

THE STANDARD

Bearer

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

VOLUME XXXII

FEBRUARY 15, 1956 — GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN

NUMBER 10

MEDITATION

Forgiven

"And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity." Isa. 33:24.

This time I would like to take you with me to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the great King.

I will write a little of things heavenly, glorious, perfect, eternal.

I will write of the happiness of those whom God has reserved for Himself.

They are the inhabitants of my text.

You do not doubt that this portion of Holy Writ indeed writes about the blessed estate, do you? Read verse 20 and 21: "Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down; not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken. But there the glorious Lord will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams; wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ships pass thereby."

Yes, indeed, it is a description of the heavenly city, the state of heavenly perfection that shall be realized when all the weary is past.

Well then, the inhabitant of that city shall not say, I am sick!

And why not?

Because he shall have received forgiveness of all his iniquities.

* * * *

Who is that inhabitant?

What a question!

There is no more important question under the sun. The answer to that question determines whether you spend eternity with God in His glorious heaven, or whether you shall spend it in hell amid horrible torment.

Yes, it is the most important question for a man.

"The people that dwell therein," that is, in the heavenly Jerusalem, the inhabitants of the new world, are often mentioned in Holy Scripture. In Isaiah and Jeremiah they are called the remnant, those whom the Lord reserves for Himself. See Jer. 50:20; and Isaiah 1:9. In the first text we read: "In those days, and in that time, saith the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them *whom I reserve*." Note, that we have the same truth here as in my text, and the inhabitants are those whom God reserves for Himself. In the original you find the word for "remaining," the remnant, therefore. The same word we find in the second text mentioned above: "Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah." Isa. 1:9.

Yes, there are people who are reserved by God for Himself. They are His peculiar people, His heritage.

In Isa. 49:16 we read of this remnant that they are engraven in the palms of God's hands. And they are there from all eternity.

Jer. 31:3 goes further and tells us that God loved them with an everlasting love: "The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee."

They are the inhabitant of the New Jerusalem of my text.

Before this earth was created, they were chosen unto eternal life. Their number cannot be decreased or increased. They are written in the book of life from before the foundation of the world. And so their blessed future estate is sure. They cannot fall away, nor blotted out of that book of life. God Himself holds them throughout all history in His hand, and no one is able to pluck them out of the hand of God.

And so the Bible pictures them as a very happy people. He suffered no man to do them wrong, in fact, the good and the evil, men and devils, and all things in heaven and on earth and in hell, must help them to arrive in the beautiful city of God of which my text speaks.

They are the inhabitant of my text.

And they are iniquitous. They are sinners all.

They are not any better than those unhappy beings that shall go to another place: hell.

Every page of the Bible tells us that the ultimate inhabitant of heaven is sinful and therefore, guilty.

But my text says: the people that dwell therein (Jerusalem, the golden) shall be forgiven their iniquity.

Iniquity is an ugly thing.

The word means in the original: "To bend" or: "to curve" and therefore, to make crooked, to distort. Ethically it means to act perversely, and to be perverse.

That is terrible.

When you are perverse you pervert yourselves and all you come in contact with.

God placed this remnant, this elect people, on the earth in order to do rightly, to be upright, to act wisely and therefore, to praise Jehovah with respect to all things, our soul and body included.

But the elect fell in Adam their first covenant head. And after this fall, all the elect approved of his terrible action. They all likewise perverted the earth and heaven, their heart, their mind, their will, their soul and their body. They also perverted their neighbor with whom they come in contact. They also perverted the things which God gave them, animate and inanimate. When they received a wife and children, they perverted them; when they received money and possessions, they perverted them.

But why go on?

Everything and everybody which came in contact with these elect people of God was perverted by them.

And now we read in my text that their iniquity is forgiven.

Astounding truth!

Yes, we grow used to it. And so we see it no more.

Think of this: iniquity bears in itself the punishment of sin: eternal damnation. This is so true, that when God shall mete out punishment to the reprobate, they themselves shall admit that they are worthy of the crime committed. No one shall go to hell, but he or she shall justify God!

Moreover, the Bible teaches on every page that God must punish the perverse. His own Being demands that.

Perverseness is the outraging of God's majesty and glory. Well, eternal damnation is the reaction of that outraged majesty and glory.

But then the question is in order: how can God forgive iniquity?

And as Jeremiah puts it: "and I will remember their sin no more," or: "the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found."

How can this people then inhabit the city of God?

* * * *

Here is the answer of the text: God forgives.
And Jeremiah: He pardons them.

Or: they are sought and looked for, but they are no more. They are gone.

Imagine: your sins have disappeared!

God of everlasting miracles! How has this come about?

The answer is Jesus!

Forgiveness, pardon, disappearance of sin, is Jesus Christ, Jehovah Salvation!

Oh, I never grow tired of the Gospel, nor to tell you of it.

In eternity, where we were chosen, God gave us to God.

And God was made the Covenant Head of the people of God. He did that in His everlasting decree.

And so, in the fulness of time, God appeared in Bethlehem.

And God took our sins upon Himself in His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ.

And God stood, hung, before the face of God.

And God burned and burned and burned on that God, manifested in the flesh.

And He burned until all the sins of God's elect people were gone.

Golgotha is hell, damnation, everlasting forsakenness.

And so, seek where you may, investigate eternally, but you never will find the sins of the elect.

God threw those sins in the oceans of everlasting forgetfulness.

He threw them behind His back.

Listen to Isaiah's confession: "Behold, for peace I had great bitterness: but Thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption: for Thou has cast all my sins behind Thy back."

The sins of God's people are gone, gone forever!

That is the Gospel which we preach in the name of God.

And that is the Gospel also of this text.

* * * *

And so, when these elect arrive in the new heaven and the new earth, they shall never say anymore: I am sick!

You may include all misery in this term.

It includes the misery of the body as well as of the soul.

It includes the whole of the misery of this earthy, sinful, dark and corrupt dispensation.

Let us go to John, and consider his version: "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be anymore pain: for the former things are passed away."

All misery shall be divorced from that happy throng.

Misery of the body. It is the result of sin.

Misery because of the elements: the curse is lifted.

Misery because of the enemy: they are forever vanquished by Jesus.

Misery, and here is the worst of all: misery because we sinned: they are now perfect before God and His throne.

And instead of misery (because the negative implies the positive) they shall be happy and blest.

Isaiah has seen and listened to their joy: listen to him: "And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." Isaiah 35:10.

G. V.

IN MEMORIAM

The board of the Adam St. Protestant Reformed Christian School hereby expresses its sincere sympathy to our teacher Mrs. D. Slomp, in the loss of her husband

MR. G. SLOMP

Ps. 52:9: "I will praise thee forever, because thou hast done it: and I will wait upon thy name; for it is good before thy saints."

The Board
A. Heemstra, Secretary
G. Stadt, President

HE LEADETH ME

I cannot always see the way that leads
To heights above;
I sometimes quite forget that He leads
on with hands of love.
But yet the path must lead to my Father's land;
And when I reach life's summit I shall
know and understand.

I cannot always trace the onward course
My ship must take;
But looking backwards I behold afar
Its stormy wake
Illumined with God's light of love.
And so I onward go,
In perfect trust that He who holds
the helm must know.

I cannot always see the plan on which
He builds my life;
For oft the sound of hammers, blow on
blow the noise of strife,
Confuses me till I quite forget
He knows and oversees,
And that in all details with His good
plan my life agrees.

I do not always know and understand
The Master's rule.
I do not always do the tasks He gives
in life's hard school.
But I learn with His help to solve
them one by one,
And when I cannot understand, to say,
"Thy will be done."

THE STANDARD BEARER

Semi-monthly, except monthly during June, July and August

Published by the REFORMED FREE PUBLISHING ASSOCIATION
P. O. Box 881, Madison Square Station, Grand Rapids 7, Mich.

Editor — REV. HERMAN HOEKSEMA

Communications relative to contents should be addressed to Rev. H. Hoeksema, 1139 Franklin St., S. E., Grand Rapids 7, Mich.

All matters relative to subscriptions should be addressed to Mr. G. Pipe, 1463 Ardmore St., S. E., Grand Rapids 7, Michigan.

Announcements and Obituaries must be mailed to the above address and will be published at a fee of \$1.00 for each notice.

RENEWALS: Unless a definite request for discontinuance is received, it is assumed that the subscriber wishes the subscription to continue without the formality of a renewal order.

Subscription price: \$4.00 per year

Entered as Second Class matter at Grand Rapids, Michigan

CONTENTS

MEDITATION —	
Forgiven	217
Rev. G. Vos	
EDITORIALS —	
The Apostates of 1953 and the Three Points.....	220
Rev. H. Hoeksema	
OUR DOCTRINE —	
The Triple Knowledge (Part III — Of Thankfulness)....	222
Rev. H. Hoeksema	
THE DAY OF SHADOWS —	
The Prophecy of Zechariah.....	225
Rev. G. M. Ophoff	
FROM HOLY WRIT —	
Exposition of I Corinthians 1-4 (9).....	228
Rev. G. Lubbers	
IN HIS FEAR —	
The Sabbath in His Fear (4).....	230
Rev. J. A. Heys	
CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH —	
The Church and the Sacraments.....	232
Rev. H. Veldman	
THE VOICE OF OUR FATHERS —	
The Exposition of the Canons of Dordrecht.....	234
Rev. H. C. Hoeksema	
DECENCY AND ORDER —	
Family Visitation	236
Rev. G. VandenBerg	
ALL AROUND US —	
A Correction	238
Women Pastors	238
United Presbyterians	238
The Movies Go to School	239
CONTRIBUTIONS —	
"Creston Will Solve Her Own Problems"	240
Rev. G. Lubbers	

EDITORIALS

The Apostates of 1953 and the Three Points

As a proof that the statement "God promises every one of you that, if you believe, you shall be saved" is correct and Scriptural, Bellflower also refers to Rom. 10:9. There we read: "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

Is this, indeed, a proof?

Not at all.

Notice:

1. That both, the statement supported by the apostates and the text in Rom. 10:9, speak of the promise of God, the promise of salvation: "you shall be saved" and "thou shalt be saved."

2. That, however, in the statement which the text is supposed to support, the promise is, on God's part, left entirely unlimited: "God promises every one of you." As far as God is concerned, He is willing to save all that are in a given audience. This leaves only one possibility. It is this: that the limiting clause: "If you believe," is a condition which man, which "every one of you" must fulfill if the promise of God is to be realized. The apostates teach a general-conditional promise. This is the same as the implication of the "First Point" of 1924.

3. But the text in Rom. 10:9 is radically different, in fact, it is exactly the opposite. It does not present God as promising anything to all men or to "every one of you," but it limits God's promise to the believer: "if thou shalt confess with thy mouth, and believe in thine heart." This makes the promise particular. God surely fulfills His promise and that, too, only to the elect, for faith is a gift of God. Hence, Rom. 10:9 does not teach a general-conditional but a particular-unconditional promise.

Bellflower (Doezema) also refers to the well-known text of John 3:16: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

It is not quite clear whether Bellflower finds the generality of the promise in the term "world" or in "whosoever." The trouble is that it is a general habit or custom of heretics simply to quote or refer to texts without explanation and without regarding the context. Nevertheless, I maintain that this text surely does not support the statement of the apostates: "God promises every one of you that, if you believe, you shall be saved." for:

1. If the generality of the promise is to be found in the word "world" the text would mean that God loved all men, which is quite contrary to the whole of Scripture. God loved Jacob and He hated Esau. And the Saviour prays not for the world. Hence, "the world" as the object of God's love

and of His promise certainly refers not to "every one of you" but to the elect only.

2. If, however, the generality of the promise is supposed to be found in the "whosoever" Bellflower is entirely mistaken. For it is strictly limited to the believers: "whosoever believeth on him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." The promise here is again the same as in Rom. 10:9 and everywhere is Holy Writ: the promise of salvation, the promise of eternal life. But this promise is not general and conditional but particular and unconditional. It is for the believers and, therefore, for the elect.

It is, indeed, striking that the apostates appeal to the same passages of the confession for their false doctrine as the Christian Reformed Synod of 1924 quoted in support of the First Point. They are the following.

Canons II, 5: "Moreover, the promise of the gospel is, that whosoever believeth in Christ crucified, shall not perish, but have everlasting life. This promise, together with the demand to repent and believe, ought to be declared and published to all nations and to all persons promiscuously and without distinction, to whom God out of his good pleasure sends the gospel."

Canons IV, 8: "As many as are called by the gospel are unfeigned called. For God hath most earnestly and truly declared in his Word, what will be acceptable to him, namely, that all who are called should accept the invitation (should come unto him). He, moreover, seriously promises eternal life, and rest, to as many as shall come to him, and believe on him."

One cannot help but wonder what Bellflower wants with these passages.

Seeing, however, that they quote these canons in support of the false doctrine that the promise of God is general and conditional, it is evident that they read and interpret these references in that light.

In other words, according to them, when Canons II, 5 speaks of the promise of the gospel to whosoever believeth they interpret this as meaning that the promise is general and conditional. When the same canon tells us that the promise of God must be declared to all nations and persons promiscuously, they give this the meaning that the promise itself is meant for all and every one without distinction. And when in Canons IV, 8 we are taught that God seriously promises eternal life to as many as come to Him and believe, they again give these words the same general meaning.

But is this really the meaning of the Canons?

If this were true, the Canons surely would contradict themselves. For in Canons I, 6 we read:

"That some receive the gift of faith from God and others do not receive it, proceeds from God's eternal decree, 'For known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world,' Acts 15:18. 'Who worketh all things after the counsel of his will,' Eph. 1:11. According to which decree, he graciously softens the hearts of the elect, however obstinate,

and inclines them to believe, while he leaves the non-elect in his just judgment to their own wickedness and obduracy. And herein is especially displayed the profound, the merciful, and at the same time the righteous discrimination between men, equally involved in ruin; or that decree of election and reprobation, revealed in the Word of God, which though men of perverse, impure, and unstable minds wrest to their own destruction, yet to holy and pious souls affords unspeakable consolation."

According to this canon, God certainly does not fulfill the promise of faith to all men. And if He does not fulfill that promise you certainly can never say: "God promises salvation to every one of you . . . if you believe" for faith belongs to the promise itself. If God does not promise faith to every one, He does not promise salvation to all.

This is also evident from Canons I, 7:

"Election is the unchangeable purpose of God, whereby, before the foundation of the world, he hath, out of mere grace, according to the sovereign good pleasure of his own will, chosen, from the whole human race, which had fallen through their own fault, from their primitive state of rectitude, into sin and destruction, a certain number of persons to redemption in Christ, whom he from eternity appointed the Mediator and Head of the elect, and the foundation of salvation.

"This elect number, though by nature neither better nor more deserving than others, but with them involved in one common misery, God hath decreed to give to Christ, to be saved by him, and effectually to call and draw them to his communion by his Word and Spirit, to bestow upon them true faith, justification and sanctification; and having powerfully preserved them in the fellowship of his Son, finally, to glorify them for the demonstration of his mercy, and for the praise of his glorious grace; as it is written: 'According as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.' Eph. 1, 4, 5, 6. And elsewhere: 'Whom he did predestinate them he also called, and whom he called, them he also justified, and whom he justified them he also glorified.' Rom. 8:30."

I cannot possibly understand how anyone can explain these passages from the Canons in the light of a general and conditional promise.

It simply cannot be done. God's promise is for the elect upon whom He also bestows the blessing of the union with Christ, faith and all the benefits of salvation by His sovereign grace. Hence, God's promise is not for "every one of you . . . if you believe" but it is for those that believe because God has given them the faith and by that gift of faith they may know that they are elect.

A general conditional promise deprives the elect of the unspeakable consolation of the Canons speak in I, 6.

Nor do the Canons speak a different language in II, 5 and IV, 8.

In II, 5 the promise of the gospel is not made general but it is limited to believers and, therefore, to the elect: "whosoever believeth in Christ crucified, shall not perish, but have everlasting life." That is the promise. It is particular.

This particular promise must be "published and declared to all nations and to all persons promiscuously and without distinction." That is, in the preaching of the Word we may not present the promise as general and conditional. We may not say: "God promises to every one of you that, if you believe, you shall be saved." But we must say that God promises to all that believe eternal life. This is according to Scripture and the Reformed Confessions. If anyone is so stupid that he cannot see the difference between these two statements, he certainly should not be a minister of the Word in a Reformed Church. Him I would consider a dangerous man.

Nor does Canon IV, 8 speak a different language.

I suppose that Bellflower refers especially to the end of this canon: "He, moreover, seriously promises eternal life, and rest, to as many as shall come to him, and believe on him." After all that has been said in the preceding, it is not necessary for me to explain that also this does not speak of a general but of a particular promise. The promise is to those that come to God and believe on Him, and this refers to the elect who receive the gift of faith from God.

Finally, Bellflower refers to the Heidelberg Catechism qu. 84. I suppose that especially the first part of the answer to this question is meant: "Thus, when according to the command of Christ, it is declared and publicly testified to all and every believer, that whenever they receive the promise of the gospel by a true faith, all their sins are really forgiven them of God, for the sake of Christ's merits." Also this will be perfectly clear to all that have understood the preceding part of this editorial. For whom is the promise of God? For the believer, for those that receive it by a true faith. It is not general but particular.

The apostates subscribe to the First Point of 1924.

H. H.

Notice for Classis West

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet, the Lord willing, in Edgerton, Wednesday, March 7, 1956. The consistories are reminded of the rule that they are expected to nominate an elder or elders who are able to serve as synodical delegate.

Rev. H. Veldman, Stated Clerk

OUR DOCTRINE

THE TRIPLE KNOWLEDGE

AN EXPOSITION OF THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

PART III — OF THANKFULNESS

LORD'S DAY 51

Chapter Three

A Serious Limiting Clause

It is plain, too, that in this parable this servant was serving the king with the king's goods. Of himself he had nothing. Perhaps the king had set him over part of his possession. The same is true with men in relation to God. Of themselves they have nothing. They receive their all from God: their talents and powers and means and all their possessions. And with it all man is never anything else than a servant, in duty bound to serve his God in love. Notice also that in the parable the day of reckoning is mentioned. The king calls his servants to give account of what they have done with his goods. This first day of reckoning is not the final day of judgment, for then the servant could not have assumed the unmerciful attitude to his fellow-servant any more. But it is the day of the present dispensation, in which God calls men to account through the preaching of His Word, and in which He roars with the thunder of the law, and preaches of righteousness and sin and judgment as well as of grace and mercy and forgiveness to all that hear the gospel.

Now we read that the king in the parable finds the debtor as soon as he begins to reckon. That he had only begun indicates that this particular debtor is the very first one. This means that in the kingdom of God we are all debtors. And when God begins to reckon, not one of us goes free by nature. Then to, in the parable the immensity of the sum that is owed by this particular servant is emphasized: it is a tremendous sum. We would say: millions of dollars. If any significance may be attached to the number ten thousand, it indicates that we have transgressed the whole law of God a thousand times, and every commandment of it. At any rate, it emphasizes the immensity of our guilt before God, a guilt which we can never pay. This too is emphasized in the parable when it states plainly that the debtor had nothing to pay. And this too is a true picture of the sinner dead in sin and misery. How could he possibly have anything to pay? He owes all to God all the time, and can never pay any back debt. He is dead in sin and misery, and can only increase his debt daily. But now notice the spiritual attitude of this debtor, which shows plainly that he is a reprobate unbeliever. He does not manifest any true contrition and sorrow over sin. On the contrary, he is merely afraid of punishment. Fear that he will be sold, and all that he has, is the motive of his plea. It is evident that he is not delivered from his self-righteousness. He does not ask for

mercy and forgiveness, but only for time to pay all the debt he owes to his lord. With the truly penitent it is quite different. He is filled with sorrow after God, and he does not promise to pay, but pleads solely for grace and remission of sins.

Now notice that this debtor lived under the dispensation of the gospel and in the covenant of God in the outward sense of the word. As we said before, the day of reckoning is not the final day of judgment, but the dispensation of the gospel. And in the outward preaching of the gospel God comes to all that hear not only with the thunder of the law, but also with the announcement of grace to His elect, to the believer that is sorry for his sins. This was announced to the unmerciful servant. He did not ask for forgiveness. He asked for time, and promised to pay all. Nevertheless, this it is that was proclaimed to him. He is not given time, but he is forgiven his debt. This, then, is the relation. The unmerciful servant represents a man in sin, without true repentance, still self-righteous, promising to do better and to make good in the future for his present debts. To that man, outwardly in the kingdom of God and under the dispensation of the gospel, forgiveness in the blood of Christ is proclaimed.

But now comes the test. If he really tasted the depth of sin, of sorrow after God, if he really experienced the riches of mercy and of remission of sin, that servant is inevitably merciful and must show mercy to his brethren. If he is not merciful, there is the proof that he never tasted the grace of God, and that, though outwardly it was proclaimed to him that his sins are forgiven, yet the Spirit never witnessed of this unspeakable grace in his heart. And this became evident in his relation to his fellow-servant. Mark you well, he was merely a fellow-servant, to whom he was supposed to be merciful. And this fellow-servant owed him a small debt, a mere hundred pence, insignificant with the ten thousand talents which the unmerciful servant had owed his lord. Thus it is indeed in the kingdom of heaven. In comparison with the great debt which God has forgiven us, we can never owe one another more than the forgiveness of a very insignificant debt. But the servant is unmerciful. He demands his right. He wants immediate payment of the one hundred pence. He forgets all about his own debt, and haughtily attempts to lord it over his fellow servant. He is cruel. He grabs him by the throat. There is no semblance of mercy in the man. He is unforgiving. The man begs for forgiveness. He falls at his feet and humbles himself. But the unmerciful servant would not listen. He cast him into prison until he should have paid all his debt.

Thus, the unmerciful servant is a picture, not of one that first tasted the grace of God and believed and then fell away, which is impossible, but of the reprobate unbeliever, that indeed heard the proclamation of the mercy of God in the preaching of the gospel, but that never tasted God's mercy for himself. And the final result is that when the last day of reckoning comes, he is held responsible for his

debt, expected to pay all that he owes. He is delivered to the tormentors, and since he has nothing to pay, this means forever. He is cast into hell.

This, then, is a beautiful illustration of the limiting clause in the fifth petition, "as we forgive our debtors." Let us not fail to note the comparison: "Forgive us our debts, *as* we forgive our debtors." This means that we fashion our forgiveness of one another after the model of God's forgiving our trespasses, and that we are so conscious that we have actually done this that we are now able to pray that God may forgive us in the same manner as we have forgiven one another. This implies several ideas. It means that our debtors desire forgiveness, are sorry for their sins committed against us, and confess their wrong doings. Only in the way of repentance and confession can we obtain forgiveness from God. And only in that same way can we forgive one another. It means more. Perhaps you are strongly inclined to agree with our last remark, and, being rather of an unforgiving spirit, you decide to wait until the brother that sinned against you will come to humble himself before you. But you must remember that God did not wait until you came to Him; but He came to you while you were enemies of God, dead in trespasses and sins, and by His grace quickened you and led you to repentance. Hence, you cannot afford to wait, but must seek the offending brother, and seek to bring him to repentance. It also means that we forgive one another abundantly. There is never an end to God's forgiveness. Never does God say to us: "So often have I forgiven you, and always you commit the same sins. I will forgive you no more." There is never a last time with God. He forgiveth abundantly. His mercy is without limit. And so there can be no last time with us. Always again we must forgive the brother that repents, and that too, for Christ's sake. And the reason for all this is not that our forgiving of one another is a ground or condition for our prayer for forgiveness, for that is Christ and His atoning blood absolutely alone. But in order to receive forgiveness of God, I must have receptivity for that blessed gift of grace. I must be truly sorry for my sins. I must behold and long for the unspeakable mercy of God in Christ. All this is not present as long as I am assuming an unforgiving attitude toward the brethren. There is no more unmistakable sign that I have no true need of forgiveness, and that therefore I am in no condition to receive it from the Lord, than that I shut up my heart against the brethren and assume an attitude of unforgiving pride over against him. If we love not the brother whom we have seen, how can we love God Whom we have not seen? With what measure ye mete, it surely shall be measured to you again. Hence, it is quite impossible to beseech the Lord for forgiveness, unless we can truly add: "As we forgive our debtors."

We will now be able to understand what spiritual disposition it requires to utter this petition in spirit and in truth. There must be true sorrow over sin, over sin as such, because it offends God, over all sin, without exception. There

must be a sincere desire to be completely delivered from all sin, to be sanctified and to walk before God in true obedience and love. There must be confidence, not in self, but in the blood and resurrection of Jesus Christ alone, as a ground for our prayer. And there must be love of the brethren and the sincere desire to forgive one another. Considering all this, we must no doubt confess that also in regard to this petition we are still far from perfection. How thoughtlessly, superficially, insincerely, we often express the words of this petition. And yet, it is only in the measure that we truly and consciously send this petition to the throne of grace that we can taste the joy of forgiveness, and exclaim with the psalmist: "O the blessedness of the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." May the Lord teach us to pray in sincerity and truth: "Our Father in heaven, forgive us our debts, even as we forgive our debtors."

LORD'S DAY 52

Chapter One

The Idea of Temptation

Q. 127. Which is the sixth petition?

A. "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil;" that is, since we are so weak in ourselves that we cannot stand a moment; and besides this, since our mortal enemies, the devil, the world, and our own flesh, cease not to assault us, do thou therefore preserve and strengthen us by the power of thy Holy Spirit, that we may not be overcome in this spiritual warfare, but constantly and strenuously may resist our foes, till at last we obtain a complete victory.

Q. 128. How dost thou conclude thy prayer?

A. "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever;" that is, all these we ask of thee, because thou, being our King and almighty, art willing and able to give us all good; and all this we pray for, that thereby not we, but thy holy name, may be glorified for ever.

Q. 129. What doth the word "Amen" signify?

A. "Amen" signifies, it shall truly and certainly be: for my prayer is more assuredly heard of God, than I feel in my heart that I desire things of him.

There are those who discover in the last petition of the Lord's Prayer two separate entreaties: the first, "Lead us not into temptation"; the second, "But deliver us from evil." In that case they find in the perfect prayer seven petitions instead of six. In a way we would be strongly inclined to agree with this view. In that case we would have the number *seven* represented in the Lord's Prayer, which is the number of God's covenant, of the fellowship between God and His people, *three* being the number of the Triune God, while *four* is the number of the creature. This would be corroborated by the fact that the first three petitions all relate to God, while the last four pertain to the people of God. But although this indeed expresses a beautiful idea, we must nevertheless agree with those that insist that in the perfect prayer there are only six petitions. The question is,

of course, purely formal, and not an important one. Yet we must say a few words about it. It certainly must be admitted that from a formal viewpoint everything is in favor of the view that in these two clauses of the sixth petition we have really but one request. They form one sentence, connected by the conjunction "but." The whole sentence runs parallel to the fifth petition, which also consists of two clauses. And this also is in favor of the view that in this last petition of the Lord's Prayer we have not two entreaties, but only one prayer. Besides, there is a very close relation between preservation in and from temptation and deliverance from evil. It may be expedient at this time to look at that relation a little more closely. Some understand the connection between the two parts of this petition in such a way that the last part makes provision in case the first part of this prayer is not granted. The meaning then would be: "Lead us not into temptation, but if we must be led into it, then deliver us out of the evil." However, this introduces quite arbitrarily a thought into the text that is foreign to it. Besides, it presupposes the possibility that the first part may not be heard. It expresses an element of doubt or unbelief. And this is not to be accepted. In the first place, if the element of doubt is to be introduced into the first part of this petition, so that it is not heard, the same motive must lie at the basis of the second part, and therefore also that part of the petition will not be granted. But in the second place, this is quite contrary to Holy Writ. For it teaches: "Without faith it is impossible to please God; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Heb. 11:6. Rather must we conceive of the relation between the two parts of this sixth petition to be such that in the first part we ask for the same blessing of grace as in the second, the first clause expressing the thing asked for negatively and in the midst of our present life, where the world, the devil, and our own flesh also tempt us to evil, while the last part expresses the same thought positively: "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." However, it must be clear that the last clause, though principally referring to the same matter, also expresses more than the first. For preservation in and from temptation leaves us nevertheless still in this world, and therefore it cannot be final. The Christian cannot rest content with a state in which he must be continually preserved against the temptation of the flesh, the world, and the devil. He wants more. He longs for perfection, for the state in which preservation against temptation is no longer necessary. He looks forward to the complete victory which will come in the state of perfection, in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. In final analysis it is for that victory that he prays in the second part of this sixth petition, ". . . but deliver us from evil." With all the similarity between the two clauses, therefore, there is sufficient difference to want a separate discussion of the two parts of this prayer. The one part asks for preservation, the other for perfect deliverance.

It is evident at once that there is a close connection between the preceding petition, which is a prayer for the forgiveness of sins, and this last request of the Lord's Prayer, which is in principle a petition for victory, and that too, for final victory. The sixth petition looks forward to something else, to a better, a higher, a more blessed state, in which the prayer for forgiveness shall never again be necessary. In the prayer for forgiveness we seek to lay hold on the glorious gift of justification by faith through the blood of Jesus Christ our Lord. Justification is the act of God whereby He forever declares us free from sin and clothes us with an eternal righteousness which is imputed to us on the ground of the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ our Lord. For this unspeakable blessing of God we ask in the fifth petition. And this blessing is very important and essential: for it is basic for all the other blessings of grace. Without this basic blessing we can have nothing, and can receive nothing from God for the simple reason that He loves the righteous and hates the wicked. Common grace is an absurdity. We must therefore be objectively justified before God in order to receive any of the blessings of His grace. But although justification is first, it cannot be last. Justification changes our legal status before God in judgment. But it leaves our sinful condition unchanged. It delivers us from the guilt of sin, but it leaves us still stained with the pollution of sin. By justification we obtain the right to be delivered from the dominion and power of sin, even as the pardon of a governor gives a criminal the right to be set at liberty. But itself does not liberate us from that power of sin and corruption. Justification, therefore, or the forgiveness of sins, cannot possibly be the end of our salvation. For Christ did not give Himself for us merely in order that we might be redeemed and justified, but that He might "purify unto himself a people for his own possession, zealous of good works." Titus 2:14. And in the first part of the eighth chapter of the epistle to the Romans the apostle indeed emphasizes that there is and can be no condemnation for them that are in Christ Jesus. But he emphasizes throughout that they are those that walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Rom. 8:1-4. And again, in Rom. 6:1-4 we read: "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?"

H.H.

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

The Prophecy of Zechariah

Jehovah urges the "daughter of Zion" to rejoice, verses 10-13.

10. *Shout and rejoice, O daughter of Zion, For behold, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith Jehovah,*

11. *And many nations shall be joined unto Jehovah in that day, And become a people to me. And I will dwell in the midst of thee, And thou shalt know that Jehovah of hosts hath sent me to thee.*

12. *And Jehovah shall take Judah as His portion in the holy land, and shall yet choose Jerusalem.*

13. *Be still all flesh, before Jehovah.*

10. *Daughter of Zion*—The post-exilic afflicted covenant people but in the final instance the whole church of the elect. *Shout and rejoice*—The covenant people of our prophet's day were far from rejoicing. They were disconsolate. Jehovah had vowed to overthrow the kingdoms of the nations preliminary to His coming and to secure the salvation of His afflicted people (Haggai 2:22). But the horsemen had walked to and fro through the earth and had found that there was no sign of the nations being shaken. All the earth sat still and was at rest (Zechariah 1:2). It seemed, therefore, that He was slack concerning His promise as some men count slackness. How long would He not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah against whom He had had indignation for those seventy years (1:12)? But let the afflicted covenant people rejoice. *For behold, I come and will dwell in the midst of thee*—The construction is the same as in verse 9, "I am about to come." The fulfilment of the promise is imminent. In the way of judgment over the nations with whom He was angry because of their ill-treatment of Zion, He will come to take up His abode in His holy temple that is in process of being built and so will He dwell in the midst of His people. What a blessedness that will be for them.

The fulfilment of this promise was the coming of Jehovah to Zerubbabel's temple; second, His coming through the Son in the flesh in the fulness of time; third, His coming through the glorified Christ in His Spirit to His church when the day of Pentecost was fully come. The final fulfilment will be His dwelling in the midst of His glorified people on the new earth.

11. *Many nations shall be joined to Jehovah in that day*—The promise of the calling of the Gentiles in this dispensation of the Gospel by the glorified Christ. They shall be changed from friends of satan into friends of Jehovah. And their fellowship will be with Him through Christ. And His warfare they shall war. They are many nations—all

the nations of the earth—but they shall form one people, family of redeemed. *And thou shalt know that Jehovah hath sent me unto thee*—A repetition of 9b with the same significance (see on verse 9).

12. *And Jehovah shall take Judah as His portion*—to Deut. 32:9, "Jehovah's portion is his people, Jacob the lot of his inheritance." Jacob is Judah and Judah is the church. He took her as His portion, that is peculiar possession in His choosing her in Christ Jesus unto life eternal before the foundation of the world, and in the fulness of time in His redeeming her from all her sins by the death of His Son, reconciling her to Himself through the cross, restoring her to the right to be forgiven of Him, to be saved of Him, and to be crowned by Him with life in glory. Truly, Judah is His peculiar possession. *In the holy land*—in the final instance the new earth. *And shall yet choose Jerusalem*—see on 1:17.

13. *Be still all flesh*—According to the context, the heathen nations. *Be still . . . before Jehovah*—Let them consider that they are but flesh and be quiet, namely their kings. Let them be instructed. Let them serve Jehovah with fear. For soon they will find themselves in His presence with Him as their judge. *For He has risen up from His holy habitation*—During the seventy years of the captivity He was still, as it were, and suffered long with His afflicted people. But now He has risen up and in the way of judgments over the nations He comes and will dwell in the midst of His people. "His holy habitation" is the heavens (Compare Amos 9:6).

Chapter III

The forth Vision—The High Priest Joshua accused of satan and acquitted, 1-10.

1. *And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to oppose him.*

2. *And said Jehovah unto Satan, Rebuke Jehovah thee, O Satan, even rebuke Jehovah thee (Jehovah) who hath chosen Jerusalem. Is not this a brand snatched out of the fire?*

3. *And Joshua was clothed with filthy garments and stood before the angel.*

4. *And he answered and spake to those who stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from upon him. And he said to him, See, I have caused to pass from upon thee thine iniquities, and will clothe thee with costly raiment.*

5. *And I said, Let them put a turban clean upon his head. So they put a clean turban upon his head and clothed him with garments. And the angel of the Lord was standing by.*

The promised blessedness of the previous visions raises questions. The nations are to be judged, the exiles restored, temple and city rebuilt, and the church expanded to the four corners of the earth. And Jehovah shall come to dwell in the midst of the covenant people not to consume them by His anger but to be unto them a perpetual fountain of all good. But how can all this amazing blessedness be their portion, seeing that He is righteous and holy God, whose eyes are too pure to behold sin and seeing that it is a sinful people whom He is thus to befriend? This blessedness can be theirs only because their iniquities have been made to pass from them. This is the glad tiding of the vision with which we are now to deal.

I. *And he showed me* — The subject of the verb is either Jehovah, who is the author of all the prophetic revelations or the interpreting angel who acts as the divine agent in explaining the visions. *Joshua* — called also *Jeshua* (Ezra 2:2; 3:2), the son of Jehozadak (Hag. 1:1; I Chron. 6:15), the grandson of Seraiah (2 Kings 25:18). He was the ecclesiastical head, while Zerubbabel was the civil ruler (Hag. 1:6). *Standing before the angel of Jehovah* — This angel is the same divine person that in the New Testament Scriptures is presented to us as the incarnate Word, the Christ of God (see on 1:2). The priest was, therefore, standing before the face of Jehovah. For what purpose is not stated. The expression "standing before" is used of a person standing before a judge either as the accused or the accuser (Num. 27:2); I Kings 3:16; Deut. 19:17); of a servant standing before his master to minister to his wants (Deut. 1:38); and of the priests standing before Jehovah to minister to Him and to bless in His name (Deut. 10:8). And this included their daily offering up sacrifices, first for themselves, for they were but sinful men, and then for the people (Heb. 7:8). On the great day of atonement, that occurred annually, the high priest offered up sacrifices for all the sins that the covenant people had committed during the by-gone year. For that entire accumulation he made atonement. This task fell to Joshua of our vision. For he was high priest. In the vision he stands before Jehovah in his official capacity. And therefore it must be presumed that he was atoning the people's sins and blessing them in the name of Jehovah. It would imply that he was confessing the sins of the covenant people including his own and imploring Jehovah's forgiveness. Symbolically he was clothed with their iniquities on which account he typifies Christ as no other priest before him. For what is especially significant is that in the vision he ministers before the face of Jehovah as clad in filthy garments. This was a thing unheard of in actual life. What high priest or common priest would dare to have come or be permitted to have come into the presence of Jehovah to minister before His face as clad in filthy garments? In causing it to happen in the vision the Lord was creating for Himself the occasion that was needed to shed new light on the promise, opening for Himself new avenues of approach to His Gospel all for the benefit of His

people. It is not difficult to discern that these filthy garments symbolized the iniquities of the people including this priest. How sinful they still were even as saints of God. How weak in faith. How lacking in zeal. How despondent. How prone to secure their own interest while neglecting God's house. How they were daily in need of being called to repentance. Satan — Literally "adversary" and written in the Hebrew text with the definite article — the adversary. Hence, it must not be referred, as is done by some, to a human adversary. Indicated is the chief of the evil spirits, Satan. In the New Testament Scriptures he is called "diabolus" from a word meaning to accuse, slander, defame — a name as befitting as the Hebrew Satan, the everlasting opposer of God and man, accusing God to man and man to God and "our brethren" before God day and night" (Rev. 12:10). *Standing at his right hand* — At the right hand of Joshua the high priest. It betokens for one thing Satan's unspeakable impudence. For the place at the right hand is the position of honor. Here in the vision the adversary stationed himself — at the priest's right hand.

To oppose him — To oppose the high priest. From the succeeding verse it is plain that he was trying to show cause why Jehovah should destroy the covenant people. He accused them, therefore, He dwelt upon their sins. It must be presumed that he argued also this point, namely that Jehovah must make an end of them, that, if He doesn't, he is not the good God that He claims to be but an evil deity. How can a righteous and holy God be blessing such a people, as Jehovah is doing, and not, instead, be destroying them? That doubtless was indeed a conundrum to the adversary. It may even have been a conundrum to this people and to their priest as well. For it was the dispensation of shadows.

2. *And said Jehovah unto Satan, Jehovah rebuke thee, O Satan* — Doubtless here, too, the speaker is the Angel of Jehovah, the second person in the trinity, our Lord Jesus Christ, calling Himself Jehovah and properly so, seeing that He is the Son of God. The clause may then be paraphrased as follows: Then said I, the angel of Jehovah, who am Jehovah. His announcement to Satan is a request that Jehovah rebuke him. And that He must and shall in order that His people with the Gospel of His rebuke in their hearts, as put there by Him, may be reassured. Certainly, Jehovah will rebuke the adversary. For here again he slanders both the covenant people and their God. In saying that the covenant people are sinful and putting the period here he slanders this people. And in saying that Jehovah is blessing such a people without saying anymore He slanders Jehovah. For both as half truths are glittering lies. For to say that God befriends sinners is to make Him out for an evil deity indeed. We must have the full truth here. Nothing else will do. In themselves the covenant people are sinful men and will ever so remain. But in Christ they are as guiltless as they would be, had they never committed any sin. And that is how God loves them. He loves them in Christ.

How the adversary then slanders in the attempt to get

God to destroy His people. "Jehovah shall rebuke thee Satan." That this is repeated by the angel betokens the ardour of His love. The adversary is accusing God's people. He slanders God. This cannot be allowed to go unrebuked. He laid down His life for that people, did the angel, that they might be to the praise of Jehovah's grace.

Who hath chosen Jerusalem — the opening statement of the rebuke. So the slander of the adversary is now being answered. The verb is in the past — hath chosen. In the first instance the reference is to the earthly Jerusalem. In His sovereign mercy the Lord had chosen her as the place of His habitation. And therefore she was precious in His sight. *For is this not a brand snatched out of the fire?* — This Jerusalem, the remnant of Judah inhabiting the city. Did not the Lord pluck her out of the clutch of the world-power? Had He not turned Judah's captivity? Were not God's people back in God's country? Jerusalem then was that brand plucked out of the fire. What wonderful evidence that He had chosen the city and that she was precious in His sight. No He cannot destroy her. On the contrary, He will surely fulfil all His promises to Zerubabel regarding her. Jerusalem and temple shall be rebuilt, so that erlong, Jehovah, will again be dwelling in the midst of His people.

Indeed, but what is He going to do about Jerusalem's sins? Jerusalem is in herself guilty, depraved, lost undone, — Jerusalem, God's chosen people. But He *chose* them. Everlastingly was He beholding them in Christ in His infinite love of them and willing them as His own. For, as He beheld them in Christ they were blameless, spotlessly clean and glorious. He has chosen His people. Verily He has. They are precious in His sight. Truly they are. For are they not a brand plucked out of the fires of hell with Christ, out of the fires of His consuming anger, and made to sit in heavenly places in Christ? For they were precious in His sight. But once more, What did He do about their sins? Let us attend to the rest of the Lord's rebuke of Satan. Then we shall know.

3. *And Joshua was clothed with filthy garments* — As was stated, symbolize, did those filthy garments, all the sin and guilt that was this priest's and his people's by nature. As clothed in those filthy garments, this priest stands before us in the vision as a type of Christ. For did not He, the incarnate Son of God, come into the world as clad with all the guilt of our sins? Truly, though Himself without sin, He was made sin for us. *And stood before the angel* — The angel of Jehovah (see on verse 2).

4. *And he answered and spake to those who stood before him* — The angel answered the high priest. The Gospel that is now proclaimed was meant for his ears and put into His heart and the hearts of the covenant people. Those that stood before the angel may be regarded as His servants. *Saying, Take away the filthy garments from upon him* — A symbolical action the meaning of which is known from the succeeding sentence. *And he said to him, I have caused to*

pass from upon thee thine iniquities — This then is what the taking away of those filthy garments signified, namely Jehovah's causing all the iniquities of His covenant people, the church of the elect — iniquities with the symbol of which (the filthy garments) that high priest was clad — to pass from them, so that before Christ and His Father they are as guiltless as they would be had they never committed any sin — guiltless in Christ typified by that priest. And how did Jehovah do that? By smiting Christ for their iniquities and thereby causing their iniquities, their filthy garments, with which the Father had clothed Him, to pass away from upon Him, so that He was no longer with their iniquities. Gone they were as completely blotted out by His death. *And I will clothe thee with costly raiment . . . And I said, Let them put a clean turbin upon his head* (verse 5) — The instructions were carried out by the servants. This, too, has meaning. Christ being now free from the iniquities of His people, God raised Him up and clothed him with a heavenly salvation, Him and His redeemed people with Him. Of the resurrected and glorified Christ that high priest clad in those beautiful garments was the type. He was thus the type of every saint, redeemed from all his sins by Christ's blood, and in whose face Christ's glory shines.

What then did God do about the sins of His people? He blotted them out, so that they are no more. So was Zion redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness (Isa. 1:27). What has Satan now to say? He has been fully rebuked.

G. M. O.

O GIVE THE LORD WHOLE-HEARTED PRAISE

O give the Lord whole-hearted praise,
To Him thanksgiving I will bring;
With all His people I will raise
My voice and of His glory sing.

His saints delight to search and trace
His mighty works and wondrous ways;
Majestic glory, boundless grace,
And righteousness His work displays.

The wondrous works that God has wrought
His people ever keep in mind,
His works with grace and mercy fraught,
Revealing that the Lord is kind.

God's promise shall forever stand,
He cares for those who trust His word;
Upon His saints His mighty hand
The wealth of nations has conferred.

Psalm 111:1-4

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of I Corinthians 1-4

9.

It is very important, for the proper understanding of the first four Chapters of I Corinthians, to bear in mind that Paul is here waging a very consistent battle against the sin of schism and party-strife in the church; he will not rest till this evil is wholly exposed for what it is. It must be eradicated with root and branch!

Why must it be eradicated?

Because it is contrary to the accomplished work of Christ on the Cross, where he has by His own blood become our peace, having made the redeemed one in body by true faith, so that by the one Spirit we are made more and more flesh of His flesh and bone of His bones, and that we should thus forever be ruled by Christ our Head, even as our body is ruled by one soul. (See also Question 76, Heidelberg Catechism.)

This law of the unity of the body also has its implications for Paul himself as he preaches the Word of the Cross. He must not only purely preach the Word, but his manner of preaching and his conduct must be wholly consonant with this accomplished work of Christ on the Cross.

In the last day the books of the conscience will be opened. Then shall every man's work be tried. Paul's work will then be tried also. The day will reveal it. Yet, Paul even now walks as in that day. And although he will not be tried by those who criticize him, for God is his judge, who tries a servant to find him faithful, (I Cor. 4:1-5) yet Paul is willing to cite the "record" of his own labors and conduct at Corinth, since that can serve in showing "fidelity and truth to the glory of God, and the safety (edification) of the neighbor"! Such is then not a glorying in "self," but even as Paul says in I Corinthians 15:10b . . . "I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me"!

Thus Paul cites the record in the verses which we wish to consider in this essay.

The verses 1-5 of I Corinthians 2 read as follows: "*And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined to know nothing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.*"

We would have you, dear reader, notice the following with us:

In the first place that Paul here asserts and testifies that the *manner* of his preaching wholly agreed with the exalted aim and rich content of the Gospel of Christ!

That is quite a wonderful testimony to be able to make, is it not, dear reader? And, when true, it is also effective as a weapon against all glorying in man, a preacher, rather than in the Word of the Cross. It stops party-strife because of the person or talents of a preacher dead in its tracks. Such is its indirect and negative purpose. We will notice more of the positive purpose of Paul later in this essay.

Surely the more positive aim of Paul is that the faith of the believers should stand wholly in the power of God, as this is wrought in the hearts of the saints, by the Holy Spirit through the preaching of the Word of the Cross, and as it is strengthened by the use of the Sacraments. Thus Paul expresses it in, where we read "that your *faith* should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the *power* of God." See also Question and Answer 65 of the Heidelberg Catechism "Since then we are made partakers of Christ and of all his benefits by faith only, whence doth this *faith* proceed? From the Holy Ghost, who *works faith* in our hearts by the *preaching* of the Gospel, and confirms it by the use of the sacraments."

In these verses Paul turns his heart inside-out!

It is the pure heart of a great preacher, separated unto the Gospel from his mother's womb, and in whom Christ, the Son of God has been revealed in grace and glory!

Here is a preacher who says: I, yet not I, but the grace of God that is with me.

All he *could* possibly preach and did preach was: *Jesus Christ and Him crucified!*

What does it imply that he preached Jesus Christ and Him crucified?

Certainly, this does not mean that Paul's preaching here in Corinth was limited to the death of Christ in the narrow sense of the term, as if he only preached "christology" and not all of its implications as this truth affects also the questions of the fall of man, his creation, the plan and purpose of God in all things, the glory of His Name; nor that he did not instruct the congregation concerning the meaning of the church (see I Cor. 12) as a body with its many members, or the doctrine of the last things. (See Cor. 15)

On the contrary this means that Paul's preaching was the accomplished work of Christ on the Cross as the anointed of God, Prophet, Priest and King, who has come to reveal unto us fully the secret counsel of God concerning our redemption, and to pay our debt on the Cross, making satisfaction to the divine justice, and also to protect and keep us by His power against every foe and bring us to final glory. And that this Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews, is the one who is come to "save His people from all of their sins." Such, indeed, was preached by Paul at Corinth. He preached the full counsel of God concerning our redemption, as this is set forth in the Son of God, Jesus Christ; in His being set forth a propitiation for all of our sins, and in His

being raised from the dead for our justification!

Paul sums this all up by saying: *proclaiming* unto you the *testimony* of God!

There is here first of all the fine touch in the Greek verb used by Paul in this phrase. Paul employs the compound verb; *kataggeloon*. This does not simply mean: bring the message, as a messenger, but it means bring the message *down* to any one, bring it *home* to him. Paul was a preacher who was mighty in the Scriptures, according to the singular grace given him, and could really bring the message of Christ in the Old Testament Scriptures to stand forth in the Christ, who was crucified in the year 33 A.D. under Pontius Pilate.

Secondly, there is the question of the reading on the text. The question is whether the reading "mystery" or "testimony" is the proper reading. It is our conviction that the reading of the King James version is correct. There we read "testimony" of God. In the first place because it is a very striking reading, bringing out a very fine *shade of emphasis*. "Testimony" indicates, that the message which Paul brought concerning the "mystery" of the Cross, was the very authoritative Word of God Himself. It was: *thus saith* the Lord. And this "thus saith the Lord" did not need to be brought with human wisdom and enticing speech, but could be brought with authority, confronting every man's conscience with the Word of God in the Cross, together with the command of repentance! And thus the reading "testimony of God" emphasizes a very important element in all proper preaching of the Word, which is not done in the wisdom of men, but in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power!

And so Paul herewith insists that his preaching was wholly consonant with the divine nature of the "testimony" concerning the Christ of the Scriptures, His crucifixion and His accomplished redemption.

The party leaders in the schismatic factions could not point to Paul's preaching as an example of Hermeneutical and Homiletical demonstration of rhetorical skill, nor of philosophical acuteness!

However, it should not pass our notice, that Paul did not anticipate all of this party-strife and schism in the church of Corinth when he came there from Athens on his second missionary journey. On the contrary Paul knows that the Son of God gathers His church out of the whole human race, that He defends and preserves her to himself by His Spirit and Word — a church chosen to everlasting life, *agreeing in true faith!*

Shall he be a minister, by whom the churches believe, then he must so preach the Word of the Cross, that, spiritually-psychologically, the believers, too, will say: we heard the gospel story, we heard the Word of God and the *Holy Spirit* worked in us both to will and to do of God's good pleasure! We know that what *He* has begun "He" will also finish even unto the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. He will cause us to continue to eat and drink, to have spiritual life, and refreshment even to the end. He will "make me sincerely willing and ready, henceforth, to live unto Him."

When our faith rests in this power of the Holy Spirit, when all our confidence lies in what God does for and in us, then we have a rock-bottomness to our faith, which all the hosts of hell cannot assail successfully. We do not believe then because a certain minister persuaded us, because we fell under the "spell" of a minister. Or, the logic of the minister was then strong, his arguments were impelling — but they were the arguments which "carefully" interpreted the meaning of the Spirit, a reasonable service, and when we heard him we could not gainsay his arguments. They are the arguments that make a Felix terrified and say "go thy way for this time; and when I have a convenient season I will call for thee." (Acts 24:25) and an Agrippa cry out "but with little persuasion thou wouldest fain make me a christian." (Acts 26:28) And the believers recognize in the minister a man by whom "as it were God speaketh" saying: be ye reconciled to God, enter ever more into the enjoyment of the reconciliation wherewith I have reconciled thee unto myself. And the Publican hearing this with the hearing of *faith* says: O, God, be propitious to me, *the sinner!* And he goes home justified and blessed, knowing that his faith rests not in the absolution of men, but in the power of God's word, the comfort of the Holy Spirit, applying all the promises unto the hearts of the penitent sinners, who repent *out of faith*, according to God's law and unto His glory!

Such was indeed Paul's aim in preaching everywhere; and such was Paul's aim also here at Corinth. He never departs from this aim and content of the Gospel.

The *testimony* of God must stand.

We cannot for various exegetical reasons agree with the theory that Paul in our text speaks of a certain rededication to the Gospel preaching when he came to Corinth.

What we have to say on this question must needs wait till the next issue, D. V.

G. L.

O GIVE THE LORD WHOLE-HEARTED PRAISE

His works are true and just indeed,
His precepts are forever sure;
In truth and righteousness decreed
They shall for evermore endure.

From Him saints' redemption came;
His covenant sure no change can know;
Let all revere His holy Name
In heaven above and earth below.

In reverence and in godly fear
Man finds the gate to wisdom's ways;
The wise His holy Name revere;
Through endless ages sound His praise.

Psalm 111:5-7

IN HIS FEAR

The Sabbath In His Fear

(4)

The Sabbath was made for man.

Yet we must remember that it was made for regenerated and sanctified man.

That is true of all God's works. All things exist for the sake of His people. They are the salt of the earth. Because of their presence upon this earth there is a pleasing savour in it to the Holy God Who upholds it. Were it not for the presence of His Church, which is pleasing in His sight for Christ's sake, all reason for Him to continue to uphold it would be gone. Were it not for the presence of His Church in this present world He would bring it to its fiery end in terrible and swift judgment.

For the sake of His Church He brings up the sun in the East each morning and guides it to set in the West at the prescribed moment and place each night. For the sake of His Church seed time and harvest come in their due order. Winter and Summer, Spring and Fall appear in the proper relationship to each other. As these seasons change; as month after month rolls by; as the weeks come and go God also brings one day in seven that He has made for His Church. The six days of labour He prepares and sends for His Church, but He also prepares and sends one special day each week for the sake of His Church.

Others will live while these Sabbaths come and go. Others will make misuse of them, but it is a day made for the people of God. As the ungodly experience the same warmth of the sun, the same refreshing rain, breathe the same air, walk and live upon the same earth, they will also pass through the same Sabbath days that the children of God do; yet all these things are made for the people of God. The Sabbath was made for regenerated and sanctified man.

Therefore the Sabbath is a gift of God's grace.

Whatever God gives to His Church, whatever He prepares for His Church, it is given and prepared in grace. "For unto you," Paul writes to the Church at Philippi as being true of all the Church, "it is graced (such is the original) in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake," Philippians 1:29. Even that suffering is prepared and sent in the grace of God. Why, then, should we hesitate to say that the Sabbath, which He prepares and sends that we may enjoy the work of salvation in a way and to a degree impossible on the other six days of the week, is prepared and sent in His grace as a gift of that grace to His people?

How little we usually appreciate that fact, the fact that it is a *gift* of God to us! So much of our activity on that day manifests that we do not appreciate the Sabbath as a special manifestation of His grace to His Church! For, we

use it so little for the purpose of being 'busy with the works of His grace. Instead of using it as a special day, we treat it as some glorified extension of the other six, a sort of period added to the six to give us more leisure time and more time for seeking the things here below. Often it is even presented as some necessary arrangement for man's physical wellbeing, a day that man needs physically as a rest day so that his daily labour, his seeking of the things of this life, his calling to provide for earthly food, shelter and a little nest-egg for a "rainy day" may be carried on the better. The Sabbath becomes necessary for the six week days that follow. The Sabbath was made for man to enable him to be busy on the six (no the Labor Unions have improved (?) upon God's original idea, which He decreed almost six thousand years ago and now it is five days of no more than eight hours each) days of the week for material things. The six days are far more important than the seventh! So, much of our behaviour and reasoning declares. But Jesus said: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and its righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you," Matthew 6:33. The six days of the week, therefore, must serve the Sabbath and not the Sabbath serve the six days. The material may not be put first in its significance. Our Fathers in the Heidelberg Catechism also grasped the truth of this teaching of Christ and put it down in words thus: "That the ministry of the Gospel and the schools be maintained; and that I . . . contribute to the relief of the poor as becomes a Christian." The work of the six days must serve the Sabbath. The ministry of the Gospel and the schools must be maintained. The poor must be cared for by those to whom God has given more abundantly. The six days in this financial support serve the Sabbath, but the Sabbath was not made for man that he might be prepared for financial gain and the accumulation of the material things during the six days of the week.

Considering it a day made by God in His grace for His Church to be able to contemplate His grace, to worship and praise Him for that grace, to seek spiritual strength, knowledge and comfort in the truth of that grace our conduct *will* be different upon that day. Besides frequenting the house of God — and frequenting means attending both services unless before God's face we can be convinced that HE prevents us — we will be busy with spiritual exercises on that day, exercises that stand in direct and close connection with the things presented in the Heidelberg Catechism, which we quoted last time, in its answer as to what God requires of us in the Fourth Commandment.

We will quote, once again that complete answer: "First, that the ministry of the Gospel and the schools be maintained; and that I especially on the Sabbath that is, on the day of rest, diligently frequent the church of God, to hear His word, to use the sacraments, publicly to call upon the Lord, and contribute to the relief of the poor as becomes a christian. Secondly, that all the days of my life I cease from my evil works, and yield myself to the Lord, to work by His Holy

Spirit in me: and thus begin in this life the eternal Sabbath."

There is first of all, then, the preparation for the divine services of worship. In our circles, where it is a practice and rule that we treat all the doctrines of Scripture according to the system of them arranged in the Heidelberg Catechism, we know in advance what will be treated in Sunday morning's sermon. We have, therefore, a splendid opportunity to acquaint ourselves with the material and truths to be treated. A reading of the Lord's Day before we leave for church will serve very nicely as an "introduction" to the sermon, as nicely as the minister's introduction in his sermon as he brings to your attention the relationship between the truth to be treated that morning and the one considered last Sunday. It will help you to understand him when he introduces the doctrine at the outset of his sermon. It will put you in the right frame of mind for spiritual things. And in conjunction with that Lord's Day are the Scriptural references upon which that doctrinal truth is based. These also ought to be read.

Our flesh, of course, would rather sleep long on Sunday so that the very last minute we gulp down a breakfast — often so that our Bible reading at the table has to be dispensed with — hurry to the car while still straightening our tie, race down the highway or streets, squeel our tires to a fast stop and run a weekly sprint with the minister to see if we can get in our seat before he stands up for the beginning of the service! It need hardly be stated that after such a victory and triumph over time and space, one is not in the mood for anything else than either more sleep to relieve the body of that terrific nervous strain that had been put upon it, or else to gloat over such a phenomenal achievement. At any rate, in serious vein, one is not prepared for hearing the Word of God and has already made much misuse of the day. It has been treated as a holiday rather than as a holy day!

The bulletin will, usually, also indicate what the text is for the afternoon or evening service. Here, surely, the opportunity for getting acquainted with the text and the context is undeniably there! At the dinner table, at the very least, the chapter should be read and the text pointed out and reread after the reading of the chapter that attention may especially be focused on it.

These things take time, to be sure. They take time away from us which we would rather use for other things such as sleep, leisure and a host of material things for which we would not take time during the week for a host of carnal reasons. That does not alter the fact that it belongs to the Sabbath in His fear. After all it is not a question as to whether you can satisfy the ideas and standards of a few men; it is not a question as to whether you can find some sect, society or denomination to sanction your Sabbath activity. It is a Holy God who still says in His Law: "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy . . . the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it." It is in His fear that we must decide what our behaviour shall be on the Sabbath.

Let us be sure when we raise the argument (?) that all these things take time, that it is not exactly for these things that God has given us that time. The Sabbath was made for man. And the Sabbath is time, a whole day of it. Let us always squarely face the issue: for what reason has God given us this time? Let us be honest enough to admit that in our flesh is that same spirit which is in the world and receives such an awful indictment of Paul that men are lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God. And let us fight against that evil in our flesh and reveal by our Sabbaths that we are lovers of God rather than lovers of pleasure.

We do not want in any way to be Legalists. We shudder even at the thought of being Conditionalists to make also our Sabbath worship a condition unto salvation. Obligation and condition are not the same. We have an obligation to love and serve God; but so does the devil! And that obligation is no more a condition unto salvation for us than it is to the devil. The obligation simply underscores the fact that salvation will have to be by promise and not by condition or else we will never obtain it. A serious examination of our Sabbath will clearly show that most of our works on that day say that we do not care to enter into the Rest that remaineth for the people of God. We are much too busy with material worldly pleasures and even entertainments! It is so very difficult for us to spend more than an hour or two in the things spiritual and the rest we just have to have for our flesh! If the obligation to serve God on that day is a condition to salvation and the entering into the eternal rest, we only begin to fulfill the condition and then cease; and lose our salvation right then and there! No, we will have to enter into that rest that remaineth by promise, as Israel entered Canaan by promise and not by fulfilling conditions in the wilderness. The whole history there in the wilderness — also as explained by Paul in his epistle is by promise; and then by unconditional promise.

But what we have been stressing is that the regenerated, sanctified child of God who in principle has already entered into that rest will hallow the Sabbath out of gratitude to God. He will look forward to the day and the worship in God's house on that day. We will be eager to "hear the word of God" and "diligently to frequent the house of God." That will move him to take the time to prepare himself for the enjoyment of the truth to be considered that particular Sunday. The fear of the Lord is not a fear that makes one rush to try to fulfill conditions that have already been fulfilled by Christ. The fear of the Lord takes hold by faith of His finished work and in reverence and awe before Him; in gratitude and humble appreciation for that salvation gathers to worship Him; in the delight of salvation meets to be instructed further in the mysteries of salvation to obtain a greater joy and richer experience of them.

Next time, D.V., we like to write a few more things about our activity on that day.

J.A.H.

Contending For The Faith

The Church and the Sacraments

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

THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

THE PAPACY (by Philip Schaff).

(Continued)

POPE Felix II, or, according to another reckoning, III (483-492), continued the war of his predecessor against the Monophysitism of the East, rejected the Henoticon of the emperor Zeno, as an unwarrantable intrusion of a laymen in matters of faith, and ventured even the excommunication of the bishop Acacius of Constantinople. Acacius replied with a counter anathema, with the support of the other Eastern patriarchs; and the schism between the two churches lasted over thirty years, to the pontificate of Hormisdas.

GELASIUS I (492-496) clearly announced the principle, that the priestly power is above the kingly and the imperial, and that from the decisions of the chair of Peter there is no appeal. Yet from this pope we have, on the other hand, a remarkable testimony against what he pronounces the "sacrilege" of withholding the cup from the laity, the *communio sub una specie*.

ANASTASIUS II (496-498) indulged in a milder tone toward Constantinople, and incurred the suspicion of consent to its heresy.

His sudden death was followed by a contested papal election, which led to bloody encounters. The Ostrogothic king Theodoric (the Dietrich of Bern in the *Niebelungenlied*), the conqueror and master of Italy (493-526), and, like Odoacer, an Arian, was called into consultation in this contest, and gave his voice for SYMMACHUS against Laurentius, because Symmachus had received the majority of votes, and had been consecrated first. But the party of Laurentius, not satisfied with this, raised against Symmachus the reproach of gross iniquities, even of adultery and of squandering the church estates. The bloody scenes were renewed, priests were murdered, cloisters were burned, and nuns were insulted. Theodoric, being again called upon by the senate for a decision, summoned a council at Rome, to which Symmachus gave his consent; and a synod, convoked by a heretical king, must decide upon the pope! In the course of the controversy several councils were held in rapid succession, the chronology of which is disputed. The most important was the *synodus palmaris*, the fourth council under Symmachus, held in October, 501. It acquitted this pope without investigation, on the presumption that it did not behoove the council to pass judgment respecting the successor

of St. Peter. In his vindication of this council—for the opposition was not satisfied with it—the deacon Ennodius after bishop of Pavia (251), gave the first clear expression to the absolutism upon which Leo had already acted: that the Roman bishop is above every human tribunal, and is responsible only to God himself. Nevertheless, even in the middle age, popes were deposed and set up by emperors and general councils. This is one of the points of dispute between the absolute papal system and the constitutional episcopal system in the Roman church, which was left unsettled even by the council of Trent.

Under HORMISDAS (514-523) the Monophysite party in the Greek church was destroyed by the energetic zeal of the orthodox emperor Justin, and in 519 the union of that church with Rome was restored, after a schism of five-and-thirty years.

Theodoric offered no hinderance to the transactions and embassies, and allowed his most distinguished subject to assert his ecclesiastical supremacy over Constantinople. This semibarbarous and heretical prince was tolerant in general, and very liberal toward the Catholic church; even rising to the principle, which has waited till the modern age for its recognition, that the power of the prince should be restricted to civil government, and should permit no trespass on the conscience of its subjects. "No one," says he, "shall be forced to believe against his will." Yet, toward the close of his reign, on mere political suspicion, he ordered the execution of the celebrated philosopher Boethius, with whom the old Roman literature far more worthily closes, than the Roman empire with Augustulus; and on the same ground he caused the death of the senator Symmachus and the incarceration of Pope John I (523-526).

Almost the last act of his reign was the nomination of the worthy FELIX III (IV) to the papal chair, after a protracted struggle of contending parties. With the appointment he issued the order that hereafter, as heretofore, the pope should be elected by clergy and people, but should be confirmed by the temporal prince before assuming his office; and with understanding the clergy and the city gave their consent to the nomination.

Yet, in spite of this arrangement, in the election of BONIFACE II (530-532) and JOHN II (532-535) the same disgraceful quarreling and briberies occurred; a sort of chronic disease in the history of the papacy.

Soon after the death of Theodoric (526) the Gothic empire fell to pieces through internal distraction and imperial weakness. Italy was conquered by Belisarius (535), and, with Africa, again incorporated with the East Roman empire, which renewed under Justinian its ancient splendor, and enjoyed a transient after-summer. And yet this powerful, orthodox emperor was a slave to the intriguing, heretical Theodora, whom he had raised from the theatre to the throne; and Belisarius likewise, his victorious general, was completely under the power of his wife Antonina.

With the conquest of Italy the popes fell into a perilous and unworthy dependence on the emperor at Constantinople, who revered, indeed, the Roman chair, but not less that of Constantinople, and in reality sought to use both as tools of his own state-church despotism. AGAPETUS (535-536) offered fearless resistance to the arbitrary course of Justinian and successfully protested against the elevation of the Eutychian Anthimus to the patriarchal see of Constantinople. But, by the intrigues of the Monophysite empress, his successor, Pope SILVERIUS (a son of Hormisdas, 536-538), was deposed on the charge of treasonable correspondence with the Goths, and banished to the island of Pandataria, whither the worst heathen emperors used to send the victims of their tyranny, and where in 540 he died — whether a natural or a violent death, we do not know.

VIGILIUS, a pliant creature of Theodora, ascended the papal chair under the military protection of Belisarius (538-554). The empress had promised him this office and a sum of money, on condition that he nullify the decrees of the council of Chalcedon, and pronounce Anthimus and his friends orthodox. The ambitious and doubled-tongued prelate accepted the condition, and accomplished the deposition, and perhaps the death, of Silverius. In his pontificate occurred the violent controversy of the three chapters and the second general council of Constantinople (553). His administration was an unprincipled vacillation between the dignity and duties of his office and subservience to an alien theological and political influence; between repeated condemnation of the three chapters in behalf of a Eutychianizing spirit, and repeated retraction of that condemnation. In Constantinople, where he resided several years at the instance of the emperor, he suffered much personal persecution, but without the spirit of martyrdom, and without its glory. For example, at least according to Western accounts, he was violently torn from the altar, upon which he was holding with both hands so firmly that the posts of the canopy fell in above him; he was dragged through the streets with a rope around his neck, and cast into a common prison; because he would not submit to the will of Justinian and his council. Yet, he yielded at last, through fear of deposition. He obtained permission to return to Rome, but died in Sicily, of the stone, on his way thither (554).

PELAGIUS I (554-560), by order of Justinian, whose favor he had previously gained as papal legate at Constantinople, was made successor of Vigilius, but found only two bishops ready to consecrate him. His close connection with the East, and his approval of the fifth ecumenical council, which was regarded as a partial concession to the Eutychian Christology, and, so far, an impeachment of the authority of the council of Chalcedon, alienated many Western bishops, even in Italy, and induced a temporary suspension of their connection with Rome. He issued a letter to the whole Christian world, in which he declared his entire agreement with the first four general councils, and then vindicated the

fifth as in no way departing from the Chalcedonian dogma. But only by the military aid of Narses could he secure subjection; and the most refractory bishops, those of Aquileia and Milan, he sent as prisoners to Constantinople.

In these two Justinian-made popes we see how much the power of the Roman hierarchy was indebted to its remoteness from the Byzantine despotism, and how much it was injured by contact with it.

With the descent of the Arian Longobards into Italy, after 568, the popes became more independent of the Byzantine court. They continued under tribute indeed to the exarchs in Ravenna, as the representatives of the Greek emperors (from 554), and were obliged to have their election confirmed and their inauguration superintended by them. But the feeble hold of these officials in Italy, and the pressure of the Arian barbarians upon them, greatly favored the popes, who, being the richest proprietors, enjoyed also great political consideration in Italy, and applied their influence to the maintenance of law and order amidst the reigning confusion.

In other respects the administration of JOHN II (560-573), BENEDICT I (574-578), and PELAGIUS II (578-590), are among the darkest and the most sterile in the annals of the papacy.

But with GREGORY I (590-604) a new period begins. Next to Leo I he was the greatest of the ancient bishops of Rome, and he marks transition of the patriarchal system into the strict papacy of the middle ages. For several reasons we prefer to place him at the head of the succeeding period. He came, it is true, with more modest claims than Leo, who surpassed him in boldness, energy, and consistency. He even solemnly protested, as his predecessor Pelagius II had done, against the title of *universal* bishop, which the Constantinopolitan patriarch, John Jejunator, adopted at a council in 587; he declared it an *antichristian* assumption, in terms which quite remind us of the patriarchal equality, and seem to form a step in recession from the ground of Leo. But when we take his operations in general into view, and remember the rigid consistency of the papacy, which never forgets, we are almost justified in thinking, that this protest was directed not so much against the title itself, as against the bearer of it, and proceeded more from jealousy of a rival at Constantinople, than from sincere humility. From the same motive the Roman bishops avoided the title of *patriarch*, as placing them on a level with the Eastern patriarchs, and preferred the title of *pope*, from a sense of the specific dignity of the chair of Peter. Gregory is said to have been the first to use the humble-proud title: "servant of the servant of God." His successors, notwithstanding his protest, called themselves "the universal bishops" of Christendom. What he had condemned in his oriental colleagues as anti-christian arrogance, the later popes considered but the appropriate expression of their official position in the church universal.

H.V.

The Voice of Our Fathers

The Canons of Dordrecht

PART TWO

EXPOSITION OF THE CANONS

SECOND HEAD OF DOCTRINE

OF THE DEATH OF CHRIST, AND THE REDEMPTION OF MEN THEREBY

Article 5 (continued)

We have seen that the article under discussion does not even teach that the *preaching* of the gospel is general in the sense that it comes to every individual of the human race, but rather recognizes the fact that also this proclamation of the gospel is limited and follows a well-defined course all through history, and that too, according to the divine good pleasure. It follows already, therefore, that the gospel itself is also certainly not general in the sense that it is for every individual of the human race, but rather is *at least* limited to those to whom it is proclaimed.

The question now is: does the article teach, or does it deny, any further limitation of that gospel? Is the gospel, in so far as it is proclaimed to many nations and many individuals, general, that is, intended as to its contents, its "good news," for all to whom it is proclaimed? Is it good news for them all? Or is it limited and particular? Is it intended for elect and reprobate alike, Or is it meant only for the elect? Is it, according to this article, an offer or a promise of God to all to whom it is proclaimed, conditioned by the demand of faith and repentance? Or is it an unconditional promise to the elect alone?

There are other questions connected. Why, if that gospel is general, is it proclaimed only to some reprobate, not to all? That gospel surely reaches all the elect. But if it is general, why does it not reach all the reprobate? In the second place, what is the basis of such a general gospel? If God makes a general offer or a general, conditional promise, does He offer or promise something which He actually has and which He can actually supply in case the condition should be fulfilled? The Arminian is consistent enough to answer this question in the affirmative, for he teaches that Christ died for all and for every man. His solution to this question, though erroneous, is therefore reasonable and sinful. The "double-track theologians" of the Reformed family, though Arminian in their conception of the gospel offer, are restrained by their Reformed sense from the sin of teaching general atonement. But for that reason they can furnish no answer to the foregoing question, and involve themselves in the greater foolishness of accusing God of pretense, of fraud—when He offers or promises salvation to all who hear the preaching. Their entire position is absurd because of its im-

possible double track, but I suppose that under their view, if a reprobate should ever appear before the Almighty with the condition of faith and repentance fulfilled, the Lord God would be compelled to admit to him: "Sorry, but I fooled you. I cannot fulfill My divine part of the contract. I offered something which I did not really have for you. My beloved Son died only for the elect." You reply that such is both unthinkable and blasphemous in regard to the Lord Jehovah? I agree.

On the other hand, if the gospel is limited and particular, for the elect alone, there is this question: why is that gospel proclaimed to reprobate as well as to elect? Why must the reprobate hear the preaching of the gospel? Besides, there is the question: why must the gospel be preached "together with the demand of faith and repentance?" And: why, and upon what basis, does that demand of faith and repentance come to elect and reprobate alike?

These questions we must bear in mind as we turn to the subject of the *contents* of the preaching, and particularly, first of all, to the *promise of the gospel* that ought to be declared and published promiscuously and without distinction.

Take note of the statement of the promise here: "The promise of the gospel is, that whosoever believeth in Christ crucified, shall not perish, but have everlasting life."

The very first fact that draws the attention in this statement, and in the entire fifth article, is that there is nothing that even hints at a *condition*. There is no literal mention of a "condition" to this promise in the statement of the promise just quoted. And there is no such mention of a condition in the remainder of the article. To be sure, mention is made of the "command to repent and believe." But this command is far from a condition. A command has nothing in common with a condition. One could never substitute the words "condition of faith and repentance" for "command to repent and believe," and retain the same meaning in the article. This would change the article radically. Characteristic of a command, — and this is above all true of a command of God — is that it is exactly unconditional and absolute. It *must* be obeyed without any question. A command is a matter of authority; a condition is a matter of bargaining, or of contract. A command must be obeyed, whether or not there is punishment connected with disobedience thereto and reward connected with obedience to it. It must be obeyed, not out of any ulterior motives, but out of complete and unreserved respect for authority and justice. Furthermore, let us note that even the *form* of the statement of the promise in Article 5 is not conditional. It has sometimes been claimed that the promise is conditional in form as it is here stated. But this is not true. Even grammatically speaking this is not a conditional promise whatsoever. The words, "whosoever believeth in Christ crucified," are not a conditional clause in grammar, but a general relative clause.

Now the above is important. The idea that the gospel is a general offer or a general promise is absolutely inseparable from the idea that the gospel is a *conditional* offer or prom-

ise. The one idea cannot be maintained without the other. If, therefore, *Canons* II, 5 intended to teach that the gospel is a general offer or promise, one would expect to find the twin teaching that the gospel is *conditional*. But this is not the case, for the article does not with a single word teach a conditional gospel. Hence, we may conclude from this fact alone that the fathers do not intend to teach a general, well-meant offer of salvation or a general promise of salvation.

But what of the content of the promise as it is here stated?

Notice, in the first place, that you have a limited description of the promise of the gospel here. It was certainly not the place in this Head of Doctrine and this paragraph to make a complete definition of the idea of the promise; nor was this the intention of the fathers. But in accord with their purpose to answer the Arminian objection that Reformed people had no room left for gospel-preaching, the fathers wanted to say something about the preaching and its content. And so, when they speak of the promise in this article, they speak of *the promise as preached*. This is not a different promise from the promise of God, but the same promise from one of its many aspects. In close connection with this fact, we may note: 1) That it is for this reason that the promise is not presented in this article in all its contents, but only as "everlasting life." The promise is here viewed, therefore, from the point of view of the goal, the end, salvation in its final realization. It is true that the promise of God also includes the means to reach that end; but this is here left out of view. 2) That for this same reason this promise is here presented as standing in close connection with "Christ crucified." It is "Christ crucified" Who is the content of all true gospel preaching, Who is to the Jews a stumblingblock, and to the Greeks foolishness, but to them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, the wisdom of God and the power of God. Without Him there is no everlasting life, but only condemnation. And therefore the promise of God in Christ crucified is everlasting life. 3) Finally, it is from the same point of view that the article speaks of faith: ". . . whosoever believeth in Christ crucified shall have everlasting life." What is the force of this clause? Simply this: as an element in the preaching it serves to identify the elect for themselves and to separate them out of the mixed multitude of elect and reprobate that hear the preaching. "Those who believe" is equivalent to "those who shall have everlasting life." The fact of the matter is that not only does this article as such say nothing about faith as a condition of everlasting life, but, taken by itself, the article says nothing at all about the relation between faith and everlasting life. It does not say whether faith is a condition, a ground, or a means. It merely says something about those who do believe: they shall have everlasting life. And all this is quite in harmony with what Scripture and the Confessions say about the preaching as a means of grace. Because the preaching of the Word must serve as a means whereby the Holy Spirit works

true faith in us, therefore that preaching must always be addressed to *faith*, must single out the *believers*, and must proclaim that the promise of everlasting life is for all those, and for those only, who believe in Christ crucified. And all of the above is quite in harmony with the main subject of this Second Head of Doctrine, namely: the death of Christ, and the redemption of men thereby.

Is then the promise of the gospel general or particular? Emphatically the latter: it is for the believers alone. And the very preaching of that promise must serve to realize that particular promise, for it must in the promiscuous proclamation of the promise plainly assert that life everlasting is for those who believe in Christ crucified. But is this the only aspect in which the promise is particular? Must we, and do we, end with *faith*? Can nothing more be said as to the relationship which exists between faith and life eternal? Do the *Canons* intend to say nothing more about faith and the promise? Of course not! In fact, the moment we begin to analyze even this fifth article, we go deeper. Who is Christ crucified? Whence is Christ crucified? For whom did Christ crucified atone? Who are they that believe in Him? How is it possible for them to believe? Why do they believe, while others do not believe? Whence is that faith? But we need not argue only from the language of this article. Surely, this canon must be taken in its context. And that context is very clear as to the origin of faith, both as to its merit and as to its actual application, as we shall see in our discussion of Articles 7 and 8. And sound gospel preaching, — the preaching of the promise, — will surely not ignore these questions and neglect to emphasize that the promise of God includes all the means that are necessary to reach that goal of eternal life.

Why, then, must there be a promiscuous proclamation of the command to repent and believe? From a positive viewpoint, the answer is simple: the elect must be brought to a true and living faith through the preaching. And since men, preachers, do not and cannot know who are the elect individuals, their preaching must be promiscuous. At the same time, the Lord has a negative purpose with the reprobate in that same preaching. Not to believe and not to repent is sin, and that too, sin of the blackest kind when it is committed in flagrant disobedience to the preaching of the gospel. By this preaching, therefore, the sin of natural man is sharply revealed and aggravated. And God is justified when He judges the ungodly!

One more question: must the promise be general in order to serve as a basis for such a general command to repent and believe? Must the reprobate have a "chance" to have life eternal in order to despise it in unbelief and impenitence? Not at all: they need only be acquainted with it, they need only know the Christ of the cross, they need only know that there is in Him life everlasting, in order, stumbling and rejecting Him in their natural foolishness and darkness and perversity, to react against Him and His precious promise,

(Continued on page 240)

DECENCY and ORDER

Family Visitation

(Continued)

"The authority of the Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed and obeyed, dependeth not upon the testimony of any man or church, but wholly upon God, the author thereof; and, therefore, it is to be received, because it is the Word of God."

Westminster Confession.

B. The Scriptural Basis

It is both proper and necessary for those who are called to engage in the work of family visitation, as well as for those who are the objects of this labor, to consider seriously whether or not this practice has the sanction of Holy Writ. Is it perhaps a man-made custom which can quite properly be relegated to the adiaphorous traditions of the church? Is it no more than an ingeniously devised means whereby a few in the church have for several centuries retained dominant supervision over the masses? Do purely practical considerations move the church to institute and maintain such a practice?

If the answer to all of the above is to be given affirmatively, it would certainly be a spiritually wholesome gesture to rid ourselves of this practice immediately. Its retention is then no longer desired. Certainly no blessing of God can be expected upon it and we will look in vain for any profitable fruits to ensue from it. The serious minded elder who seeks to perform the functions of his office according to the Word of God has little or no incentive to engage in a labor that has its basis solely in antiquity and borders dangerously on the serious sin of arrogating to the office-bearers of the church spiritual powers which they do not rightly possess.

But is this the true nature of the case?

Can a proper basis for the work of family visitation perhaps be found in the Word of God? If so, there can be no question as to the validity of this practice nor can there be any doubt concerning its future retention for the authority of Holy Scripture is above all other and must be obeyed simply because it is the Word of God. In considering this question, therefore, it is important that we do not take the negative approach. If, after studying the Word of God, we find that there is nothing that directly condemns the practice of family visiting and may, therefore, conclude that within its confines this labor may be tolerated, such a basis can hardly be termed adequate. The work of family visiting has too important a place in the life of the church to be sustained by negative proof. We can be satisfied only with the firm con-

viction that Christ Himself commands this of the church. Only then can it be performed with a strong incentive and a firm confidence that those engaged in it truly wield the sword of Christ.

Does Scripture then provide such a basis? One may search hard and long to find a text that speaks directly and specifically of the work of family visitation. To our knowledge such a text cannot be found. This, however, does not warrant the conclusion that Scripture does not endorse this work. Often you meet people who refuse to be convinced of the Scripturalness of certain things unless they are given a text or texts that plainly designate that particular thing. Take, for example, the practice of infant baptism. How frequent do you not hear the argument raised that since there is no direct or specific command in the Bible to baptize infants, this practice is to be entirely condemned. Of course such reasoning is absurd and superficial. It manifests no small ignorance of Holy Writ, refuses to acknowledge the fundamental rule that, "Scripture Interprets Scripture," and denies the essential and organic unity of the whole Word of God. No amount of argumentation, even though it is based directly on Scripture, will convince such persons to alter their views. And, of course, following this kind of reasoning they would also be compelled to judge the Reformed practice of family visiting an unscriptural one for there is no text in the Word of God that directly sustains or commands it.

A solid and reasonable inferential basis for this work, however, may be found in many parts of God's Word. There can be no doubt about this. The term "elder" (episkopos), as we wrote before, denotes "an overseer" and that necessitates not only a general supervision of the preaching of the Word but also a personal and periodic interrogation of the family and social life of the members of the church. Elders are appointed to exercise careful supervision over the faith and conduct of those under their care. The manner in which this is done, as long as it is a legitimate one, is quite irrelevant but there should be some instituted practice through which this phase of the elder's work can be accomplished.

Thus it is also with the term "pastors" or "shepherds." Christ is The Chief Shepherd of the flock. (I Peter 5:4) He is the Good Shepherd Who lays down His life for the sheep. (John 10) In the church He appoints some "pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." (Eph. 4:12) This labor of the under-shepherds requires: (a) feeding the flock by leading them into the green pastures of the Word, (b) leading or guiding the flock, directing them in the way of the truth and warning, admonishing and rebuking them concerning every sinful departure from that way, and, (c) protecting them from the wolves that seek their destruction. This all is implied in such passages of Holy Writ as the following, to which others might easily be added:

Acts 20:28: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and

to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."

Hebrews 13:17 "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief; for that is unprofitable for you."

I Peter 5:2, 3 "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock."

Now this labor plainly requires some official work comparable to that of family visitation. To accomplish this it is indispensable that there be an intimate relation between the elders and the members of the church so that the former is thoroughly acquainted and constantly aware of the needs of the latter. Only then can they be ministered unto effectively. And family visitation as a spiritual institution is a proper means through which this knowledge can be obtained. Not only this but even more so, while they, the elders, are engaged in this work itself, they are able to fulfill their calling to look after the welfare of the sheep of Christ's flock and being vested with His authority they do instruct, admonish and comfort them as is fitting. If this is not the case, the visit has failed to attain its Scriptural objective. Let no elder then shun this duty or ever feel that Christ would not have him perform this labor but rather let him do it with firm confidence. Let them "Preach the word, be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine. (II Tim. 4:2) And let no sheep refuse submission to this Divinely authorized rule of Christ's church for to do so is to injure their own soul and to make impossible, while in such a state, the conscious joy and experience of the Lord's blessing.

C. The Spiritual Nature of Family Visiting

In the treatment of this sub-division of our subject we shall be brief, not because the nature of family visiting is less important but because, firstly, this should be evident already from what is written in the foregoing so that we can avoid mere repetition and, secondly, we will have opportunity to write more about this in connection with our last sub-division.

It is necessary, however, that we clearly understand the spiritual purpose of this work lest we be too easily dissuaded by the common objections that are often raised against it. Family visitation is a spiritual work throughout. In his "Poimenics," the Rev. G. M. Ophof emphasizes, and correctly so, that family visiting is ministering the Word of God. In the words of Scripture, it aims at the "perfecting of the saints . . . the edification of the body of Christ." (Eph. 4:12).

It might then be objected that this practice is quite unnecessary since the ministry of the Word in the services of public worship is sufficient to realize this objective. This, however, is a very erroneous conclusion. No one would care

to deny the sufficiency of the preaching of the Word nor desire to degrade its importance in any way. However, the mere fact that the Word is preached in public assembly and that this preaching has its effect upon the members of the church does not at all exclude the necessity of that Word being administered to the members individually and in their respective families. Such an informal ministry is of great value to those who minister as well as to those who are ministered unto.

This special ministry of the Word is designed to develop and enrich the spiritual life of the individual. Essentially, of course, all of the children of God are the same and have need of the same spiritual nourishment which they receive together each Lord's Day. Nevertheless, there is also a wide variation in each individual's circumstances, environment, personal weaknesses, needs, temptations and shortcomings. No two are in this respect alike and unto all these different needs the Word of God must be adapted and ministered.

The same is true of the family. No two families are the same. And the individual does not exist solely for himself but is a part of the broader unit, the family. The individual then must be regarded in the light of his position and calling in the family and the light of God's Word must be made to reflect upon his circumstances so that not only he is spiritually enriched but so that the whole family may be spiritually uplifted and the sins of the individuals which disrupt and degenerate the home-life may be successfully combatted.

Furthermore, the family in its individual members must be brought to the consciousness of its calling in relation to the church and, in general, to society and the world. Family visitation must purpose to bring each one in the church to the daily consciousness of "knowing it to be his duty, readily and cheerfully to emply his gifts, for the advantage and salvation of other members." (Lord's Day 21, Heid. Cat.) And, in the world, the far reaching implications, which touch every sphere of life, of the calling of God's people to walk as children of light, opposing the darkness, may well be emphasized again and again.

Family visitation, therefore, aims to bring the individual the Word of God so that it can direct him in his personal daily conflict with the powers of sin, aid him in realizing his calling in the midst of the family, the church, and the world. When this is thoughtfully considered, no objection to this practice can stand and the real child of God will not repel from family visitation, regarding it as an annual abhorrence, and seeking the meagerest excuse to be absent from the occasion but will rather meet it with eager spiritual anticipation and regret only that it is not performed more frequently. He will understand that this labor is designed for his spiritual welfare, and, knowing himself, will realize the necessity of his being constantly stimulated to walk in a new and holy life.

G.V.d.B.

ALL AROUND US

A Correction.

In the January 1st issue of the Standard Bearer undersigned gave a brief treatment of "The Evils of Calvinism," a little pamphlet written by the Rev. Mr. Frank B. Beck.

Rev. Beck, who is a regular reader of the Standard Bearer and who tells us that he enjoys it thoroughly, also read our article reflecting on his pamphlet in condensed form in our rubric.

He also asked me if it would be permissible to inform our readers that his little pamphlet has been reprinted in a more attractive format, a copy of which he also sent me. These little pamphlets are obtainable at 10 cents each, or 12 for \$1.00 by writing to the Rev. Frank B. Beck, P. O. Box 184, Millerton, New York.

Moreover, he also called my attention to an error I unwittingly made in my article, which I now gladly correct. I spoke of him as "an independent evangelist." Pastor Beck now informs me that he is "no longer an independent evangelist" but "a pastor of this church (North East Baptist Church — M. S.) for over 6 years." We trust that brother Beck will take note of this correction, and we invite him to correspond with us again.

Women Pastors.

A friend handed us a clipping taken from one of the recent issues of the Grand Rapids Press that was entitled "Approves Women In Role Of Pastors." The brief article reads as follows:

"Milwaukee — The Milwaukee presbytery has voted to open the ministry to women by concurring in a proposed change in the constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the United States.

"Clergy and lay delegates from 40 churches in the Milwaukee region voted, 38 to 18, in a secret ballot to approve the constitutional change which would permit the church to ordain women to the ministry."

When one reads a report like this, he cannot help asking the question: Is there no longer a man in Israel? and, Is this not the destination of Women's Suffrage in the church?

We have before pointed out that Women's Suffrage in the church, if it consistently follows through, must end up with women also filling our pulpits.

I know of a minister, who is now retired, whose wife would nod her head in approval and shake her head in disapproval of the things her husband would say while he was preaching. Thus the minister would know whether he was saying the right thing or not. Maybe the above mentioned church has a lot of ministers like that who are weak on their two legs or who have been dictated to so much that they

would just as soon have their women take over also in the ministry.

Aside now from the question of whether this is right or wrong, it seems to me that it would be a bit humiliating for me to have my wife serve our church in the role, say of assistant pastor. But then, everyone does not have the same opinion, does he?

Unitarian Presbyterians.

Such is the title of a brief article appearing in The Guardian News Commentator, a section of the Presbyterian Guardian of January 16, 1956.

Writes the editor of this article, "Shortly before Christmas Adlai Stevenson, who has been a member of a Unitarian church, was received into membership of the Lake Forest Presbyterian Church. Some Unitarians criticized him for having deserted his former faith. Some Presbyterians criticized him for insincerity.

"But four local ministers soon took the play away from him. Two Presbyterian and two Unitarian ministers joined together and issued a statement in which they said that it was perfectly all right for Stevenson to be a member of a Presbyterian Church and still be loyal to his Unitarian heritage.

"In the minds of the National Council of Churches, the Unitarian body is not acceptable, because it refuses to acknowledge Jesus Christ as God and Saviour. But apparently some Presbyterian ministers in Illinois find no problem involved. Presbyterian in membership. Unitarian in faith. Why not?"

My interest in this article is not in what Stevenson did, nor to conjecture his motive for doing so. We may leave that to the politicians to null over. We are interested particularly in the last statement of the writer of this article and the peculiar title he placed over it. "Presbyterian in membership. Unitarian in faith. Why not?" and "Unitarian Presbyterians."

The reader will understand, of course, that the reason for the editor's last statement as well as the peculiar title of his article is the fact that the Presbyterians referred to have long ago thrown over-board the doctrine of the deity of Christ. Therefore they are essentially no different than the Unitarians who, like their historical progenitors (Arius, Servetus, Laelius and Faustus Socinius) denied the deity of Christ not only but also the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. Presbyterians, who once in the hoary past embraced both of these fundamental Scriptural doctrines, are joined with those who have always denied them. That is significant, indeed. It is not difficult to understand how easy it is for churches which care nothing for their denominational and doctrinal distinctiveness to be so enthused with the idea of ecumenicity. Disturbing is the thought that there are so many people who are pleased with this spiritual indifference. More disturbing still is the fact that this indifference is fast creeping in upon the Reformed churches which stand closer to us.

The Movies Go to School.

The February '56 issue of Reader's Digest presents an interesting and informative article under the above named subject. My purpose in referring to it is only to call attention to what should be obvious to all of us that we are living in a rapidly developing and changing world. When I think back just a few years ago, say thirty-five or forty years, how we used to attend a small, decrepit school building, where all the students of eight grades were stowed away in one room with a pot-belly stove and one teacher for all grades and with teaching methods which today would be scoffed at, one begins to imagine he is in a new world when he reads an article like the one referred to in Reader's Digest.

The impact of modern electronics upon education staggers the imagination. And we are told that "Schools have only dipped their toes into the electronic age." More and wonderful things are in the offing.

The article is not interested in the so-called Hollywood movies, though I suppose that these are also used rather promiscuously; but the educational movie which, with the assistance of proficient technicians, is able to inculcate the facts of science, etc., into the minds of pupils more efficiently and profoundly than teachers well-trained for the job can do it. And we are told that "more than 90 percent of our high schools today are using movies to teach everything from algebra to zoology;" i.e., a to z. We are also told that "in most school libraries about half the films come from a single source — Encyclopaedia Britannica Films."

Here are a couple of illustrations of the films Britannica produced:

"Here's how Britannica filmed the way the human ear works. The ear of a man who had willed his body to science was kept alive while a camera was placed where the brain had been. It took a close-up of the tiny hammer, anvil and stirrup bones, and of that miracle the anatomists call the cochlea, responding as in life — stirring slumbrously to gentle sounds, quaking frantically to loud sounds. Now school children can see an exciting event that some of even our greatest medical men have never observed.

"Here's the story of another kind of movie. *The Monarch Butterfly*, an outstanding ten-minute film that tells the story of the butterfly from parent to egg to caterpillar to parent again. It took William A. Anderson 1200 hours spread out over 18 months to make the picture. One of his problems: the female Monarch squirts out an egg so fast there is no time to focus a camera, so Anderson had to point his lens at a logical leaf and hope for the best. In all, it required 14 field trips, each involving a six-hour wait, to get the shot.

"But it was worth all the trouble. You see a caterpillar busy with its own affairs suddenly halt and lift as if to hear some great, inaudible summons to depart from its life. It obeys busily, even frantically. It works a white glue from its mouth, wriggles and thrusts desperately from its hanging

place to fashion a shroud around itself. There it lies still as in a grave. How somber is this moment: You remember how active the caterpillar was and mourn for it. But suddenly it stirs; its day of resurrection has come. It thrusts numbly from the grave, then unfolds as a thing of perfect loveliness — with wings! To see it all happening is to know, unforgettably that this humblest of creatures has been commanded throughout by God."

The article goes on to say that T. V. may one day replace the movie as the more effective medium of education. In fact, in some instances it has proved already its superior effectiveness.

As we see it, there can be no objection to these media of education being put to use in our Christian Schools provided they are scrupulously censored by capable Reformed critics, and applied by teachers thoroughly trained in the art of teaching the sciences from our Protestant Reformed perspective.

M.S.

CONTRIBUTIONS

"Creston Will Solve Her Own Problems"

The undersigned is very happy with the "Apology" of Rev. M. Schipper in the February 1 issue of *The Standard Bearer* for the use of the term "playing church," and he accepts it also, and wishes to assure his colleague that the frank apology warmed the cockles of his heart.

This does not mean, however, that I am wholly in agreement with all that the Rev. Schipper writes *after* he made the apology.

I could have appreciated it, if the Rev. M. Schipper had also apologized for writing about a matter on which, evidently, he had not been called upon in any way from the Consistory of Creston to give his advice or "convictions."

What my colleague writes in the last paragraph are words of gold: *Creston will solve her own problems!*

Would it not display poor taste on my part, Rev. Schipper, should I, probably solicited by some individual, yet having no request from the Consistory of Second Church reflect upon the life and constituency of Second Church?

Me thinks, it would.

I believe that I should give myself and Rev. Schipper the sound advice to hold ourselves to that sentence, above quoted, which is as golden apples on a silver bowl, lest we both become guilty of making the rubric "All About Us" the occasion of meddling with matters not lying within the scope of the jurisdiction of co-editors of a Theological Journal, and lest we both fall into the sin of being busy-bodies.

Hence, I will not reflect on what Rev. Schipper calls "things objectively and factually." That would (not: "will") have to wait until the Lord Himself places this matter be-

fore us in the proper channels, (not by a "voice from heaven") and places the duty upon our shoulders to judge of this matter. Then we shall do it in good conscience and in His Name!

For the rest I believe that all concerned will agree that Creston and Rev. Schipper and the undersigned should enjoy living quietly in the land, keeping peace with all men, where possible.

The latter, indeed, is a boon from the Lord.

G.L.

After the Rev. Schipper has replied to the above, if he desires to answer, the discussion will be closed.

Ed.

Sure Footed

In some ways the animals of the wild are superior to man. Mountain goats and big-horn sheep and various of the deer family are amazingly sure-footed. It is nothing unusual for these animals to pick out their paths on the narrow ledges of a rock cliff. They need but little space for their hoofs, and the sheer drop of the cliff troubles them not at all. But sometimes even the narrow ledge comes to an end. Then the impossible is performed. Reaching up, and pawing the rock with his front hoofs, the animal will search for the tiniest hold. Finding it, he will lock his hoof in the socket of rock and with one bound bring his hind hoofs where his front had been, and with a second great leap, stand on the security of a wider ledge.

There are times in life when our feet would slip. We know how true Psalm 73:2 can be: "As for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped." Trouble, testing, loss, temptation, and even day-by-day ordinary living can cause spiritual stumbling. We need a strength that will make our steps secure in every situation. It is the Lord who can give us such sure-footedness:

*"He maketh my feet like hind's feet; and
setteth me upon my high places."*

Psalm 18:33

David, the Psalmist, had often watched wild goats make their way along dangerous ledges. It spoke to him of the way the Lord upheld him when he was nigh to despair. Such strength came to David because he made the Lord his day-by-day portion. We must all confess: "my feet were almost gone." But if we make the Lord's presence real by daily obeying His Word, we shall be able to say,

*"He maketh my feet like hind's feet; and
setteth me upon my high places."*

THE REFINER'S FIRE

He sat by a furnace of sevenfold heat,
As He watched by the precious ore,
And closer He bent with a searching gaze
As he heated it more and more.

He knew He had ore that could stand the test,
And He wanted the finest gold
To mold as a crown for the King to wear,
Set with gems of price untold.

So He laid our gold in the burning fire,
Tho' we fain would say Him "Nay";
And watched the dross that we had not seen,
As it melted and passed away.

And the gold grew brighter and yet more bright,
But our eyes were dim with tears,
We saw but the fire — not the Master's hand —
And questioned with anxious fears.

Yet our gold shone out with a richer glow
As it mirrored a Form above,
That bent o'er the fire, tho' unseen by us,
With a look of ineffable love.

Can we think it pleases His loving heart
To cause us a moment's pain?
Ah, no! but He sees through the present cross
The bliss of eternal gain.

So he waited there with a watchful eye,
With a love that is strong and sure,
And His gold did not suffer a bit more heat
Than was needed to make it pure.

— Selected

THE VOICE OF OUR FATHERS

(Continued from page 235)

to aggravate their sin, and to go down in the way of their own sin to destruction, according to the purpose of God.

The conclusion of the matter therefore is this, that the Canons here teach a particular promise, for the elect alone, that must be proclaimed and set forth promiscuously and without distinction to all to whom God directs that preaching. And to maintain such a general proclamation of a sovereignly particular promise is Reformed; anything else is Arminian.

H.C.H.