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The Prophet Zephaniah

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The Wicked Kings of Israel
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"Narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." MATTHEW 7:14b



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Meditation

The Son of Man Lifted Up

Rev. E.C. Adams, Picture Butte, AB

“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:14-15).

This text spoken to Nicodemus by Jesus refers to the history of the children of Israel traveling through the wilderness to the land of Canaan. We can find this history recorded in Numbers 21:6-9. The king of Edom did not allow the Israelites to pass through his land on the king’s highway. They were required to go around the land; therefore, we read, “And the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way.” They focused only on their difficulties, which indeed were not minimal. First, they were traveling a way that considerably lengthened their journey. Secondly, travelers tell us that this was indeed a difficult sandy way with many rocks. Thirdly, they already had been so long dwelling in the wilderness, and “hope deferred maketh the heart sick” (Proverbs 13:12). In the fourth place, they have mentioned that their supply of water has ceased. The disappointments in the life of the Israelites led to discouragement and murmuring. Shall we throw any stones at them?

The Israelites would have done well, despite their disappointments, to count their blessings one by one. There was still a way to the Promised Land. They received many blessings. There was the wonder that their shoes did not wear out (Deuteronomy 29:5). The pillar of cloud and fire was still leading them. They still received their supply of manna. Also, hitherto, the Lord had restrained the poisonous snakes. We read in Deuteronomy 8:15a, “Who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought.”

Because they spake against God and against Moses, the LORD sent fiery serpents which caused the death of many. They were called fiery snakes either because they had a reddish color and a fiery, stinging bite, or because they caused a scorching thirst. When the people were bitten, the poison permeated their whole body, affecting all their members. This bite was painful. It paralyzed and ended in a certain death. So, we have been bitten by the poisonous bite of Satan in Paradise with the poison affecting our understanding, will, and affections. Even our newborn children are permeated with this poisonous venom in all their members (Job 14:4). For this poison there is no remedy or herb to heal. The end of the bite is death (Genesis 2:17).

The sorely afflicted people came to Moses. It did not begin with the raised-up serpent. It began with a confession

concerning their sin. We read in Acts 20:21, “Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance towards God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.” We live in a day where much is spoken of believing without repentance. Often the royal command is quoted out of Mark 1:15, “Repent ye, and believe the gospel.” Oftentimes there is only spoken of the last, omitting the first. Nowhere in the Bible do we read that a dead sinner can repent and believe. We read in 1 Corinthians 12:3b, “And that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.” Yet, a Holy God who has created us perfectly in His image requires perfect obedience to this royal command.

A troubled people came to Moses with the confession, “We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD, and against thee.” They have asked Moses to intercede for them. Yet, their confession did not take away the serpents or bring healing. The Lord can never pardon sins because of our repentance; yet pardon shall never be without the *godly sorrow* that leadeth to repentance (2 Corinthians 7:10). The Church learns what is written in Isaiah 64:6a, “But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.” May I ask you, have you, by the work of the Holy Spirit, felt the sting of the poisonous bite? It is written in Romans 6:23a, “The wages of sin is death.” Have we learned the exceeding sinfulness of sin? For those bitten, poor and troubled souls, the Lord has provided a remedy.

The Lord commanded Moses to make a fiery serpent and fasten it to a pole. We read in the text, “*And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up.*” Several comparisons can be made with this serpent and the Son of Man. In the first place, this brass serpent was made by divine appointment, so the Triune God thought out a way for bitten sinners to be saved. The way back to the Father is made possible through the Beloved Son, by the work of the Holy Ghost. Secondly, the serpent was formed, and so we read in Galatians 4:4, “But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law.” Thirdly, the serpent was made of brass which is a hard, durable metal. The brass covering on the brazen altar of burnt offerings was a type of the divinity of the Mediator. Fourthly, the serpent which was to be the remedy for bitten Israelites was made in the likeness of the serpents which had bitten them. So, we read of Christ in Romans 8:3b, “God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh.” In the fifth place, this serpent had to be elevated on a pole so that the bitten and dying ones could see it better. Christ hung between the earth and heavens, as the Saviour for

sinner. Christ must be raised up and extolled in the preaching of the gospel as Paul has written in 1 Corinthians 2:2, "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified."

More was necessary because it is written, "That whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have eternal life." It was needful for those bitten, dying ones, to look on the serpent. To that end, they needed strength and help from above because many were already nauseated, pale and weak, even paralyzed and losing their eyesight. Some had a clearer view of the serpent than others on account of their condition and their distance, but only a look, a glimpse, and they were perfectly healed. They immediately were healed and restored. Peter has written to the churches in 1 Peter 1:8b, "Believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

Hearers, what think you of the text? Is our text not a rich gospel? For whom has this serpent now received value and beauty? Is it not for bitten and perishing sinners (Matthew 9:12)? The Lord Jesus Christ as the risen Saviour came to save His people from their sins (Matthew 1:21). All are called and commanded to look. All may look.

By nature, none will look (John 5:40). However, the Lord has a people who are deeply taught in the things of the Lord, who are given spiritual eyes to look (John 6:37). It is written of Him in Hebrews 7:25a, "Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him." They may exclaim with the bride in Song of Solomon 5:10, "My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand."

Bitten Zionites, I read in Jeremiah 8:22, "Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? Why then is not the health of the daughter of My people recovered?" Daughters of Zion, what is your answer? For those mourning, bitten ones, the special invitation comes in Isaiah 45:22, "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." My unconverted traveler to eternity, the exhortation comes yet to you as you hasten to eternity. We read in Isaiah 55:6-7, "Seek the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." □



Bible Study

The Names of the Mediator (26)

Rev. C. Neele (1962-2022) & Rev. A. Schot, Nunspeet, the Netherlands
(Translated from the 2010 issues of *De Saambinder*)

Vine

"I am the true *Vine*" (John 15:1a).

Christ, together with His disciples, just left the Paschal room. For the last time He drank with them of the fruit of the vine. They probably passed a vineyard at that moment. For the Israelite, the image of a vine was a striking one. In Scripture, a time of peace is indicated as follows: "And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig tree, from Dan even to Beer-sheba, all the days of Solomon" (1 Kings 4:25). Israel is compared to a vine. Think of Psalm 80: "Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt..." The Church is compared to a vine: "Let us see if the vine flourish, whether the tender grape appear" (Song of Solomon 7:12b).

However, here, Christ applied the comparison to Himself. He is the true Vine. The word "true" here is not the opposite of "false" or "deceitful." The annotator wrote, "I may truly be compared to a vine."¹ The Mediator can rightfully lay claim to that name. A vine is not beautiful. It is not an ornamental plant but a fruit tree. Actually, the vine itself is the least ornamental part of the vineyard. A bare vine in

wintertime has no beauty. It is understandable that Christ compares Himself to the sun. We can imagine Him wanting to be "the bright and morning star," but the vine? This name points us to His deep humiliation. His appearance on earth was not an appearance with grandeur. "For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." The Mediator was born of a lowly virgin, laid in a lowly manger, and hung on the tree of the cross.

A vine is planted in the earth. This Vine was planted by the heavenly Husbandman. The purpose of a husbandman is to obtain fruit. That was also the goal of the heavenly Husbandman. Anyone who sees a vine without leaves does not understand that life could ever come forth from it, but how beautiful it is when the vine grows and bears fruit.

¹Annotations mentioned refer to aligning text from *Authorized Version Annotated (including Dutch Annotations)* found on the website <https://bijbel-statenvertaling.com>

The Vine Christ bears many branches. The Husbandman pays attention to this also. The branches, however, are twofold. There are fruitless branches in Him, which is an image of those who are only in an outward relationship to Christ. Those branches the Husbandman will eventually take away. Even the outward bond will soon be broken. On the other hand, there are also fruit-bearing branches that draw their saps from the vine. This is an image of those who stand in an internal relationship to Christ. That bond will never be broken. The Husbandman does purge these branches so that they may bring forth more fruit. Have you already become a fruitless vine in your own experience? God's children learn: the branch is nothing without the Vine.

—December 16, 2010, Rev. A. Schot

Witness

*“And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful **Witness**” (Revelation 1:5).*

Three different names of the Mediator appear in this verse: “Faithful Witness,” “First begotten of the dead,” and “Prince of the kings of the earth.” These are names in which the offices of the Mediator shine forth. As Prophet He testifies, as Priest He entered into death, and as King He is the Prince of the kings of the earth. We will dwell on the first name.

The Mediator is Witness. Of what is He witness? The annotator wrote, “Namely, He, who has brought the gospel unto us out of the bosom of the Father, and sealed it by His death.” He is the witness of things which no one has ever seen. “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him.” He is witness of the hidden counsel of God. As Witness, He also gives that testimony. He spoke to

Nicodemus: “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that We do know, and testify that We have seen; and ye receive not Our witness.” Because He is the only One who can testify of these things, His testimony is indispensable. Are you among those who keep His testimony?

The Greek word for witness is “martus.” This reminds us of our word martyr. A martyr is one who gives his life for His testimony of faith. Thus, Christ is a blood witness. He was willing to pay His testimony with His death. No, He did not enter death as a powerless martyr, but as a willing Witness. It is striking that this name is also given to God's children. Would we be ready to suffer for the name and cause of the Lord?

He is the risen Witness. That resurrection is also the future of all martyrs who have suffered for His name's sake. He is the faithful Witness, meaning that His testimony is true. That is why His testimony is of such inexpressible value. What use

is the testimony of a false witness? “The Pharisees therefore said unto Him, Thou bearest record of Thyself; Thy record is not true. Jesus answered and said unto them, Though I bear record of Myself, yet My record is true: for I know whence I came, and whither I go; but ye cannot tell whence I come, and whither I go.” May we know? Oh people, you will not end up being ashamed with His testimony. He does not want to deceive you, He cannot deceive you, He will not deceive you. “His truth at all times firmly stood, and shall from age to age endure.”

Beloved fellow traveler, hear the testimony of him who has personally met this Witness: “And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe.”

—April 29, 2010, Rev. A. Schot

(This installment marks the end of this series.)

Note from the Editors

Dear reader, over the last two years, many names of the Mediator have been placed before you in this series. Has it ever been for you what the bride says in Song of Solomon 1:3b, “Thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love Thee”? Have the Saviour's Name, His Person, the Christ's soul-saving offices, as revealed unto us in the gospel and explained in these meditations, set your heart on fire? Are the names of the Mediator precious to you? Or must you say, “I see no beauty in Him that I should desire Him,” as we read in Isaiah 53. This must bring you in a great need. If we remain as we are, this Mediator will become our Judge. You, who have found in this Mediator all that you need in your guilty existence, may it humble you. Give all the glory to Him, who is so worthy to receive it. The bride testified, “He is altogether lovely. This is my Beloved.” We hope you may have tasted something of this.

The Prophet Zephaniah (1)

Rev. C. Van Dam (1893-1976)

((Translated from the February 4 through November 4, 1965 issues of *De Saambinder*)

During the reign of Josiah, king of Jerusalem, the situation appeared favorable, because Josiah was a great reformer who, at the age of sixteen, began to seek the God of his father David, and at the age of twenty, set out to purify Judah and Jerusalem of carved and molten idol images. He also broke down the altars of Baal, and when he was twenty-six-years-old, he began to repair the temple, which was very dilapidated.

Jeremiah was active as a prophet. There was also a prophetess, named Huldah. Moreover, Zephaniah was added to them. Hilkiyah was the high priest, and Shaphan was the scribe, all of them walking in the ways of the Lord and teaching the people the law of God.

Josiah also celebrated the Passover to the Lord in Jerusalem. There had been no Passover like this in Israel since the days of Samuel the prophet. As perfect as it seemed, Zephaniah prophesied judgments that should have filled the people with horror. Jeremiah and the prophetess Huldah prophesied the same thing, that the Lord would bring evil upon Jerusalem and its inhabitants because they had forsaken Him and burned incense to other gods, provoking Him to anger.

So we read in the opening of Zephaniah's prophecy, chapter 1:1-3: "The word of the LORD which came unto Zephaniah the son of Cushi, the son of Gedaliah, the son of Amariah, the son of Hizkiah, in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah. I will utterly consume all things from off the land, saith the LORD. I will consume man and beast; I will consume the fowls of the heaven, and the fishes of the sea, and the stumblingblocks with the wicked; and I will cut off man from off the land, saith the LORD."

First of all, the question arises as to why Zephaniah's ancestors are mentioned by name, while we know virtually nothing about Elijah's origins and ancestors. He was probably a great-grandson of the godly King Hezekiah and, therefore, a man of significance. This raises the question of how it was possible that the Lord sent His prophets with severe judgments at a time when things seemed to be going so well, since Josiah was cleansing the land of idolatry. Because Jehovah knew the hearts of the people and knew that the reformation had not taken place with full consent, but only with feigned submission, and He knew above all that the wicked sons of the godly Josiah would soon undo their father's reformation; therefore, the Lord sent His preachers of penitence to warn Israel of the impending ruin that awaited them because of the Chaldeans, a bitter and cruel people. It would be a great and general judgment of God. The Lord pronounced judgment on Judah and Jerusalem through Zephaniah. Many prophets had already warned in the name of the Lord that the sin of idolatry in

particular would result in God's judgments. Nonetheless, the people continued, led by a completely corrupt priesthood, with the exception of the good ones. Therefore, not long after, a terrible war would break out so that not only the people but also the animals would be consumed from the land. The violence of the war would even cause the birds of the sky to fly away in fear to other regions, or perish, as would the fish of the sea.

It would therefore be a judgment similar to that which befell the inhabitants of the world with the flood in the days of Noah. Man and beast would feel the wrath of God upon themselves and indeed perish miserably in it. The Spirit of the Lord would not continue to contend with the wicked seed of Abraham. Even a public reformation, though well-intentioned, could no longer avert the judgment, because the great multitude was hypocritical and deceitful, merely waiting for another time when they could freely go a whoring after idols again. Where the people dared to defy God's wrath and, through their terrible sins, made themselves deeply unworthy of all blessings, it was perfectly just that the prophets, in the name of the Lord, announced complete destruction with unvarnished and fiery testimonies. Because of the abominations of men, the animals had to be subjected to the terrible judgments of God. The prosperity of the wicked often hastened their destruction. The abuse of God's longsuffering hardened the heart. Just as the idolatry of unrepentant sinners would cause them to sink into destruction and ruin, so, too, would the stumbling blocks be consumed with them.

Zephaniah prophesied that the general misery would be so great that there would be no way out. Continuing in God's name, we read further (verses 4, 5, and 6): "I will also stretch out Mine hand upon Judah, and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and I will cut off the remnant of Baal from this place, and the name of the Chemarims¹ with the priests; and them that worship the host of heaven upon the housetops; and them that worship and that swear by the LORD, and that swear by Malcham; and them that are turned back from the LORD; and those that have not sought the LORD, nor enquired for Him."

Judah was the head of those who remained after the fall of the ten tribes, and therefore judgment would come upon Judah and the capital city of Jerusalem. This was for various reasons, namely, especially the sins against the first table of the moral law. First of all, the worship of Baal, which, despite Josiah's reformation, was probably still practiced in secret. □

(To be continued)

¹Verse 4, The Chemarims—a type of priest in the Baal worship. Verse 5, priests of mixed worship—those who practiced worship of both God Malchim/Moloch or Baal. —Ed.

Curatorium Announcement

The Curatorium is scheduled to hold its next annual meeting, the Lord willing, at the Beckwith Avenue church in Grand Rapids on Wednesday, June 3, 2026. Rev. A.H. Verhoef hopes to lead us in a prayer service the prior evening at 7:30 P.M.

At this meeting, Student W.A. de Wilde is to be examined after his first year of studies. Student G.F. Rozeboom, after his second year of studies, also will speak a trial sermon with the hope of being sent out to begin speaking an edifying word in the midst of our congregations. We hope and pray that the Lord may grant our instructors and students much of His Spirit to lead into His truth for the welfare of our denomination.

At the same time, the opportunity will be opened at this meeting for men to present themselves with an attest from their consistory, to be considered for entrance into our Netherlands Reformed Theological School with the hope of being admitted to the holy ministry, whether in the established congregations or on the mission field.

In the gospel of John we read, "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through Him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light" (John 1:6-8). No man can bear witness of that which he has not experienced himself. That Light must first be revealed to John, in order that he might see it. Then he must recognize it as the Light. That is only possible by knowing what darkness is, that it may be distinguished from it. This must be in the first place true of every man that preaches God's Word. Alas, what confusion has come into the Christian churches in general in the world, for the lack of ability to distinguish between light and darkness itself, by the very men who attempt to witness it to others! May the Lord ever spare us from this as a denomination! When the birth of Christ was revealed to the Shepherds on the fields of Bethlehem, it was in the night, not only naturally, but also spiritually. What a great contrast when suddenly light shone from heaven! Do you know what this is, my friends, for the Light of grace to suddenly be revealed in your soul darkened by sin?

Still, it is not sufficient for the ministry to know experientially of the revelation of that Light in your darkness. We read that John the Baptist was "sent from God...for a witness...to bear witness of that Light." Now surely every man to whom that Light is revealed, will desire to witness of that Light. We read of the

Shepherds that "when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this Child. And all they that heard it wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds" (Luke 2:17-18). This is not a strange thing in the life of those who have been truly enlightened by the Lord in their darkness, also not in the life of women and sometimes even of children. What a blessed benefit may then be received by our loved ones and all those who surround us by such a testimony! May the Lord grant more of this in our dark days!

We read more, however, of John the Baptist, for he was "sent from God...for a witness...to bear witness of that Light." We can ourselves have witnessed that Light, and not be *sent to bear witness* of that Light, that is, in an official manner in the Church of God. When John began to bear witness, he was approached by the priests and Levites, who asked him, "Who art thou?" These were sent by the Pharisees. The church rightly asked him about his authority. Did not Christ Himself admonish the Church of Thyatira for "suffering that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach"? Indeed, every minister truly sent by the Lord will know what it means to have his authority questioned, not merely by men, but by Satan himself! How often, in the multitude of trials experienced in the midst of this work, do they not have to go back to the Lord to say, "Lord, didst Thou not send me?"

Thus, these two things are most necessary to know, a *personal witnessing* of the Light of grace in the midst of the darkness of sin, and a *sending* to bear witness of that Light. These two things are what every applicant to our theological school is asked to explain to us. Are there men upon whom such matters are laid by the Lord in the days in which we live with our seed, upon whom the weight of the welfare of souls is bound? Let such a man unburden his soul honestly and openly before his consistory, that they may make their judgment of the matter. Who can tell if the Lord would be pleased to add more men to the sacred work! Vacant congregations should seek help from their moderator. If freedom to grant an attest is received, the clerk of the Curatorium should be notified. The applicant should also forward his own request to the clerk for a hearing at the upcoming meeting, the Lord willing. Please submit all information as soon as it is available.

On behalf of the Curatorium,
Rev. J. den Hoed, *President*
Rev. J.J. Witvoet, *Clerk* (clerk@nrtschool.com)



A Word in Season

A Prayer at the Beginning of a New Year

Rev. M. Golverdingen (1941-2019)

(Translated from the January 3, 2008 issue of *De Saambinder*)

“Be Thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort” (Psalm 71:3a).

Many questions may come to us at the turn of the year. Circumstances naturally evoke these questions in us—circumstances in the midst of the world, in the life of our nation. Ah, if we look at national sins, there is nothing good to expect.

In your personal life, too, the question arises: What will this year bring us? None of these questions can ultimately be answered by a human being. There is only One who knows the answer—the Lord, who works all things after the counsel of His own will. Happy is the man who has learned to trust in this. There is one question that *must* be answered, and that is not what will happen, but in whom we are secure for the year 2008 (2026 —*Ed.*). Whoever has no security in the Lord, ultimately has no future, no matter how wonderful the prospects may seem. Those who do have security do have a future; however difficult it may be. It is precisely for this security that this poet prays!

David prays this psalm later in life while surrounded by enemies. In that distress, he may seek refuge with God. Hear the prayer here. He begs for the Lord to be a strong habitation (in Greek: rock —*Ed.*) for him to dwell in.

Wonderful thought. He is not asking for the Lord to dwell in him. That is great, but it is greater when he dwells in the Lord. Let the image speak. In the land of Palestine are rocks. In the psalms the rock is so often a means of speaking of what is hidden in God for the poet. Here it is about dwelling in the rock. That was and is not strange. In the rocks are the caves and caverns in which shelter could be found. David knew of it in the time when he had to flee from Saul. In that dwelling was found safety. There he could dwell in security from the grasping hand of the enemy.

Here emerges the miracle. How can a son of man ask for God to be a dwelling place? Is He not the holy and exalted God, infinitely high, a consuming fire for the sinner? He is. David had learned in his life that he could not exist before that God, that he could not dwell with God. Yet, he was taught of God from his youth. By grace he may testify in this psalm that God is not strange to him. That God has descended so low that in Him there is a place for a guilty son of man to dwell, to find safety for time and eternity.

David came to know the power of God’s merciful promises in Christ for his life, and it is precisely in Him that this is a reality. In Him, God is a Rock, in which a dwelling has been opened for a lost son of man, who knows no security in himself and is driven out to God. Are you concerned

about that dwelling? There can be so many expectations. It is a privilege if we need the Lord in life, also for the New Year. However, how poor we are if we pass by this Rock in which to dwell. By nature, we look for a dwelling in ourselves or in someone else, but one day it will collapse. There is still an opened door in that dwelling, in the saving work of Christ for poor sinners.

The Lord calls upon all those who seek it (a refuge —*Ed.*) outside of Him, to find a place in that Rock. Then it will become a miracle if we may enter there—a miracle for those who have no place of refuge left and now by free grace enter this dwelling. Oh, that is a good place to live. There is communion with God, and there one experiences whom He wants to be for all-forfeiting creatures. There is more. That God is a Rock in which to dwell. That is much. It is cause for wonder to those who know its power. Now we go in and out of our earthly dwelling. This dwelling takes on more meaning for us over time. If we have been out of it for a while, then we say, happily, we are home again. No matter how much we are attached to every dwelling on earth, it is written “a temporary home.” This is the truth, whether we experience it or not. We do not have a continuing city here.

However, for the dwelling in God in Christ, it is perfectly true that there is a continual power hidden in it. The poet knows by experience, “whereunto I may continually resort.” As long as he is on earth, he is in danger. The enemies seek his downfall. He himself continues to carry around an existence that does not ask for God. He is ready to halt and stumble every moment, but now this dwelling in God is opened to him again and again. Then he may experience its constant power through God’s grace and Spirit.

Another year lies before us. On the one hand, time is short. We fly away. Yet, on the other hand, how much can happen in a year. The most important thing is that we have found a place within this dwelling. Then there is a perpetual refuge. Driven on by want and need, He holds the door open for us. We are led to experience the miracle more and more—who this God wants to be in Christ for His own; to know the union and fellowship with the blessed Immanuel and the power of His blood in daily iniquities, and the protection in Him against all enemies. Do you live outside this divine dwelling? Do you stand from afar? This Rock, as the cave of Adullam, wants to receive all those who are in debt and who are discontented! It is never disappointing to enter there and be inside, because God in Christ gives to those who have no rights the right of access and wants to be everything to them. *Also*, in the year 2008 (2026 —*Ed.*). □



For Young and Old

“If Thou Wilt, Thou Canst Make Me Clean” (2)

(The following is a chapter adapted from *The Bible History Told to Our Children, Volume 2* by John Vreugdenhil)

Matthew 8:2-4, Mark 1:40-45, Luke 5:12-16

Boys and girls, last month's article explained what the terrible disease leprosy was, what happened to one's body, how lepers had to live alone, and that anyone having leprosy knew he or she had to die from it. That was explained first so that we could better understand the following story about a leper and the miracle of Jesus. As you read about this leper, allow your thoughts to connect how this leper is like a lost and seeking sinner. —Ed.

A man is walking fast on one of the roads in Galilee. His head is bowed and, besides, most of his face is covered with a cloth. He hastens forward without looking up or around. Shyly and fearfully, he listens to every sound. He is going to one of the cities in Galilee. He is going to Jesus, to the miracle performing Prophet. Why? What does he want of the Lord Jesus? Who is this man? He is a leper. We do not know whether or not he had been with other lepers, but he lives a melancholy life in his solitary hut or cave far removed from friends and acquaintances. He cannot be cured, no, he must die. His disease will progress and get worse. Really, he is waiting for death. Isn't that a dreadful thought?

However, one day he hears something. A great Prophet has appeared in Galilee who preaches in the surrounding cities and villages. Yes, he hears that this Prophet performs miracles, many miracles. The dumb speak; the paralytic and cripples are cured at the word of Jesus of Nazareth; those possessed with the devil are delivered from the evil spirit. In short, all sicknesses are cured by Him. Oh, at first, he may have thought it was not true, that it was grossly exaggerated, but no, it is no exaggeration. We do not know how he came to know this. See him sitting in his quiet hut. He is pondering over that which he had heard. If there were more lepers with him, undoubtedly, they conversed together about it. Whatever it may be, he cannot stop thinking of that which he had heard.

All kinds of questions rise up in his mind, such as, “Would this Prophet be able to cure me?” Probably at first, he shook his head. Isn't his sickness incurable? ... He is reckoned as one dead. He cannot sleep at night, for these thoughts are ever with him. Is there any hope of a cure for him; could it be possible for him to be cured from his deadly sickness? ... It seems as if this Prophet is exceedingly mighty. The more he hears about it, the stronger the hope becomes that there is a possibility of deliverance also for

him. A longing desire rises in his heart to meet the Lord Jesus and to ask Him to cure his leprosy. Oh, if Jesus would only come to him, but no, that does not happen. If the Lord Jesus would come nearby, if only He would come in the vicinity! Ah, neither does that happen. Undoubtedly such thoughts came in his mind.

Should he go to Jesus? ... Should he look for Jesus? ... Ah, he hardly dares to do so, for he isn't allowed to mingle among the people. He is unclean. Still this thought becomes firmer within him. At last, he decides to risk it. That is why this man is on the road to Jesus. Finally, he arrives at the place where Jesus is, but undoubtedly Jesus is surrounded by a great multitude of people, for the Lord is always surrounded by many people who listen to His preaching and watch His miracles. Oh, if he could only speak to the Lord Jesus alone, he would ask Him if He would cure him. Jesus could do it; he firmly believed this, but would He be willing? ... Faith in the almighty power of God was placed in the heart of this leper!

Undoubtedly, he stood and watched everything from afar. He cannot come close without being seen. Suddenly he thinks, “Shall I go? Shall I force myself through the people?” Oh, he hardly dares do such a thing and still... and still. Undecidedly, he stands there. Suddenly, he braces himself. Do you know what? ... He will try it. He has nothing to lose. If Jesus should refuse, well—then he will return to his gloomy abode and wait for death. But... but...if the Lord Jesus refuses not, if he would be cured, oh, wouldn't that be glorious? ...

Boys and girls, a leper was expelled from the city or village in which he lived. Adam and Eve were driven out of the beautiful Paradise because of sin. The leper was separated from everyone and everything dear to him. We are separated from God by sin. No one can deliver us from sin. Only the Lord Jesus, the Saviour, can break the bands of sin for us. As the leper had to be cleansed from his terrible disease, so we, too, must be cleansed from sin shall it be well for eternity. Leprosy made a person unclean, thereby causing him to be loathsome in the eyes of every person. Sin makes us unclean, thereby causing us to be loathsome in the eyes of God.

Only the blood of the Lord Jesus cleanseth from every sin. This man did not come to Jesus with the words, “You must cleanse me! I have a right to it!” No, he came as one who was “unclean,” as one who had no claim upon anything. □

(To be continued)



Instructive Gleanings

Onesimus, a Runaway Slave (11)

Rev. P. Kleijer, Lethbridge, AB

“But withal prepare me also a lodging: for I trust that through your prayers I shall be given unto you. There salute thee Epaphras, my fellowprisoner in Christ Jesus; Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, Lucas, my fellowlabourers. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen” (Philemon 22-25).

Introduction

Paul had pleaded with Philemon and had become surety for Onesimus, as we have seen in this letter. In our thoughts we see Onesimus on his way to Colosse. Many thoughts would have filled his heart. He did not carry the letter Paul wrote. This letter was carried by Tychicus who also carried the letter which was written to the Colossians. Paul thanked the Lord for the grace that was to be found in Colosse but also had concerns about errors that were creeping in. Both of these letters have received a place in the canon of the Holy Scripture. We will now consider Paul's concluding words in this letter.

Paul asking for lodging and prayer

We read in verse 22, “But withal prepare me also a lodging.” Paul asked for accommodation, for a simple place to stay. Why would he have asked for this? Was he not a prisoner? The marginal notes¹ in the Dutch Bible say (and herein they follow Calvin), “This he adds, in order that Philemon, understanding that Paul would come there himself, would not likely refuse this to him.” Paul wanted to stir him up to receive Onesimus and knew that he would more readily do so when knowing that he also would come. Did Paul expect to be released? It is clear that he hoped to be released from his bonds as we can also read in his letter to the Philippians. According to history writers, Paul was in prison twice. Between the first and second time, he had preached in Italy and Spain. He was beheaded in the thirteenth year of Emperor Nero. I believe, Paul was welcome in Philemon's home. Dear reader, would Paul also be welcome in your home?

Paul also asked for prayer, “For I trust that through your prayers I shall be given unto you.” He requested it. We know that he was a man of prayer, but, by the same token, he very highly regarded the prayers of others and often desired them. We read in Colossians 4:3, “Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds.”

¹Annotations mentioned refer to aligning text from *Authorized Version Annotated (including Dutch Annotations)* found on the website <https://bijbel-statenvertaling.com>

Prayer is a tender subject. The Lord will not hear *because* of prayer, but *upon* prayer. Throughout all centuries, there have been many true supplicants at the throne of grace. Prayer remains so necessary for the Church of God, also today. We need to pray in private and must pray along in public prayer. Young and old, may the need of body and soul, and also of state and church, be bound upon us. Who is able to pray a true prayer? May the Holy Spirit help us in our infirmities.

Paul's salutations in this letter

In the salutation we see names which are familiar to us. We read of Epaphras who was from Colosse. He was in prison with Paul because of the gospel. He came to Rome via Philippi (Philippians 4:18). At this time Nero began to persecute the Christians more severely. Paul could say, “My fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus.” If we may be such a prisoner, then we are a happy prisoner. It makes a difference why we are in prison.

Next, we read of Marcus. Marcus was the son of Barnabas's sister, also known as John Mark. He had a close bond with the Apostle Peter. We all know that there arose contention between Paul and Barnabas because of this Mark. This ran so high that there came a breach between them as we read in Acts 12:12. After this the apostle was reconciled with Mark. Must we not always strive for this? It can be that we cherish old grudges, but no blessing will rest upon it. This means we must acknowledge our guilt. Mark proved himself to be a faithful and useful minister of the gospel.

The next one is Aristarchus. He was a Macedonian of Thessalonica. Very likely Paul had been the instrument of his conversion. We read of him when Demetrius raised an uproar at Ephesus. Later he accompanied Paul into Asia and went with him on his journey to Rome. He now was a fellow prisoner with him.

Demas is mentioned also. He is still mentioned as a fellow labourer. Later Paul wrote to Timothy, “For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica” (2 Timothy 4:10a). There are some who believe that he was again restored after his fall. Scripture does not make mention of this; therefore, we must leave it alone. However, we fear that he was a temporal believer. Let us learn from this that an office in the church does not save us. He is mentioned in Scripture as a warning for us.

The last one mentioned is Lucas. This is Luke the Evangelist, the beloved physician, the brother whose praise was

in all the churches. For years, he was a constant companion of the Apostle Paul. He stayed with him in the difficult hours of his trial.

What did Paul call these men? “My fellow labourers,” all of them being ministers of the gospel. This shows Paul’s great humility. He was the apostle of the Gentiles but did not look down upon others. Here we see the communion of saints. May this be experienced in the time in which we live—that the Lord, who calls laborers, may give them grace to fulfill their labors.

The closing benediction

He closes with the benediction. The well-known words come to us, “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.” This means the love of God towards all His people. Dear reader, this grace is only given for the sake, and in and through the merits, of the Lord Jesus Christ. Do we know something of this? He prayed that they might feel this in their hearts and spirits. We can know it in with our mind, but it is so necessary to experience it. This grace is to quicken,

(This installment marks the end of this series.)

strengthen, comfort, and establish them, according to the different manifestations of the Spirit of grace. This was not only for Philemon but for his whole house, and also today.

Closing

At the close of this letter, we may ask one another, “What did we learn from this letter?” Onesimus, a runaway slave, received salvation. He went to Rome to be finished with the pious talk and all the rules in Philemon’s house, but in Rome the Lord arrested him. We would say, he became more and more wicked, but he was not out of reach for the Lord. Dear reader, we should not give up hope for anyone. Use the means, offer prayers for those who have gone astray, and receive the penitent back like the prodigal son was received by his father. Do not forget that we all need that same grace, even though we might not have gone astray like Onesimus did. All of God’s people will recognize themselves in Onesimus. May the spiritual lessons of this letter be learned. □



Among All Nations

What Did Jakobus Koelman Say About Israel?

Rev. J.M.D. de Heer, Rotterdam-IJsselmonde, the Netherlands

*(Taken from the book *What Our Fathers Said About Israel*, Chapter 11)*

Jakobus Koelman (1632-1695) served the congregation of Sluis in the province of Zeeland (the Netherlands) from 1662 until 1674. Between his birth in Utrecht and his passing away in the same city lies a life full of unrest. In 1674, he was banished from the town of Sluis because the government was of the opinion that he did not show enough respect towards the authorities. In addition, the minister refused to use the ecclesiastical forms and the formulary prayers. What followed was a wandering existence and a temporary stay in Rotterdam, Amsterdam, and other locations. During the last years of his life, Rev. Koelman obtained more rest. He lived among friends in the city of Utrecht, where he died on February 6, 1695.

Jakobus Koelman had much respect for the work of those who produced the Dutch States’ translation. He considered this translation as the very best that had ever appeared in the world and he fondly consulted the marginal annotations of this Bible version. Nonetheless, he felt that the marginal writers lacked “a key to unlock many of the biblical prophecies.” What was this key? It was the conviction that a time of spiritual prosperity was to arrive for the church, a time in which the Jewish people would be converted and return to the Promised Land. Rev. Koelman

hardly, if ever, encountered this conviction in the annotations regarding the prophecies of the Old Testament. Among the Scottish and English Puritans, he came across this conviction much more frequently. This led Koelman to translate many writings of Puritan divines such as the annotations to the Old Testament by Mr. Samuel Clark.

The future conversion of the Jewish people was such a settled fact for Rev. Koelman that he could barely imagine that people of a Reformed church could be blind to this. In his view, such people must be entirely biased and preoccupied.

His commentary on the Book of Revelation is one of the publications in which this Further Reformation divine writes about the impending conversion of the Jews. This conversion will be experienced by both the two tribes and the ten tribes. This is what he writes: “There shall be a national conversion of the Jews; Judah and Israel shall be turned to the Lord and the Christian religion, and thus they shall be united to serve the Lord together in many generations to come.”

This will happen in the Promised Land, the land to which Israel as a nation will return. Koelman is of the conviction that the impending conversion of the Jews will be accom-

panied by a period of a spiritual flourishing for the entire church. The banished minister writes that the conversion of the Jews will even be “the most outstanding part of that glorious state of the church.” This time of spiritual prosperity will coincide with many external blessings. After that, the antichrist will come with horrible violence.

It is striking that Jakobus Koelman does not exhibit much affinity with the Jews themselves. He rebukes them for their unwillingness to repent and for their stubbornness, as a result of which they have rejected the Messiah and continue to reject Him. He was even of the opinion that the civil authorities granted the Jews too much opportunity to exercise their religion. On the other hand, he felt that the government did not make enough money available for the proclamation of the gospel among the Jews. Much to his grief, even the church was too reticent in this respect,

(To be continued)

especially where it concerned their task to convert the Jews from their errors.

Rev. Koelman’s expectation for the future is, at times, so concrete and clear-cut that now and then we feel certain hesitations. However, we feel deeply ashamed when we are confronted with a specific urgent call by him. The wandering minister had a fervent hope that the topic of the conversion of the Jews would receive a place in the Christian upbringing of children and young people. He himself anticipated that by addressing this topic in his book *The Duties of Parents*. Let parents teach their children to pray for the conversion of the Jewish people, so he writes. Let the very promises relating their conversion receive a proper place in prayer. Thus Rev. Koelman was deeply moved concerning the Jewish people. Above all, he longed for rich fruit as a crown upon the work of Christ as the Surety of His people. □



From Our Inheritance

The Close of a Letter

John Newton (1725-1807)

[During his life, Rev. J. Newton wrote a multitude of letters, which were filled with spiritual and practical instruction. Below follows the close of one such an epistle.]

With respect to my own experience, I have little now to add to what I have formerly offered; at least, little variety: for, in one sense, every new day is filled up with new things—new mercies on the Lord’s part, new ingratitude on mine—new instances of the vileness of my nature, and new proofs of the power of sovereign pardoning grace: new hills of difficulty, new valleys of humiliation—and now and then (though, alas! very short and seldom) new glimpses of what I would be, and where I would be. The everlasting love of God; the unspeakable merits of Christ’s righteousness; and the absolute freeness of the gospel promises—these form the threefold cord by which my soul maintains a hold of that which is within the veil. Sin, Satan, and unbelief, often attempt to make me let go and cast away my confidence, but, as yet, they have not prevailed; no thanks to me, who am weaker than water. I am wonderfully kept by the mighty power of God, who is pleased to take my part, and therefore I trust in Him that they never shall prevail against me.

A vile sinner, indeed, I am; but, since God, who alone has a right to judge, is pleased to justify the believer in Jesus, who is there that shall condemn? I bless the Lord for that comfortable portion of the Scripture,¹ Zechariah 3:1-5. When the Lord is pleased to pluck a brand out of the fire

to save it from perishing, what power in heaven or earth shall presume or prevail to put it in again? No, He has done it, and who can reverse it? He has said it, and His Word shall stand. And I humbly believe (Lord, help my unbelief) that not one good thing shall fail of all that the Lord my God has, in His Word, spoken to me of.

Yet, alas! I must still charge myself with a great want of watchfulness and diligence. The enemy cannot destroy my foundation, but he spreads many nets for my feet, to weaken me, and to interrupt my peace; and, to my shame I must confess, he too often prevails. The Lord in great mercy preserves me from such sins as would openly dishonor my profession; and a mercy I desire to esteem it, for I can infer from my heart what my life would be, if I were left to myself. I hate sin; I long to be delivered from it, but it is still in me, and works in me. “O, wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?” I bless God for Jesus Christ my Lord. To His grace I commend each of you.

¹Zechariah 3:1-5, “And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. And the LORD said unto Satan, the LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire? Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel. And He answered and spake unto those that stood before Him, saying, take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him He said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment. And I said, let them set a fair mitre upon his head. So they set a fair mitre upon his head, and clothed him with garments. And the angel of the LORD stood by.”



Commentary

The Twelve Apostles (6)

Rev. H. de Leeuw, Brant County, ON

“Cast the net on the right side” (John 21:6b).

The Apostles’ Net

The disciples have had a conversation with a hidden Mediator on the shore of the Sea of Tiberius. The conversation was short, yet, also, here Jesus spoke with authority. He has asked if they had fruit after a night of fishing. Their short answer has echoed back to Him: “No.” Here a wonder happens; the Mediator reveals Himself as taking interest in those who have toiled all night and have nothing with which to go forward. He calls out a remarkable command to them. He instructs them to cast the net on the right side of the ship. The command is followed with a promise “and ye shall find.” Some explain how dangerous this was, how uncommon this was, and for experienced fisherman how hopeless this even seemed. Some are of the opinion they never fished on the right-side, others say it was common to fish from both sides. However, the focus here is that the command comes from the Master! He will have a willing people in the day of His power. The One who calls out this command is God; yes, greater, upon the grounds of satisfied justice He has received ownership of those toiling fishermen. The unfruitfulness of these men becomes the care of Jesus Christ in His exaltation. Dear reader, then wonders happen. When the exalted Mediator makes the needs of His Church His care, then wonders happen regarding bearing fruit. The command is divine!

The situation in which Jesus’ disciples find themselves is unfruitfulness after toiling all night. For the sake of the exalted Mediator, this will change in their life. Only for Christ’s sake do they cast that net on the right side, and only for Christ’s sake will they catch fish. This is an important lesson which they have to learn for their future task. Upon the command of the Master, they soon will have to go into the world to preach the gospel. The fruit can come only from Him. Just as the talents of their fishing experience could not help them in the past night, so in the unknown future they will have to learn to deny themselves and follow Christ wheresoever He will lead. Remember that in the boat of fishermen, all except John will suffer the martyr’s death for His sake!

The divine authority of Christ and His Spirit in them moves them to obey. The net is cast over the right side, and what did not happen all night happens in an instant—the net is filled with fishes. The Bible speaks here of a multitude of fishes. When looking overboard into the net, the number

is summarized as a multitude. Later, on the shore they will be counted, a multitude of 153 great fishes. The work these apostles are called to perform is to gather a multitude from all nations—a number known to the Master who has purchased His whole Church with His blood, elected by the Father, redeemed by the Son, and sanctified to be great in Jesus Christ by the Holy Ghost. There were so many, yet the net did not break. They all will be caught in the gospel net to be brought safely to the shores of Immanuel’s land!

When this great wonder takes place, the heart of John burns with love. He cannot remain silent. He speaks to Peter, “It is the Lord.” John may see Him through the power of His resurrection as making toilers fruitful. The truth of Easter receives here for him a fresh application; he cannot remain silent, and he confesses who this stranger is on the shore—indeed, not a stranger anymore. Through this wonderful harvest of fishes, he sees the Lord. This makes Peter active, active to go to Him as soon as possible. The fishes are forgotten by Peter. His need is to come directly to his Master. He desires the fellowship and communion with Him. Peter is first; the others are dragging the net with the fishes, and then, they, also, may come to the Lord Jesus on the shore.

Dear reader, this miracle speaks of the power which Christ has merited to bring fish into the gospel net. At His command the net was let down. So today, under the preaching of the truth, the Lord will gather fishes that need to come to shore to be with Him. The Word still goes forth. Do you see the purpose? My unconverted reader, this testimony declares that Christ desires not the death of the wicked but that you may live. The ground for this lies in Christ. You will not become converted because of your ability or your knowledge but by His sovereign command. Does that not reveal the responsibility to use the means of grace and place ourselves under the means of grace? The command of Christ prospers under the preaching of His Word and the reading of His Word. The Lord deals with toilers.

It is the season that office bearers are being or have been installed again. Also, the Curatorium announcement is placed in *The Banner of Truth*. Your toiling will not accomplish it, but at His command He is pleased to use instruments who toil all night to bring in the multitude elected unto eternal life! The apostles were made obedient to cast that net, so the Lord will also today have a willing people who obey Him officially! □

(To be continued)



Questions from Our Readers

Serve the LORD with Fear

Rev. H. Hofman, Beckwith, Grand Rapids, MI

What does it mean to fear the Lord and rejoice with trembling?

The words of this question are a direct quotation of what we read in Psalm 2:11, “*Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling.*” The Dutch Marginal Notes by these two phrases tell us the following:

1. *Fear*, that is a filial (meaning: *childlike*) fear and reverence, or standing in awe and fear of the LORD, as good and well-raised children do of their good father.
2. *Rejoice with trembling*, in regard to and over the great salvation, which despite all your merits is presented by the great and gracious God, in order to be apprehended and enjoyed by faith in His only begotten Son, whose despisers shall fearfully perish.

What is mentioned about well-raised children is a very applicable comparison. The relation between father–son (or child–parent) is a tender and a deeply loving one, but the fact is that there always remains a certain distance because of divided roles. This is why it sounds so strange when today we sometimes hear (older) children call their parents by their first name. In my opinion this transcends into the sphere of undue familiarity—or plain disrespect.

Now, parallel to this, there is a difference between respect and undue fear in the sense of being afraid of a parent. A child never ought to be afraid or terrified of his or her parent no matter what. On the other hand, a certain distance between the two is only natural and beautiful. As soon as the beauty of natural respect goes missing, a natural element of harmony is lost.

In the work of grace, love and fear, reverence and humility, go hand in hand. Grace makes man small and keeps him small. The constitution of the kingdom of heaven, of which Christ is the King, is that its subjects must be *humbled* in order to receive grace and live from grace. “Rule us so by Thy Word and Spirit, that we may submit ourselves more and more to Thee” (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Day 48). No, the Lord is not the austere

man as that servant said who kept his talent laid up in a napkin and tried to use his actions as an excuse (Luke 19:21). On the contrary, in saving grace God is in Christ a reconciled Father, for Christ’s sake.

Hence, it must be understood, as one writes, that there always must be a holy fear mixed with true Christian joy. This fear is like a sacred compound yielding a sweet smell as incense was to be used in the evening sacrifice (Psalm 141:2). Martin Luther writes that there are two kinds of serving and rejoicing in God. First, there is a serving in security, a rejoicing in the Lord without fear. These are peculiar to hypocrites who are secure, who please themselves to be useful servants, and to have great merit on their side, concerning whom it is said “*There is no fear of God before his eyes*” (Psalm 36:1). Secondly, there is a serving with fear and rejoicing with trembling which is peculiar to the righteous who do righteousness at all times, and always rightly temper both by which they are terrified and brought to despair of themselves and of all their own works. Thus, (I now quote Luther literally) “between the upper and nether millstone they are broken in pieces and humbled, and the husks being thus bruised off, they come forth as the all-pure wheat of Christ.”

Before we conclude, let me make it clear that Luke 1:74 does not contradict the above-mentioned. Zacharias’ prophecy included: “*that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve Him without fear.*” Here the reference to fear means being scared or terrified, so, the very opposite of filial, childlike fear, we just mentioned earlier.

In closing, I would encourage you to continue reading Psalm 2 all the way to the end: “*Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and ye perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him.*” □

Send your questions to: Rev. H. Hofman, 2339 Deer Trail Dr. NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49505, or hofman@premieronline.net.

In order to the attaining of all useful knowledge, this is most necessary, that we fear God; we are not qualified to profit by the instructions that are given us unless our minds be possessed with a holy reverence of God, and every thought within us be brought into obedience to Him.... As all our knowledge must take rise from the fear of God, so it must tend to it as its perfection and centre. Those know enough who know how to fear God, who are careful in every thing to please Him and fearful of offending Him in any thing; this is the Alpha and Omega of knowledge.

—Matthew Henry (1662-1714)



Current Events

Nigerians Support U.S. Strikes, but not Without Worry

Once again, there was a Christmas Day attack in Nigeria, only this time, the jihadists themselves were targets. This is because the operation, carried out in northwestern Nigeria's Sokoto state, was undertaken by the U.S. military in coordination with Nigerian authorities. The situation is more complicated for many millions of Nigerian Christians who would have to continue living in their country long after the foreign military strikes. "Truly, we wish we could handle this ourselves," said one Christian man, but he acknowledged that the authorities in his country, for whatever reasons, have not yet come close to meeting the challenge effectively. A Christian pastor said that he has observed a variety of reactions to President Trump's position on Nigeria. "A significant number of Nigerian Christians welcome international attention," he said. He added that many Nigerian Christians, particularly in rural communities, have "felt unheard and invisible" and that "their suffering does not receive the urgency it deserves." Yet, he also related, "there is also genuine concern among many Christians that overt Western intervention could complicate matters." Much, if not the majority, of year-round violence against Christians in his country "has a strong religious or ideological component, even when attackers frame [it] as land disputes or banditry."

—Persecution.org

Huge Crackdown on a Church Network in China

A police crackdown took place between December 13 and 18 on the unregistered Yayang church network in Zhejiang province on China's east coast. Many members were detained for questioning, while two senior leaders have been arrested and placed in criminal detention. On January 4, authorities surrounded the main church site with heavy construction vehicles including bulldozers. Over a thousand police officers, SWAT units, anti-riot forces and firefighters from cities across the province converged on Yayang town in a coordinated crackdown on its network of twelve independent house churches. Local witnesses reported seeing roving police patrols and multiple checkpoints at entrances to the town, and in the early hours of December 15 police stormed the main Yayang Church building. Over two hundred Christians who were inside the church were taken away for questioning and held at undisclosed locations until approximately 11 A.M. that morning. Personal belongings were confiscated, roads leading to the church were sealed off, and Christians are currently barred from entering the church building. China Aid reports that observers have been shocked by "the authorities' attempt to bring criminal charges against the two men (brothers and highly-respected church leaders) under the highly stigmatizing label of an 'organization with characters of a criminal syndicate.'"

—ChurchInChains.ie

Israel Recognizes Somaliland

Israel has become the first country to formally recognize Somaliland as an independent state, more than thirty years after the region broke away from Somalia, citing cooperation and the Abraham Accords. The decision highlights Somaliland's long push for recognition while triggering condemnation from Somalia and several regional powers. Somaliland is a Sunni Muslim region located along most of Somalia's Red Sea coastline in the Horn of Africa. In 1991, as Somalia descended into anarchy and civil war, Somaliland formally broke away. Since then, it has effectively operated as an independent state and is considered more stable and functional than Somalia, with a history of peaceful, democratic transitions of power. Despite this, no country had formally recognized it until Israel's recent declaration. For Israel, Somaliland occupies a strategic location at the entrance to the Red Sea and opposite Yemen, an area that has seen frequent attacks on shipping during the Gaza war by Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi rebels. This move drew sharp criticism from the region.

—TimesNowNews.com

Assyrian Artifact Found

A group of excavators recently uncovered the first-ever Assyrian inscription found in Jerusalem—shedding light on ancient power struggles described in the Bible. The inscription, which was carved on a small pottery fragment, was uncovered at the Tzurim Valley National Park in East Jerusalem. The inscription belonged to the Assyrian civilization, the dominant empire in the Middle East during the time of biblical kings. The Assyrians ruled much of the Near East from the ninth to the seventh centuries B.C., before Nineveh, their capital, fell. "The inscription provides rare evidence of correspondence between the court of the King of Assyria and the King of Judah," experts said, calling the fragment "tiny, extremely rare, and historic." The pottery piece, just about 2.5 cm. long, records an exchange between ancient rulers. Historians believe it was a message about a tax payment or other obligation. The inscription specifies a deadline. "The discovery strengthens our understanding of the depth of Assyrian presence in Jerusalem and the extent of its influence on the city's administration," they said. Although the fragment does not include the name of the King of Judah to whom the message was addressed, its chronological context and partial text suggest it was sent to the court of one of the Judean kings—Hezekiah, Manasseh, or Josiah early in his reign—when Judah was a vassal kingdom under Assyria," the experts noted.

—FoxNews.com

Self-abasement

Foundations totter that are not laid deep enough. The more true light a man hath, the more cause of self-abasement will he find in himself. You can never magnify Christ enough, and you can never debase self enough; and certainly Christ is most exalted when you are most abased (Isaiah 2:17). Dagon must fall upon his face if you mean to set up the ark; and if Christ shall be precious to you, you must be vile in your own eyes. None have such true revivings as the humble (Isaiah 57:15&16).

—Thomas Manton (1620-1677)



Timothy FOR THE YOUNG

A Boy from Stavenisse (9)

C. Visser-Sluis

(Reprinted with permission from the book, *Leen Potappel, A Boy from Stavenisse*)

A child of God

Leen has to talk about what has taken place. He is in a hurry. First, he goes to Grandma. He stumbles inside through the mudroom, almost forgetting to take off his clogs, and drops onto his knees in front of her. He is already twelve, but he is not embarrassed with her. He hides his head on her lap and cries.

She silently strokes his hair. Grandma waits patiently. She hears by his sobbing that he is not crying for nothing. Something has happened; she feels that it is something very extraordinary. While she is waiting for him to start talking, she softly begins to sing within herself:

*Praise Jehovah for His love,
God of gods, enthroned above;
Praise the mighty King of kings,
Who alone doth wondrous things.*

Leen begins to talk. He has to stop often. It seems as if he is listening to a voice that is telling him what to say. "I was so afraid. The Lord is the Judge. I deserve to be punished. Oh, my sins! It could never be good between that dear Lord and me! I did not want the Lord to receive too little of anything because..." he has to weep again, "because I love Him so much. Then the Lord Jesus was there. He opened His arms wide. I was allowed to come; He bears my punishment and makes me free of sin. I do not feel my sins anymore!"

Together, they silently weep with joy. He does not have to say much to Grandma. She understands him so well, and this makes everything all the more glorious.

"There is nothing that is of us, my boy," she says simply, "for even if you would pray and seek your entire life, you are still not worthy of the Lord's answer. How long do we already sin against God? How long do we let the Lord wait? No, it is only by grace that He looks upon a sinner."

A boy is slowly walking through the streets of Sint Maartensdijk. He is on the way to the little store owned by Sammarina. Leen often heard his grandma speak about this woman, and now he would like to see her. She is a woman who fears the Lord! Because of this, it is understood that he also loves her. Still, he is somewhat afraid. This woman already knows the Lord much longer and better than he. There is the little house already. It has a door in the middle and a window on each side. Leen looks closer. It looks like someone is standing in the doorway. Yes, the door is open. A woman is looking outside. She is holding her hand above her eyes and is looking in his direction. When he gets closer, he sees that she is laughing joyfully. She extends her hand to him. She looks so happy.

"Oh, my boy, you have come to tell me something."

Speechless, the boy looks down at her small frame. Was this woman expecting him? Had she felt that he was coming?

"Come on in," she says, and she pulls him inside by his hand. She leads him to the back room.

Leen follows her with a pounding heart. Oh, he is not looking forward to talking with this woman. She might see right through him. Still, he longs to speak with another child of God.

"Just sit down at that table. Would you like to have a cup of tea? You have come from Stavenisse, haven't you?"

He nods silently. It seems as if he has lost his tongue. When the tea is standing in front of him, she begins to speak. He now notices that she has a kind face. Her voice is soft and serious.

"My boy, I already know you for a long time. I have struggled much for you in prayer. Just tell me what has happened."

Leen begins to speak. He stutters a bit at first. It is not easy to talk about the great miracle in his

life using the right words, but it is what he loves to do most of all. After all, that is why he has come. After a few minutes, the words come easily. He tells about his great sorrow of having sinned against God. "I felt that He is good and I have done nothing but sin. I looked for Him, but I could not find Him, so I became more and more wicked. I sought Him in the wrong way. I wanted to improve myself for Him, by sinning less and so on."

He looks at her. Yes, she understands him. She nods that he should continue. "I saw how angry God is about sin, about my sins, and that it could never become right anymore. Everything was lost."

He thinks about the last while. How he almost couldn't get a bite down his throat anymore. "Ah, the Lord saved me," he says with a soft voice. His eyes show a look of great amazement. "He truly saved me! Christ has come and freed me from the heavy burden of sin. I do not feel them anymore. It is just like a bridge over a deep ravine. Christ is

the bridge. Through Him I may return unto God again."

Sammarina understands the boy. He is a child, and he speaks like a child, but her exercised ear hears the beauty of true Life.

"Now I may be His possession," he says with tears in his eyes.

With her wrinkled hand, she reaches across the table toward his. "I knew it. This past night my prayer for you stopped, and I became so happy, so very happy. It was just as if I gave birth to a child. I had the same glorious joy. I believed that the Lord had delivered your soul from death. Ah, my boy, you surely are happy now. Now you are my little brother. We have the same Father. Cleave unto Him, also when it becomes difficult later on."

Leen cannot imagine that it will become difficult. Doesn't he have the Lord Jesus? There is no safer Refuge. No one can take that happiness away from him anymore.

(To be continued.)



Bible Stories for Little Ones

The Wicked Kings of Israel

(Based on 1 Kings 15&16)

After wicked Jeroboam's death, his son Nadab reigned over the ten tribes. Nadab was like his wicked father and was not like his little brother who earlier had died and been taken to heaven. In heaven God's people receive a crown much better than the crown of an earthly kingdom. This wicked king Nadab did not reign long. After two years, a man named Baasha conspired against him, killed him, and made himself king of Israel.

When Baasha was king, the first thing he did was to destroy all Jeroboam's family. He did not let one of them escape. Baasha was a very wicked and a very cruel man. It was wrong of him to murder his king and to put all the king's family to death, but now all that God had said to Jeroboam's wife by the prophet Ahijah had come true. God never forgets what He says, and He always fulfills what He has promised.

Baasha made war with Asa, who was king of Judah. It seems that they were constantly fighting each other. It was at this time that Asa displeased God by trusting in the king of Syria for help in fighting against Baasha. However, Baasha continued to

walk in the ways of Jeroboam and Nadab, leading the people of Israel into many of the same sins. God therefore sent a prophet to tell him that God was displeased with his sins, and as punishment his children would not receive proper kingly burials. God was fulfilling His Word spoken at Mount Sinai, where He said that He would visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation.

After Baasha died, his son Elah became king. He was as wicked as his father, and God sent punishments upon him as He had said. Zimri, the captain of Elah's chariots, conspired against his master Elah and killed him while he was eating and drinking and making merry with his wicked friends. Zimri then became the king instead of Elah.

Zimri did not reign long. There was another captain in Israel, as ambitious and selfish and wicked as he. His name was Omri. The people of Israel liked Omri, and they chose him for their king. Omri and his soldiers went to Tirzah where Zimri lived, and they besieged the city. Zimri was frightened when he saw

Omri coming against him. All wicked people are troubled and fearful in the time of danger because then they have no safety and no hope. They know that God is their enemy and not their friend. They cannot trust in Him for deliverance in this life, and they have no hope of being saved when they die. Wicked people are very unhappy people, but those people who may have God for their friend may look to Him in all their dangers.

What did Zimri do? When he saw that the city was captured and surely would be conquered by the enemy, he did not know where to go. All his possessions and riches could not save him. In despair, he went into his palace and set it on fire; so, the beautiful palace was burnt, and the wicked king perished in the flames.

After Zimri's death, Omri was king. At first, he lived in Tirzah; but after a few years, he built a new city and named it Samaria. Then Samaria was the capital of the kingdom of Israel, and not Tirzah. Omri was a very wicked king. He was worse than

Jeroboam, Nadab, Baasha, Elah, and Zimri. He himself sinned, and he taught his people to sin, also. They all became idolaters, worshipping false gods. They did not worship the true God, nor did they turn to Him in their need. They knew very well that the Lord had provided for the children of Israel so often in times past. The psalmist in Psalm 78 describes them to us, saying, "They kept not the covenant of God, and refused to walk in His law; and forgot His works, and His wonders that He had shewed them." Canaan was no longer the happy country it had been when the king and the people loved and served God together, as in the time when good King David reigned.

How is it for us, and for our country? We do not worship the idol Baal, but many of us have idols in our hearts. If we love the world, or sin, or self, better than we love God, then we serve idols just like wicked Israel. The Apostle John says to us all, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols" (1 John 5:21).



Bible Quiz

Judging

Dear Boys and Girls,

We are quick to judge. That is because it is so easy to judge. It is much harder to try to see others in the best light possible.

For example, when a boy seems to always look bored in class—he is always staring out of the window or looking very sleepy—it is easy to assume that he is lazy. Often, someone fails to see that he actually has great difficulty concentrating because his mind moves too fast.

If a boy is never on time and can't plan his days well, he might be teased or looked down upon. Others might say that he isn't trying, but actually, he is trying his hardest and is quite frustrated with himself.

If a girl becomes angry on occasion and shows it, it is easy to judge her and say that she has quite a temper. Perhaps no one knows or realizes that her brain is different from most people, where she can't express or even feel her own emotions properly.

Sometimes a boy or girl is accused of lying or of being moody. No one stops to consider that she has withdrawn herself because she has been misunderstood, or that she is quiet because she has troubles no one knows about. She is judged quickly, or perhaps even teased.

Shall we be careful to never judge others? Judging is to draw a bad or wrong or negative conclusion about someone else. We cannot see what is in a person's heart or mind. Always be kind. Always find the best in others and realize that everyone has his faults and difficulties. What does the Bible say about judging? The Lord says expressly in His Word, "Judge not, that ye be not judged." He warns that if we judge others, we will receive the same treatment.

He tells us that we should look at ourselves. If we look at ourselves, we will have enough without worrying about others. He compares it to seeing a splinter in someone else's eye while not noticing a bigger beam in one's own eye. It is as though we

Answers to January's "Mire" quiz:

- 1. (down) Delivered Psalm 69:14
- 1. (across) Dungeon Jeremiah 38:6b
- 2. Grow Job 8:11
- 3. Washed 2 Peter 2:22
- 4. Wicked Isaiah 57:20
- 5. Waters Isaiah 57:20
- 6. Stamp 2 Samuel 22:43
- 7. (down) Stones Job 41:30
- 7. (across) Streets Isaiah 10:6b
- 8. Enemy Micah 7:10
- 9. Battle Zechariah 10:5
- 10. (down) Floods Psalm 69:2
- 10. (across) Friends Jeremiah 38:22a
- 11. Gold Zechariah 9:3
- 12. Dust Job 30:19
- 13. Psalm 40:2
- 14. Psalter 111:1

Please send your answers to the address shown below:

Aunt LenaBeth
 180 Jacobs Road
 Newfoundland, NJ 07435
 E-mail: auntlenabeth@gmail.com

Answers to previous quizzes were received in December from:

- | | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| Jonathan Baum | Kate Hoogendoorn (2) | Lynne Ruissen |
| Josina Baum | Lane Hoogendoorn (2) | Lydia Ruissen |
| Britni Blom (2) | Rylan Knibbe (6) | Ava Van Manen |
| Tiffany Blom (2) | Gregory Koenen | Alana van Manen |
| Aryanna Breeweg (2) | Reuben Koenen | Evan Van Manen |
| Julian Breeweg (2) | Carissa Mans (2) | Travis Van Manen |
| Carly Brouwer | Travis Mans | Hanna Van Wyk (2) |
| Thomas Brouwer | Abe Mol | Sophia Vande Waerd |
| Melanie DeKorne | Teddy Mol | Caleb Vogelaar |
| George Den Dekker (2) | Andrew Murphy | Matthew Vogelaar |
| Zachary Den Dekker | John Murphy | Keegan Weeda |
| Cody Driesen | Blake Pannekoek | Jayden Weeda |
| Ethan Driesen (2) | Cassadee Pannekoek | Nathan Wesdyk |
| Alyssa Driesse | Lauren Pannekoek | Maddyn Ymker |
| Jordan Driesse | Andrew Remijn | Quentin Ymker |
| Lindsey Driesse | Daniel Remijn | Whitney Ymker |
| Ronna Geuze | Lauren Remijn | |
| Samantha Grisnich | | |



Diligence in Raising Our Children

J.C. Ryle (1816-1900)

We must labor to do good to our children even from their earliest years. If Satan begins so early to do them harm, we must not be behind him in diligence to lead them to God. How soon in life a child becomes responsible and accountable, is a difficult question to solve. Perhaps far sooner than many of us suppose. One thing, at all events, is very clear—it is never too soon to strive and pray for the salvation of the souls of children—never too soon to speak to them as moral beings, and tell them of God, Christ, right and wrong. The devil, we may be quite sure, loses no time in endeavoring to influence the minds of young people. He begins with them even from childhood. Let us work hard to counteract him.

News & Announcements

■ Ministerial Calls

Extended:

To Rev. W. Harinck, of Utrecht the Netherlands, by the congregation of Chilliwack, British Columbia.

Declined:

By Rev. Al-Chalabi of Hilversum, the Netherlands, to the congregations of Sheboygan, Wisconsin, and Kalamazoo, Michigan.

By Rev. E. Hakvoort of Norwich, Ontario, to the congregation of Sioux Center, Iowa.

By Rev. W. Harinck, of Utrecht the Netherlands, to the congregation of Chilliwack, British Columbia.

By Rev. J. Slingerland of Corsica, South Dakota, to the congregations of Markham, Ontario, and Clifton, New Jersey.

By Rev. H.A. van Zetten of Nieuw-Beijerland, the Netherlands, to the congregations of Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and Franklin Lakes, New Jersey.

By Rev. P.C. Vlot of Krabbendijke, the Netherlands, to the congregation of Grand Rapids—Covell Avenue, Michigan.

■ Obituaries

KIEBOOM, Karen (nee Steenks), Age 90; December 11, 2025; Rock Valley, Iowa; Husband – Leonard (Rev. L. Kieboom, deceased); Children – Arline & Dan De Roon, Ella & Wilmer Fluit, Andrew & Mary; 14 grandchildren, 28 great-grandchildren; Sister – Ria Baaij; In-laws – Caroline Steenks, Peet Hobo; predeceased by 2 sisters, 2 brothers, and 2 in-laws. (Rev. J.J. Witvoet, 2 Kings 4:2.)

VAN VOORST, Jacob “Jake” – Age 93, December 23, 2025; Rock Rapids, Iowa (formerly Lester, Iowa); Wife – Hilda (nee Roskam); Children – Julie & Craig De Ruyter, Sheryl & Scott Moret, Lisa & Doug Faber, Wanda & Elwyn Hoogendoorn, Jacob “Jay” & Stacy; 14 grandchildren, 26 great-grandchildren; Sister – Jeanette & Marv Van Beek; Sister-in-law – Rena; predeceased by grandson Lucas Faber and 2 brothers. (Rev. J.J. Witvoet, John 6:49&50.)

Christ is not truly prized at all—
unless He is prized above all.

—Nathaniel Vincent (1639-1697)

■ Eagle Bay Young Adult Retreat

May 21-23, 2026

The Bethel Young Adult Group of Chilliwack, BC, is planning a young adults’ retreat (18+) for May 21-23, 2026, DV. Join us to learn more about God’s Word, connect with others, and explore the beauty of Shuswap Lake. Find more details and register at bethelyoungadults.my.canva.site by April 30. If you have any questions, please contact us at bnrc.youthgroup@gmail.com

■ New Titles from Bible Truth Books

Helen Thomson of the Valley by J. Bout—One Sunday during the time of persecution of the Scottish Covenanters, eight-year-old Helen and her mother leave a secret outdoor church service. They are almost home when tragedy strikes. The true story of Helen of the Glen. For ages twelve and older. Hardcover, 122 pages, \$18.00.

And If I Perish, I Perish—A Series of Sermons on Esther by Rev. J. Spaans—A series of twelve sermons from the life of Esther preached in the Norwich, Ontario congregation between 1996 and 2000. Hardcover, 166 pages, \$20.50

From the Manse, Volume 11 by Rev. J. Roos—While the first ten volumes in this series have been available for several years already, another volume in this series has now been printed. Hardcover, \$18.50.

A Life in His Service by C. van Rijswijk—Rev. Smijtegelt (1665-1739) is perhaps the most well-known Dutch “old writer.” This book tells a little about his life. Even before his birth, his mother believed that she would have a child who would later become a servant of the Lord. For ages eight and older. Hardcover, 54 pages, \$20.50.

The Smallest Loaf by M. van Steenis—This book relates true stories that all testify of wonders in the lives of God’s children. Sometimes, He uses simple means to instruct or help them. Young or old, rich or poor, the Lord will not put to shame those that trust in Him. For ages five and older. Hardcover, 64 pages, \$20.50.

The Story of the Scottish Church by Th. McCrie—A detailed history of the church in Scotland from 1529-1843. A reprint from the 1874 edition. Hardcover, 568 pages, \$16.75.

Recent Reprints

But He Shall Appear to Your Joy by T. Butijn-Melis—Hardcover, \$18.50.

The St. Andrews Seven by S. Piggan and J. Roxborough—Paperback, \$9.75.

Heaven Taken by Storm, The Christian Soldier by Thomas Watson—Paperback, \$7.50.

The prices above do not include postage.

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The lesser we discern pride in
ourselves—the more it reigns in
our hearts.

—William Perkins (1558-1602)

Anniversary and other announcements will be placed upon request. A donation for their placement would be appreciated. Please follow directions for check payment, shown in gray area at bottom of inside front cover. For consistency, copy size is limited. Send requests to James Okken, managing editor (see contact information at bottom of inside front cover.) Requests should be made **by the first of the month prior to the month of publication.**

■ The Banner of Truth in Audio Format

Monthly copies of the articles appearing in *The Banner of Truth* are available on MP3s and CDs for those who have reading difficulties such as poor vision. These MP3s are produced by a committee in Norwich, with the support of the Norwich consistory, who make the MP3s available to your consistory. Consistories distribute the MP3s and CDs which are provided at no cost. You may contact Mrs. Tillie Lamain at 616-242-0291 or blamain@netscape.net to arrange for a free subscription or to discontinue receiving *The Banner of Truth* on CD.

Minutes of Classis Far West 2025 Meeting (Summary)

Rev. P. Kleijer of Lethbridge delivered the Classis prayer service on the evening of September 30, 2025, in the Picture Butte church. His text was taken from Psalm 3:1-3. Theme: *David's Comfort in His Affliction*.

- 1) The cause of his affliction;
- 2) His complaint in his affliction;
- 3) His trust in his affliction.

Article 1—Opening

The Classis meeting convened at 9:00 A.M. on Wednesday, October 1, 2025, in the sanctuary of the Picture Butte NRC. On behalf of the calling church of Artesia, Rev. E.C. Adams opened the meeting with a request to sing Psalter 252:1-4 and read Psalm 93. He then asked the Lord for His blessing upon His church and the classical meeting. He welcomed the delegates and the visitors. The psalmist in Psalm 93 begins with the words, “The LORD reigneth.” This is the reason why we as Classis may meet by renewal. The “LORD” in capital letters is the faithful covenant God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Psalm 93 is also a Messianic psalm where Christ has ascended into heaven, sitting at the right hand of His Father. This psalm speaks of four special matters: (a) *The LORD enthroned*; (b) *The LORD's adversaries*; (c) *The LORD's omnipotence*; (d) *The LORD's sure testimonies*. As watchmen upon the walls of Zion, we have profound responsibility to take care that the house of the Lord is not desecrated and become man centered. May the prayers be multiplied to the Almighty LORD who reigneth, that He may be pleased to remember us and our dear children. The Lord grant His help and blessing also on this classical meeting. Rev. Adams then read the list of significant events in the Classis since the last meeting.

Article 2 & 3—Credentials & Election of Moderamen

The credentials were examined and approved.

President – Rev. E.C. Adams (by rotation)

Vice President – Rev. P. Kleijer (by rotation)

Clerk – Elder Arie Van Wingerden (by election)

Treasurer – Elder Pete Neels (by appointment)

Article 4 & 5—Minutes & Correspondence

The minutes of the Classis meeting held on March 20, 2024, were approved by the moderamen. There was no correspondence to report.

Article 6—Reports

Church visitation reports were received for the following congregations: Fort Macleod, Lethbridge, Lynden, Nobleford, Picture Butte, and Sunnyside. All things were found to be in good order.

Article 7—Submitted Points

After conferring with our moderator, Artesia wishes to bring forward a point for Classis Far West to consider. Thankfully, it was possible to add an office bearer in Artesia, but concerns remain due to the dwindling membership. It has been discussed at various times whether it would be possible for Artesia to become a mission post, or an outreach post.

Classis response: After some clarification by Artesia and discussion, Classis encouraged the Artesia consistory and congregation to proceed with their local evangelizing and to reach out to other congregations for material and financial assistance if necessary.

The Nobleford NRC consistory is forwarding these points to Classis asking for clarity and advice: Point 1: How do we deal with NRC members who have withdrawn their membership from the denomination and after some time (shorter or longer) ask to become a member of another NRC congregation? Does that consistory handle this in the same way as a person that wishes to join our denomination from a different denomination? Point 2: Should the consistory look at the reason(s) why a member has left the denomination and deal with each case accordingly when someone desires to come back to the NRC?

Classis response: Rev. Adams reported that the Book and Publishing Committee is in the process of publishing a volume of the most significant synodical decisions. Included in this are the procedures and the forms to be used in membership withdrawals and transfers. There is a form for an attest for those transferring to another congregation and a form for those withdrawing from the denomination. For those that have withdrawn and desire to return to our denomination, the same procedure applies as for those coming from another denomination as it is recorded in the 2010 Synod minutes under point #5 of the Far West Classis. Their names are to be announced to the congregation two consecutive Sundays to give opportunity for any objections. They will then meet with the consistory. If they are returning after a previous withdrawal, they have broken their oath of confession and therefore must make confession of guilt. Then the Voetius questions are to be answered. This will then be announced in the congregation. For those that are transferring to another congregation a form of attest is given. The clerk of the receiving congregation is notified of their intention. The question arose as to the time frame for transferees to contact the receiving congregation. The answer was unknown and will be researched. If no time frame has been designated, the Synod will be asked for a determination.

The Picture Butte branch in Rosthern, Saskatchewan, has providentially been offered to purchase a church property and building in the Town of Rosthern, which would suit the needs of the branch, D.V., for many years. The Picture Butte consistory is requesting the approval of Classis to ask the congregations in the denomination for financial help to purchase this church and property.

Classis decision: Classis approved this request.

Article 8 & 9—Moderatorships & Customary Questions

The moderatorships remained unchanged. No questions.

Article 11—Arrangements for the Next Classis Meeting

The next meeting will be held at Sunnyside on March 18, 2026, D.V. Chilliwack will be the calling church. Rev. H.D. den Hollander will preach a prayer service the preceding evening. By rotation Rev. Kleijer will serve as president and Rev. den Hollander as vice-president. Rev. Adams will open the meeting. Rev. Kleijer will make a presentation at the Office Bearers' Conference.

Article 12—Closing

Rev. P. Kleijer thanked the chairman, the calling church, and the host church and all those who helped facilitate the meeting, asked the Classis to sing Psalter 83:1-3, and then closed with prayer.

Dear reader, the need is great. If you have an education background, please take a moment to consider the many positions available across our congregations.

■ Administrators

EBEN-EZER CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, ST. CATHARINES, ONTARIO, is inviting applications to fill a full-time secondary teacher/administrator role. We would be gladdened by inquiries and applications of individuals who are qualified, versatile, and dedicated but who

also love the doctrine according to godliness. For more information about this position, please contact the principal, Mr. Arthur Verhoef at 905-563-3077 or principal@ecschoo.ca. Please send applications to the secretary of the school board, Mr. G. Brouwer, 1372 Gregory Road N., St. Catharines, Ontario, L2R 6P9 or call 647-271-8984, or email gerry@ecschoo.ca

NETHERLANDS REFORMED CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, POMPTON PLAINS, NEW JERSEY. (*Although this position has been filled on an interim basis, we are still in need of a permanent candidate.*) The school administrator will strive to direct the school according to the Word of God, the Three Forms of Unity, the Constitution of the Netherlands Reformed Christian School,

the policies of the NRC School Board, and the regulations of the New Jersey Department of Education. The primary duty of the administrator is to maintain productive relations with the school board, students, faculty and staff, parents and community.

Relocation expenses and financial incentives will be discussed upon inquiry. For more information or to apply, please contact Tom Van Vugt (education chairman) at 973-703-1511 or email tomv@plainviewgrowers.com, or John Van Der Brink (administrator) at 973-628-7400 or email nrcs_office@nrcsnj.org

■ Teachers/Assistants

CALVIN CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, COAL-HURST, ALBERTA, invites applications for elementary or secondary teachers to begin in January or August 2026. Applicants must be members of the NRC, or a closely-related denomination, and must be eligible for Alberta certification. Any inquiries should be directed to the principal, Mr. Marc Slingerland, at 403-381-3030 or inquiries@ccschool.ca. Should the Lord incline your heart to apply, please submit a cover letter and resumé with references to inquiries@ccschool.ca

EBEN-EZER CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, ST. CATHARINES, ONTARIO, is inviting applications for elementary and middle school teaching positions. We would be gladdened by an inquiry and application of someone who is versatile and dedicated, who also loves the doctrine according to godliness. For more information on this position, please contact Mr. Arthur Verhoef, at principal@ecscool.ca or call 905-563-3077.

Please send applications to the secretary of the school board, Mr. G. Brouwer, 1372 Gregory Road N., St. Catharines, Ontario, L2R 6P9. Email: gerry@ecscool.ca

EBENEZER CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, SHEBOYGAN, WISCONSIN, has an opening for a full- or part-time position teacher or coordinator to monitor, oversee, and assist the students with their homeschool curriculums. We have a range of students for 2025-2026 from grades 4 through 8. For more questions regarding this position, please contact Andrew Van Stelle at 920-452-1967 or email amtrees@excel.net

EMMANUEL CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, LYNDEN, WASHINGTON, is accepting applications for the 2026-2027 school year. We welcome applicants at the elementary, middle, or high school level. To apply or request more information, please contact the administrator, Ms. Beth Bleeker, at 616-826-7663 or email bbleeker@nrcslynden.org or the school board president, Mr. Jerry DeBruin, at 360-224-0901 or email jdebruin3797@gmail.com

MOUNT CHEAM CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, CHILLIWACK, BRITISH COLUMBIA, anticipates an URGENT NEED for the next school years with multiple openings for teachers in elementary and secondary grades. Applicants

must hold or be eligible for BC certification and subscribe to the faith identity of the MCCS Society and the Reformed Congregations in North America. Inquiries should be addressed to the principal, Mr. Jan Neels, at jneels@mccs.ca. Please send your application, along with supporting documentation, to Mr. Jan Neels and to the board secretary, Mr. Jacob Kerkhoff, at jkerkhoff@mccs.ca. See also www.mccs.ca

NERIAH CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, CALGARY, ALBERTA, has a unique opportunity for a full-time teacher to join our small school. While all applications are welcome, we are in most need of a teacher for our students in middle and high school. We are seeking an organized individual who is willing to learn, a team player, and able to transition between grade levels during a school day. While a certified teacher is preferred, we welcome all applicants who are passionate about teaching. For more information, please contact the principal, Darlene Dekker, at darlene.dekker@neriahcs.ca or school board president, Mr. Daniel Visser, at 403-554-1097 or by email visser.daniel@outlook.com

NETHERLANDS REFORMED CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, CORSICA, SOUTH DAKOTA, is seeking applicants to fill a full-time teaching position for the elementary grades. The applicant should be highly self-motivated, versatile, and one who loves the old truths and paths. NRC membership is required. A teaching certificate is appreciated but not required. For more information on this position, please contact the school board president, Mr. Cornie Blom, at 605-680-0557. Applications should be sent to Cornie Blom, 37885 275th St., Corsica, South Dakota 57328, or emailed to clerk Brad Spaans at kjspaans05@gmail.com

NETHERLANDS REFORMED CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, ROCK VALLEY/SIOUX CENTER, IOWA, is seeking to fill teaching positions in elementary, 7-12 math, and other secondary subjects. These positions are part-time or full-time and can be combined depending on qualifications and experience. For further information, please visit www.nrcsia.com or contact the principal, Mr. Daniel Breuer, at dan.breuer@nrcsia.org or call 712-476-2821.

PONATAHI CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, CARTERTON, NEW ZEALAND, has an exciting opportunity for an upper primary teacher. We are seeking an enthusiastic and passionate Christian teacher to teach our upper primary classes (one or more of grade 5-8). Please do not hesitate to contact us and discuss the options; we can be flexible as to which subjects would be taught. This is a full-time position, starting February 2026 (beginning of our school year). For more information, see <https://www.ponatahi.school.nz/our-people/teacher-vacancies/> or contact the principal. To apply, send a cover letter and CV to Jaap Reijersen van Buuren at principal@ponatahi.school.nz

PROVIDENCE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, KALAMAZOO, MICHIGAN invites qualified candidates to apply for elementary and middle school positions that may be open. For more information regarding possible openings or for application forms, please contact the administrator, Mr. Tom Kwekel, at tkwekel@pcskzoo.com or call 616-644-2661.

REHOBOTH CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, NORWICH, ONTARIO, is accepting applications to fill a full-time grade 4 position starting in mid-February 2026. For information about this and other elementary and middle school opportunities, contact Mr. Andrew Korevaar, at elementaryprincipal@rcsnorwich.com or 519-495-6629. For information about secondary opportunities, contact Mr. Gerrit TenHove, at secondaryprincipal@rcsnorwich.com or 519-536-3689. We invite inquiries about our locally developed teaching training program which provides a blend of paid teaching, mentorship, and training, making it a great opportunity for those new to the profession or those seeking to transition into teaching. Cover letters and resumé should be submitted to hr@rcsnorwich.com. Applications will be reviewed. Applicants selected for interviews will be contacted by the school board.

TIMOTHY CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, CHILLIWACK, BRITISH COLUMBIA, is in need of middle school teachers. We are looking for teachers who are excited about teaching and are dedicated to nurturing the hearts of young people. We have a definite need in middle school for the upcoming school year but would encourage secondary and intermediate grade-level applicants. If you are such a teacher, please apply to join our team. Applicants need to be certifiable to teach in British Columbia. For information and/or an application form, please do not hesitate to contact Mr. Doug Stam, principal, at dstam@timothychristian.ca, or Mr. Kevin Romeyn, school board president, at kevinromeyn@timothychristian.ca

To All Candidates for Education Positions

Please visit advertising.nrcea.education for an up-to-date listing of job openings in NRCEA schools as well as links to the school websites for more information about the positions and the schools. When accessing the job bank on the NRCEA SharePoint, please use the following:

User Name:

advertising@nrcea.education

Password: **Schooljobs!**

I Am the Way

Jesus is the way to God;
Jesus is the way to bliss;
In this way the Church has trod,
Down from Adam's day to this.

Jesus is the living way;
All beside to ruin lead;
They are safe, and only they,
Who are one in Christ their Head.

Jesus is a holy way;
Leads to endless joys above;
Holy men, and only they,
Walk in this blest way of love.

Jesus is the narrow way;
Hagarenes have here no room;
Sons, and only sons are they,
Who can travel this way home.

Jesus is a humble way;
Pride and self must be brought down;
Nothing like a beast of prey
Ever can in this way run.

Jesus is the way of strength;
Yet the strong this way can't come;
And the Lord will prove at length,
Weaklings have the victory won.

Jesus is the way of peace,
Paved from end to end with love;
Yes, this way abounds with grace,
And the needy it approve.

All a helpless soul can need,
All a faithful God can give,
In this way is to be had;
Here the hungry eat and live.

—William Gadsby