is the Word of God: "Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." Heb. 6:17, 18.

H.C.H.

IN MEMORIAM

The Men's Society of the South Holland Protestant Reformed Church hereby expresses its sincere sympathy to two of its fellow members, Frank Van Baren and Micheal Van Baren in the sudden death of

JAMES KUIPER

May the rich promise of God's Word comfort and sustain them in their sorrow.

Mr. Wm. Terpstra, President
Mr. G. A. Van Baren, Secretary

Note: Since this In Memoriam notice was sent in Mr. Frank Van Baren also passed away.

It is the habit of making sacrifices in small things that enables us for making them in great, when it is asked for us. Temper, love of preeminence, bodily indulgence, the quick retort, the sharp irony,—in checking these let us find our cross and carry it. Or, when the moment comes for some really great service, the heart will be petrified for it, and the blinded eyes will not see the occasion of love.

—Anthony W. Thorold

ALL AROUND US

God's Way with the Jews.

This is the title which Mr. Albert Huisjen placed over his article in the latest issue of the Reformed Journal of November, 1954. Mr. Huisjen, according to a footnote in the article, has been for many years, and is now, a missionary to the Jews from the Christian Reformed Churches.

The subject of this article caught our eye because for sometime now the matter of Jewish Missions has been of personal interest to me. A year or two ago, while I was studying the eleventh chapter of the Romans with our Ladies' Society in South Holland, I was amazed to note how much this portion of Scripture had to say about the Jewish problem. In fact, when we were finished with our study I concluded that of all possible mission fields the mission among the Jews was the one which the Lord in His Word definitely asserted would be the productive one.

Since that time I have been wondering why it is that our Churches have never, to my knowledge, given serious thought to this matter. While we have considered and even investigated the possibility of missions in other fields, no one, as far as I know, has ever pointed out the necessity of investigating the possible openings in the field of Jewish Missions. Then, too, I have raised the question in my own mind how it is that the Christian Reformed Churches, which, to all intents and purposes, have expended years of effort in Jewish Missions both in Chicago and in Paterson, N.J., have only seen a token of success. The question that bothered me was: Has the approach these churches made to the Jewish problem been the wrong one? When I read the informative article of Mr. Huisjen I could hardly conclude that they have made the wrong approach. And Mr. Huisjen surely ought to know since the burden of Jewish evangelization has been for many years his personal concern.

Mr. Huisjen introduces his well written article with the rather striking observation that "the apostle Paul, the apostle who was especially commissioned as the apostle of the Gentiles, has thrown more light on God's way with the Jews, concerning their salvation, than any other New Testament writer. It was Paul, in fact, who gave the Church her directives concerning her mission to the Jews." The writer argues that "as the apostle of the Gentiles, Paul was to establish the church as a body of believers called out from all peoples and it was this body of believers whom God would use to bring the Jews under the ministry of the Gospel." Mr. Huisjen bases this observation on Romans 11:13, 14 where he declares: "Paul magnified his office as the apostle of the Gentiles in that he sought to build up the Church in faith and godliness so that she might deport herself as having inherited God's promises once given to Israel and thus provoke the Jews to emulate her." This provocation of the Jews through the riches which the Gentile church re-

ceived is, according to Mr. Huisjen, God's way with the Jews. So he understands, and I believe, correctly so, such passages as Romans 10:19 and 11:11.

The writer delineates upon his subject in an interesting way and impresses upon his readers that the salvation of the Jews and God's way with them concerns us in several ways. There are especially four sub-divisions in his article which clearly define this Jewish problem as related to us. Writes Mr. Huisjen: "Observe that it involves us in: a divine provision; a particular relationship; an unique mission; and a godly deportment."

Under the part entitled, "A Divine Provision," the writer reminds his readers that according to Deut. 32:21, which is part of the Song of Moses quoted by Paul in Rom. 11:14, it is clear that the people whom God would raise up for the purpose of provoking the Jews to jealousy are none other than the Christian people. He writes: "No other people could possibly serve this purpose of God. There have been times that God used other peoples to chastise Israel, but to provoke them to jealousy concerning their salvation, only a people can do who have become God's people indeed. From this prophetic word of the Lord God we must conclude that our being raised up to provoke the Jews to jealousy concerning their salvation was as much determined by God as was our salvation. In this Old Testament Scriptures lies the embryo of Jewish evangelism, the precursor of our mission to the Jews!"

As to the second part of his article entitled, "A Particular Relationship" Mr. Huisjes writes: "God's way with the Jews concerning their salvation also involves us in a particular relationship with them, a relationship such as is not found between us and other peoples."

He then points out wherein this relationship consists. There are four points to which he calls attention: 1. "First, we are particularly related to the Jews in that our salvation is closely intertwined with them. Paul speaks of this in Romans 11:11 when he says, 'Have they then stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come to the Gentiles for to provoke them to jealousy.' The fall of the Jews was subservient to our salvation and our salvation, in turn, is to be subservient to their salvation . . ."

2. "Secondly, we are particularly related to the Jews in that both they and we are branches of one root. They are the natural branches, we are the ingrafted. Paul speaks of this relationship at length in Romans 11:16-24 . . ."

3. "The most relevant point in our relationship to the Jews, however, is found in Romans 11:17. There we read, 'What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it.' Here we have just such a relationship as naturally genders jealousy. We have inherited that which was first promised to the Jews and which they believe they should have. The Jews indeed have a rich heritage by promise of God. Paul describes this heritage when he says, 'To whom pertaineth the adoption,

and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises.' The Jews are not devoid of a knowledge of these promises nor of a feeling for them, but in their selfrighteousness they have not obtained them. Now when Paul tells us that the election hath obtained it, he has reference to none other than those whom the Lord has called unto Himself in Christ Jesus. By profession we are the members of the body of Christ, we are the elect. Hence, we are the people whom God would use to provoke the Jews to emulation and we are the people whom God can use to that end; our particular relationship with them involves our doing so."

4. "Although not as specifically set forth in Scripture, but clearly by the providence of God, we are involved in still another meaningful relation to the Jews. They are our neighbors in a true sense of that word . . . Increasingly therefore, we find ourselves side by side with the Jews today. Thousands upon thousands actually reside in the shadow of Christian churches, and our Church also has its quota. Do we need proof that this is meaningful?"

Regarding the third point "A Unique Mission," Mr. Huisjen points out that "God's way with the Jews further involves us in a unique mission in their behalf . . . The provocation to jealousy, implemented by our particular relation to them, makes our mission to the Jews unique. The Jew is provoked to jealousy or emulation when he comes to see that the Christian has truly become heir of God's promises. And this he comes to see by observing Christian life, not the Christian life of an individual Christian merely, but the collective Christian life, the life of the Church, the body of Christ."

In the concluding paragraph under this third point the writer says: "Now Paul tells us plainly that he labored to condition the church for her mission to the Jews. Says, Paul, 'For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify my office: if by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh and save some of them.' Obviously, Paul was here not speaking of his labor with the Jews, but, of his labor with and in the Church in behalf of the Jews. Paul sought to build up the Church in faith and godliness so that she might the better answer to her high calling with respect to the Jews."

Under the last thought, "A Godly Deportment," Mr. Huisjen writes: "Last but not least God's way with the Jews concerning their salvation involves us in a godly deportment. Scripture elsewhere tells us that godliness is profitable unto all things and so it is in our mission to the Jews. Without godly deportment there is no provoking the Jews to emulation. In considering this part of our subject we make our observation on the basis of Romans 9, 10 and 11."

Regarding this observation the writer points out three things:

"First if we would be godly as concerns the Jews we must be embued with a spirit of Godly compassion for them, as was the apostle Paul. Paul, observe, had great heaviness

and continual sorrow in his heart for he could wish himself accursed from Christ for his brethren, his kinsmen according to the flesh . . ."

"Second, if we would be godly as concerns the Jews it must also be our heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel that they may be saved. 'Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved.'"

"Third, if we would be godly concerning the Jews we must be guided, not by our intuition or feelings, but by the Word of God. The reasonings mentioned above might be rational, but it is not Biblical. To those who thus reason Paul says, 'I say then hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I am also an Israelite . . . God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew.' Then, taking his stand upon the Scripture, Paul brings Elias into the picture and says, 'Wot ye not what the Scripture saith of Elias?' Paul had recourse to the Old Testament but we have recourse to both, the Old and the New Testament . . ."

"Wot ye not what the Scripture saith? 'The gifts and calling of God are without repentance. For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief: Even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they may also obtain mercy.' Romans 11:29-31. God's way with the Jews as concerning their salvation involves us in a mission, and it is a purposeful and glorious mission. But are we faithful?"

Mr. Huisjen writes much more than that I have here quoted, and what I have quoted I know does not really do justice to his fine article. I do believe, however, that enough has been quoted to show that he is quite well aware of the Jewish problem and the proper approach to its solution. This does not mean, however, that he has answered all my questions also those regarding the conduct of Jewish missions in the Christian Reformed Churches. For example if the approach to the Jewish problem suggested by Mr. Huisjen has also been that of these Churches and it has been meticulously applied throughout these many years of Jewish mission work, how is it that to all intents and purposes there has been so little response and such meagre fruits? Unless I have been wholly misinformed, the results of Jewish mission work have been never phenomenal in the Christian Reformed Churches.

Is the answer to this question to be found in the fact that these Churches have spoiled their approach with an offer of grace in the preaching of the gospel? A Jew likes consistency, you know; he hates the contradictory. An offer of grace in the preaching of the gospel is a plain contradiction to what Paul declares in Romans in the heritage of the Jew. I wonder!

But how about our own Churches? When I read and re-read those wonderful sermons of the Rev. H. Hoeksema which he preached some years ago to his own congregation and incorporated in the book called: "God's Eternal Good Pleasure," and especially the one on Romans 11:11, my heart thrills with the truth that God has promised to save also the

Jew and ingraft him into his own olive tree. How much more assurance do we need that, proceeding from this truth, Jewish mission will be successful? I propose that our Mission Committee consider seriously of investigating the possibility of conducting Jewish missions, and advise our Churches of their findings. M.S.

(Continued from page 133)

FROM HOLY WRIT

quotations he retorted, "I have a right to prove my point, haven't I?" I told him then and there, "you have only a right to speak the *whole* truth and *nothing but the truth*, so help you God." If a writer, breaking out into print, puts himself in that position where the two-edged sword of justice and equity demands that to speak the *whole* truth he must quote the *whole* Standard Bearer or any other document, may (I say this with great trembling!) God help him by His Holy Spirit, Who leads into all truth! I tremble when I think what will happen to those who offend the little ones for whom Christ died with confusion and wind. I shudder about the "mill-stone" and the "deep sea"!

I also noticed, just a few minutes ago, that Rev. Howerzyl's pen slipped when quoting me he wrote, "It is a pity that people are confused on this point"! I do like to believe that the change was unintentional. What I actually wrote was, "It is a pity that some (notice: "some") people are confused on this point." The confusion is not as general as Concordia's "editing" might seem to indicate. But suppose it were? What then? It would merely mean that with more patience we instruct the erring!

When I read the decisions of "Classis West" on the Statements of Rev. De Wolf I cannot help but ask: what child's play is this? I ask: does God call me to join such "babes in the wood"? Oh, I like to believe the very best of Rev. Howerzyl. Love believes no evil; neither does it close its eyes to the naked reality! My spirit groaned within me in travail when I read the decisions of Classis West, which were sent to my address by Rev. M. Gritter of Pella, Iowa. The words of Dr. A. Kuyper Sr., came to my mind, who spoke of "Snelle Afloop der Wateren"!

Here I stand in obedience to God and Christ who has the "seven stars in His right hand." Without looking to the left or to the right I shall keep my eye on God's precepts, knowing that no matter what happens, the just do not live by speculation but by faith!

G. L.

Announcement

Classis East will meet in regular Session on Wednesday morning, January 5 at 9 o'clock, in the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church. Will the Consistories, in need of subsidy, kindly fill in the blanks sent to their address? Will they regard this announcement as a personal reminder?

Geo. C. Lubbers, Stated Clerk

Chastening

I know not why His hand is laid
In chastening on my life,
Nor why it is my little world
Is filled so full of strife.

I know not why, when faith looks up
And seeks for rest from pain
That o'er my sky fresh clouds arise
And drench my path with rain.

I know not why my prayer so long
By Him has been denied;
Nor why, while others' ships sail on,
Mine should in port abide.

But I do know that God is love,
That He my burden shares,
And though I may not understand,
I know, for me He cares.

I know the heights for which I long
Are often reached through pain,
I know the sheaves must needs be threshed
To yield the golden grain.

I know that, though He may remove
The friends on whom I lean,
'Tis that I thus may learn to love
And trust the One unseen.

And, when at last I see His face
And know as I am known,
I will not care how rough the road
That led me to my home.

— Grace Troy.

I Cried to God in My Distress

I cried to God in my distress,
And by the Lord my prayer was heard;
O save me, Lord, from lying lips
And from the false, deceitful word.

What woe for falsehood can atone,
Or punish the deceitful tongue?
The tongue whose speech consumes like fire,
Whose words like deadly shafts are flung?

Alas for me, whose lot is cast
With those who find their joy in strife!
With those who hate the paths of peace
I long have dwelt and spent my life.

In thought and act I am for peace,
Peace I pursue and ever seek;
But those about me are for strife,
Though I in love and kindness speak.

Psalms 120